



The Challenge of Peoplehood: Strengthening the Attachment of Young American Jews to Israel in the Time of the *Distancing Discourse*

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Abstract: The Distancing Discourse

The claim that young American Jews are distancing themselves from Israel is rapidly becoming a major preoccupation of those in charge of cultivating the Jewish People.¹ This paper shows that the claim of distancing is not supported by the data currently available and argues that the conversation about distancing, as such, defeats the very purpose of those who engage in it: to enhance the attachment of the American Jewish community to Israel.

The relationship between the two largest Jewish communities, Israel and North America, is complex. Both communities are undergoing a process of change and, as a result, American Jewry's attachment to Israel is also undergoing a long and multi-faceted process of transformation. These changes carry both risks of genuine distancing in the future as well as opportunities for building new models of partnership between the two communities. But parsing the relationship between the two communities along a binary model of distance versus closeness fails to capture its complexity. Moreover, the distancing discourse tends to exacerbate negative trends and thus risks becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. Instead, there is a need to promote the long-term programs that would bring the world's two largest Jewish communities even closer together.

This paper analyzes the conflicting hypotheses concerning distancing, identifies the weak links in the research to date, and surveys the different aims served by the distancing discourse. It then reviews the salient features of the changing relationship between the Jewish communities of Israel and North America and proposes guidelines in response to



the new relationship pattern between them. Building on prior JPPI recommendations (see Appendix 3), we recommend:

Recommendation No. 1: Israel as a Personal and Social Mode of Expression

It is recommended to identify and emphasize channels in which Israel serves **not just as a national political expression** of the Jewish People, but also as a personal and social Jewish form of expression.

Recommendation No. 2: Improving Communication with New Institutions

Governmental bodies in Israel should improve their familiarity and interaction with organizations that provide a Jewish portal for American youth and strengthen their ties with non-political organizations.

Recommendation No. 3: Cultivating Knowledge about US Jewry

It is recommended to **improve substantially Israeli knowledge and planning** concerning US Jewry.

Recommendation No. 4: Enhancing Research

Attachment **research should be augmented** in terms of resource allocation, specialized researchers, and long-term investment.

Recommendation No. 5: Language Matters: *Attachment* is a Better term than *Distancing*

It is recommended to **exercise prudence and restraint when discussing distancing** in the daily routine of the official institutions of Jewish People. Whenever possible the more positive term *Attachment* should be favored over *Distancing*.

Background: The Distancing Hypothesis

In its most basic formulation, the distancing hypothesis is as follows: American Jews between the ages of 18 to 35, who comprise roughly a quarter of the adult Jewish population in America (see Appendix 1: Data), are increasingly distancing themselves from Israel. Their emotional attachment to Israel is decreasing and the place Israel occupies in their consciousness as a fundamental component of Jewish identity is eroding.



The cohort under scrutiny – emerging adults who, by and large today, have not yet embarked on starting a family or creating a home -- poses an attachment challenge not only vis-à-vis Israel, but also vis-à-vis the entire Jewish community.² In most cases, these are young Jews who have no need for communal services for their own families (kindergarten, synagogue), and for whom there are fewer institutional opportunities for Jewish participation. Many of them have already severed their connections with the organized communities in which they were brought up (their parents' community) or with the temporary communities they may have joined as students. Thus, they have been largely disconnected from a Jewish communal framework for many years.

With respect to attachment to Israel specifically, this cohort also differs from the same age cohort in prior decades. The current generation of young American Jews has no living memory of the formative events that sustained the strong Diaspora-Israel ties in previous generations: the Holocaust of European Jewry, the establishment of the State of Israel on its heels, the great victory of the Six Day War, and the great anxiety of the Yom Kippur War. Events in more recent decades in Israel, starting with the shift of power to the right and the (first) Lebanon War, but mostly events related to the protracted Israeli-Palestinian conflict, have also taken their toll. Thus, the American Jewish community today is less hesitant to voice public criticism of Israel's policies and to express discomfort with what it perceives as Israel's failure to exemplify liberal values.

While forecasts have been written and proven false about the imminent disassociation between the world's two largest Jewish communities in the past-- indeed, throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s³ -- the concern today does seem broader and more warranted, given the patterns and experiences of this new generation.⁴ (Indeed, in prior papers JPPI



warned about this possibility)⁵ The claim that distancing is already upon us, however, is controversial and requires further elucidation.

Defining Distancing

In assessing distancing, two fundamental questions arise:

1. How do we measure erosion in the attachment between U.S. Jewry and Israel? Does a difference in the various measurements reflect an actual decline in the level of emotional identification with Israel or, instead, a shift in the patterns of attachment that may call for updating research parameters? The focus of research has not, until recently, been "distancing" and the work on which this paper relies was designed to more generally understand American Jews. Attitudes toward Israel are a piece of it, which can only be understood in the context of American Jewish identity.
2. What precisely is the young generation distancing from? Available data does not provide a conclusive answer to this question. We need to ask whether there is a distancing from the State of Israel – or even an aversion to the notion of a Jewish state; whether there is a distancing from the people of Israel (i.e., from Jews who live in Israel); or whether there is a distancing from the *Land of Israel* as an abstract religious-cultural concept.

It is helpful to distinguish between two conceptually distinct forms of distancing, each reflecting a different process, each requiring different measurement tools, and each necessitating a different policy approach:

1. **Emotional distancing**, which involves a weakening of **visceral** attachment to Israel.
2. **Cognitive distancing**, which reflects **various reservations** about the centrality of the State of Israel for Jewish thriving.

To these two, we should add another category that is useful in conducting distancing research, even though it is primarily a manifestation of (1) or (2) above:



3. **Behavioral distancing**, which reflects **erosion in actions** manifesting connection with Israel.

Emotional Distancing. Emotional distancing addresses the question whether young Jews feel a familial affinity with Israel. Do they care about Israel? Do they love Israel? Many of the questionnaires designed to measure Israel attachment were based mainly on questions about emotional ties. For example, in the 2000-2001 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS), the researchers asked: “How emotionally attached are you to Israel?”⁶ his question was also used in several communal studies that examined congregants’ attachment to Israel.⁷ A study by Cohen and Kelman⁸ included the analysis of several questions such as “Do you agree/disagree with the following statement: I am worried the United States may stop being a firm ally of Israel,”⁹ and “If Israel were destroyed, I would feel as if I had suffered one of the greatest personal tragedies of my life.”¹⁰ The 2011 Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion included the question: “How close do you feel to Israel?”¹¹ The emphasis in all of these questions is on the respondents’ personal feelings toward Israel.

Cognitive Distancing. Several studies have attempted to examine distancing trends based on a more cognitive and ideational dimension. In Steven Cohen’s study,¹² which examined the attitude of rabbis and students at the Jewish Theological Seminary toward Israel, respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the statement that: “Caring about Israel is a very important part of my being a Jew.”¹³ This formulation is the standard question also used in AJC surveys of American Jews,¹⁴ and is subtly different from those questions designed to elicit personal feelings about Israel. It touches on the respondents’



position or attitude: do they think that Israel plays an essential part in their Jewishness? Another question examined whether respondents “identify [themselves] as Zionists”¹⁵ – a question directly bearing on their ideological stance rather than their emotional state of mind. Questions focusing on Israel’s centrality to the Jewish People and certainly those eliciting the respondents’ position on Israeli state policy bear on cognitive distancing.

Behavioral Distancing. Many studies examine behaviors that reflect attachment to Israel, along with changes in attachment over time. In the AJC study, the question that followed the one about emotional attachment was distinctly practical: “Have you ever been to Israel?”¹⁶ Cohen’s study of the JTS rabbis examines practical attachment in a similar manner. The study asked about the number of Sabbath homilies each rabbi gave at the synagogue that year, followed by the question: “In how many of these was Israel a main topic or theme?”¹⁷ Behavioral distancing is not necessarily measured exclusively by questionnaires; it is a phenomenon measurable by more precise indicators, such as how many young Jews visit in Israel in various programs, how many return for another visit, how many look at websites that report news from Israel, how many donate to Israel-related causes, etc.

It is important to note that current claims of distancing **rely** on research that examines emotional distancing primarily, for which there is no research-based evidence at present. Nevertheless, the distancing discourse – which has been enormously influenced by essays in the public sphere such as those by Peter Beinart in *The New York Review of Books*¹⁸ and Daniel Gordis in *Commentary*¹⁹ -- **focuses** on phenomena primarily associated with cognitive distancing, for which there is some circumstantial evidence at the present time. The discourse tends to **ignore** behavioral distancing, for which there is



some supporting evidence (i.e., fewer sermons about Israel), but also much evidence to the contrary (i.e., increased visits to Israel, and increased financial giving to Israel²⁰).

Distancing Hypothesis: The Debate

The Distancing Hypothesis is the subject of debate among several groups of researchers who have relied on varied sets of data to substantiate their respective positions. The studies, which have been published and regularly updated since 2007 (most of these studies rely on evidence that is valid through 2005-2008) are of great interest to both Jewish organizations worldwide and the public at large. They have served as a platform for numerous press articles and have become a topic for discussion in dozens of conferences and symposia. They are often in the background of raging confrontations among Jewish pundits.²¹

The ongoing debate over distancing has had some positive effects. It is spurring the broadening and intensification of research, and creating improvement in our knowledge of the Diaspora-Israel relationship. Yet, many of these studies, and the controversies among researchers, are not well understood by the general public because they involve analysis of complex data and competing interpretations of that data. As a result, there is a discrepancy between the professional debate about the data and their meaning, and the public debate, which often adopts interpretations that are overly simplistic or serve other agendas. (See section below) Two key and diverging approaches among the researchers illustrate the dilemma. (For a more comprehensive description of the controversy among researchers and of the evidence, see Appendix 2).

One research group, led by Steven Cohen and Ari Kelman, stated that, with the exception of Orthodox youth, the young generation of American Jews is “less attached to Israel.”

Cohen and Kelman’s working assumption is that this weakened attachment to Israel will lead in the future (i.e., when that generation grows older) to a general distancing of



American Jews from Israel, and they emphasize that the main driver of distancing is interfaith marriage. The other research group, led by a team from Brandeis University's Cohen Center (Leonard Saxe, Charles Kadushin, Theodore Sasson, and others) examines the degree of attachment as compared to previous decades, and finds no dramatic change – certainly not one for the worse – in the attachment of American Jews to Israel. According to this group, the weakened attachment observable in studies of younger Jews is not the result of a distancing trend, but is, rather, a permanent feature of the Jewish life cycle. Young people are, indeed, more distant from Israel, but as they grow older they grow more attached.²²

A word of caution is advised here as this paper, and all of the studies it relies upon, are based on an implicit assumption that the types of changes or erosion in attachment to Israel will occur gradually, in a linear fashion. It is a reasonable assumption, as so many changes in opinion, affect, and life choices do seem to correspond to such a dynamic. However, we cannot dismiss the possibility of a more sudden, unexpected and rapid change in attitudes. Such development might not be detected by surveys and studies prior to the actual passing of a certain tipping point. While we have no factual evidence with which to substantiate a suspicion that distancing will be a case of such sudden shifting, one must keep in mind that the changed circumstances surrounding American Jewish youth today (these changed circumstances will be presented in some detail in the next chapter) do give one reason to worry about such a possibility.

