

**Brandeis University**

Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies

---

## **JEWISH FUTURES PROJECT**

The Impact of Taglit-Birthright Israel:  
2012 Update

Leonard Saxe  
Michelle Shain  
Graham Wright  
Shahar Hecht  
Shira Fishman  
Theodore Sasson



October 2012

*In memory of Myra Kraft, z"l. She was an extraordinary woman who deeply loved her family, the Jewish people, and Israel. An alumna of Brandeis University, she felt passionately about the university and was a great supporter. Myra was a wonderful friend and along with her husband, Robert, she helped to make our study of the Birthright Israel generation possible. We miss her greatly and hope that our work reflects her legacy.*

© 2012 Brandeis University  
Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies

Additional copies of this publication are available from:  
Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies  
Brandeis University  
Mailstop 014  
Waltham, MA 02454-9110  
781.736.2060  
[www.brandeis.edu/cmjs](http://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs)

The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, founded in 1980, is dedicated to providing independent, high quality research on issues related to contemporary Jewish life.

The Cohen Center is also the home of the Steinhardt Social Research Institute (SSRI). Established in 2005, SSRI uses innovative research methods to collect and analyze socio-demographic data on the Jewish community.

## Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge the sponsors of this research whose support made this study possible: The Robert K. and Myra H. Kraft Family Foundation, the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, the Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center Fund, and Taglit-Birthright Israel. The study also benefited from material support from the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies and the Steinhardt Social Research Institute.

The program of research on the “Birthright Israel generation,” of which this report is a part, is made possible because Taglit, as an educational organization, is committed to being a sophisticated knowledge developer and user. We are particularly grateful to Taglit’s leadership and educational consultants, including Gidi Mark (CEO), Prof. Ada Spitzer (Vice President), Dr. Zohar Raviv (Director of Education), and Prof. Barry Chazan (Educational Consultant). They have encouraged our work and allowed us to function as independent scholars and researchers. In addition, we want to thank Taglit’s two founding philanthropists, Charles Bronfman and Michael Steinhardt, whose efforts to create Taglit-Birthright Israel made this entire endeavor possible.

This project could not have been carried out without the assistance of our research team at Brandeis University. We are appreciative and grateful for their efforts. Dina Bleckman was tireless in her management of our calling operations and, along with Yves Bruno, Iva Perovic, and Yassmin Abas supervised many night and weekend shifts and responded to various questions from respondents. Mark Grinberg offered technical support for the survey software and the survey management system. Theadora Fisher was invaluable during data collection and her contribution to data analysis is greatly appreciated. Charles Kadushin, as always, provided crucial insights, analysis, and feedback. Deborah Grant and Joshua Davidson turned our words and charts into a physical report. And none of this work would be possible without the support of our colleagues, Masha Lokshin and Gloria Tessler, who manage day-to-day operations.

Our team of telephone interviewers was critical to project implementation. We acknowledge their work with appreciation: Nia Fogelman, Rachel Goutman, Andrew O'Brien, Alexa Rose, Daniel Shpolyansky, Kristina Yopez, Nihan Celiktas, Doug Kanovsky, Hila Landau, Steve Ramirez, Rebecca Weiss, and Lauren Fox. Likewise, we owe a debt of gratitude to the research assistants who found respondents with missing or out-of-date contact information: Gabrielle Santoro, Abby Kulawitz, Justin Lang, and Rachael Diament.

Finally, we express appreciation to our academic and policy colleagues who reviewed this report and commented on presentations of the preliminary data. Their feedback was extremely useful, and we hope it is reflected in the quality of this monograph. Our gratitude notwithstanding, the authors take full responsibility for the design and conduct of the study.



## Table of Contents

List of Tables and Figures.....	iv
Executive Summary .....	1
תקציר מנהלים .....	3
Introduction.....	5
Methods.....	9
Findings.....	13
Relationship to Israel .....	15
Marriage.....	19
Children.....	23
Jewish Engagement.....	25
Discussion and Conclusion .....	29
Notes .....	33
References.....	35

## List of Tables and Figures

Table 1. Wave 1 and Wave 2 Samples in Wave 3 .....	9
Table 2. Characteristics of Sampling Strata for 2006 Cohort.....	10
Figure 1. Parental Inmarriage by Taglit Participation .....	13
Figure 2. Age at Time of Survey by Taglit Participation .....	14
Figure 3. Feeling Connected to Israel by Taglit Participation .....	15
Figure 4. Feeling Connected to Israel by Taglit Participation and Cohort .....	16
Figure 5. Confidence in Explaining the Current Situation in Israel by Taglit Participation .....	17
Figure 6. Lifetime Israel Travel by Taglit Participation .....	18
Figure 7. Taglit Participants' Lifetime Israel Experience.....	19
Figure 8. Percent Married by Taglit Participation .....	20
Figure 9. Inmarriage by Hours of Jewish Education and Taglit Participation.....	21
Figure 10. Inmarriage by Taglit Participation.....	22
Figure 11. Importance of Raising Children Jewish by Taglit Participation .....	24
Figure 12. Belonging to a Jewish Congregation by Taglit Participation and Having Children .....	25
Figure 13. Jewish Holiday Celebration by Taglit Participation.....	26
Figure 14. Hearing of and Supporting AIPAC and J Street by Taglit Participation.....	27

## Executive Summary

Taglit-Birthright Israel's ambitious goal was to foster the Jewish identity of a generation of young adults who it was feared would not feel a connection to the Jewish community and Israel. Although there was widespread agreement about the importance of facilitating young adults' Jewish engagement, skeptics argued that a short trip (10 days) could not meaningfully affect one's core identity and lifelong engagement with Jewish life. Today, however, with over 200,000 North American alumni and numerous evaluative studies of Taglit, there is substantial evidence of the impact of the experience on participants. The present report is the third in a series that examines the long-term impact of Taglit on alumni. The focus is on participants six to eleven years after their visit to Israel. The goal is to understand whether, and to what extent, participation in Taglit alters individuals' Jewish identities and leads to engagement with Jewish life and Israel.

This study is based on data from a survey of a sample of individuals who applied to Taglit between 2001 and 2006. Interviews, both telephone and web, were conducted with nearly 2,000 respondents. The sample of applicants includes both participants and nonparticipants. The present study represents the third wave of data collection in a broad longitudinal study aimed at understanding young adults' Jewish trajectories and assessing the long-term impact of Taglit. The first two waves of the study (conducted in 2009 and 2010) showed strong effects of Taglit participation, and the current analysis, with a sample that is more Jewishly diverse and includes older individuals who are more likely to be

married, increases confidence in the previous findings.

The findings focus on respondents who were not raised Orthodox, and the analysis compares responses of Taglit participants to a comparison group of individuals who applied to the program but did not participate. At the time of application/trip, there were few systematic differences between participants and nonparticipants. Overall, the results indicate that, despite the increasing time lag since the Taglit experience, there is substantial evidence of the program's positive impact on a broad range of measures having to do with an individual's Jewish identity, relationship to Israel, and connection to the Jewish people.

- Taglit participants are 42 percent more likely to feel "very much" connected to Israel compared to individuals who did not go on the program.
- Participants are 22 percent more likely to indicate that they are at least "somewhat confident" in explaining the current situation in Israel as compared to those who did not go on Taglit.
- Taglit participants are 45 percent more likely than nonparticipants to be married to someone Jewish. Taglit's impact on inmarriage was constant across all levels of childhood Jewish education.
- Taglit's influence extends beyond participants themselves: seven percent of nonparticipants are married to Taglit alumni (25 percent of participants are married to other participants, who they did not necessarily meet on the trip).

- Among respondents whose spouses were not raised by Jews, participants' spouses are over three times more likely to have formally converted to Judaism at the time of the survey than nonparticipants' spouses.
- Virtually all inmarried parents are raising their children as Jews and close to half of parents who are intermarried are doing so. Taglit participants and nonparticipants who are intermarried are equally likely to be raising their oldest child Jewish. Among respondents who are not parents, Taglit participants are 23 percent more likely than nonparticipants to view raising their children as Jews as "very important."
- Although the effects were small, Taglit participants are more likely to belong to a Jewish congregation (synagogue, temple, minyan, etc.), to have a special meal on Shabbat, to celebrate Jewish holidays, and to donate to Jewish or Israeli organizations.
- Taglit participants are more likely to have heard of and have an opinion on AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) as compared to nonparticipants.

Across a diverse set of attitudinal and behavioral measures, Taglit has a significant impact on Jewish engagement and involvement. The mechanisms by which Taglit is able to achieve these results in such a short time frame will continue to be the focus of ongoing investigations. The extent to which these findings will continue over time as participants become more removed from the experience remains to be seen. The results of the present study, however, provide an optimistic assessment of the millennial generation's likelihood of maintaining a strong identification with the Jewish community and potential for contributing to Jewish life in America.

## תקציר מנהלים

הממצאים מתמקדים במשיבים שלא גדלו כאורתודוקסים וניתוח הנתונים משווה את אלה שהשתתפו בתכנית לקבוצת ביקורת של מועמדים דומים שלא השתתפו בתכנית. בזמן המועמדות לתכנית היו הבדלים עקביים מעטים בין המשתתפים ללא-משתתפים. הנתונים מצביעים על כך שלמרות הזמן שעבר מאז ההשתתפות בתכנית, יש עדויות רבות לכך שלתגלית יש השפעה חיובית על מגוון מדדים הנוגעים לזהות יהודית, קשר לישראל ולעם היהודי.

- הסיכוי של משתתפים בתגלית לדווח כי הם קשורים לישראל "במידה רבה" גדול ב – 42 אחוזים מזה של הלא-משתתפים.
- הסיכוי של משתתפים לדווח כי הם לפחות בטוחים "במידה מסויימת" ביכולתם להסביר את המצב בישראל גדול ב – 22 אחוזים מזה של הלא-משתתפים.
- הסיכוי של משתתפי תגלית להיות נשואים ליהודי/ה גדול ב – 45 אחוזים מזה של הלא-משתתפים. השפעתה של תגלית בתחום זה עקבית עבור משיבים בעלי רקע חינוכי יהודי מכל הסוגים.
- השפעתה של תגלית מגיעה אל מעבר למשתתפים בה: 7 אחוזים מקרב הלא-משתתפים נשואים לבוגר/ת תגלית (25 אחוזים מהמשתתפים נשואים למשתתפים אחרים, אולם הם לא בהכרח נפגשו בתכנית).
- בקרב משיבים עם בני/בנות זוג שלא גדלו כיהודים, הסיכוי של בני/בנות זוגם להתגייר גדול פי שלושה מזה של בני/בנות זוגם של לא-משתתפים.
- כל ההורים היהודים מגדלים את ילדיהם כיהודים. כמחצית ההורים, שאחד מהם אינו יהודי מגדלים את ילדיהם כיהודים. אין הבדל בין משתתפים ללא-משתתפים בעלי בן/בת זוג לא יהודי/ה בנוגע לדת בה הם מגדלים את

תכנית "תגלית" שמה לה למטרה לטפח את הזהות היהודית של דור שלם של צעירים יהודים שהיה חשש שלא ירגישו קשר לקהילה היהודית ולישראל. למרות ההסכמה לגבי חשיבות קידום מעורבותם היהודית של צעירים אלה, ספקנים טענו שלסיוור קצר בישראל (10 ימים) לא תוכל להיות השפעה ארוכת טווח ובעלת משמעות על זהותם היהודית ומעורבותם של המשתתפים בחיים יהודים. אולם כיום, לאחר שלמעלה מ – 200,000 צעירים השתתפו בתכנית ומספר מחקרים פורסמו על התכנית, יש עדויות רבות להשפעתה של תגלית על המשתתפים בה. הדו"ח הנוכחי הוא שלישי בסדרה של מחקרים הבוחנים את השפעתה ארוכת הטווח של התכנית על בוגריה. המחקר מתמקד בבוגרים שש עד אחת עשרה שנים לאחר ביקורם בישראל. המחקר שואף להבין האם ובאיזה מידה ההשתתפות בתגלית משנה את זהותם היהודית של המשתתפים ומובילה למעורבות בחיים יהודיים ולקשר עם ישראל.

