

# Access to Taglit-Birthright Israel Evaluation Datafiles

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Taglit-Birthright Israel is the largest single educational intervention in the Jewish community and, since its inception in 1999 through 2013, has engaged more than 350,000 young adults from around the world on 10 day educational tours of Israel. Since 2000, researchers at the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS) at Brandeis University have carried out a program of evaluation research designed to assess Taglit's impact on participants. Several dozen research studies have been conducted, principally focused on North American applicants and participants. The findings of these studies have been reported in CMJS research monographs, peer reviewed journal articles, chapters, and books (see <http://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/researchareas/taglit-publications.html>). Because the focus of CMJS' evaluation studies has been on program impact,<sup>1</sup> most of the investigations involve surveys that are analyzed by comparing participants to similar others (applicants who do not go on the program). Depending on the cohort, surveys have been conducted pre-program, as well as post-program (from 3 months to 10+ years). Survey data from the CMJS Taglit surveys are organized in nearly 30 separate datasets. This document provides an overview of these datafiles and their availability to qualified researchers.

The evaluation data included in the CMJS datafile collection are separate from Taglit's registration system used to register and manage assignments to trips/flights.<sup>2</sup> CMJS' evaluation studies, however, draw data from the registration database and thus include personal information about applicants. All such information is collected and used in accordance with federal regulations for the conduct of human subject research (see <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.html>). Specifically, evaluation data were collected and used per agreements approved by Brandeis University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). As required by IRB regulations, respondents consented to participate in the studies and were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and that they would not be individually identified. Secondary analyses of these datasets need to comply with the consent agreements. To facilitate use of the data by researchers outside CMJS, individual and institutional information that may identify individual respondents has been stripped from datasets.

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<sup>1</sup> Additional evaluation studies focusing on the trips' educational process (and compliance with Taglit standards) have been conducted by Israel-based researchers (Moach 10 and, currently, The Henrietta Szold Institute). These studies collected data during trips and are not part of the Brandeis datafile collection.

<sup>2</sup> The Taglit registration database contains basic demographic and contact data on all applicants. Along with contact information, applicants provide data about their Jewish backgrounds, along with their educational and employment status.

## Program of Research

Each CMJS study conducted as part of our program of research on Taglit was designed primarily to assess the program's impact on participants. Multiple research designs and methodologies were used, including a variety of attitudinal and behavioral outcome measures. Details about the methods used are available in CMJS research monographs. Below is a summary of the designs, survey instruments, and foci of study that are part of the Taglit program of research conducted. In addition, a number of interview, focus group, and participant observation studies have been conducted.

### Pre- and Post-trip surveys

During the first ten years of the program, pre and post trip surveys were conducted on a regular basis. These studies employed quasi-experimental designs with both a comparison group and repeated measures. The treatment group (Taglit participants) was compared to a comparison group of eligible Taglit applicants who did not participate in the trip. Survey data were typically collected at two time points: shortly after registration (but in a separate and independent process) and again 3-6 months after the trips. Taglit's impact was assessed as change between participants and nonparticipants post-trip, controlling for any pre-trip differences. The comparison group design was employed to enable differences between participants and non-participants to be attributed to the impact of the program rather than selection bias or overall change over time.

These pre- and post-trip surveys were most often conducted as "failed censuses." All eligible applicants were invited to participate. Invitations to participate in the surveys were sent via email and data were collected through an online questionnaire. To deal with potential response bias, a stratified random sample of applicants was drawn (5-10% of the population) for intensive telephone follow-up. Since this type of follow-up yields significantly higher response rates a comparison of the characteristics and responses of this sample and the rest of the respondents allowed us to assess response bias. Analyses were done using both design and post-stratification weights.

### Special Surveys

In addition to pre- and post-trip surveys of the general applicant/participant pool, CMJS has conducted studies of specific groups. These include applicants and participants on specific college campuses, applicants who were 22 or older, and applicants and participants in countries outside the United States. International studies include a study of applicants in five European countries, a study of applicants in Brazil and Argentina, a study of Canadian applicants and participants, and a study of Israeli participants on the trip (Mifgash). Some of the international data were collected directly by CMJS, but in some cases, studies were conducted in collaboration with local researchers.

Some of the special surveys were short-term evaluations (3-6 months post-trip), while others were mid-term follow-up studies that covered a time period of six months to four years post-application to the trip. A quasi-experimental design with nonparticipants serving as a control group was employed in these studies. Some (but not all) used data collected during several time periods.

For these studies a random sample of eligible applicants was selected, with the sample generally being stratified by variables relevant to the research questions (e.g., older participants, participants in specific regions, etc.)

### Longitudinal study

In 2009, CMJS embarked on a longitudinal panel study of applicants and participants from the early years of the program. The study follows a panel of individuals (more than 3,000) who applied to the trip during 2001-2006. Although the study has a broader goal of understanding young adult Jews in the U.S., it also provides an assessment of the impact of Taglit. The Taglit focus is on patterns of Jewish identity, Israel engagement, and Jewish peoplehood. In addition, the study considers the evolution of Jewish identity as affected by Taglit and how participation in Taglit is reflected in lifestyle choices and cultural engagement.