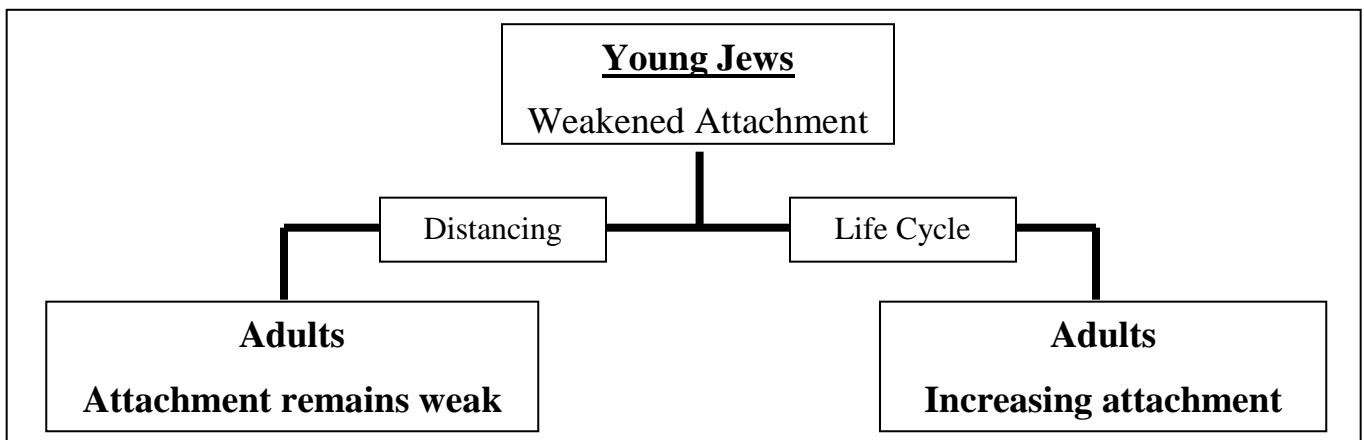




Figure 1: Distancing vs. Life Cycle

We draw two conclusions based on the research to date:

1. There is no conclusive evidence of an erosion of U.S. Jewry's attachment to Israel.

On the contrary, the studies that included a longitudinal comparative examination indicate a sustained and even increased level of attachment. In short, **there is no evidence of distancing as compared to the past.**²³

2. Nonetheless, the changed circumstances surrounding American Jewish youth today raise the suspicion that studies pointing to distancing in the present, while not based on conclusive evidence, give more reason for worry than past studies. These changed circumstances include:

- The general tendency of disengagement from any fixed identity in many spheres of American life;
- The increasing emphasis on components of Jewish identity within the private sphere at the expense of traditional communal identity;
- Substantial increase in the percentage of mixed marriages. Cohen and Kelman's studies point to this finding as the determinant variable regarding attachment;
- The return to relative calm on the Israeli front, the absence of engagement-enhancing momentous external events (obviously, war with Iran or other dramatic and tragic world events may develop into such external engagement-enhancing), and a concurrent decline of the Zionist narrative;
- Indications of growing unease among young Jews toward Israeli policy on matters related to war and peace, and also to religious issues;
- Decline in the centrality of organized Jewish community institutions and their ability to influence the younger generations.



It should be mentioned that a decline over time in a diaspora community's attachment to its core state or country of origin is a well-documented phenomenon. Although the American Jewish community is not a classic diaspora community, since most of its members did not emigrate from Israel to the U.S., in many respects its attitude toward Israel resembles that of other ethnic and religious diasporas, where gradual erosion in core state attachment is observable over time. The attachment of such groups is eroded in the second and third generations, almost without exception. However, in diasporic groups that have managed to sustain a core, albeit weakened, identification with their country of origin, there have been instances of awakening attachment and identity-strengthening as a result of dramatic external events.²⁴

Points of Agreement

Researchers are in agreement on many important points, and these points of agreement are often as fundamental as their points of contention:²⁵

1. According to all studies, **a significant majority of American Jews still supports Israel**, is emotionally attached to Israel, and regards Israel as an essential element of its Jewish identity.
2. There are **clear gaps in Israel attachment** between younger and older generations.
3. The Israel attachment of **Jews who are married to non-Jews** is weaker than that of Jews who married Jews. (The rate of mixed marriages among younger American Jews is about 50 percent.)
4. No significant erosion was measured in the Israel attachment of American **Orthodox Jews**, and to a lesser extent, in the attachment of communally engaged Jews.
5. Both groups of researchers (and others)²⁶ accept the claim that visits to Israel enhance attachment to Israel. Among non-Orthodox young American Jews, about 35% visit Israel before they are 35 years old (see Appendix 1: Data). This is a



higher percentage than their parents' generation. Subsidized Visit Israel programs (with Birthright as the flagship) are steadily increasing this number.

6. Researchers have not found in the data collected so far any significant indication of distancing that could be interpreted as rooted in political disagreement (i.e., an expression of resentment or disappointment due to Israeli government positions on political issues).²⁷

Distancing Drivers: Differences among Communities

A large part of the distancing discourse is hampered by the difficulty of distinguishing between distancing and shifts in attitude toward Israel that do not necessarily reflect distancing. Many studies have identified a shift in the attitude of American Jews toward Israel, along with a change in their expectations of Israel concomitant with a change in the character of Israel itself.²⁸

This shift requires an extensive discussion beyond the scope of this paper. We merely note here that the majority of those involved in the Israel-Diaspora relationship agree that the relationship pattern based on the classic Zionist premise (“an ideology that divides the world into Jews who live in Israel and Jews who live outside Israel”)²⁹ is eroding to the point of irrelevance for younger American Jews. A number of competing patterns were introduced as possible substitutes to the classic pattern by way of attempting to reframe Israel-Diaspora relationships. Terms such as *Jewish Peoplehood* and *New Zionism* capture the gist of these new patterns.³⁰ The transition to new relationship patterns, though, does not in itself guarantee the continuation of a strong attachment between the two communities because the new relationship patterns do not necessarily place the Israeli nation-state at the center of Jewish consciousness. Rather, these new patterns highlight the shift in emphasis among American Jews from the national and communal to the personal.



In addition to shifts in patterns of relationship, fundamental differences between the American and the Israeli communities pose a challenge to communication, bonds, and mutual understanding between American and Israeli Jews. Some of these differences are not new, but, in the relative absence of engagement-enhancing external forces and events (such as anti-Semitism and grave physical danger to Israelis), the differences between the two communities come into sharper focus, and, thus, a potential distancing driver.

Key areas of difference that are potential distancing drivers include:

1. The difference of choice: In Israel, Jewishness is essentially enforced (“You are a Jew!”) while American Jewishness is voluntary (“Are you a Jew?”)
2. The legal difference: In Israel, a person’s Jewishness carries far-reaching legal and social ramifications, whereas in the US, there are no legal implications, and the social implications are far less significant than in the past.
3. The sociological difference: In Israel, Jews comprise the general society; in the US, most Jews are members of an elite.
4. The experiential difference: In Israel, the Jewish experience is pervasive (everything is Jewish); in the US, the experience is occasional (multiple identities).³¹
5. Demographic difference: In Israel, fertility rates are relatively high, whereas they are low among American Jews. The Jewish community in Israel is growing; in the US, it is apparently shrinking or at least not growing rapidly.³²
6. Uniformity/cohesion difference: In Israel, Jews almost invariably marry other Jews; In the US, a high percentage of young Jews (about half) marry non-Jews. The American Jewish family is not as uniform/cohesive in the religious and national sense as the Israeli family.

In addition to these differences, there are also fundamental differences in terms of viewpoint, belief, and identity. Key among them:



1. Political difference: American Jews lean to the political left, whereas in Israel, in the last decade, voting patterns lean right. This difference is reflected in strengthening ties between some political sectors and groups in Israel and conservative US Evangelical Christians, who have political views in diametric opposition to those of most American Jews.
2. Religious difference: In Israel, religion and tradition are almost invariably Orthodox, whereas in the US, the religious lean toward the liberal denominations. In the US, the number of secular Jews is expanding, while in Israel there is an opposite trend.³³

These differences, along with many others, do not necessarily cause distancing, but they can certainly stand in the way of engagement, making conversation with a common language especially problematic. Yet such dialogue is vital to preventing crises in the relations between the two communities, which could engender anger, alienation and distancing.³⁴ In addition, the level of familiarity of Israeli Jews with the life experience of US Jews, and vice versa, is not very high.³⁵ Knowledge gaps inevitably lead to difficulties in understanding the context and circumstances surrounding the actions of the other side, and could become a potential driver of distancing.

Attachment Drivers: World of Easier Communications

Even among those convinced that distancing is real and sufficiently documented, there is agreement that **there are also encouraging attachment-generating trends**. These trends are of two main types: those deriving naturally from American Jewish community life and without any deliberate institutional intervention, and those that are the product of institutional intervention, both American and Israeli.

Among those occurring naturally (sometimes with supplementary encouragement by the establishment), the following are key:

1. An increase in the **sense of security felt by young Jews**, which enables them to express their Jewishness publicly without fear. For young people on US campuses



forced to cope with an often-unfriendly atmosphere vis-à-vis Israel, this sense of security is less strong.³⁶ Despite these difficulties, however, there is no comparison between the situation of young Jews in the US today and the situation of this cohort just a few decades ago.

2. The Jewish establishment in the US, despite all of its divisions and squabbles, has **placed Israel high on its agenda**, and is not backing away from this position. Today, a significant Jewish body that does not place support for Israel high on its agenda, or rejects the idea of a Jewish-national project in the land of Israel, is almost inconceivable. This was not always the case and should not be minimized.
3. Improved transportation (flights) and communications (Internet, long-distance calls) make it very easy for American Jews **to visit Israel and communicate with Israelis**. Improved physical conditions in Israel (hotels, standard of living) have made it a more attractive tourist destination. Visiting Israel is no longer perceived as a sacrifice for the sake of Jewish identity, but rather as an attractive, pleasurable travel experience
4. A substantial extension of the American **Jewish Culture Basket** to include Israeli elements such as music and the increased use of Hebrew.³⁷ This trend, which encompasses a large variety of phenomena, provides an opportunity for connecting the American Jewish community to other Jewish communities around the world. This is especially the case now, given that Israeli Jews are closer to Jewishness than before.³⁸

Attachment drivers resulting from deliberate institutional action include all the efforts aimed at improving and deepening American Jewish identity, Jewish education, and Jewish engagement. The most significant activity is the **accelerated development of Visit Israel programs** for young American Jews – whether they are short-term programs, primarily Taglit/Birthright, or longer-term offerings such as Masa and others. Such programs were established primarily to strengthen the Jewish identity of young Diaspora Jews – based on



the premise that the experience of the shared journey could generate long-term involvement and interest. Nevertheless, from both the American perspective that regards engagement with Israel as a secondary gain derived from such programs, and the Israeli perspective, which tends to stress Israel-engagement more than Jewish identity generally, this is clearly an activity that can engage young Jews, as suggested by studies that examined the mind-set of Birthright and Masa participants before and after visiting Israel.³⁹ Birthright researchers have identified “significant differences between participants and non-participants in their connection to Israel ... The Taglit effect was greatest among participants from relatively weaker Jewish backgrounds.” The researchers (Saxe et al) went on to suggest that “the majority of Taglit participants surveyed felt the trip made them feel much closer to Israel.”⁴⁰

Four Expressions of Distancing

Four phenomena are commonly perceived as expressions of distancing. We analyze below whether these phenomena should, in fact, be taken as evidence of distancing.