הנתונים ממחקר זה מבוססים על סקר של צעירים שהגישו את מועמדותם לתגלית בשנים 2001-2006. ראינות עם כ – 2,000 משיבים בוצעו באמצעות הטלפון ושאלון מקוון. המדגם כולל את בוגרי התכנית וכן את אלה שהגישו את מועמדותם אך לא השתתפו. המחקר הנוכחי מהווה את השנה השלישית של איסוף נתונים במחקר אורך נרחב הבוחן את מהלך חייהם של צעירים יהודיים ואת השפעתה ארוכת הטווח של תגלית. הממצאים מהשנתיים הראשונות של המחקר (שבוצע ב- 2009 ו – 2010) הצביעו על השפעתה הרבה של תגלית. הנתונים הנוכחיים מבוססים על מדגם מגוון יותר מבחינת שייכותם היהודית של המשיבים. בנוסף המשיבים מבוגרים יותר וסיכוייהם להיות נשואים גבוה יותר. מאפיינים אלה של המדגם הנוכחי מחזקים את ביטחוננו בממצאים הקודמים.

לתגלית יש השפעה ניכרת על מעורבות יהודית מעבר למדדים שונים הנוגעים לעמדות ולהתנהגות. האופנים שבהם תגלית מצליחה להשיג תוצאות אלה בפרק זמן כל כך קצר ימשיכו להוות את המוקד של מחקרים נוספים. יש להמשיך ולבחון את המידה שבה הממצאים ישארו עקביים לאורך זמן, ככל שהמשתתפים מתבגרים ופער הזמן מאז התכנית גדל. ממצאי המחקר הנוכחי, מספקים הערכה אופטימית לגבי הסיכוי שדור המילניום ישמור על הזדהות חזקה עם הקהילה היהודית ולגבי הפוטנציאל שלו לתרום לחיים יהודיים בארה"ב.

ילדם הבכור. בקרב משיבים ללא ילדים הסיכוי של משתתפי תגלית ליחס חשיבות "רבה מאד" לגידול ילדיהם כיהודים גדול ב- 23 אחוזים מזה של הלא-משתתפים. למרות שההבדלים קטנים, הסיכוי של משתתפי תגלית להיות חברים בקהילה יהודית (בית כנסת, מנין, חבורה וכו'), לערוך ארוחה מיוחדת לכבוד שבת, לחגוג חגים יהודיים ולתרום לארגונים יהודיים או ישראלים גדול מזה של הלא-משתתפים.

- הסיכוי שמשתתפי תגלית שמעו על איפא"ק ומחזיקים בדעה לגבי הארגון גדול מזה של הלא-משתתפים.

## Introduction

When Taglit-Birthright Israel was first proposed nearly 15 years ago, its ambitious goal was to stem the tide of assimilation and engage a generation of young adults who it was feared was losing its connection to Jewish life (Saxe & Chazan, 2008). Despite the program creators' enthusiasm, skeptics challenged the idea that a ten-day educational tour to Israel, targeted at "unaffiliated" Jewish young adults, could have long-term impact. Jewish education during childhood was viewed as an essential path to adult Jewish engagement, and there was substantial skepticism that a relatively brief intervention could change feelings about Jewish identity. As an educational venture, Taglit strives to encourage Jewish continuity, foster engagement with Israel, and forge new relationships among Jews around the world. Through its focus on experiential education, the program seeks to engage Jewish young adults in meaningful conversations about Jewishness and Israel in an environment that fosters bonding and cohesiveness (Taglit-Birthright Israel, 2012).

Since 1999, more than 200,000 young adults from the United States and Canada (along with an additional c. 100,000 from outside North America) have participated in Taglit's educational tours of Israel. The participants, ages 18 to 26, qualify for Taglit by being Jewish and not having been a participant on any other Israel peer education program since bar/bat mitzvah. Assignment to the program from within the applicant pool was contingent on available trip dates and, therefore, in effect random. For each program cycle (winter/summer), there have been more individuals seeking to participate than there are available spaces. Although

applicants do not precisely represent the proportion of every segment of the Jewish young adult population (those with the highest levels of Jewish education are often ineligible because they have had some type of peer educational experience in Israel and those least engaged in Jewish life may be less likely to apply), they reflect the diversity of American Jewry. Applicants include the highly Jewishly educated and engaged, those with some Jewish education, and those who grew up in nonobservant homes with little or no experience with Jewish education.

The present report describes the third in a series of studies of the long-term impact of Taglit on North American participants. It aims to understand whether, and to what extent, participation in Taglit alters individuals' Jewish identities and leads to engagement with Jewish life and Israel. The report begins by laying out the underlying premise of impact evaluation and continues with a description of what is known about the program's impact to date based on research conducted over the past decade. The design and the main research questions of the present study are then described and findings reported. The report concludes with a discussion of opportunities and challenges facing the program and the Jewish community in the years ahead.

### Measuring Taglit's Impact

The evaluation of Taglit's impact is based on comparisons between Taglit participants and individuals who applied to the program but did not go. The unique nature of the program has created an ongoing "natural

experiment,” because (a) the demand for the program has always exceeded available slots, (b) assignment to the program in the first six years of the program was virtually random with nonparticipation generally due to unfeasible trip dates, and (c) both participants and nonparticipants expressed an initial interest in the program by applying to it. Information available about applicants’ demographics and Jewish background indicates that both groups were very similar at the time of application. Although participants were more likely to be younger when they applied and to come from families where both parents were Jewish, the groups were identical with regards to household Jewish ritual observance during childhood and rates of participation in formal and informal Jewish education. Thus, nonparticipants serve as a natural comparison group and provide a unique opportunity to isolate the program’s impact.<sup>1</sup> Because the comparison group of nonparticipants is composed of a self-selected group of individuals interested in traveling to Israel, the estimates of Taglit’s impact described below are perhaps conservative when considering the “Birthright generation” cohort as a whole. To the extent that nonparticipant applicants have higher levels of Jewish engagement than the general population of Jewish young adults (who are potential applicants), the differences observed may underestimate program impact.

### Evaluation Studies

A commitment to measuring program outcomes—both specific feedback from the trip and long-term results of participation in the program—has been at the core of Taglit’s educational platform. A dozen years of program evaluation studies, conducted principally with North American participants, who form the largest group of

Taglit alumni, consistently showed that the program is highly valued and has a substantial impact on participants’ engagement with Israel and their Jewish identities (e.g., Saxe et al., 2008; Saxe et al., 2009a; Saxe et al., 2011b).

Consistent with the goals of the program, study findings since 2000 have shown that although most alumni agreed that the trip was fun (Saxe, Kadushin, Kelner, Rosen, & Yereslove, 2001), the majority also described it as “a group Jewish experience” or “an individual journey to my Jewish roots” (Saxe, Sasson, & Hecht, 2006). In addition, upon their return, participants overwhelmingly rated their journey as feeling like a “life-changing experience” (Saxe et al., 2008). Thus, Taglit experiences were enjoyable, but were also perceived as meaningful explorations of participants’ Jewish identities.

Evaluation studies conducted three months to three years post trip repeatedly showed that those who went on Taglit felt a stronger connection to Israel and the Jewish community worldwide, as compared to nonparticipants (Saxe et al., 2008; Saxe et al., 2006; Saxe, Sasson, Phillips, Hecht, & Wright, 2007). Participants reported stronger positive evaluations of Israel, saw Israel as a source of pride, and were more likely to strongly agree with positive statements such as “Israel is a refuge for Jewish people” and “Israel is a technological powerhouse” (Saxe et al., 2008; Saxe et al., 2006). In addition to changing their perceptions of Israel, Taglit appears to have an impact on participants’ comfort in explaining the current situation in Israel. Even three years post trip, participants, as compared to nonparticipants, were more likely to feel “very confident” in explaining the situation in Israel (Saxe et al., 2008).

Across numerous studies, those who go on Taglit are more likely to report that it is important to them to marry someone who is Jewish and raise their children as Jews (Saxe et al., 2004; Saxe et al., 2001; Saxe, Kadushin, Kelner, Rosen, & Yereslove, 2002; Saxe et al., 2008; Saxe et al., 2007).

Although Taglit has been shown to have a significant impact on attitudes in the short and medium term, no significant impact was found on behavioral measures such as participating in the lighting of Shabbat candles, attending religious services, or participating in Jewish activities (see Saxe et al., 2009a; Saxe et al., 2011b).

### **Long-Term Studies**

In recent years, as time has elapsed since the first cohorts of the program and participants have aged, it has become possible to begin examining the long-term effects of the program on participants' Jewish identities and on their engagement with Israel. In 2009, we launched a study to assess the program's impact across the participants' lifespan and to understand how the "Birthright generation" engages with Jewish life (Saxe et al., 2009a; Saxe et al., 2011a; Saxe et al., 2011b). Specifically, the study aims to explore the ways in which Jewish young adults make decisions about marriage and family, participate in the life of the Jewish community, and view the role of Israel in their lives. The 2009 investigation (Wave 1) studied a sample of individuals who applied to Taglit between 2001 and 2004. In 2010 (Wave 2), the original sample was recontacted and, in addition, the sample frame was expanded to include individuals who applied to the program in 2005 (Saxe, et al., 2011b).

Data from the 2009 and 2010 studies support and affirm earlier findings that Taglit has a lasting impact on the lives of its participants. Five to nine years after the trip, the vast majority of participants reported that the trip was "a life-changing experience" (Saxe et al., 2009a). Participants were also more likely than nonparticipants to feel "very much" connected to Israel and feel "very confident" in their ability to explain the situation in Israel (Saxe et al., 2009a; Saxe et al., 2011b), suggesting that the strong connection to Israel seen in the immediate aftermath of a trip is maintained by alumni even five to ten years post trip.

Although earlier short-term research demonstrated that Taglit has a significant impact on the participants' attitudes regarding Jewish continuity, specifically a desire to marry another Jew and raise their children Jewish (Saxe et al., 2002; Saxe et al., 2008; Saxe et al., 2006), the long-term research has allowed for an examination of how these attitudes manifest in actual behavior. Findings from the first two waves of the study revealed that married participants were significantly more likely to have a Jewish spouse than nonparticipants (Saxe et al., 2009a; Saxe et al., 2011b). Even controlling for childhood Jewish education, the inmarriage effect of Taglit was still evident (Saxe et al., 2011b). While assessing the program's impact on choices regarding child rearing was not possible (as most individuals were not yet parents), Taglit's impact was still evident with regards to intentions to raise Jewish children. Five to nine years after the trip, childless participants were more likely to view raising their children Jewish as "very important" as compared to nonparticipants (Saxe, et al., 2011b).

## The 2012 Study

The findings in this report are based on data collected in 2012 to investigate Taglit's long-term impact six to eleven years after the program. The data are part of a broader longitudinal study of Taglit applicants and represent the third wave of data collection. The sample for this study included more than 3,000 individuals who applied to the program between 2001 and 2006. These individuals include respondents who were interviewed previously for the first two waves of the study (2001-2005 applicants) as well as a new sample representing the cohort that applied in 2006.<sup>2</sup> The analyses presented here are an independent cross-sectional investigation focusing on the long-term impact of the program, presenting a snapshot of respondents' Jewish identities and engagement.

The current study (Wave 3) allows us to assess the robustness of Taglit's effects documented by the previous waves of data collection. Specifically, it investigates the extent to which the findings regarding inmarriage are sustained and whether patterns of attachment to Israel and engagement in the Jewish community continue as members of the sample assume full adult roles.