The study was developed to help understand Taglit's potential impact on the behavior of participants as adults. The goal was to be able to track program applicants as they become fully independent adults and, in particular, form long-term partnerships or marriage, enter professional life, and become parents. The investigators wanted to study applicants/participants as they make critical decisions about the kinds of Jewish lives they will lead. The study considers: (1) Whether participants are more likely to marry a Jewish spouse and/or marry in a Jewish ceremony; (2) If participants have children, what is the nature of their Jewish upbringing; (3) Whether participants are more likely to have returned to Israel since Taglit; and (4) How participants enact their Jewish identity through affiliation or involvement with Jewish institutions (including participation in Jewish study, *tzedakah*, etc.).

Four waves of data collection for the longitudinal study have been completed (as of summer 2013). This is an ongoing project, and the research team is actively involved in analyzing the data and describing the results. The longitudinal nature of the study makes these data files the most complex in the CMJS collection. Substantial personal information is included in the raw datafiles and some analyses require information to be linked across files. In addition, the frame has changed since Wave 1 (2009). In Wave 2, we added a cohort (applicants from 2005) and, in Wave 3, an additional cohort (applicants from 2006) was added. The expansion of the frame was done both to increase sample size and to allow us to investigate whether cohort-specific effects underlay the findings. Detailed methodological appendices accompanying the reports include a description of how design and post-stratification weights were developed and applied.

### Questionnaires and survey questions

Questions included in the CMJS surveys focus on both attitudinal and behavioral measures. For the most part, questions are repeated in standardized form in multiple surveys. General Jewish attitudinal measures include questions regarding salience of various factors to Jewish identity; importance of Jewish continuity; connection to Israel, the Jewish community and Jewish institutions; and perceptions of Israel. Behavioral measures include participation in Jewish activities on and off campus; Jewish study; Jewish religious practice; giving and volunteering; synagogue membership; travel to Israel; choice of spouse and significant others; and child rearing. Most surveys also include specific questions about the

trip, including evaluation of the bus community, the Israeli guide and overseas staff, the learning on the trip, and the overall trip experience. All questionnaires also include detailed questions about respondents' Jewish background, including inmarriage of parents, Jewish education growing up, Jewish religious practice at home, and attending Jewish camp and youth groups. Some of the questions are archived in the Jewish Survey Question Bank: <http://jewishquestions.bjpa.org/>. Most of the original questionnaires are available on the CMJS website: <http://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/researchareas/taglit-survey.html>.

## Public Use Datasets

CMJS and Taglit are committed to making its datafile collection available to researchers interested in Taglit, as well as those interested in Jewish young adults in general. In the past, along with making available detailed information about the methodology and analyses underlying our analyses (see, e.g., <http://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/pdfs/Taglit.GBI.App.10.22.09.pdf>), a number of our datasets have been shared with researchers. Small grants have also been given to researchers to facilitate analysis of evaluation data. CMJS and Taglit are now able to expand access to datasets and will make available all of the datafiles from the first ten years of Taglit, with subsequent years to be released as mutually agreed upon and determined by Taglit Research Committee. Datasets have been prepared according to established standards for restricted public use datasets. Personal identifiers have been removed from the datasets and user guides are being developed. A public use datafile "packet" will be prepared, by request, for each dataset and will include the following:

- Datafile in Stata format.
- Codebook.
- Data collection documentation.
- Data analysis documentation including sampling procedures, weighting, constructed variables, and statistical analytic procedures.
- List of references to published work using the datafile in question.

## Requesting Access

The goal of this process is to promote use of the data to learn more about young adults; to promote quality research; to study new perspectives on this population and on Taglit; and to foster investigations that will contribute to the understanding of Taglit, Jewish identity among young adults, and attitudes and engagement with Israel. Access to the datasets is intended primarily for trained researchers – Ph.D.'s, as well as graduate students (and, in some cases, undergraduates). Ph.D.'s (and others) based outside of academic institutions are welcome, if their goals are consistent with developing new knowledge that extends understanding

Use of the datasets will be subject to the approval of Taglit-Birthright Israel's Research Committee. They have approved the protocol for use of the data and will review proposals for access.

Interested researchers (including graduate students) must provide the following information:

- Full Name and title (graduate students should apply jointly with their advisor)
- Name of Institution/Program or Department
- Research Proposal (see below for instructions)
- Detailed Curriculum Vitae that includes current research affiliation, list of publications, and membership in professional societies.

## Proposal Instructions

Researchers interested in using any of the datafiles should request access by submitting a brief proposal with the above information and: intended use of the datafiles; the specific files requested (or time period); proposed or determined funders of the research, project, or analyses, and any hypothesized outcomes. Please indicate how the proposed use will contribute to better understanding of the areas described in the first paragraph of this section.

The use of data is subject to the submittal of the information listed above and signing of Data Use and Legal Agreement to be sent by Taglit-Birthright Israel upon approval of the proposal. The agreement is intended to ensure that human subject regulations are followed (in particular with respect to revealing individual information) and that the use of the dataset is for the purposes laid out in the requester's proposal. In addition, any publications based on the dataset should acknowledge CMJS (i.e., the authors/developers of the study), as well as Taglit. Copies of publications that result should be provided to CMJS and Taglit.

All submissions should be made to Taglit's Research Committee: [research@taglitbri.com](mailto:research@taglitbri.com)

The review process for each submission is anticipated to take 6-8 weeks from receipt of all information to the satisfaction of the committee.