Criticism of Israel: This is the most familiar form of expression popularly perceived and presented as proof of distancing. Research shows that, within the American Jewish community today, there is much greater openness to direct and often sharp criticism of Israel. (More generally, the American Jewish community is finding it increasingly difficult to present a uniform and consensual stance on any given subject.) Criticism often relates to Israel’s security and peace policies, but touches upon many other subjects as well, including so called anti-liberal legislation,⁴¹ the relationship between religion and state in Israel,⁴² the attitude toward minorities in Israel, the system of government, etc. Numerous factors have contributed to the intensification of criticism of Israel, including:



- Israel's power and the fact that Israel is no longer perceived as a country under existential threat have eroded the customary restraint of criticism (again, this might change as the Iranian situation evolves).
- Cognitive and ideological differences between Israeli and American Jews.
- The critical discourse inside Israel itself, which enables groups in the US to identify not just with Israel as a general concept, but also with sub-groups within Israeli society.
- Young American Jews do not have the "us and them" mentality that characterized previous generations of American Jews, and therefore, do not feel the need to conceal intra-Jewish controversies from the non-Jewish world.
- Intensification of anti-establishment discourse as a global trend.

The spreading criticism among various segments of American Jewry regarding Israeli policies, actions, and worldview is often interpreted as an expression of a dwindling sense of identification with Israel among American Jews. In some cases, this is accurate. For some Jews, criticism reflects conditional support – a tacit statement that the connection can be maintained only if Israel takes steps to improve its conduct in criticized areas. Nevertheless, it should be reiterated that the studies undertaken so far have failed to identify a distinctly political component affecting the Israel-attachment of the majority of young American Jews. Moreover, the very decision of young Jewish Americans to criticize Israel, often very sharply, indicates their continued engagement, and is sometimes the mark of a very strong connection. The investment of time, energy and resources in changing or improving Israel embodies a desire for greater involvement and partnership, rather than distancing.

Rejection of Israel's Centrality: Israel is not necessarily a central identity component of American Jewishness. "[...] for parts of US Jewry, Israel is just another component in their Jewish identity. Certain portions of this community challenge the centrality of Israel and



question its central position in the Jewish People as a whole in our times.”⁴³ Thus, there is a wide spectrum of views ranging from “Israel as just another Jewish community” to the “negation of Zionism.” The historical and conceptual roots of this phenomenon include negation of Zionism due to religious views (Judaism as a religion rather than a nation); competitive views (Zionism negates the Diaspora); cultural objections (Judaism is a diasporic religion), etc. In previous generations, the centrality of Israel came to the fore in times of crisis due to external events and more skeptical voices were marginalized. In recent years, decentralizing Israel is more prevalent and perceived as a legitimate voice in the public discourse. In studies that measure Israel attachment, it is clear that for many young people, the sense that Israel is a vital identity component of Jewishness has less weight than among older Jews. This is shown, for instance, in their response to questions such as “Is caring for Israel an important part of being a Jew?”⁴⁴ Nonetheless, it should be reiterated that, according to available research, the life cycle explanation of the generation gap applies to questions concerning Israel’s centrality as well – namely, that young Jews have always tended to be less convinced than older Jews that “caring for Israel” is an important component of Judaism, and seem to become more convinced as they mature. Thus, no decline was detected when the long-term trend related to such questions was carefully examined. For example, in 1986, 27% of American Jews defined themselves as “Zionists,” whereas in 2007 this figure rose slightly, to 29% (based on AJC surveys as reported by Sasson, Kadushin and Saxe⁴⁵). In 1986, 63% said, “Caring about Israel is an important part of my being a Jew,” in 2007 this percentage rose to 70%.

In any case, a distinction should be made between instances in which the rejection of Israel’s centrality entails distancing (i.e., if Israel is not central, there is no need for



attachment or caring), and cases in which Israel's centrality according to the classic Zionist version (negation of the Diaspora) is rejected, but the sense of attachment and caring (stemming from Jewish Peoplehood or simple gut feelings) is preserved. Nevertheless, it is conceivable that a general trend in the direction of rejecting Israel's centrality could lead to eventual distancing.⁴⁶

Negation of particularism: There is a documented aversion among young American Jews to values that are perceived as particularistic, and a tendency to favor values that are perceived as universal. "They consider such identification [with Israel] as clashing with their belief in universal values and their being part of a universal world."⁴⁷ Contrary to some research findings of prior years, this aversion does not necessarily disappear even when attempts are made "to connect these Jewish youngsters to their Jewish identity and to Jewish values through activities aimed at social justice and contributing to mankind. "Young Jews are drawn to [voluntary public] service mainly through universal values and identification, rather than Jewish-based values."⁴⁸ In other words, there is an inherent difficulty in connecting young Jews to messages or activities in which the Jewish community is involved, even when these messages and activities are not aimed exclusively at the Jewish community, and even when they are clearly consistent with both Jewish and universal values. The rejection applies not only to the message itself, but often also to its carrier. Consequently, young Jews so inclined find it difficult to identify not only with an Israel that upholds values that are different from their own, but also with an Israel that upholds values similar to their own, by virtue of its being a Jewish state -- a particularistic, rather than a universal notion. Although the common assumption is that many young American Jews are uncomfortable with and often vehemently opposed to manifestations of Jewish particularism, there is currently no conclusive evidence of erosion



in Israel attachment as a result. Nevertheless, the possibility exists that such erosion could be documented in future studies.

Indifference/apathy: Many studies, including in recent years, have demonstrated a correlation between intensity of Jewish identity and Israel attachment among young American Jews. A concrete manifestation of this correlation is that visits to Israel enhance the sense of Jewish identity among young Jews, to the point of “creating a significant gap between young Jews who have spent a considerable amount of time in Israel and those who did [sic] not.”⁴⁹ It is possible to be Jewishly involved while disengaged from Israel. However, the common reality for the majority of Jewish Americans is that young Jews whose Jewish identity is strong would also be “more strongly attached” to Israel, whereas “young Jews who have no interest in living a creative Jewish life are distancing themselves from Israel as well.”⁵⁰

Most of the reasons for the indifference of younger American Jews are not directly related to Israel, its character and policies, or its very existence. Indifference stems from several key factors, including:

- Overall erosion of tribal identifications among younger Americans, which affects young Jews as well;
- The extremely limited Jewish education most young American Jews receive;
- The weakening of Jewish institutions, from local synagogues and community centers to some national organizations;
- Declining identification with the Jewish religion. Studies suggest that among young Jews there is a significant group that defines its Jewish belonging as cultural⁵¹ rather than religious.⁵² A decrease in religiosity leads to a decrease in the level of Israel attachment;⁵³
- A dramatic increase in the number of out-marriages, which result in families that are less engaged with and less attached to Judaism and the Jewish community. Out



marriages have also been found to be a fairly reliable predictor of the intensity and vitality of attachment in studies directly focused on the Israel-attachment of young Jews. It appears that “the most important trend, beyond any other factor, in shaping American Jews’ attachment to Israel, is the trend of mixed marriages.”⁵⁴

Contrary to the first three instances (criticism, negation of Israel’s centrality, negation of particularism), which are active in nature and ideologically based (i.e., phenomena possibly leading to cognitive distancing), indifference is a passive phenomenon that reflects a general loss of interest in Judaism, which can be expected to lead to emotional distancing. Loss of interest in Israel is often disguised as ideologically based because indifference is perceived as negative, and those who are indifferent are more comfortable presenting their motives as principled. It is, however, easily distinguishable because most indifference to Israel relates to a general indifference to Judaism. Nevertheless, in times when Israel is perceived as a burden by American Jewry – for instance, when military operations force young Jews to deal with critical peers on university campuses – passive indifference can turn into hostility, because of the sense that Israel’s existence compels them to engage in issues or positions in which they have no interest.⁵⁵

Utilization of the Distancing Discourse

The distancing narrative often has appeal because raising the specter of distancing serves various interests. The basic dynamics that drive utilization of the distancing discourse are similar (see Figure 2):

1. Drawing explanations for the nature of distancing from the basket of inherent differences between the two communities as the rationale for, and proof of, the validity of the distancing hypothesis.
2. Ignoring attachment drivers concurrently in operation, and the fact that research on distancing is inconclusive.



3. Developing a distancing discourse that is based on selective arguments, and moving the discourse into the (ideological or practical) field of action that serves the users' ultimate goals.
4. Using distancing as a vehicle for promoting various causes whose actual connection with distancing, or with attempts to prevent distancing, is loose or, as is often the case, non-existent.

We have identified four main categories of distancing utilization:

(a) **Distancing in the service of a political agenda:** The distancing narrative is often a political weapon used by the left against Israeli government policies.⁵⁶ As a result, the belief that Israel's policies are the main cause of distancing is widespread⁵⁷ among broad sectors in both Israel and the US. The argument has added appeal because it shifts responsibility for distancing away from the American Jewish setting and places it on the shoulders of Israel's government. Yet, the existing quantitative research does not support the claim that the controversy over Israel's political course is a central distancing generator.⁵⁸ The very repetition of this argument gives it credence and may eventually generate a mental shift sufficient to actualize it.

(b) **Distancing in the service of organizational causes:** The distancing narrative also has been used to shift responsibility not only to the government of Israel but also to the Jewish-American establishment, thereby bolstering an argument for the need of organizational change.⁵⁹ The argument runs as follows: establishment organizations are dedicated to uncritical support for Israeli policies; impervious to public opinion, they refuse to let in critical voices. Under the current regime, U.S. Jews are losing hope and interest in Israel. Accordingly, new bodies must be established to provide better agency for US Jews and thereby curb the distancing trend.