The study's design enables us to address some concerns that could cast doubt over the validity of the findings from the study's previous two waves. The first concern relates to the generalizability of the findings based on a sample drawn from the applicant pool to Taglit during the years 2001-2004. In this period, marked with anxiety over international travel in the wake of 9/11 and with violence in Israel associated with the second Intifada, the applicant pool was characterized by higher rates of childhood Jewish education and engagement compared

to applicants to the trip in subsequent years. Although it is possible that findings from the first wave of the study are unique to this particular group, the current sample includes two additional applicant cohorts (2005, 2006) and better represents the diversity of the applicant pool that characterizes the later cohorts applying to the trip. Findings based on data collected from this expanded sample increases confidence in the relevance of the results to the "Birthright generation" as a whole.

The second concern relates to the fact that since the majority of the sample is not yet married, the findings regarding marriage patterns may only represent those who married early. Since most contemporary young adults start marrying in their late 20s, the full picture of marital patterns and choices is yet to be played out. The data regarding marriage from Wave 3 of the study is based on a larger number of married individuals than in the previous waves because it includes new marriages of the individuals from cohorts previously examined and marriages of those in the new cohorts. Repetition of the findings of the previous waves based on this expanded base of married individuals increases confidence in our findings. Whether the trend we observed continues into the future remains an open question.

Finally, assessing Taglit's long-term impact is limited by the length of time since its inception. To date, the findings have demonstrated that Taglit's effects are long-lasting and alter the trajectory of Jewish engagement of participants as they form families and become adult members of the community. However, some measures of communal engagement and Jewish living, may only be evident after an additional period of time.

## Methods

The sample for this study was drawn from the population of all eligible applicants—both participants and nonparticipants—to Taglit in the winter trips of 2001-2006. Details on the sampling frame are provided in Appendix A.

### The Sample

The sample for Wave 3 was comprised of the Wave 2 sample (see Saxe et al., 2009b; Saxe et al., 2011a) plus a sample from the winter 2006 cohort.

*Original sample and 2005 cohort.* Previous waves drew samples designed to represent eligible applicants to the program from the 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005 cohorts. For Wave 3, cases from these initial five cohorts were grouped based on their

responses to previous surveys and the quality of their contact information (Table 1). There were 1,785 individuals who responded to one or both prior waves of the study; these were considered a single group.

The available contact information for individuals who had not responded to either Wave 1 or Wave 2 surveys was carefully reviewed in preparation for data collection. Individuals were grouped by the predicted likelihood of contact given the quality of available contact information. Four hundred and eighty-five individuals had a reasonably “high” probability of contact in Wave 3; 205 individuals had a relatively “low” probability of contact in Wave 3; 75 eligible individuals had no potential for subsequent contact. These 75 cases were not surveyed.

Table 1. Wave 1 and Wave 2 samples in Wave 3

Group	Nonparticipants	Participants	Total
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>N</i>
Responded to previous survey (w1 or w2)	521	1,264	1,785
Non-respondent, “high” contact probability	211	274	485
Non-respondent, “low” contact probability	109	96	205
Non-respondent, no contact probability	41	34	75
Refusals	195	146	341
Ineligible for study	185	11	196
<b>Total (from Wave 1 and 2 samples)</b>	<b>1,262</b>	<b>1,825</b>	<b>3,087</b>

*2006 cohort additional sample.* In Wave 3 the sample was expanded to include a more recent cohort. The sample for the winter 2006 cohort (n=700) was randomly drawn from the pool of applicants in that cohort in a similar manner in which the 2005 cohort sample was drawn in Wave 2 (Saxe et al., 2011a). As in previous years, the sample target values were divided equally between men and women and between those over and under age 30. As with the 2005 cohort sample, the 2006 cohort sample included 400 nonparticipants and 300 participants. The oversampling of nonparticipants was due to the anticipated lower response rate of nonparticipants, the objective being to obtain roughly equal numbers of participant and nonparticipant respondents. Table 2 shows the characteristics of the different strata in the 2006 cohort, the

number of cases assigned to each strata and the sample allocation.

### Survey Instrument

The survey instrument included questions about Jewish educational and family background; attitudes toward Israel, Judaism, and the Jewish community; involvement with Jewish organizations and activities; and dating, marriage, and children. An in-depth module on travel to Israel was also included. Questions about Jewish and family background were only asked of respondents who had not answered such questions in previous waves. The section of the survey pertaining to spouses and children included detailed questions about the Jewish characteristics and choices of those with young families. To ensure high

Table 2. Characteristics of Sampling Strata for 2006 Cohort

Status	Age	Sex	Frame pop.	Sample Allocation n	
Nonparticipant	Under 30	Male	573	100	
		Female	791	100	
	30+	Male	206	100	
		Female	249	100	
			Total	1,819	400
	Participant	Under 30	Male	2,266	75
Female			2,811	75	
30+		Male	712	75	
		Female	687	75	
		Total	6,476	300	
Total			8,295	700 <sup>3</sup>	

response rates, the number of questions was kept to a minimum. Full telephone interviews averaged 12 minutes in length. Prior to the launch of the study, extensive cognitive testing was conducted. Most of the interview questions were close-ended, with an open-ended question asked at the end of the survey.

### Protocol

The survey was a dual-mode telephone and Web survey. Most of the respondents who had completed surveys in previous waves completed the survey online (updated email addresses were collected at the end of the survey in previous waves). However, because many email addresses for the new 2006 cohort sample—recorded in Taglit’s registration database six years prior to our study—proved unreliable, most interviews with new respondents were conducted by telephone. Telephone calls were made at the Cohen Center by interviewers, most of whom were Brandeis University students, specifically trained for this study.

The research team utilized email messages, phone calling, data enhancement services, and extensive Internet searching to obtain up-to-date contact information for all potential respondents. Field operations began on December 21, 2011 and ceased on April 5, 2012.

### Response Rates

Interviews were conducted with 1,990 eligible respondents. The response rate (AAPOR RR4<sup>4</sup>) was 77.7 percent for Taglit participants and 64.0 percent for nonparticipants. The overall response rate (weighted because participants were oversampled) was 72.8 percent. Relatively few individuals explicitly refused to take the

survey, although the rate for nonparticipants (10.2 percent) was higher than for participants (4.3 percent). The cooperation rates were 94.6 percent for participants and 86.3 percent for nonparticipants.

Nonrespondents were overwhelmingly individuals who could not be located due to a lack of valid contact information. Tables of final dispositions and response rates are shown in Appendix A.

*Weighting.* In addition to design weights developed to account for the differential probabilities of selection due to sample stratification, poststratification weights were created using registration system information on age, Jewish denomination, year of application, and gender. These weights correct for differences between the distribution of known characteristics of the respondents and known characteristics of the sampling frame (see Appendix A).

### Analysis

In describing the sample, weighted frequencies and cross-tabulations are reported. For outcome measures comparing Taglit participants to nonparticipants, predicted values from regression models are reported, controlling for factors associated with both the outcome measure and participation in Taglit (Saxe et al., 2009a, p. 12 and endnote 9). For each outcome measure, Appendix B includes the regression model and predicted probabilities as well as the weighted estimates (cross-tabulations).

For the analyses described in this report, only respondents not raised Orthodox are included.<sup>5</sup>



## Findings

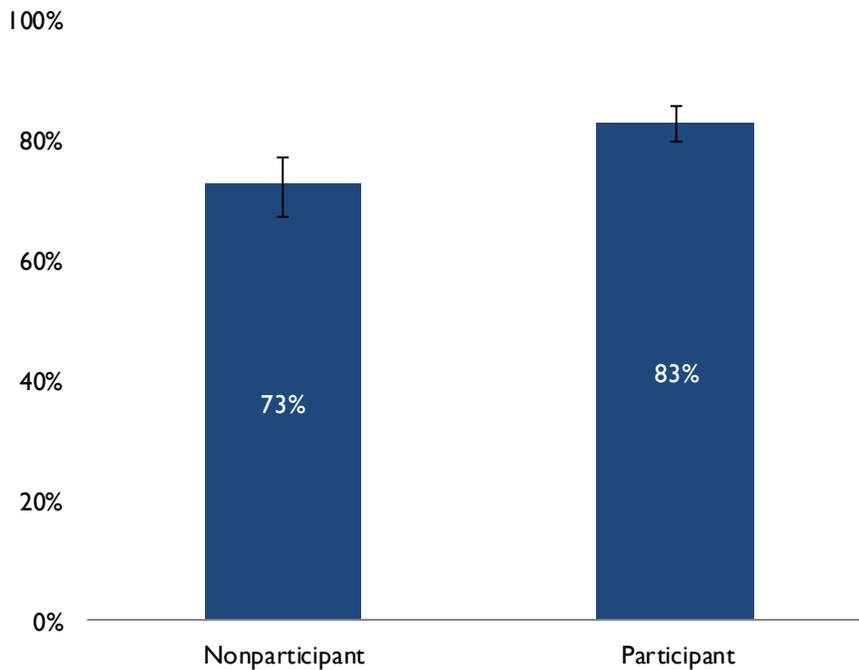
### Sample Description

The 2012 achieved sample of respondents not raised Orthodox includes Jews from a variety of backgrounds. There are no significant differences between participants and nonparticipants on key measures of childhood Jewish education and practice. Thus, there are no differences between the groups with regards to the Jewish denomination in which they were raised. And there are no significant differences between participants and nonparticipants in terms of observance of Jewish customs and holidays at home during high school. In addition, there are no significant differences

between participants and nonparticipants in their Jewish educational experience.

The majority of participants and nonparticipants come from families in which both parents are Jewish (Figure 1). However, participants are more likely to have inmarried parents than nonparticipants. The difference between the groups, however, is relatively small and as described above, despite this difference, participants and nonparticipants did not differ in their involvement in Jewish life while growing up.

Figure 1. Parental Inmarriage by Taglit Participation (Estimated Proportions)<sup>6</sup>

