

# Three basic ways of conceptualizing “Jewish Peoplehood” from a sociological point of view

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Conceptualizing Peoplehood

# I. INDIVIDUAL

# Expansion

- Moving beyond a simplistic, one dimensional understanding of what Jewish belonging is about.
- For most Jews, Jewish life is reduced to “religion.”
  - For the unengaged - If I am not religious, do not believe in God or do not identify with religious ritual then why should I be Jewish.
  - For fundamentalists – its all about a particular set of religious beliefs and practices, if you don't do it like me, then you aren't an authentic Jew.
- Research shows that meaningful Jewish social experiences expand an individual's “Jewish consciousness” – “ahh, its not just about being religious.”

# Motivation

- Expansion of an individual's Jewish consciousness is vital to promote interest in Jewish collective life
- However, there is also a need to motivate
  - Deepen interest in personal Jewish journey in the company of other Jews
  - Motivate an individual to connect other Jews (family, friends) to Jewish community
  - Move the individual from a “connector” to “an organizer” of Jewish life – working on behalf of the welfare of the Jewish People.

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## **II. ORGANIZATIONS FOUR CORE PRACTICES**

# 1. Broad conceptions of Jewish community

- Peoplehood organizations view their mission as enabling constituents to have multiple, continuous and overlapping interactions with other Jews in different places and with different organizations.
- A Peoplehood organization pursues collaboration with other organizations, locally and globally in order to encourage an expanded conception of Jewish community.

## 2. Pluralistic Paradigm for Enabling Belonging

- The development of intentionally pluralistic or inclusive approach to Jewish belonging
- Active embrace and welcome of Jews with different Jewish backgrounds and different ideological approaches to Jewish life
- The organizing logic : “If the global Jewish collective includes Jews of many types, then the experience we offer our constituents must model this pluralism for Jewish collectivity.”

# Two types of pluralism

- Organizations, particularly religious organizations, which have a clear world view and whose programs are not internally pluralistic, but which embrace collaboration and cooperation with organizations who are different from themselves; hence, contributing to an inclusive Jewish public sphere.
- Organizations whose programs are pluralistic, in that they are designed to accommodate different Jewish worldviews and life-styles.

### 3. Emphasis individual's Jewish journey

- Focus is not socialization into a particular Jewish life-style
- Peoplehood organizations provide the social context, knowledge, ideology, skills and motivation to enable an individual to successfully pursue a Jewish life.
- They are less concerned if Jewish life is lived according to a particular Jewish ideological creed.
- The goal is for participants to leave the program with the Jewish People in their *kishkes*. They are compelled to continue their Jewish journey and have been given the tools to do so in the company of other Jews.

## 4. Framework for Commitment and Action

- A Peoplehood organization perceives meaningful engagement with the Jewish collective as a core activity.
- The organization enables concrete commitment to action within a collective Jewish context.
- Peoplehood defines the organization in terms of:
  - All areas of activity, branding, marketing, communications, programming and revenue sources support
  - Constituents , staff, board and funders perceive engagement with Jewish collective as a core activity of the organization and not as an extra-curricular activity.

# For more on the organizational dimension...

Read:

“Best Practices of Peoplehood organizations,” which is available on the Nadav Fund’s website.

<http://www.nadavfund.org.il/resources/research?catid=10>

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## **III COMMUNAL/GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE**

# Peoplehood depends on relationships

- Relationships between individuals
- Relationships between organizations and through organizations, between Jewish communities
- Building Jewish Peoplehood = more relationships between Jews and Jewish organizations and those connections should be diverse touching on the multiple areas of life as we live it today.