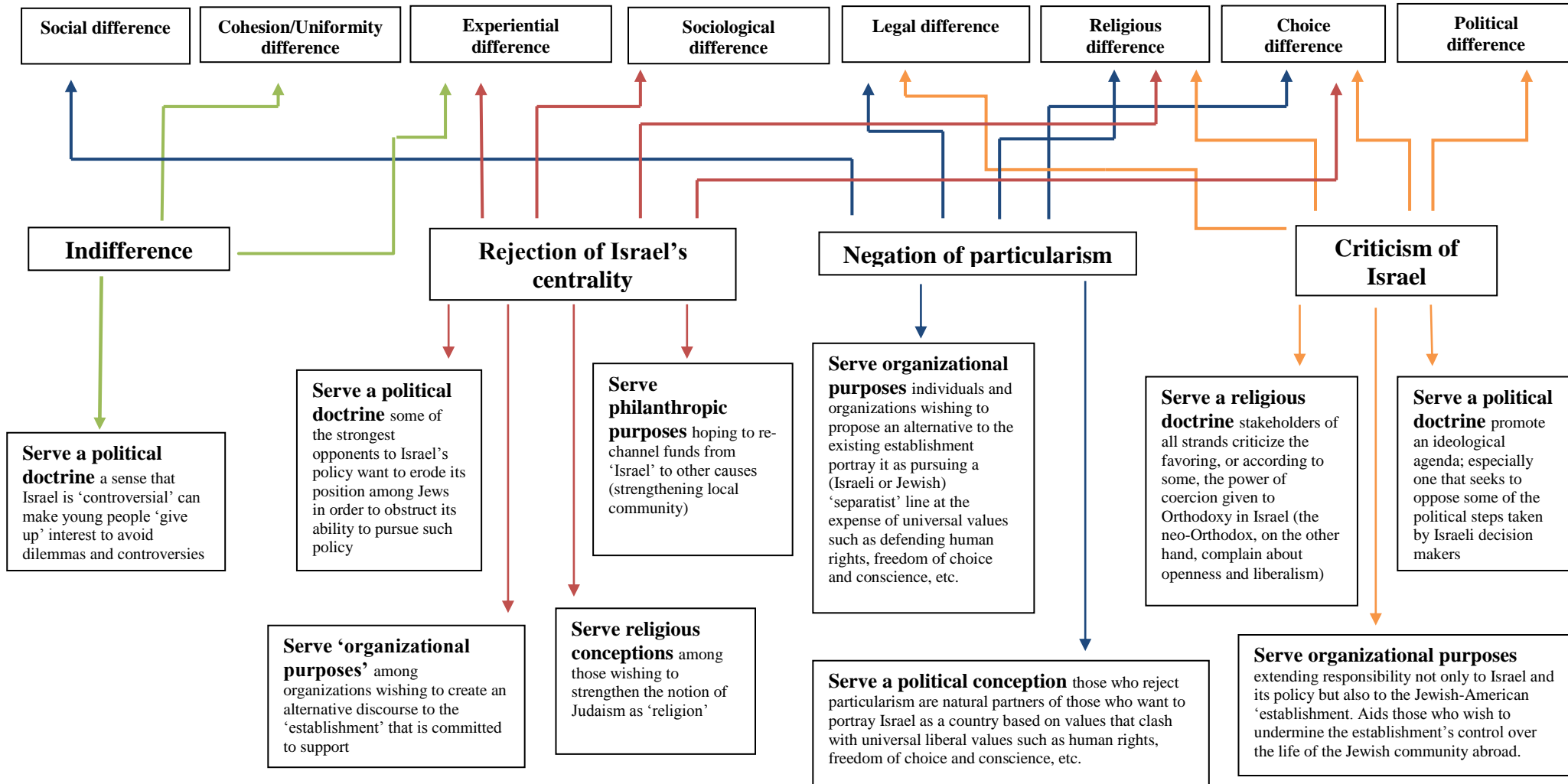


(c) **Distancing in the service of philanthropic causes:** The distancing discourse is also spreading because it provides a means of mobilizing resources. Central Jewish organizations, which suffer from a steady decline in donations, are searching for ways to re-motivate donors. Combating distancing has donor appeal. Thus, distancing has joined the basket of threats to Judaism and to Israel, such as various military (Iran) and political (de-legitimization) threats, assimilation, anti-Semitism, and poverty in Israel, which are motivating factors in the Jewish world, propelling certain sectors into action. This is by no means an attempt to argue that such threats are not real or important – they most certainly are. Our aim is to draw attention to the use of threats to motivate the Jewish world – which, as clearly indicated by research, propel certain sectors into action, while at the same time, as argued in different studies, deterring other sectors.⁶⁰

(d) **Distancing in the service of religious denominational interests:** The gist of this argument is that the manner in which state and religion is ordered in Israel, which favors Orthodox Jewish doctrine and practices and delegates governmental functions exclusively to Orthodox clerics, is a central factor in the distancing of young American Jews from Israel.⁶¹ According to the studies, young Orthodox Jews in the US show no sign of distancing.⁶² While liberal denominations blame Israel for alienating non-Orthodox denominations, the Orthodox assert that it is liberal Judaism that had failed to come up with an educational response that would prevent the erosion of young Jews' attachment to Israel.

Turning to the distancing narrative to advance the goals of various ideological and institutional actors has tended to obstruct a pragmatic and objective discussion of what needs to be done to promote a healthy partnership between the two communities, minimizing distancing drivers and maximizing attachment drivers.

Figure 2: Utilization of Distancing Markers





Policy in a Time of Change

There are no conclusive findings indicating a generational erosion of Israel-attachment in the last two decades. Rather, all attempts, to date, to examine aggregated data over time have found stability in the level of US Jews' attachment to Israel, and even a certain attachment strengthening during the first years of the last decade (2000-2005). Researchers suspect (but "have no way of proving it,"⁶³ according to Sasson) that this attachment strengthening might be related to the Second Intifada.⁶⁴

Given changed circumstances that make the possibility of declining attachment in the current generation plausible, decision-makers must cautiously assume that they may indeed be faced with a distancing problem within a short time period. Until such a trend, or its reverse, is clearly documented, scholarly disputes regarding distancing will remain unresolved. (Some scholars believe that "the only way to resolve the disagreement is through a long-term national study of US Jews, which would follow up on their attitude and behavior throughout their life-cycle").⁶⁵

At the same time, some attachment drivers are still too fresh to determine whether and to what extent they will have long-term effects as young Jews grow older. In light of such partial uncertainty, institutions wishing to effect increased attachment levels should conduct their affairs according to the following two principles:

1. A cost-benefit analysis argues in favor of expending resources to combat perceived distancing, even if there is currently no hard evidence to prove that it is actually taking place. Inaction is riskier than possibly unnecessary expenditures of resources, especially given the probability that they would yield other benefits.
2. Attachment is contingent on external drivers that are uncontrollable (such as sociological trends in American society, oil prices and their effect on US-Israel airfares), as well as internal drivers where intervention is possible (such as state-religion ordering in Israel and its effect on the Diaspora). There is no single solution



to the possibility of a distancing problem, which is intertwined with other issues in a complex system.

There are clear interactions between the three forms of distancing identified in this work (emotional, cognitive, and behavioral). For example, a decrease in cognitive attachment may lead to emotional distancing, and then to the erosion of behavioral attachment. Therefore, in seeking to prevent future distancing, decision-makers must address drivers of all three forms of connection.

The Jewish People's executive bodies charged with addressing the Israel-attachment issue must do so in two stages: In the first stage, push (distancing) and pull (attachment) drivers must be mapped, including both external (intervention is difficult) and internal (intervention is possible) factors. In the second stage, intervention points and modalities should be identified, for neutralizing internal (and possibly external) push drivers and reinforcing internal pull drivers. The recommendations outlined at the beginning of this paper provide a preliminary response to some of the factors already identified in studies as possible distancing or attachment generators.

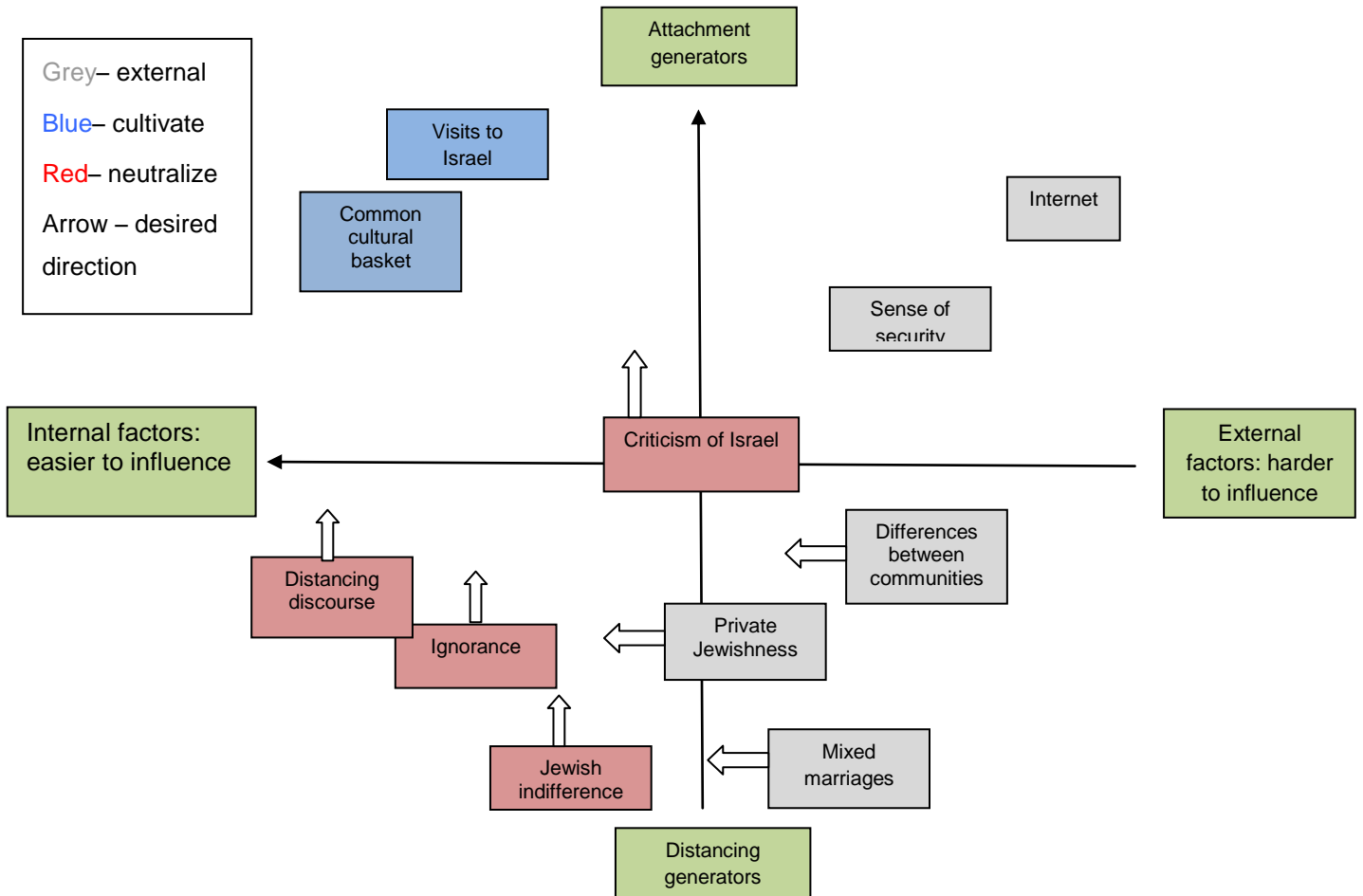


Figure 3: Attachment and Distancing Drivers

Action Guidelines and Recommendations

The recommendations presented here are supplementary to the recommendations included in JPPI's 2009 policy paper *Arevut, Responsibility and Partnership*. Therefore, we focus here on presenting only recommendations not included in the previous paper. Appendix 3 contains a summary of recommendations made in previous JPPI papers, many of which are equally relevant to this paper. These recommendations have provided decision-makers with a conceptual infrastructure and guidelines for implementing plans that could offer a more effective response to the new relational pattern between the Israeli Jewish community and Jewish communities in the Diaspora.



Recommendation No. 1: Israel as a Personal and Social Mode of Expression

It is recommended to identify and emphasize channels in which Israel serves **not just as a national political expression** of the Jewish People, but also as a personal and social form of expression.

Explanation: For young Jewish Americans, Judaism is currently less an expression of national identity and more an expression of a personal or social-communal identity (ethnicity implies ties to other Jews, both in the local Diaspora communities and in Israel). Israel, by contrast, originated with a distinctly national act of the Jewish People. In order to create bridges between these two different mindsets, **channels must be developed through which Israel can serve as a vehicle for personal and social expression**—mainly through cultural, spiritual and religious innovation. Initiatives for the development and cultivation of institutions that focus on such activities should be promoted.

Specific recommendations include:

- Dissemination of Israeli culture as recommended in JPPI's *Arevut, Responsibility and Partnership* paper, and initiation of joint Israeli-American *Tikun Olam* ventures, which would express the contribution of the State of Israel and the Jewish People to the greater good of humanity.
- Israel should ensure the presence of its most outstanding and esteemed representatives at conferences and summits not only of American Jewry's political organizations (Conference of Presidents, AIPAC, AJC, Anti-Defamation League, etc.), but also in symposia related to culture, education, identity, and religion. The Israeli agenda in such gatherings should steer clear of political content (Israel's foreign policy priorities) and instead relate to the topics discussed, in order to prevent the impression of forced Israeli representation that tries to redirect the agenda to suit its leaders' goals.