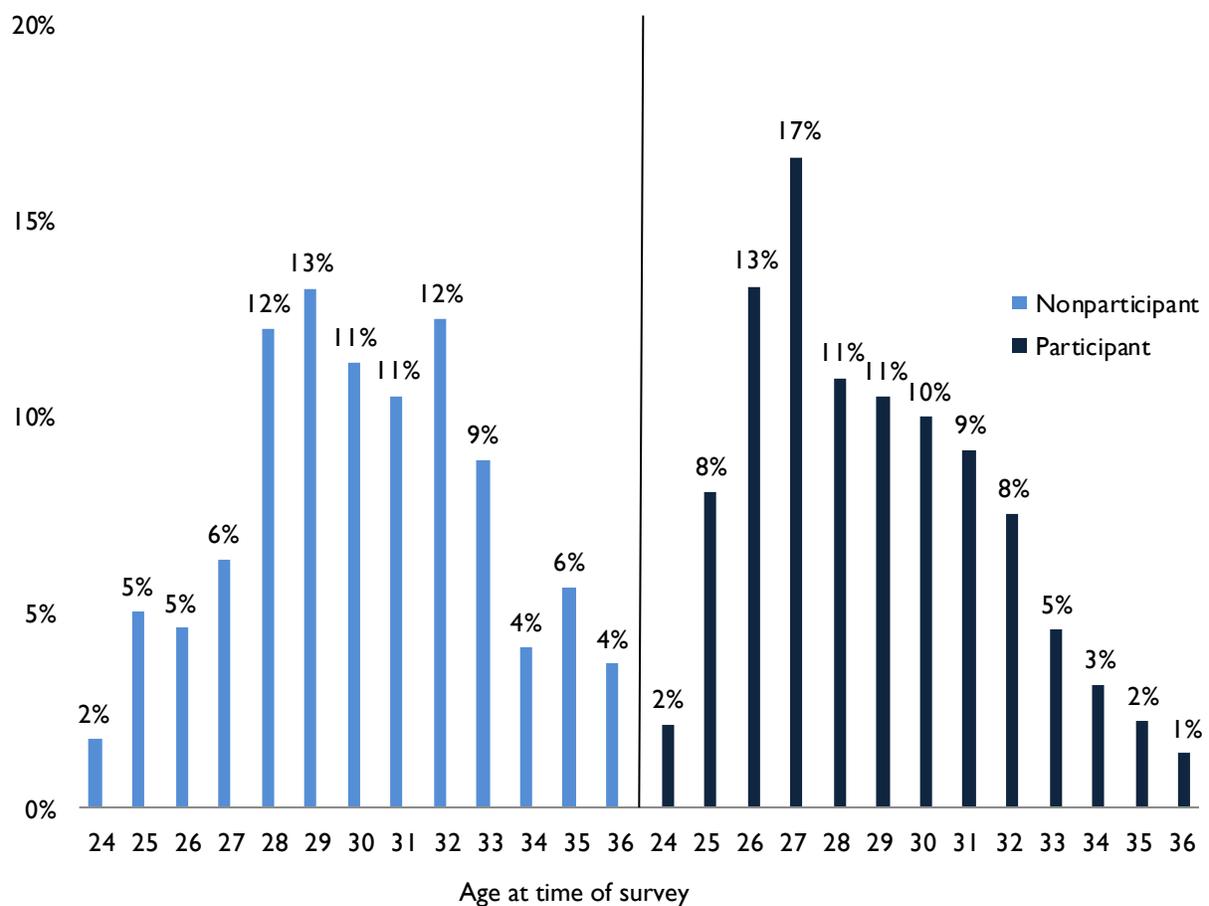


Note: Respondents not raised Orthodox.  $F(1, 1,965) = 14.43, p < 0.001, n = 1,736$ .

Figure 2 shows respondents' age at time of survey. The bulk of respondents are in their late twenties, but a significant number are entering their mid-thirties.<sup>7</sup> Nonparticipants are somewhat older than participants, with a mean age just over 30, compared to participants' mean age of just under 29.

All regression models that assess Taglit's impact control for these differences between the groups (age and parental inmarriage) that existed at the time of application to the program.

Figure 2: Age at Time of Survey by Taglit Participation (Estimated Proportions)



Note: Respondents not raised Orthodox.  $F(11.44, 22,493.55) = 6.55, p < .001, n = 1,737$ .

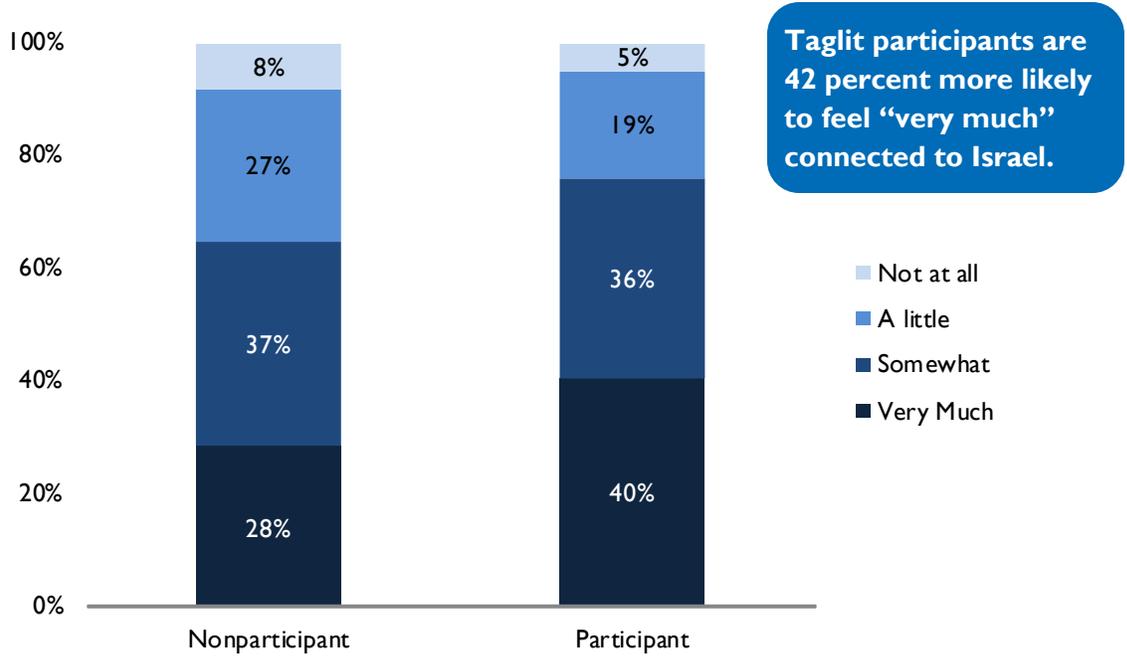
**Relationship to Israel**

Previous research has documented significant differences between Taglit participants and nonparticipants with respect to feelings and attitudes about Israel (Saxe et al., 2008; Saxe et al., 2009a). Data from the current study demonstrate similar trends across a number of measures.

*Feeling connected to Israel.* Taglit participants are 42 percent more likely to report feeling “very much” connected to Israel than nonparticipants (Figure 3).

*Connection to Israel over time.* Debate about Jewish young adults’ connection to Israel has been at the center of recent scholarly and communal discussions (Sasson, Kadushin, & Saxe, 2010, 2010b; Sasson, Phillips, Kadushin, & Saxe, 2010; Sasson, Phillips, Wright, Kadushin, & Saxe, 2012). Some assert that there has been a decline in the attachment of Jewish young adults to Israel (Cohen & Kelman, 2010). The data collected during the first three waves of this study provide an opportunity to assess the stability of attitudes over time.

Figure 3: Feeling Connected to Israel by Taglit Participation (Predicted Probabilities)

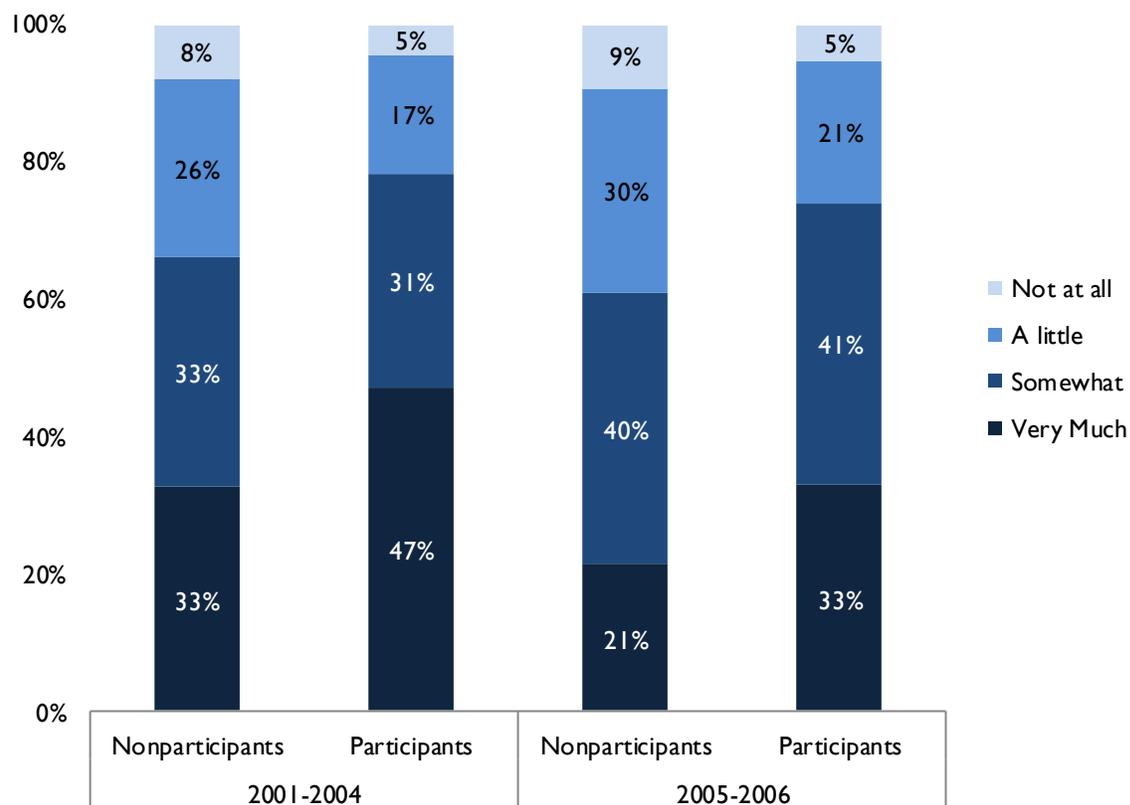


Note: “To what extent do you feel a connection to Israel?” Respondents not raised Orthodox. Predicted probabilities from an ordinal logistic regression model controlling for Taglit participation and parental inmarriage. Odds ratio = 1.72,  $t(1,727) = 4.12, p < .001$ .

When comparing respondents' level of connection to Israel in Wave 3 to findings from previous waves of the study (Saxe et al., 2009, 2011), it might appear that overall levels of connection to Israel have declined. This "decline," however, is due to the expansion and change in the composition of the sample in Wave 3. Figure 4 illustrates that there are marked differences in the connection to Israel observed in Wave 3 between those who applied in 2001-2004 and those who applied in 2005-2006, with the later cohorts being significantly less

connected to Israel. This trend is true for both participants and nonparticipants, and these cohort differences explain the seeming decline in attachment to Israel across the three waves of the study. Note though, that the likelihood of being "not at all" connected to Israel has remained stable among cohorts, indicating that alienation from Israel is not a growing phenomenon. Furthermore, although these later cohorts display lower levels of connection to Israel, the magnitude of Taglit's impact is very similar for both groups.

Figure 4. Feeling Connected to Israel by Taglit Participation and Cohort (Predicted Probabilities)



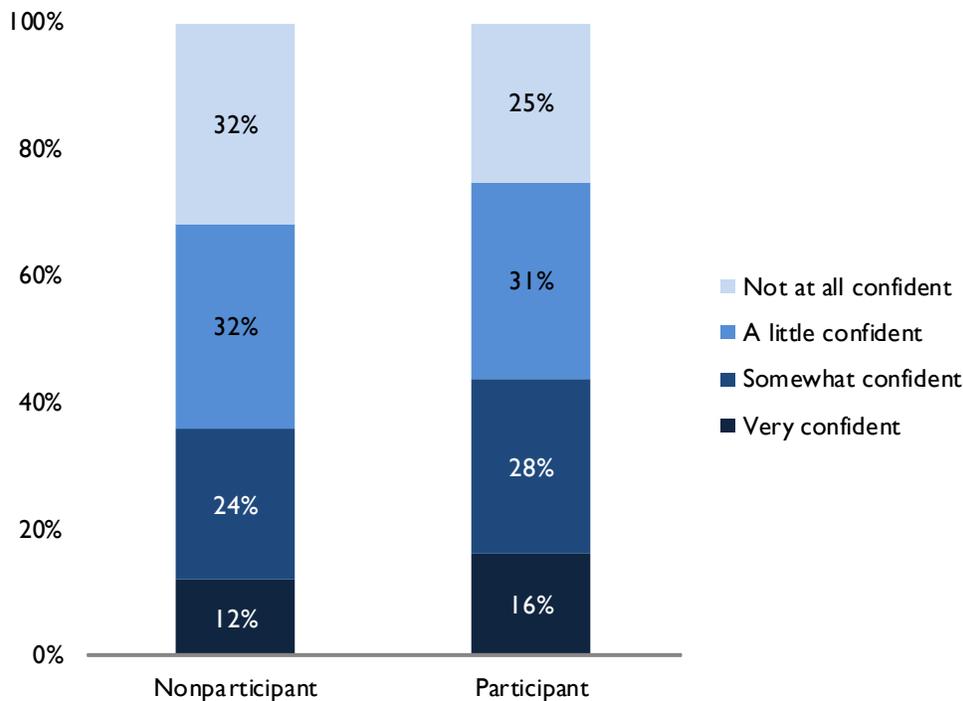
Note: "To what extent do you feel a connection to Israel?" Respondents not raised Orthodox. Predicted probabilities from 2 ordinal logistic regression models controlling for Taglit participation and parental inmarriage. 2001-2004 cohorts: Odds ratio = 1.84,  $t(1,1,063) = 3.51$ ,  $p < .001$ . 2005-2006 cohorts: Odds ratio = 1.82,  $t(1,658) = 3.13$ ,  $p < .01$ .