- Increased development and support of programs in which **Israeli and American youth study and volunteer together**.
- Removing barriers that encumber the development of alternative and liberal Jewish communities in Israel. Such barriers are mainly due to political arrangements regulating religion-state relations in Israel.
- Work to upgrade the public sphere in which non-Orthodox religious-spiritual activity can take place, especially at the critical sites of the Holy Basin in Jerusalem.

Recommendation No. 2: Improving Communication with New Institutions

Israeli governmental bodies should improve their familiarity and interactions with organizations that provide a Jewish portal for American youth and strengthen their ties with non-political organizations.

Explanation: To the extent that young US Jews are distancing, they are not distancing only from Israel, but also, and perhaps mainly, from the patterns of communal affiliation of their parents' and grandparents' generations. Traditional Jewish bodies with which Israel maintains institutional ties still represent some of these young Jews, but a considerable number of them do not find a place in establishment bodies – whether due to the tendency to favor personal considerations over national and ideological ones, or the sense that established organizations are not sufficiently attuned to the views and concerns of the younger generation. Therefore, in parallel with the continuation of ties with the existing establishment – and while **taking care not to inadvertently contribute to erosion of the establishment** – Israel must make a greater effort to connect with the communities young Jewish Americans tend to join. These include young religious communities in big urban centers, *Tikun Olam* projects, cultural and creative ventures, etc.

Israel's natural connection with the establishment stems not only from familiarity, but also from the fact that the establishment addresses political issues, which the Israeli leadership



regards with more urgency than addressing new communities. Therefore, an optimal connection with the young communities should include the understanding that the old political discourse may not be the best channel for engaging young American Jews. Having based much of its relationship with organized US Jewry on the political discourse – which has always been and still is the government of Israel's first priority – Israel must identify **non-political channels** (see Recommendation No. 1) to reach new communities and strike a successful dialogue with them. At the same time, the government of Israel should improve its relations with traditional non-political establishment institutions, a sector it has relatively neglected over the years.

Focal points for cultivating this connection include:

- Israel must identify and track future leaders among young Jewish Americans and maintain interaction on the highest possible plane, whether through US visits by senior Israelis, or by inviting potential and nascent leaders to Israel. In this context, efforts should be made to develop a program for promoting engagement with young American rabbis and rabbinical students.
- Care must be taken to ensure that communications with new leaders doesn't focus exclusively, or even mainly, on political discourse. Big Jewish questions should not be avoided.
- Israeli representation and the agenda for such encounters must be crafted with care. The possibility of entrusting this dialogue with educational and cultural bodies, rather than political or diplomatic agencies, should be examined.
- It is imperative that Israel presents a young and diversified face. One problem that must be addressed with great sensitivity but still be acknowledged is the fact that a large percentage of the young Israelis currently engaged with Diaspora Jewry are members of Israel's Orthodox communities (there are no authoritative figures, but a sample examination indicates that observant Orthodox Israeli youth are disproportionately



represented in institutions interacting with US Jewry compared to their share of the general Israeli population). These young people are often not sufficiently prepared to meet Jews whose values differ greatly from their own.

Recommendation No. 3: Cultivating Knowledge about US Jewry

It is recommended to substantially improve **the Israeli bodies of knowledge and planning** concerning US Jewry.

Explanation: Previous JPPI studies have noted the lack of Israeli knowledge, interest in, and understanding of the American Jewish community. This lack constitutes a two-dimensional barrier to the improvement of the relationship between the two communities: (1) by conveying to American Jews the message that Israel is not sufficiently interested in them, and that they are not getting proper recognition for their own interest in Israel; (2) by making it difficult for Israeli Jews to understand the realities of American Jewish life, thereby impeding their ability to properly weigh the interests and desires of American Jewry in relation to the policy considerations of Israel's Jewish citizens.

Whereas previous works have focused on recommendations that applied to the general population of Israel's Jewish citizens – and specifically the need to improve the nature and scope of curricula on US Jewry in schools and other educational frameworks, this paper's recommendation focuses on the need to improve the cadre of experts dealing with US Jewry. Based on our sample assessment, the number of professors in Israeli universities who specialize in the study of US Jewry is small, and the number of those focusing on contemporary American Jewry is even smaller. The number of Israelis studying US Jewry in frameworks that allow for high-level specialization is also too small, and insufficient to fill the required ranks of lecturers, policy advisers, and other professionals. This recommendation is two-fold:

- a) Incentivize high-level research institutions to increase the number of students specializing in contemporary US Jewry.



b) Incentivize those specializing in US Jewry by favoring their candidacy for positions involving intensive contact with US Jewry, in various governmental ministries, the Jewish Agency, governmental or other official agencies.

Similar efforts, albeit on a smaller scale, should be made vis-à-vis other Jewish communities worldwide.

Recommendation No. 4: Enhancing Research

Attachment **research should be augmented** in terms of resource allocation, specialized researchers, and long-term investment.

Explanation: Researchers examining young Jewish American attachment to Israel disagree on numerous points and many of them believe that the available data is insufficient for deriving definitive answers. Jewish research in the US is vibrant and diverse, but it suffers from lack of funding. Moreover, most current studies in the US are financed by stakeholders- organizations, institutions, communities- with specific and sometimes competing competing interests; the questions they want answered are not Jewish People questions but questions related to the specific activity of the financing body; at times, these institutions and funders use the data found in their studies for marketing purposes and refrain from sharing any data that may be damaging or discouraging to the causes of the funders. As a result, the studies provide only partial data and partial answers to the big questions of the Jewish People, including the distancing question. A number of possible solutions should be considered. Some of the following recommendations deserve a separate explanatory paper, which JPPI intends to publish.

- Conducting a national survey of US Jewry every decade is essential. The last survey, from 2000, exposed a host of problems and fomented considerable debate, and was not followed by a 2010 survey. The findings from 2000 are outdated, so reliance on them for meaningful analysis grows more problematic with every passing year.



- Philanthropists should be encouraged to finance reliable studies of the Jewish People independent of institutional agendas. This recommendation is not an indictment of the motives of any particular financing body, organization, or study currently underway (most of these bodies have the best of motives and their studies produce important data) but rather to suggest a supra-institutional alternative that would examine the big questions of the Jewish People independent of any organizational objective. Funders of such studies should be ready and willing to give researchers unfettered publication rights and avoid interfering in the design of the studies.
- New avenues should be created allowing evaluation and follow up studies of research conducted by major Jewish People programs. Taglit/Birthright, since its inception, has devoted 0.5%-1% of its budget to support a range of studies. Quality assurance and program evaluation studies are carried out by Israel's Szold Institute, and allow Taglit/Birthright to monitor and evaluate how the programs are run. Taglit/Birthright also supports outcome research, using Brandeis University⁶⁶ (an independent and respected research organization). The Brandeis research has been extensively disseminated and datasets were made available for other investigators' use. Szold should do likewise, consistent with accepted confidentiality rules.
- More importantly, such methods should be replicated by other organizations that accept public funding and private philanthropy to carry out major Jewish peoplehood projects, including other visit-Israel programs. The information from such studies would be critical to improving the programs and ensuring that educational funds are wisely spent.
- Visit-Israel programs are a project to which the State of Israel is currently committed, both financially and institutionally. The Government of Israel, as a primary stakeholder, should independently assess the cost-effectiveness of its investment through the offices of a non-partisan research team. This would entail an evaluation of the various programs, but also the occasional examination of original data as deemed necessary by the Government.



Recommendation No. 5: Language Matters: *Attachment* is a Better term than *Distancing*:

It is recommended, as a rule, to **exercise prudence and restraint when discussing distancing** in the daily routine of the official institutions of the Jewish People.

Explanation: The distancing discourse has become an instrument serving political, organizational, funding, and denominational interests. Frequent use of the distancing discourse in official venues confers validity on this construct, thus undermining the Jewish People's agenda, which centers on attachment and closing the distance. Because distancing has not yet been confirmed, and because frequent discussion of distancing may artificially inflate it, becoming a distancing generator in and of itself, it is advisable to focus discussion, instead, on changing attachment patterns. A shift **from negative to positive messaging** could contribute to the development of new and reinvigorated expressions for the attachment of young American Jews to Israel.

Several points worth noting:

- Complaining about the choices made by distanced youngsters, and making demands upon them, is a pointless exercise. They are not obliged to be attached to Israel, and any strengthening of their ties to Israel can only come from choice; attempts to scare them into caring or to make them feel guilty would probably do more to alienate young Jews from Israel than to bring them closer.
- Israel must be very clear about its right and duty to pursue a policy that is consistent with the interests of its citizens, despite complaints that such a stance carries the risk of promoting distancing. Nevertheless, it would be wiser to explain these interests as part of a dialogue and an attempt to listen to and understand the positions of those Jews with reservations about Israeli policy, rather than rejecting their right to be critical.



- The Jewish-American establishment has no need to apologize for supporting Israel's policies as formulated by its citizens (through the institutions of its democracy), let alone be petrified by the possibility that other Jews may choose to not to support those policies. Nonetheless, it too should make time for a moderate, dispassionate and mutually respectful dialogue with critics of both Israel and the Jewish establishment.



Conclusion

It is impossible to separate theories about young Jews' attachment to Israel from data indicating a decline in the general level of engagement with Judaism among young American Jews. Israel alone cannot keep these young people engaged. Any attempt to find a solution to a real or imagined distancing problem must begin with the question: **Why should young American Jews be attached to Israel?** The (diverse) answers to this question may be found only through renewed investigation of Jewish history, tradition and culture.

The Jewish People's main interest should therefore be the enhancement of young Jews' attachment to their Jewishness, in the hope- based on experience and data- that a strong Jewishness is also the key to engagement with and attachment to Israel.

* * *

We would like to thank all our JPPI colleagues for investing their good advice and hard work in this paper, and to especially name Suzanne Stone and Barry Geltman. They helped us make this work better. We also benefited from comments, suggestions and corrections by Len Saxe, Ted Sasson, Steven Cohen, Ari Kelman, Ofira Bino, Shalom Lipner, Samuel Heilman and other scholars and officials. We thank them all for their cooperation and would like to make it clear that not all of them agree with the content of this paper as it is written or support the paper's findings, conclusions, methods or recommendations. We, of course, welcome any response this paper may generate.