Although the observed decline in attachment to Israel in Wave 3 is explained by the changing composition of the cohorts applying to the program, an alternative possible explanation is that there has been an overall decline in attachment over the course of the study. An analysis focusing on data from the *same* respondents across the three waves of the study (this exploration limits the analysis to the original sample of the study from the 2001-2004 cohorts) indicates that there is no significant decline over time in these individuals' attachment to Israel. Further exploration of changes over time will be possible when more data points are gathered for all respondents in the study.

*Confidence in explaining Israel's situation.* Taglit participants are 22 percent more likely to indicate that they are at least "somewhat confident" in explaining the situation in Israel (Figure 5).

*Views of Israeli politics.* To investigate Taglit's influence on attitudes toward Israel, the survey asked respondents' about their views on contentious issues related to the future of the West Bank and Jerusalem.<sup>8</sup> Respondents were asked: "As part of a permanent settlement with the Palestinians, should Israel be willing to dismantle Jewish settlements in the West Bank?" and "In the framework of a permanent peace with the

Figure 5: Confidence in Explaining the Current Situation in Israel by Taglit Participation (Predicted Probabilities)



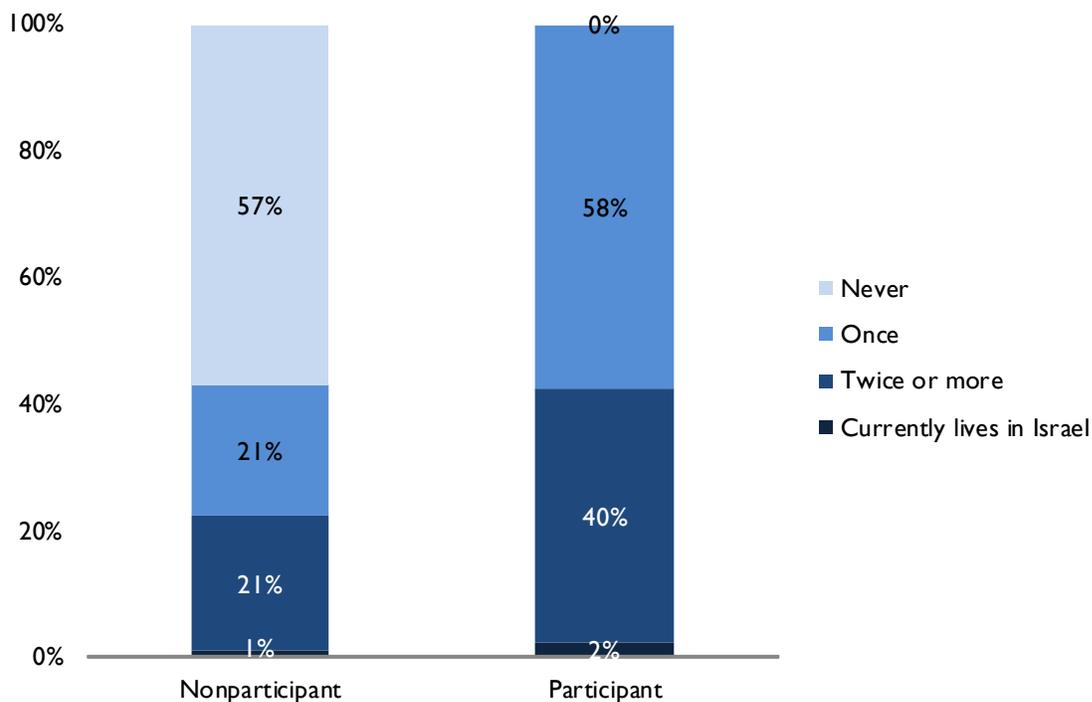
Note: "If someone asked you about the current situation in Israel, how confident do you feel in your ability to give a good explanation?" Respondents not raised Orthodox. Predicted probabilities from an ordinal logistic regression model controlling for Taglit participation. Odds ratio = 1.39,  $t(1,721) = 2.65$ ,  $p < .01$ .

Palestinians, should Israel be willing to compromise on the status of Jerusalem as a united city under Israeli jurisdiction?”

Taglit participants and nonparticipants did not differ in their likelihood of having an opinion about the future of the West Bank or Jerusalem. Among those who had an opinion on Jerusalem, Taglit participants and nonparticipants are equally likely to think that Israel should compromise on the status of Jerusalem. Among those who had an opinion on West Bank settlements, Taglit had a small effect, with participants slightly less likely than nonparticipants to say that they favor dismantling “none” of the settlements in the West Bank as opposed to “some.”

*Lifetime travel to Israel.* To put the findings regarding Taglit’s impact on attitudes toward Israel into context, respondents were asked a set of questions that explored their lifetime travel to Israel. Respondents were asked about all of their trips to Israel and the length and purpose of each visit. As can be seen in Figure 6, a significant proportion of nonparticipants (43 percent) have traveled to Israel over the course of their lifetime, for the most part to visit family and friends. Note that 30 percent of nonparticipants traveled to Israel prior to their application to Taglit. Participants and nonparticipants visited Israel prior to the program at the same rate.

Figure 6. Lifetime Israel Travel by Taglit Participation (Estimated Proportions)



Note: Respondents not raised Orthodox,  $F(2.92, 5,721.91) = 188.40, p < 0.001, n = 1,730$ .

Figure 7 illustrates that Taglit was the first encounter with Israel for nearly three-quarters of the participants, and for more than half it was their only Israel experience.

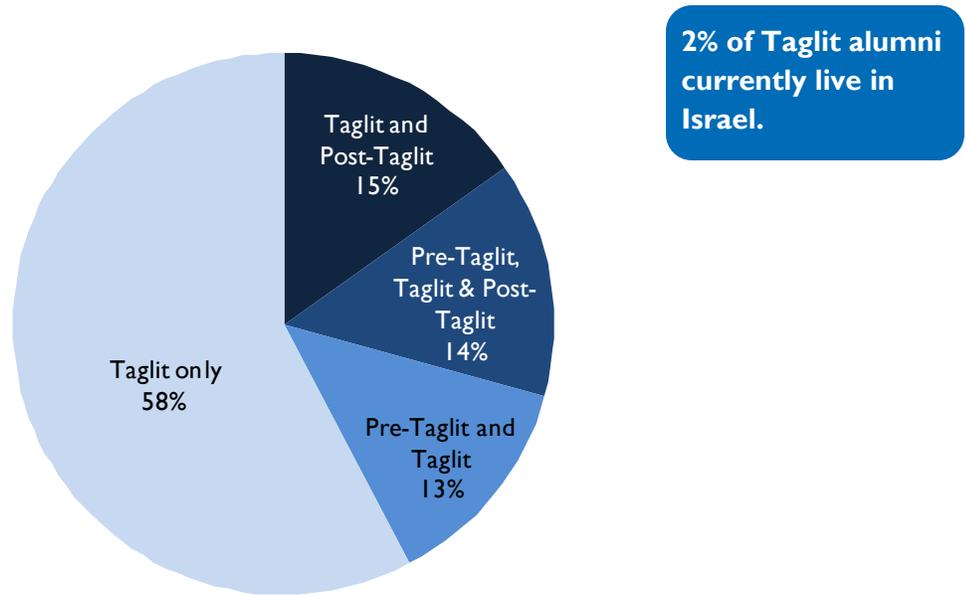
Nearly 30 percent of all participants returned to Israel after their trip. Thirteen percent returned once, 14 percent returned twice or more, and two percent report that they are currently living in Israel. Upon their return, the majority take a vacation and visit family and/or friends (58 percent). A minority study in a yeshiva or seminary (13 percent), study in a university (12 percent), and/or participate in a long-term, non-academic program (three percent). Factors associated with returning to Israel are: being born in Israel or speaking Hebrew at home while growing up, having been to Israel already

before Taglit, being inmarried, as opposed to unmarried, and being unmarried, as opposed to intermarried.

**Marriage**

One of the important aims of this study is to observe the choices made by Jewish young adults as they get older, marry, and start families. The decisions made by young adults about whom to marry and how to raise and educate their children are key indicators of their commitment to remain part of the Jewish collective. Previous findings indicated that Taglit had a significant effect on participants’ behaviors and attitudes regarding marriage and parenting (Saxe et al., 2009a; Saxe et al., 2011b). As a larger number of these

Figure 7. Taglit Participants’ Lifetime Israel Experience (Estimated Proportions)



Note Respondents not raised Orthodox, n = 1,182.

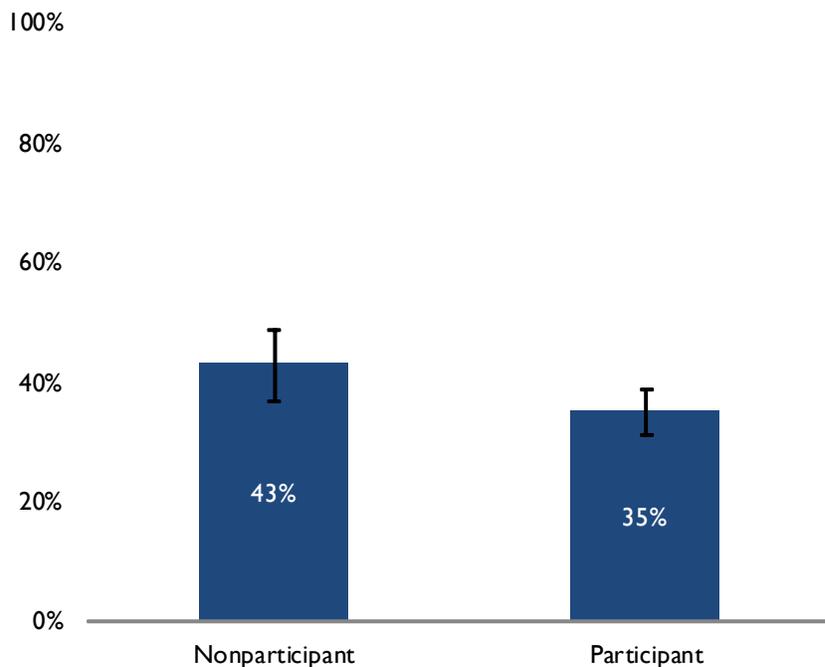
respondents are currently married and have children, and as the sample has expanded to include more respondents with less Jewishly engaged backgrounds, this phenomenon can now be better explored.

*Relationship status.*<sup>9</sup> One somewhat curious finding is that participants are less likely to be married than nonparticipants (35 percent vs. 43 percent; see Figure 8). This parallels previous findings which showed that, at least for certain age groups, participants were less likely to be married at the time of the survey than nonparticipants (Saxe et al., 2009a; Saxe et al., 2011b). The source of this difference is still unknown. It should be noted that among those who are not married or engaged, roughly the same proportion of

participants and nonparticipants are currently in a relationship with a “significant other,” suggesting that participants and nonparticipants are equally likely to be seeking a relationship.