Appendix 1: Data on Young Jews in the USA

Percentage of youth among Jewish adult population (aged 18-34):

Survey	Measuring and Assessing the American Jewish Population (June 2008)	Young Jewish Adults in the United States Today- p.53 (2006)	NJPS 2000-1	Israel Off Their Minds: (Berman-Wagner) (October 2008)
Percentage	22.2%**	29.5%	24%	27%

Denominational Breakdown:

	Survey			
	NJPS 2000-1	Young Jewish Adults in the United State Today (Ukeles- p. 56) (2006)	Avi-Chai *** Generation of Change: How leaders in their twenties and thirties are shaping American Jews' life (Sep. 2010) ¹	OMG! How Generation Y is Redefining Faith in the iPod Era- p.4 ***** (Apr. 2005)
Orthodox	(18-24) 15% (25-29) 14%	23%	15%	18%
Conservative	(18-24) 20% (25-29) 17%	21%	29%	24%
Reform	(18-24) 29% (25-29) 38%	34%	17%	25%
Secular	(18-24) 8% (25-29) 6%	9%		
'Just Jews'	(18-24) 26% (25-29) 21%	15%		23%

¹ Younger Mixed, p.28



Marital status:

Survey					
Marital Status	NJPS 2000-1 *****	Young Jewish Adults in the United State Today (Ukeles-p.57) (2006)	Generation Birthright Israel – The impart of an Israel experience on Jewish identity and choice-p.26 (Oct. 2009) ****		OMG! How Generation Y is Redefining Faith in the iPod Era-p.5 ***** (Apr. 2005)
			Under 30	Over 30	
Married		50%	Participants –25%; Non-participants – 47%	Participants –45%; Non-Participants – 51%	10%
Cohabiting		4%	Participants – 27%; Non-participants – 23%	Participants –16%; Non-participants – 15%	
Widowed; Separated; Divorced		3%			
Never Married		43%			90%

Practices of Jewish Life:

Survey					
	NJPS 2000-1 *****	Young Jewish Adults in the United State Today (Ukeles) * p. 72 (2006)			
		Orthodox	Married with children, non-Orthodox	Unmarried and married with no children, non-Orthodox	Mixed marriages
Light Hanukah candles	(18-24) 72% (25-29) 65%	95%	92%	65%	73%

Participate in or host a Seder	(18-24) 60%; (25-29) 62%	98%	86%	73%	60%
Fast on Yom Kippur	(18-24) 66%; (25-29) 62%	98%	81%	67%	46%
Light Shabbat candles	-	91%	36%	11%	9%
Keep kosher at home	-	96%	19%	14%	6%

Education:

	Survey	
	Avi-Chai – P.25*** (Sep. 2010)	NJPS 2000-1 *****
Any Jewish education		80%
Jewish day school	34%	23%
Private school after day school		39%
Once weekly Jewish program		33%

* This figure refers to ages 18-39.

** This figure refers to ages 20-34 and is based on NJPS.

*** The survey refers only to young Jews in leadership positions (inside and outside the establishment) aged 22-40.

**** The survey refers to young Jews who applied to Birthright from 2001 and includes both applicants and participants (Birthright participants' age ranges between 18-26).

***** This figure refers to ages 18-34

***** This figure refers to ages 18-25



Israel Attachment:

Questions	Survey							
Israel Off Their Minds: The Diminished Place of Israel in the Political Thinking of Young Jews (Oct. 2008) ²	NJPS 2000-1 ³	Still connected: American Jewish Attitudes about Israel (Aug. 2010)	Israel Connections and American Jews (UJC) (Aug. 2005) ⁴	Generation of Change: How leaders in their twenties and thirties are shaping American Jews' life (Sep. 2010) ⁵	Jewish Futures Project: The Impact of Taglit Birthright Israel 2010 (Feb. 2011) ⁶	The Uncontestable, Incontrovertible & Absolutely Convincing Case for the Distancing from Israel Hypothesis (Dec. 2008) ⁷	OMG! How Generation Y is Redefining Faith in the iPod Era ⁸ (Apr. 2005)	

² Under 35 years of age (excluding Orthodox).

Cohen M., Steven, Sam Abrams, (2008), "Israel of their minds: The Diminished Place of Israel in the Political Thinking of Young Jews," **The Berman Jewish Policy Archive at NYU Wagner**

³ NJPS (2001) National Jewish Population Survey 2001

< <http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=860> > pp. 23-24

⁴ Age 18-34

Ament, Jonathon, (2005). "Israel Connections and American Jews," National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01 report 12, United Jewish Communities, p. 12

⁵ The data refers to women and men between the ages 22-40 who serve as leaders of Jewish endeavors

Wertheimer, Jack, (2010), "Generation of Change: How Leaders in their Twenties and Thirties are Reshaping American Jewish Life," Avi Chai

⁶ The sample population is comprised of Jewish young adults who applied to participate in Taglit-Birthright Israel between 2002-2006 (ages 18 to 26)

Saxe, Leonard et al., (2011), Jewish Futures Project: The Impact of Taglit-Birthright Israel: 2010 Update, Brandeis University

⁷ Under 35 years of age

Cohen, Steven, (2008), "The Uncontestable, Incontrovertible, & Absolutely Convincing Case for the Distancing from Israel Hypothesis," Association for Jewish Studies Conference

⁸ Age 18-25

Greenberg, Anna, (2005), " OMG! How Generation Y is Redefining Faith in the iPod Era," Reboot

< [http://gqrr.com/articles/1218/732_OMG%20\(Survey\).pdf](http://gqrr.com/articles/1218/732_OMG%20(Survey).pdf) >



Visited Israel	36% ⁹	23% (18-24); 27% (25-29) ¹⁰	40% (18-29) ¹¹	49%	Younger Mixed- 94% ¹²		19.3% ¹³	43%
Visited Israel twice or more	63% ¹⁴			2 - 17% 3 or more – 33%			28.6%	
Jews in the US and Israel share a common destiny		35% (18-24); 32% (25-29) ¹⁵		Strongly agree – 35%; Agree – 74%				
Israel is the spiritual center of the Jewish People		67% (18-24); 56% (25-29) ¹⁶		Strongly agree – 60%; Agree – 87%				
Friends or family in Israel		54% (18-24); 43% (25-29)					42.1%	

⁹ Visited Israel only once.

¹¹ Age 18-29, p.13.

¹² Wertheimer, (2010), *Ibid.*, p.26

¹³ Visited Israel only once.

¹⁴ Under 35 years of age (excluding Orthodox). Cohen, (2008), *Ibid.*

¹⁵ NJPS (2001) National Jewish Population Survey 2001

< <http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=860> > pp. 23-24

¹⁶ NJPS (2001) National Jewish Population Survey 2001

< <http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=860> > pp. 23-24



<p>Feel strong emotional connection with Israel</p>		<p>Very Emotionally Attached: Orthodox – 69%</p> <p>Married w/ Children, All Other Denominations- 33%</p> <p>Unmarried and childless married, all other Jewish denominations – 22%</p> <p>Intermarried – 10%</p> <p>Somewhat emotionally Attached: Orthodox – 23%</p> <p>Married w/ Children, All Other Denominations- 33%</p> <p>Unmarried and childless married, all other Jewish denominations – 35%</p> <p>Mixed marriages – 29%¹⁷</p>	<p>Participants age is 18-29:</p> <p>Deep emotional connection: 28%;</p> <p>Some emotional connection: 38%;</p> <p>Only loosely attached: 14%¹⁸</p>	<p>Very attached – 29%</p> <p>Very or somewhat attached – 61%</p>	<p>Non-establishment– 53%</p> <p>Young Establishment– 62%¹⁹</p>	<p>participants:</p> <p>Very much – 51%</p> <p>Somewhat– 32%;</p> <p>A little– 14%</p> <p>Nonparticipants</p> <p>Very much – 35%;</p> <p>Somewhat– 37%;</p> <p>A little – 23%²⁰</p>	<p>Very Attached: 23.3%;</p> <p>Somewhat Attached: 39.2%</p>	<p>How Close do you feel to Israel?</p> <p>Very Close 32%;</p> <p>Fairly Close: 24%</p>
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¹⁷ NJPS data in: Ukeles, Jacob B., Ron Miller and Pearl Beck, (2006), "Young Jewish Adults in the United States Today," The American Jewish Committee, p. 79

¹⁸ See there, p.11

¹⁹ Wertheimer, (2010), p.15

²⁰ Saxe et al., (2011), Ibid., p.9



Feel proud of Israel							Always: 19.7% Often: 37.7% Sometimes: 34.1%	
Caring about Israel is an important part of my being Jewish				Strongly agree – 39% Agree – 75%	Non-establishment – 31% Establishment – 50%			
Familiar with Israel's social and political situation		78%		Very familiar – 31%; Very or somewhat familiar – 84%		"Very much" confident in ability to Explain Situation in Israel Participants – 23%; Nonparticipant – 18% ²¹	The question was: Do you read Israeli newspapers on the Internet? 12.9% responded positively.	
US Support for Israel			Not Supportive enough: 34% (18-29)					

²¹ Saxe et al., (2011), Ibid., p.11



Appendix 2: The Distancing Debate among Scholars

The following is a brief description of the key points of contention between various groups of researchers regarding the distancing issue. The controversy mainly revolves around two contradictory interpretations of data indicating gaps in the attitudes of younger and older American Jews toward Israel.

According to one approach, the younger generation of American Jews (excluding young Orthodox Jews) “is less attached to Israel.” The weakening attachment can be traced through various indicators, including evidence of the gradual disengagement of young American Jews from any identity that has an ethnic dimension; the decline of Jewish organizations – a central vehicle of mobilizing support and expressing attachment to Israel; a shift in the way young people perceive their religious belonging – less emphasis on tribal and national belonging and more emphasis on religion and culture as a mode of essentially personal expression; and so on. Scholars in the distancing camp assume that what is currently perceived as pertaining mainly to the younger generation – and which distinguish it from older generations – will, in the future, as these youngsters grow older, lead to an ever-increasing phenomenon of distancing among the entire Jewish population in the US.

The other school, which attempts to refute this interpretation, maintains that at this point in the research, there is no hard evidence of any distancing of American Jews from Israel, and that Israel attachment and support have remained almost unchanged during the last few decades. They believe that researchers from the distancing school are making a fundamental mistake in their interpretation of the data, failing to recognize that younger generations have always been more distant from Israel compared to their elders. Scholars opposed to the distancing hypothesis believe that the gaps in identification and support of Israel between the younger and older generations stem from mental changes related to



the Jewish life cycle. Young people are indeed more distant from Israel, but as they grow older, they gradually move closer. Moreover, these researchers find grounds for assuming that the next generation's youth would be even closer to Israel than their parents' generation, thanks to numerous factors, primarily the increased offering of programs such as Birthright/Taglit and Masa, which continue to increase the number of young Jews who visit Israel. (By 2014, Birthright/Taglit is expected to bring to Israel over half of the young US Jews of every age cohort.)

The debate refers primarily to the research methodology, making it difficult for the wider public to follow it closely. One of the major difficulties it poses for Jewish People's decision-makers stems from the fact that "that data may be consistent with the both claim about decline and the one that regards the relationship between American Jews and Israel as stable, because the data may reflect different segments of the Jewish People as well as life-cycle and generational changes."⁶⁷

Without delving too deeply than necessary for the purpose of this paper into the nature of these controversies,⁶⁸ some of the seminal studies and the inherent problematics of their conclusions are presented here in brief.

The first study that triggered the current wave of distancing research and polemic writing was published in 2007 by Steven Cohen and Ari Kelman,⁶⁹ and it immediately raised a storm by suggesting that "there is mounting evidence pointing to a distancing of American Jews from Israel", and that "this distancing is especially strong among young Jews." The study was based on a questionnaire developed specifically for its purposes, and a survey that exposed, according to the authors' method, the increasing distancing of the younger generation from Israel. Based on the data presented by Cohen and Kelman in their first study and in further research, the main increase in documented distancing is correlated



with the growing trend of mixed marriages (Jews marrying non-Jews) among the younger generation of Jews (about half). Cohen and Kelman's studies have detected a considerable gap in Israel attachment between Jews who married Jews and Jews married to non-Jews (one must note that a strong correlation exists between intermarriage and all measures of Jewish engagement, as was known prior to this specific study).