*Jewishness of spouse.* Previous findings have shown that Taglit participants have a significantly higher likelihood of marrying a Jew compared to nonparticipants. Furthermore, Taglit’s impact on inmarriage was found to be relatively consistent across different levels of childhood Jewish education (Saxe et al., 2009a; Saxe et al., 2011b). Data from the current study confirm these earlier findings.

Figure 8: Percent Married by Taglit Participation (Predicted Probabilities)

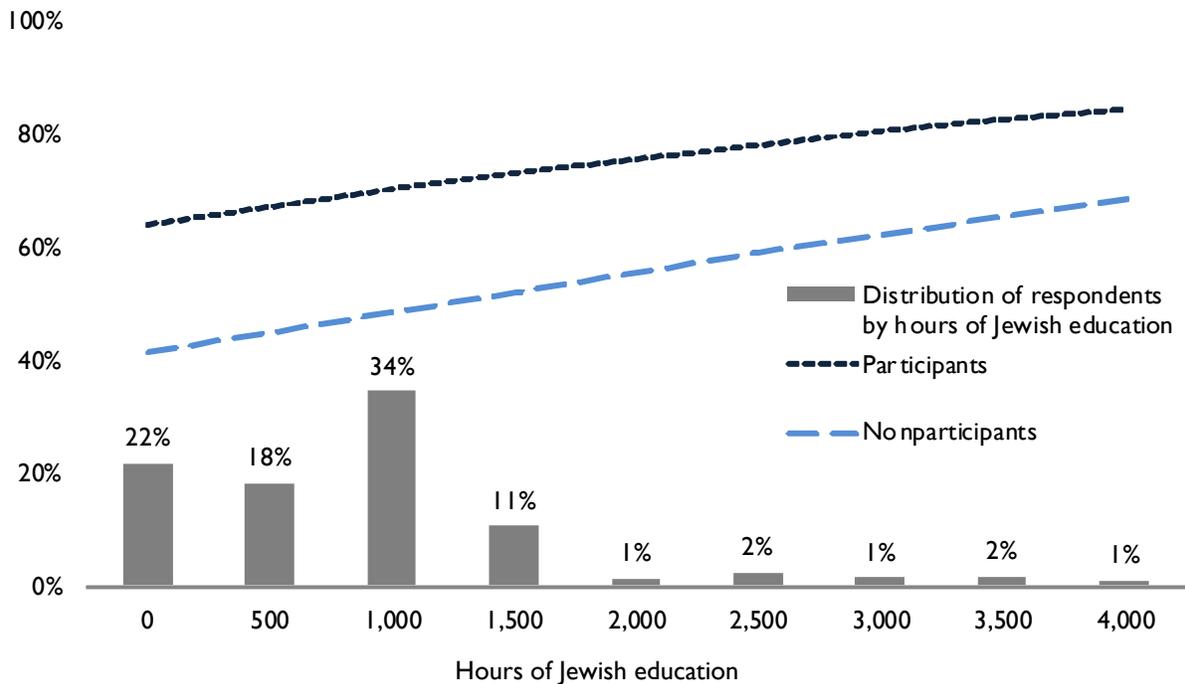


Note: Respondents not raised Orthodox and married after Taglit application. Predicted probabilities from a logistic regression model controlling for Taglit participation and age. Odds ratio = 0.72,  $t(1,693) = -2.26$ ,  $p < .05$ .

Figure 9 shows the predicted rates of inmarriage for married participants and nonparticipants with different levels of childhood Jewish education, as measured by hours of formal Jewish education in grades 1-12. The *bars* at the bottom of the chart represent the proportion of (non-Orthodox raised) respondents in the sample with a given amount of Jewish education. Very few had more than 2,000 hours of Jewish education. The *dashed lines* represent the likelihood of inmarriage for participants and nonparticipants. As can be seen, Taglit’s

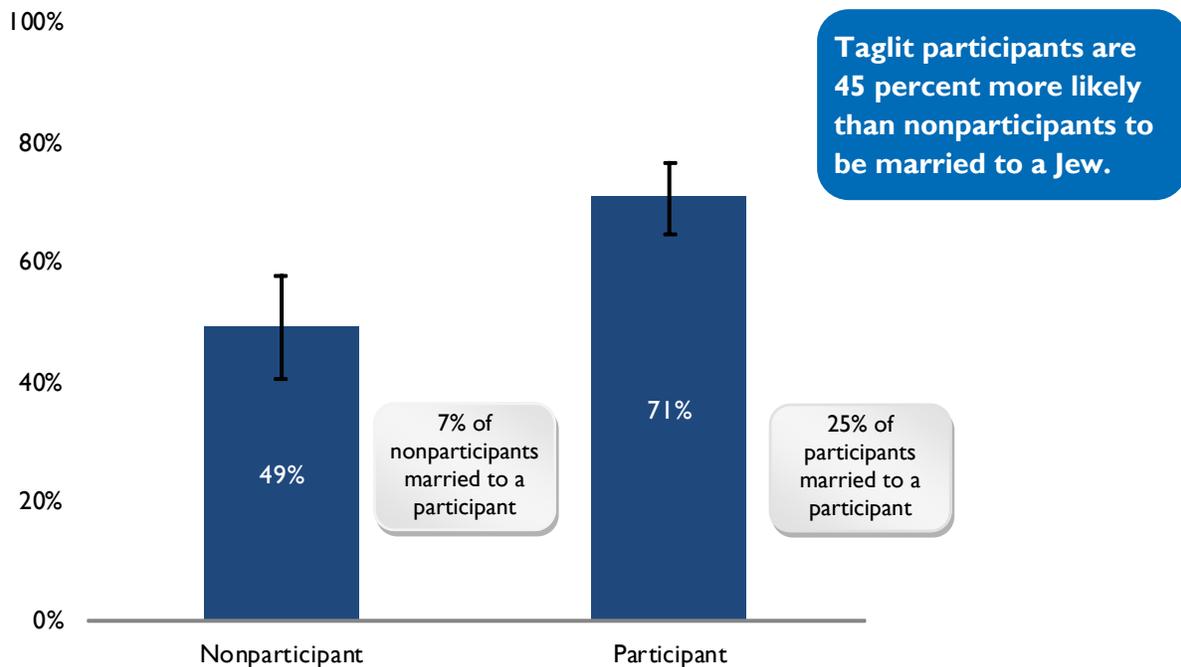
impact on inmarriage is constant across all levels of Jewish education. Overall, among married non-Orthodox respondents, Taglit participants are 45 percent more likely than nonparticipants to be married to a Jew (Figure 10). This figure represents a significant Taglit impact on choice of spouse and is consistent with previous findings (Saxe et al., 2009a; Saxe et al., 2011b).

Figure 9: Inmarriage by Hours of Jewish Education and Taglit Participation (Predicted Probabilities)



Note: Respondents not raised Orthodox and married after Taglit application. Predicted probabilities from a logistic regression model controlling for Taglit participation parental inmarriage and hours of formal Jewish education in grades 1-12. Odds ratio = 2.51,  $t(738) = -3.98$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Figure 10: Inmarriage by Taglit Participation (Predicted Probabilities)



Note: Respondent not raised Orthodox and married after Taglit application. Predicted probabilities from a logistic regression model controlling for Taglit participation and parental inmarriage. Odds ratio = 2.52,  $t(742) = 4.02$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Note that if the Taglit participants who returned to Israel on a long-term program (Yeshiva, university/study abroad, or other long term program) are excluded from the analysis, participants still have a significantly higher probability of marrying a Jew than nonparticipants (67 percent vs. 49 percent, respectively. Odds ratio = 2.13,  $t(694) = 3.22$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This finding indicates that Taglit has a direct impact on inmarriage absent a second organized trip to Israel (cf. Cohen & Kopelowitz, October 2010). However, a decision to participate in a long-term Israel program is in itself an

impact of Taglit and cannot be causally separated from Taglit's impact on choice of spouse.

Twenty-five percent of married participants and seven percent of married nonparticipants are married to Taglit alumni, indicating a potentially extensive impact of the Taglit experience far beyond the alumni pool (most of participants married to Taglit alumni did not meet their spouse on the trip). Insofar as choices regarding a family's Jewish engagement (such as belonging to a Jewish congregation, holiday celebration, Jewish

education of children, etc.) are made by both spouses, a non-trivial percentage of the nonparticipant sample will be making these choices in consultation with a Taglit participant. Future analyses that aim to compare Taglit participants and nonparticipants on these measures may underestimate Taglit's effect due to the influence of participant spouses on nonparticipant respondents.

*Conversion of spouse.* Among respondents whose spouses were not raised by Jews, participants' spouses are over three times more likely to have formally converted to Judaism at the time of the survey than nonparticipants' spouses (12 percent for participants vs. two percent for nonparticipants, odds ratio = 6.49,  $t(1,309) = 3.16$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This finding is in line with those in the previous waves of the study (Saxe et al., 2009a; Saxe et al., 2011b) and is based on a larger number of cases, thereby increasing our confidence in its reliability.

*Importance of marrying a Jew.* Among the unmarried, participants and nonparticipants do not differ in how important it is for them to marry someone Jewish. For both groups, the likelihood of reporting that marrying a Jew is "very important" is just over one quarter. Previous findings differed and suggested that unmarried Taglit participants were somewhat more likely to report that marrying a Jew was important compared to nonparticipants, although the effect was small (Saxe et al., 2009a; Saxe et al., 2011b).

*Wedding officiation.* Jewish commitment may be measured by factors other than choice of spouse. Although this commitment may be difficult to assess, the chosen officiant at a wedding ceremony may be an

indicator of connection to Judaism, especially for intermarried couples. For both inmarried participants and nonparticipants, sole officiation of a Jewish clergy (rabbi or cantor) at the wedding is near universal (92 percent). In the case of intermarried respondents, there are no differences between participants and nonparticipants in their choice of Jewish clergy: thirty percent chose a Jewish clergy to officiate.

## Children

All parents are faced with decisions about how to raise children. Decisions to embrace particular Jewish rituals and to pursue Jewish education of children indicate the continued commitment of contemporary Jewish young adults to their Jewish identities and have the potential to shape the Jewish identity of the next generation of Jews. The study respondents are now at a stage in their lives when they are beginning to make these decisions, allowing for an initial examination of parenting choices of Taglit applicants. Note however, that the number of parents in the study is still small and currently observed patterns may change as more respondents become parents.

*Respondents with children.* Of the Wave 3 respondents who were not raised Orthodox, 17 percent of Taglit participants have at least one child, compared to 31 percent of nonparticipants. This difference is explained primarily by the fact that nonparticipants are older and have been married for longer than participants (an average of 4 years vs. 3.6 years, respectively). About 40 percent of parents have more than one child. Of all parents, 82 percent report, at the time of the survey, that their oldest child is below the age of five.

*Religion of oldest child.* Virtually all parents who are inmarried report that they are raising their oldest child Jewish. Close to half of the parents who are intermarried are raising their oldest child Jewish. Intermarried Taglit participants and nonparticipants are equally likely to be raising their oldest child Jewish.

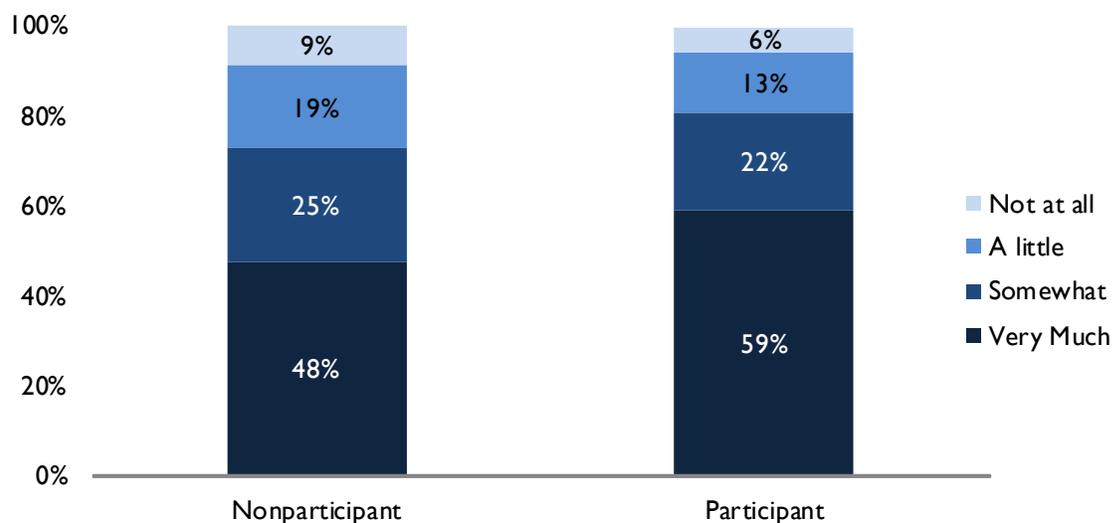
*Circumcision and naming ceremonies.* Virtually all respondents (95 percent) whose oldest child is male and being raised Jewish had a Jewish circumcision or naming ceremony for their son. Among respondents whose oldest child is female and being raised Jewish, 72 percent had a Jewish naming ceremony for their daughter. There are no differences between participants and nonparticipants on either measure.

*Early childhood education.* As in previous waves of the study, there are no differences between participants and nonparticipants

regarding the likelihood of respondents enrolling their young children in Jewish daycare, nursery school, or preschool, even when accounting for the fact that Taglit participants' children are younger. Although the number of cases is still small, it is worth noting that almost half of all respondents with children ages 0-6 are sending their children to a Jewish school.

*Respondents' attitudes toward child-raising in the future.* Among respondents who are not parents, Taglit participants are 23 percent more likely than nonparticipants to view raising their children Jewish as "very important" (Figure 11). This is in line with prior findings (Saxe et al., 2009a; Saxe et al., 2011b).

Figure 11. Importance of Raising Children Jewish by Taglit Participation (Predicted Probabilities)



Note: "Thinking about the future, how important is it to you to raise your children Jewish?" Respondents not raised Orthodox and with no children. Predicted probabilities from an ordinal logistic regression model controlling for Taglit participation and parental inmarriage. Odds ratio = 1.57,  $t(1,193) = 2.83$ ,  $p < .01$ .

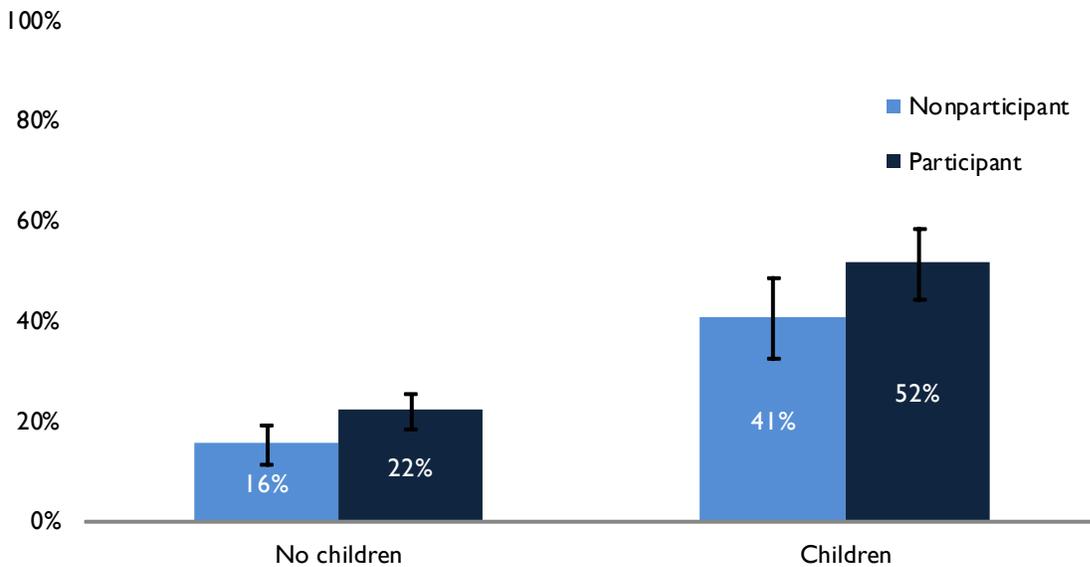
### Jewish Engagement

Individuals express their Jewish engagement in many ways. In addition to the traditional ritual observances and membership in religious organizations, individuals may choose to dedicate their time volunteering for a Jewish organization or give monetary contributions to Jewish philanthropies. Respondents may also express their Jewish connection through support of pro-Israel political organizations. Our understanding of the current generation’s Jewish engagement will certainly change as the sample ages.

*Religious life.* Belonging to a Jewish congregation is strongly predicted by having a child (Sheskin & Kotler-Berkowitz, 2007). Thus, to isolate Taglit's impact, the analysis controls for having a child, since Taglit participants are significantly less likely to be

parents than nonparticipants. For both parents and non-parents, Taglit participation predicted belonging to a synagogue, temple, minyan, havurah, or other Jewish congregation (Figure 12). Among respondents with children, the likelihood of participants belonging to a religious congregation is 52 percent compared to 41 percent for nonparticipants. Among respondents without children, the likelihood of participants belonging to a congregation is 22 percent compared to 16 percent for the nonparticipants. Taglit participants are also significantly more likely to attend Jewish religious services as compared to nonparticipants, although this difference was small.<sup>10</sup> Taglit participation did not have an impact on the extent to which individuals feel confident that they can follow along in a religious service.

Figure 12. Belonging to a Jewish Congregation by Taglit Participation and Having Children (Predicted Probabilities)

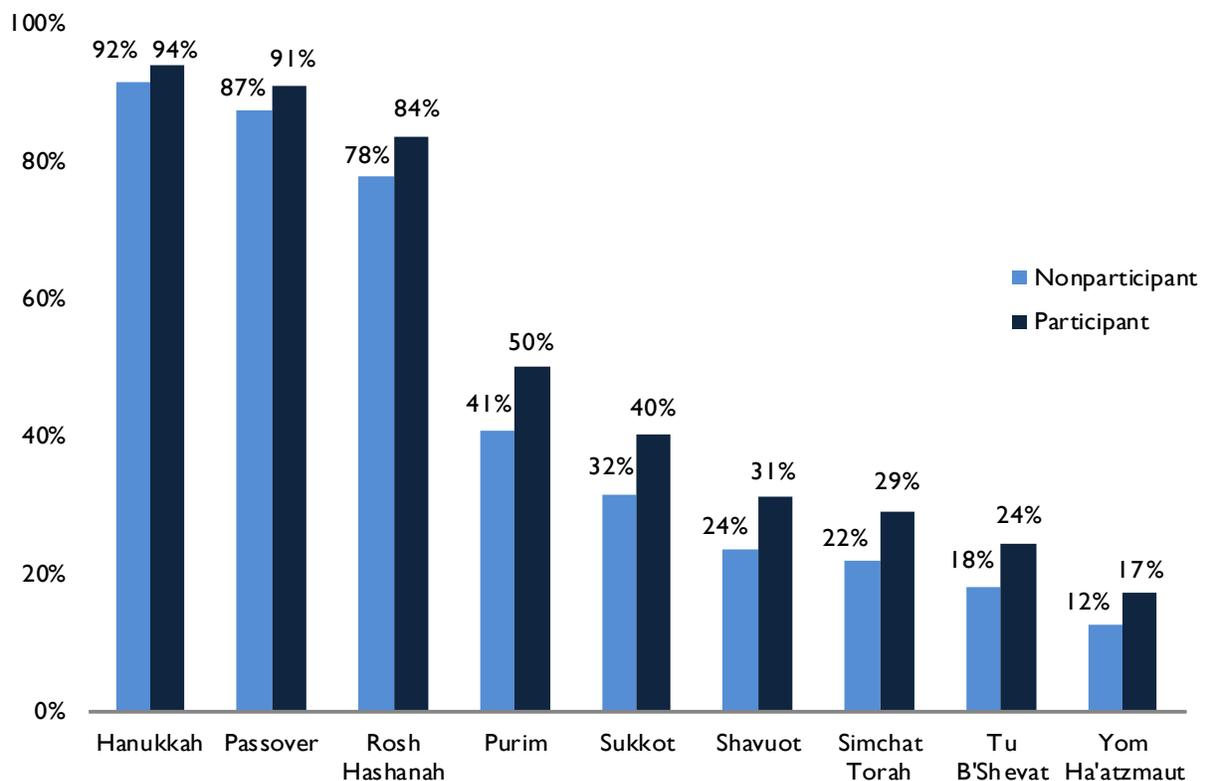


Note: Respondents not raised Orthodox. Predicted probabilities from a logistic regression model controlling for Taglit participation, parental inmarriage and having children. Odds ratio = 1.56,  $t(1,720) = 2.62$ ,  $p < .01$ .

*Shabbat and Jewish holiday celebration.* Taglit participants are slightly more likely than nonparticipants to have a special meal on Shabbat.<sup>11</sup> They are also more likely to celebrate Jewish holidays than nonparticipants (Figure 13). Although Taglit participation did impact holiday celebration overall, it is interesting to note that in the past year a large majority of the respondents, both participants and nonparticipants, celebrated the holidays of Hanukkah, Passover, and Rosh Hashanah.

*Charitable giving and volunteering.* Taglit participants are slightly more likely than nonparticipants to make charitable contributions to Jewish or Israeli organizations or causes.<sup>12</sup> This difference is statistically significant, but very minor. Taglit did not have an impact on participants' likelihood of volunteering under Jewish sponsorship.

Figure 13. Jewish Holiday Celebration by Taglit Participation (Predicted Probabilities)

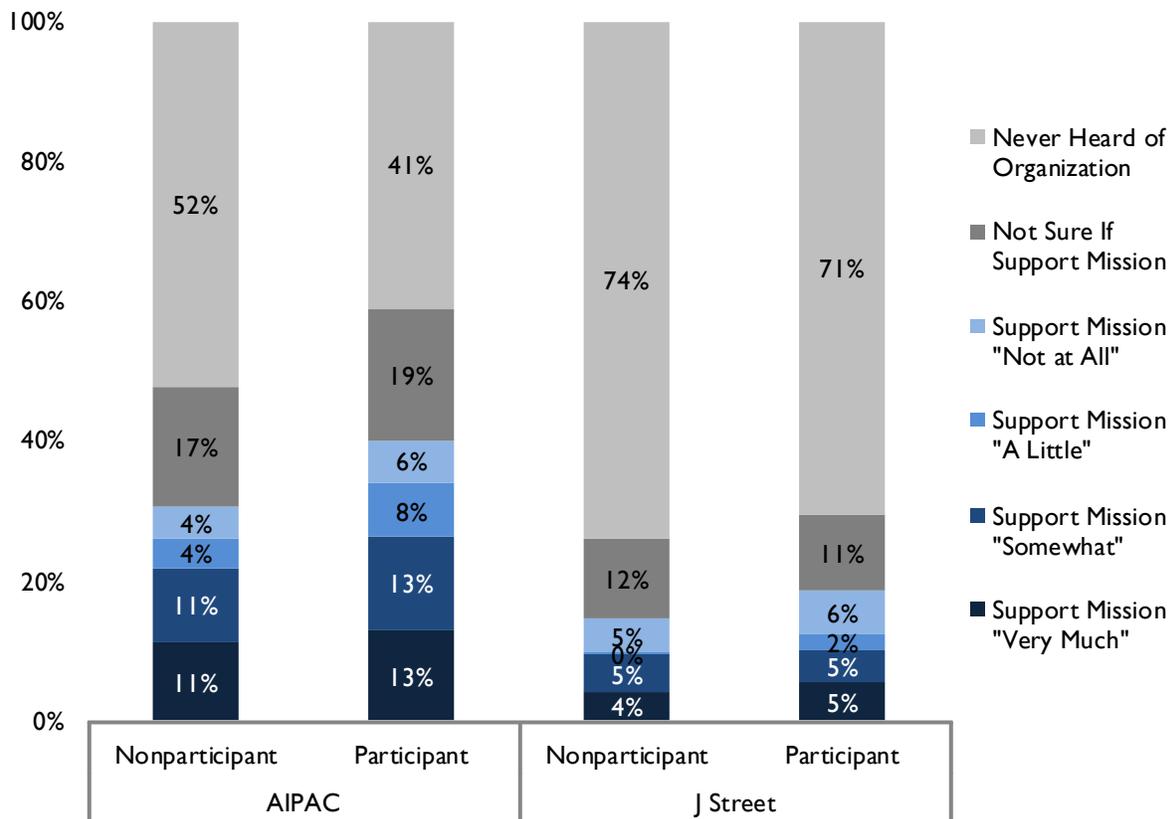


Note: Respondents not raised Orthodox. Mokken scale cumulative percentages. Predicted probabilities from an ordinal logistic regression model controlling for Taglit participation and parental inmarriage. Odds ratio = 1.48,  $t(1,730) = 3.14$ ,  $p < .01$