The critique of Cohen and Kelman's studies and conclusions revolves around two key parameters:

1. The fact that the authors investigated a distinct population group from the current generation of young Jews, at a single point in time, without the ability to compare it to appropriate control groups from previous generations. The critics (Saxe, Kadushin, Sasson, Phillips, Wright) suggest that young Jews today may not be more distant from Israel than young Jews in previous generations, and that the gap between younger and older American Jews on Israel-related issues is a permanent inter-generational gap that is affected by mental changes during the life-cycle (a familiar phenomenon in the political field, where older respondents tend to express more conservative views than they held in their youth).
2. The phrasing of the questions chosen by researchers may not necessarily express the changes in the nature of young Jews' attachment to Israel, and may reflect a built-in bias of the questionnaire, rather than an actual distancing of young Jews from Israel.

Cohen and Kelman's answer to these claims is multifaceted, but their most important argument refers to the accumulation of other circumstantial evidence – beyond the rigid survey data – that in their view, a view shared by many other scholars, clearly indicates a distancing trend. These scholars are of the opinion that the following factors attest to the study's reliability and validity, which goes beyond describing a temporary situation among the studied group of young Jews:



- The general tendency to detach from any fixed identity in many spheres of American life – politics, religion, consumer behavior, etc. This tendency, which reflects ongoing trends in American society, has not skipped the Jews and affects their mentality as well (“this generation is characterized by changing and diverse boundaries, and only a handful of young people derive their identity from a geographical racial or ethnic source.”)⁷⁰
- A decline in indicators of ethnic cohesion among US Jews, which is a strong predictor of Israel attachment.
- The weakening centrality of organized Jewish community institutions and their power to influence the shaping of Jewish identity.
- The increasing emphasis on components of Jewish identity that are part of the private sphere at the expense of communal identity.
- A qualitative (and some new quantitative) research about younger American Jews which “reinforces our perception of distancing from Israel not only among younger Jews in general, but among the more Jewishly engaged leaders outside of Orthodoxy.”⁷¹ (Such a study by the Avi-Chai Foundation stated: “Jewish Peoplehood among non-establishment leaders means an emphasis on Diaspora culture, including an explicit or implied rejection of the centrality of Israel for American Jews.”)⁷²

The group of scholars that promotes an opposing theory has published a host of papers,⁷³ the latest of which was published in early 2012.⁷⁴

The group analyzed the accumulated data from numerous studies and sources (AJC, NJPS, local surveys by several large Jewish communities), indicating that a generation gap in the Israel attachment of American Jews is a permanent and ongoing trend. They



also showed that according to these studies, Jews who are distant in young age grow more attached to Israel as the years go by. According to this analysis, the data accumulated so far does not provide consistent evidence of distancing, but rather a fairly stable emotional attachment among US Jews to Israel, with minor fluctuations generally attributable to external events.

Criticism of these studies has focused on one significant aspect: the first studies by the opponents of the Distancing Hypothesis were based on the AJC data, whose respondent database does not reflect American Jewry in all its diversity – among other things, due to the phrasing of the AJC survey's screening questions. In addition, AJC studies suffer from under-representation of Jews married to non-Jews, and it is doubtful whether statistical adjustments alone can rectify this deficiency. Given the fact that certain Jewish groups are under-represented in these studies (Jews not by religion and Jews married to non-Jews) are fast-growing segments of the population (when asked what religion they belong to, about 20% of the Jews responded with "no religion"), biased results are to be expected, as well as responses that would suggest a stronger Israel attachment among young Jews than actually exists across the population of young people categorized as Jews.

Following this criticism, this group of researchers submitted their analysis of another data set, this time from the NJPS database, which does not suffer from the same bias, but is ridden with other methodological problems. This data indicates a similar trend: Jews are more distant from Israel when they are younger, and they grow more attached at older ages. Even more comprehensive and convincing evidence to this effect was presented in early 2012, based on previous analyzed data (AJC, NJPS) and on new analysis of community studies in which attachment questions could be found⁷⁵. The researchers did not address the claim of indirect and corroborating evidence for the Distancing Hypothesis – i.e., its consistency with the general trends of decentralization, diversity, and the particularism of the Jewish-American identity of the younger generation.



Appendix 3: Previous Recommendations regarding Distancing

The following are the recommendations previously outlined in the JPPI's *Arevut, Responsibility and Partnership* paper in the present context.

1. **Israel Experience:** It was recommended to expand and diversify the options of “every Jewish young man and woman” to visit Israel. Visits to Israel are regarded as “a highly effective driver of enhancing Jewish identity in the Diaspora and deepening Israel attachment.” In addition, it was recommended that Visit Israel programs “should include a Jewish cultural experience, enriching the participants’ knowledge of the Jewish People, Judaism and the State of Israel,” etc. We have provided complementary recommendations on this issue, but it should be mentioned that according to various studies, it is the second visit to Israel that produces the most dramatic difference in Israel attachment. For instance, fewer than a third of the (non-Orthodox) youngsters who visited Israel only once considered the Israeli-Palestinian conflict a highly important issue in their voting in the US presidential elections; among those who visited twice, the percentage of those who considered the conflict an important determinant rose to 56%.⁷⁶
2. **Dissemination of Jewish and Israeli Culture:** It was recommended to develop the study of “historical Jewish knowledge and time-honored intellectual and cultural treasures ... including contemporary Israeli culture.” There is a consensus that young American Jews who are more knowledgeable of Jewish subjects also tend to be more attached to Israel.



3. **Jewish Education:** It was recommended that the government of Israel contribute to the improvement of Jewish education in the Diaspora through support centers, which would train personnel, develop content, and make knowledge accessible. In this case, too, the recommendation applies to the distancing issue. There is a consensus that young American Jews who benefit from improved Jewish education tend to be more attached to Israel. This section of the recommendations also stipulated working toward the “development of comprehensive curricula about the history of Jewish civilization and culture and contemporary Jewry,” which would be incorporated into “the Jewish educational systems in Israel and the Diaspora.”

4. **Encourage *Tikun Olam* Projects:** As explained above, there are indications that the issue of young American Jews’ attitude toward *Tikun Olam* projects in Jewish frameworks is more complex than previously argued. Nevertheless, it is clear that a period of joint work by young people from the Israeli and US Jewish communities in projects such as those recommended in the previous JPPI paper could enhance familiarity and dialogue among the participants.

5. **Create a Foundation for the Future of the Jewish People:** This is an organizational recommendation, which could also contribute to programs related to addressing the distancing issue.

6. **Strengthening Jewish Identity in Israel:** In the context of distancing, it is recommended to stress, as part of this recommendation, a common “experience of Jewish identity”– i.e., to find a language that could bridge gaps between the ‘Jewish Israeli’ and ‘Jewish American’ experiences. As explained above, there are intrinsic differences between the two, leading to a different Jewish mentality,



and as a result, to difficulty in finding a common language understood by both communities.

Beyond the recommendations included in *Arevut, Responsibility and Partnership*, JPPI publications throughout the years (including as recently as the *2010 Annual Assessment*) have contained additional key recommendations that are paramount in the context of this paper as well, and therefore deserve a brief mention in terms of their effect on distancing.

1. Decision makers in Israel must take into account the impact of Israeli legislation and policy on the consciousness/mentality of Diaspora Jews and the extent of their ability to identify with Israel. This recommendation concerns both legislation that could enhance young American Jews' impression that Israel's values contradict the basic values in which they believe, and (mostly religious) legislation that renders Israel as a state that excludes the Jewish denominations to which significant numbers of American are affiliated.
2. Efforts should be made to avoid introducing Israel as a bone of contention in the American political system. The majority of young American Jews are affiliated with liberal groups, and steps must be taken so as not to force them to recognize Israel as an entity that is identified with political factors whose doctrines are opposed to the values that these young people uphold.
3. As part of their education about Israel, the young generation should learn more about Israeli culture and society, including language, literature, food, film, friends, familiarity with the country, etc. Special care must be taken in discussing Israeli policy and Israel's vulnerability, issues that stir internal controversies among young people. Studies suggest that young American Jews seek a positive Jewish experience and tend to steer clear of a Jewishness based on threats and risks.⁷⁷



Jewish organizations must be committed to a special effort to open their ranks to young people and to encourage them to assume key roles in communal life. This would obviously benefit the organizations in many ways, but in the context of distancing it is designed to prevent the removal of young people from communal activity precisely in those institutions where the probability of finding empathy and attachment to Israel is relatively high.

4. Critical points of view about Israel should be allowed expression. Negating the right of critical voices to be heard would only exacerbate their alienation and enhance the claim that attachment to Israel is difficult for anyone who does not endorse its policies at any given time.

Endnotes:

¹ Dr. Harold T. Shapiro's concluding remarks in "Are Young American Jews in the Diaspora Distancing From Israel?", *Colloquium Report*, Esther Farber and Idon Natanzon, AJC, 2011.

² See Debbi Tuttle (2009). How Do You "Jew"? Personality and Participation Decisions Among Young American Jews. JCSA.

³ See, for example, American Jews and Israel: Are They Drifting Apart? A Symposium, AJC, 1990.

⁴ Gil, Avi, and Wilf, Einat (2010). *2030: Alternative Futures for the Jewish People*. JPPI, Jerusalem.

⁵ Kraus, M., Karasenty, Y, Mirsky, Y., and Maimon, D. (2009). *Arevut, Responsibility and Partnership*. JPPI, Jerusalem.

⁶ NJPS, 2000-2001.

⁷ See, for example, Ira M. Sheskin, 2004 Population Study of the Greater Miami Jewish Community.

⁸ Cohen, Steven, and Kelman, Ari (2007). *Beyond Distancing: Young Adult American Jews and Their Alienation from Israel*.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ 2011 Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion. American Jewish Committee (AJC). 26 September 2011:

<http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=13349>

¹² Steven M. Cohen, (2011), *JTS Rabbis and Israel, Then and Now: The 2011 Survey of JTS Ordained Rabbis and Current Students*, JTS

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ A detailed discussion of this question and response to it can be found in Sasson, Theodore, Charles Kadushin, and Leonard Saxe, (2010), *Trends in American Jewish Attachment to Israel: An Assessment of the "Distancing" Hypothesis*, Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University

¹⁵ M. Cohen, and Ari Y. Kelman, (2010), *Thinking about Distancing from Israel*, AJC.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Cohen, Steven M., (2011), *JTS Rabbis and Israel, Then and Now: The 2011 Survey of JTS Ordained Rabbis and Current Students*, JTS

¹⁸ Beinart, Peter (June 2010), The Failure of the American Jewish Establishment, *The New York Review of Books*

¹⁹ See: Gordis, Daniel, (2011), *Are Young Rabbis Turning On Israel?*, Commentary Magazine

²⁰ Theodore Sasson, testimony at Knesset subcommittee on Diaspora Affairs, March 2012

²¹ Ibid.

and also: Jager, Elliot, (Oct.2011), Are Young Rabbis Turning on Israel, *Jewish Ideas Daily*;

Rosner, Shmuel, (Oct. 2011), Why Conservative rabbis don't want Israel to be "a Jewish

State," *Jerusalem Post*

²² Theodore, Sasson, Benjamin Phillips, Graham Wright, Charles Kadushin, and Leonard Saxe, (2012), *Understanding Young Adult Attachment to Israel: Period, Lifecycle and Generational Dynamics*, Contemporary Jewry

²³ See, for example: Sheskin, Ira M. (2011). *Attachment of American Jews to Israel: Perspectives from Local Jewish Community Studies*, Contemporary Jewry, pp. 24-26, and 36.

²⁴ See: Thompson, Joseph E. (2001), *American Policy and Northern Ireland: A Saga of Peace Building*, Praeger, CA, USA

²⁵ Dashefsky and Miller and other researchers have identified these points of agreement. See: Miller, Ron, Arnold Dashefsky, (2009), *Brandeis v. Cohen et al.: The Distancing from Israel Debate*, Contemporary Jewry, 30:155–164.

²⁶ See: Ament, Jonathon, (2005). *Israel Connections and American Jews*, National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01 report 12, United Jewish Communities.

²⁷ “In contrast to Under 35 conventional wisdom, we found that political inclinations associated with possible discomfort with Israeli government policies are not the root cause of young people’s distancing from Israel.” *Thinking about Distancing*, AJC, 2010.

²⁸ See, for example: Sasson, Theodore, (2009). *The New Realism: American Jews’ Views about Israel*, American Jewish Committee.

Cohen, Steven M., Ari Y. Kelman, (2010), *Thinking About Distancing from Israel*, Contemporary Jewry, 30:287-296

²⁹ Kopelowitz, Ezra, (2003). *Between Mifgash and Shlichut: Paradigms in Contemporary Zionist Education and the Question of the Ideological Relationship between Israel and Diaspora*, Jewish Agency for Israel.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Greenberg, Anna, Jennifer Berkold, (2006). “Grande Soy Vanilla Latte with Cinnamon, No Foam ...”, *Jewish Identity and Community in a time of Unlimited Choices*. Reboot.

³² For further information, see: *Number of Jews in the world with emphasis on the United States and Israel*, JPPI.

<

http://jppi.org.il/uploads/Number_of_Jews_in_the_world_with_emphasis_on_the_United_States_and_Israel_EN.pdf >

Issues related to the demographic trends in US Jewry are also controversial among scholars. See: DellaPergola, Sergio (2010). *Jewish Demographic Policies: Population Trends and Options in Israel and in the Diaspora*, JPPI, Jerusalem; DellaPergola, Sergio (2010). *World Jewish Population, 2010, Current Jewish Population Reports Number 2*, Berman Institute – North American Jewish Data Bank, University of Connecticut; Sheskin, Ira, Dashefsky, Arnold (2010), *Jewish Population in the United States, 2010, Current Jewish Population Reports Number 2*, Berman Institute – North American Jewish Data Bank, University of Connecticut; Saxe, Leonard, (2010), *US Jewry 2010: Estimates of the Size and Characteristics of the Population*, Steinhardt Social Research Institute, Brandeis University

³³ For additional information, see Table 7.6: Jews aged 20 and over, by changes in their level of religiosity over the life course, *2011 Israel Statistical Almanac*. Central Bureau of Statistics: Jerusalem, 2011; Kosmin, Barry (2009), *The Changing Population Profile of American Jews 1990-2008*, Trinity College, Hartford, CT; (2009), *A Portrait of Israeli Jews, Beliefs, Observance, and Values of Israeli Jews*, Guttman Center for Surveys of the Israel Democracy Institute, and Avi-Chai Israel Foundation.

³⁴ See, for instance, an analysis of the ‘Rotem Bill’ crisis: Rosner, Shmuel, (2010), “*Conversion: Between Crisis and Dialogue*,” Integrative summaries of the five working groups comprising the JPPI’s 2010 conference discussions. JPPI: Jerusalem.

³⁵ Cohen, Steven, Ephraim Yaar, (2009), “*The Jewish Peoplehood Index: Evidence from Surveys in the US and Israel*,” PowerPoint presentation at the Ninth Annual Herzliya Conference: Strategies and Leadership for Times of Crisis, Herzliya, Israel.

³⁶ Fisher, Shlomo, (2011), *Israel De-legitimization and Israel Attachment among Young Jewish Adults in North America and Europe*, In Fisher, S. (ed.), *2010 Annual Assessment*, JPPI: Jerusalem. pp. 119-166 [Hebrew]

³⁷ See, for example, the Conclusions section in: Bunin- Benor, Sarah, Steven M. Cohen, (2009), *Survey of American Jewish Language and Identity*, Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion.

³⁸ Arian, Asher, (2011), *A Portrait of Israeli Jews: Beliefs, Observance, and Values of Israeli Jews, 2009*, the Israel Democracy Institute and AVI CHAI, Israel

³⁹ Saxe, Leonard et al., (2011), *Jewish Futures Project: The Impact of Taglit-Birthright Israel: 2010 Update*, Brandeis University.

⁴⁰ Saxe, Leonard et al., (2009), *Generation Birthright Israel: The Impact of an Israeli Experience on Jewish Identity and Choices*, Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University.

⁴¹ See: Yakobson, Alexander, Avinoam Bar-Yosef, Suzanne Stone and Arielle Kandel, (2012), *New Proposed Knesset Bills and Israeli Democracy*, JPPI annual assessment 2011, JPPI

⁴² Rosner, Shmuel, (2011), *Debating Religion and State, Debating Distancing*, JPPI: Jerusalem.

⁴³ Kraus et al. (2009), *Supra*, p. 40

⁴⁴ Cohen, Steven M., Ari Y. Kelman, (2010), *Thinking About Distancing from Israel*, Contemporary Jewry, 30:287-296.

⁴⁵ Sasson, Theodore, Charles Kadushin, and Leonard Saxe, (2008), *American Jewish Attachment to Israel: An Assessment of the 'Distancing' Hypothesis*, Steinhardt Social Research Institute, Brandeis University

⁴⁶ This conclusion is derived from the following reasoning: in some cases, attachment continues despite rejecting Israel's centrality; in other cases, distancing is registered as part of the rejection of Israel's centrality. It is, however, difficult to think of instances in which attachment could grow as a result of rejecting Israel's centrality. Thus, the aggregated effect would be manifested in overall erosion.

⁴⁷ Kraus et al, (2009), *Supra* p. 67.

⁴⁸ Chertok, Fern, et al., (2011). *Volunteering + Values: A Repair The World Report on Jewish Young Adults*, Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University

⁴⁹ Wertheimer, Jack, (2009), *The Truth about American Jews and Israel*, Commentary

<<http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/the-truth-about-american-jews-and-israel/>>

⁵⁰ Bayme, Steven, (2010), *American Jewry confronts the Twenty-First Century*, American Jewish Committee (AJC)

⁵¹ See, for example: Sales, Amy L., Samuel, Nicole, Zablotsky, Alexander (2011), *Engaging Jewish Teens: A Study of New York Teens, Parents and Practitioners*, Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University.

⁵² Kosmin, Barry, Keysar, Ariela, (2006), *Religion in a Free Market*, Paramount Market Publishing: NY

⁵³ Mayer, Egon, Kosmin, Barry, and Keysar, Ariela, (2001), *American Jewish Identity Survey 2001*, The Graduate Center of the City University of New York

⁵⁴ Wertheimer, Jack, (2009).*Supra*.

⁵⁵ For this matter, see the extended chapter on: JPPI (2011), *The de-legitimization of Israel and Israel attachment among young Jewish adults in North American and Europe*, 2010 Annual Assessment, JPPI.

⁵⁶ Beinart, Peter, (2010), *Ibid*.

⁵⁷ See, for example: Seltzer-Schultz, Erica, Goldien, Michael, (2011), *Zionism, Liberalism, and Young American Jews: How Redefining the American Zionist Could Help Bring Peace to the Middle East*, Grinnell College

⁵⁸ See, for instance: Sasson, T., Saxe, L., (2010), *Wrong Numbers*, Tablet Magazine

⁵⁹ See, for example: remarks by J Street President Jeremy Ben Ami, Opening Session, J Street National Conference 2011 (February 26, 2011).

⁶⁰Tobin, Gary, (2001), *The Transition of Communal Values and Behavior in Jewish Philanthropy*, Institute for Jewish & Community Research, San Francisco <http://jewishresearch.org/PDFs/Transition_Phil_2001.pdf>

⁶¹Rosner, Shmuel, (2011), *Debating Religion and State, Debating Distancing*, JPPI, Jerusalem

⁶²See: JPPI, (2011), *Identification level of Diaspora Jews with Israel*
< <http://jppi.org.il/uploads/Identification%20level%20of%20Diaspora%20Jews%20with%20Israel.pdf> >

⁶³ See interview with Theodore Sasson at
http://www.jewishjournal.com/rosnersdomain/item/research_shows_no_link_between_political_views_and_emotional_ties_to_israel/

⁶⁴ Theodore, Sasson, Benjamin Phillips, Graham Wright, Charles Kadushin, and Leonard Saxe, (2012), *Understanding Young Adult Attachment to Israel: Period, Lifecycle and Generational Dynamics*, Contemporary Jewry

⁶⁵ Keysar, Ariela, (2010), *Distancing from Israel: Evidence on Jews with No Religion*, Contemporary Jewry, 30:199–204

⁶⁶ One must note though that the Birthright research cannot be a model to fit all programs in this exact form. Birthright is uniquely positioned to do impact studies. No other program has the luxury of randomly rejecting applicants.

⁶⁷ Goldscheider, Calvin, (2010), *American and Israeli Jews: Oneness and Distancing*, Contemporary Jewry, 30: 205-211

⁶⁸ An entire issue of *Contemporary Jewry* dedicated to the debate on the distancing hypothesis was published in October 2010. In it, experts from various fields offer highly professional analyses of the debate, including methodological issues of survey design and implementation, using the data and the extent to which the data reflect relevant attitudes.

⁶⁹ Cohen, Steven M., Kelman, Ari, (2007), *Supra*.

⁷⁰ Greenberg, Anna, (2005), *OMG! How Generation Y is Redefining Faith in the iPod Era*, Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, NY

See also: Sasson, Theodore, Charles Kadushin, and Leonard Saxe, (2010), *Trends in American Jewish Attachment to Israel: An Assessment of the "Distancing" Hypothesis*, Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University

Sasson, Theodore, Charles Kadushin, and Leonard Saxe, (2010), *On Sampling, Evidence and Theory: Concluding Remarks on the Distancing Debate*, Contemporary Jewry, 30: 149-153

⁷¹ Cohen, S., Kelman, A., (2010), *Distancing is Closer than Ever*, Contemporary Jewry, 30: 145-148

⁷² Wertheimer, Jack, (2010), *Generation of Change: How Leaders in Their Twenties and Thirties Are Reshaping American Jewish Life*, Avi Chai Foundation

⁷³ Sasson, Theodore, Charles Kadushin, Leonard Saxe, (2010), *Trends in American Jewish Attachment to Israel: An Assessment of the "Distancing" Hypothesis*, Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University

Sasson, Theodore, Charles Kadushin, and Leonard Saxe, (2010), *On Sampling, Evidence and Theory: Concluding Remarks on the Distancing Debate*, Contemporary Jewry, 30: pp.149-153

⁷⁴ Theodore, Sasson, Benjamin Phillips, Graham Wright, Charles Kadushin, and Leonard Saxe. (2012), *Understanding Young Adult Attachment to Israel: Period, Lifecycle and Generational Dynamics*, Contemporary Jewry

⁷⁵ Theodore, Sasson, Benjamin Phillips, Graham Wright, Charles Kadushin, and Leonard Saxe, (2012), *Understanding Young Adult Attachment to Israel: Period, Lifecycle and Generational Dynamics*, Contemporary Jewry

⁷⁶ Cohen, S., Abrams, S., (2008), *Supra*.

⁷⁷ Tobin, Gary, (2001), *Supra*.