*Political activities.* The current study explored respondents' knowledge and support for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and J Street. Among the respondents who have heard of and have an opinion of AIPAC and J Street, participants and nonparticipants do not differ in the extent to which they support each

organization's mission. However, participants are more likely to have heard of and have an opinion on AIPAC's mission as compared to nonparticipants (40 percent vs. 31 percent). There are no differences between participants and nonparticipants in terms of their likelihood of hearing of and having an opinion on J Street (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Hearing of and supporting AIPAC and J Street by Taglit participation (Predicted Probabilities)



Note: Respondents not raised Orthodox. Predicted probabilities from multinomial logistic regression models controlling for Taglit participation and parental inmarriage. See Appendix B for coefficients.



## Discussion and Conclusion

The current study, the third in a series of long-term investigations of Taglit's impact, shows further evidence of the robust impact of the Taglit experience on young adult participants from the United States. Six to eleven years after participation in Taglit, the program has a significant impact on Jewish engagement and involvement across a diverse set of attitudinal and behavioral measures. Participants, compared to individuals with similar characteristics who applied to the program but did not go, feel a stronger connection to Israel and feel more confident in explaining the current situation in Israel (even as their specific views on Israeli politics appear to be largely unrelated to Taglit participation).

Perhaps most strikingly, as compared to nonparticipants, participants are more likely to be married to a Jewish partner, and among respondents who are married to someone who was not raised Jewish, participants' spouses are more likely to convert to Judaism. The findings are robust and are a strong indicator of the impact of Taglit on participants' Jewish identities.

In addition to Taglit's impact on inmarriage rates and connection to Israel, participation in the program influences other spheres of Jewish engagement. While the effects are small, participation in Taglit increases the likelihood of belonging to a synagogue, attending religious services, celebrating Jewish holidays, and making charitable contributions to Jewish or Israeli organizations. Supporting results of earlier waves of the study, overall, the findings indicate that, despite the increasing time lag since the Taglit experience, the program has

a positive impact on a broad range of measures having to do with individuals' Jewish identities, relationship to Israel, and connection to the Jewish people.

One of the goals of the current wave of the study was to extend the findings of the previous waves of the long-term study to a population of Taglit applicants that more closely matches those currently applying to the program. The applicant pool during 2001-2004 included a larger proportion of highly engaged individuals. The addition of the 2005 and 2006 cohorts, yields a sample that more closely resemble the diversity of current applicants. Even with the addition of less engaged and less Jewishly educated applicants, the new findings replicate those of previous waves. The substantial differences in attitudes and decisions about marriage between participants and nonparticipants illustrate that the effects of Taglit are not ephemeral, nor are they specific to a group of young adults recruited during a difficult period of Israeli history.

As evidenced by the debate in recent years about the perceived "distancing from Israel" by young adults Jews (Cohen & Kelman, 2010; Sasson et al., 2010a; Sasson et al., 2010b; Sasson et al., 2010; Sasson et al., 2012), there has been substantial skepticism that the "Birthright Israel generation"—Jewish millennials—are interested in becoming full participants in Jewish communal life. Assimilation, in particular as reflected in high rates of intermarriage (Cohen, 2006), was believed to undermine Jewish continuity and was leading to a diminishment of Israel as central to Jewish identity. Although evaluation studies of

Taglit suggested that intensive Israel educational experiences might address these concerns in the short and moderate-term, the current study of the relatively long-term impact of Taglit reinforces these findings.

A great deal of effort is presently being expended to develop follow-up programs for those who participate in Taglit (specifically through Birthright Israel NEXT).<sup>13</sup> In part, the theory is that a ten-day experience is too limited to provide long-term benefits unless additional opportunities are provided for learning and engagement. Follow-up programming for Taglit alumni, as it exists today, began targeting cohorts who participated several years after the respondents included in this study. So although most respondents did not have an opportunity to engage in these programs, the results of the present study do not necessarily mean that such efforts are unnecessary. They may, in fact, enhance the impact of the program and may be important for some groups of participants. What the present results indicate is that there is an independent effect for Taglit, regardless of the nature of the follow-up. As the present program of research evolves, it will be important to understand how engagement is affected by post-trip activities.

When the present study was launched in 2009 (Saxe et al., 2009a), the researchers believed that they would find evidence of Taglit's influence over the long term. But the extent of impact and its consistency is somewhat surprising. For example, it was an unanticipated finding that a significant minority of those who applied, but did not go on the trip are married to Taglit alumni, extending the reach of the program's impact beyond those who have experienced it themselves.

The results of the present study unquestionably provide an optimistic assessment, not only of Taglit, but of the potential for the millennial generation to maintain a strong identification with the Jewish community. Alumni show increased commitment to Jewish continuity and to Israel. Perhaps most importantly, Taglit alumni inmarry at rates greater than would be expected based on socio-demographic research, and at significantly greater rates than others who did not participate. There is much to be learned about the mechanisms underlying these changes and the full story will only unfold as the "Birthright generation" matures further.

### Implications and Future Questions

Why should a ten-day informal education experience have long-lasting impact? What accounts for the changes in the attitudes and behavior that seem evident in the present results? These are the next set of challenges that must be addressed to understand the mechanism underlying Taglit's impact on Jewish young adults. Below we explore some potential theoretical explanations, including social network and social identity theories.

In previous research, we considered whether Taglit's impact was based on its ability to activate social networks in which participants are connected to others who share their Jewish identity (Kadushin, 2010; Kadushin, Wright, Shain, & Saxe, 2012). To the extent that Taglit reinforces participants' Jewish identities and connections to other Jews, Taglit participants may, in fact, influence others in their social networks as they seek to engage with other Jews.

Social influence operating through existing social networks only partially explains the Taglit phenomenon. The social psychological process of group identification (see Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi, & Cotting, 1999; Hogg, 2012) offers another way to understand the Taglit effect. Throughout the trip, participants are provided with multiple indicators of their special status as members of *klal Yisrael* (the Jewish people). From the selection process, where applicants identify themselves as Jewish and describe their background, to the special status they are accorded upon arrival at the airport, to events during the course of their trip, there are a host of symbolic and actual markers of their group status. For many, most central is participation in a *mifgash* (encounter) with Israeli peers that, in part, is designed to increase awareness of commonalities among these groups (Sasson, Mittelberg, Hecht, & Saxe, 2008).<sup>14</sup> Once a member of a group, pride and identification with that group is unlikely to diminish (Swann Jr, Gómez, Jetten, Whitehouse, & Bastian, 2012). Perhaps unsurprising then is the fact that years after Taglit, participants still feel strongly connected to Israel.

Exploration of the mechanisms underlying the observed effects will be increasingly important in the years to come. Thus, it will be critical to examine how social network effects diminish or magnify the effects of the program and under what conditions group identification may be most effectively fostered. In addition, it will be essential to assess how these effects are moderated by subsequent travel to Israel, involvement in the Jewish community, adult Jewish education, and child-rearing experience.

With each subsequent year of analysis, additional information about Jewish identity and the choices of the current “Birthright generation” is revealed. Questions still remain as the sample ages, continues to have children, and makes choices that may or may not reflect the Jewish identities of its members. The continued investigation of the strength of Taglit’s effects will inform our understanding of the Jewish lives of the current young adult generation as they continue to form the backbone of the adult Jewish community.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup>If necessary (e.g., in the case of age differences), statistical adjustments can also be made.

<sup>2</sup>See *Jewish Futures Project: 2012 update Technical Appendices*.

<sup>3</sup>Of the 700, 18 were later found to be ineligible for the program and were removed from analysis.

<sup>4</sup>Response rates for this study were calculated using the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) standard definitions. The response rate is defined as the number of complete interviews with reporting units divided by the number of eligible reporting units in the sample. Response Rate 3 (RR3) estimates what proportion of cases of unknown eligibility is actually eligible and includes them in the denominator. Response Rate 4 (RR4) allocates cases of unknown eligibility as in RR3, but also includes partial interviews (AAPOR, 2000).

<sup>5</sup>Respondents raised Orthodox comprise 14 percent of the sample. These individuals were excluded from the analysis both for programmatic and methodological reasons. Although Taglit is open to all those who are eligible and interested in the program, it was designed to engage those least affiliated with Jewish life. Orthodox young adults participated in significant numbers only during a few early years of the program (2001-2003) and, overall, represent a small percentage of Taglit applicants between 1999 and 2012. For the outcome measures examined in this study (e.g., connection to Israel, confidence in explaining the situation in Israel, marriage to a Jew, desire to raise children Jewish), both participants and nonparticipants in the raised Orthodox group tended to score in the highest (i.e. “most engaged”) possible category, and as such there were no significant differences between the groups on these measures. One explanation for this “ceiling effect” is that, in addition to their already high baseline levels of engagement, the vast majority of Orthodox-raised nonparticipants had visited Israel at least once in their lifetime. Thus, while the overall point estimates for various measures would be higher if those raised Orthodox were included, excluding them provides a more accurate examination of Taglit’s impact.

<sup>6</sup>The lines of the tops of the bars in figure 1 and subsequent figures indicate 95% confidence intervals. Confidence intervals describe the amount of uncertainty around an estimate. If we were to repeatedly draw a new sample, conduct new interviews, and run new analyses the resulting estimates would fall within the confidence intervals 95% of the time. Non-overlapping confidence intervals indicate results that are significantly different at the .05 level.

<sup>7</sup>Note that the sample was designed to include 50 percent of respondents who were above the age of 30 when they were recruited to the study. Design weights applied during analysis correct for this.

<sup>8</sup>Question wording was taken from the annual surveys of the American Jewish Committee.

<sup>9</sup>Among those not raised Orthodox, 22 participants and 17 nonparticipants were already married at the time of their application to Taglit. These individuals were excluded from all analyses of the impact of Taglit on marriage.

<sup>10</sup>Respondents not raised Orthodox. Predicted probabilities from an ordinal logistic regression model controlling for Taglit participation and parental inmarriage. Odds ratio = 1.45,  $t(1,730) = 2.80$ ,  $p < .01$ .

<sup>11</sup>Respondents not raised Orthodox. Predicted probabilities from an ordinal logistic regression model controlling for Taglit participation and parental inmarriage. Odds ratio = 1.37,  $t(1,726) = 2.31$ ,  $p < .05$ .

<sup>12</sup>Respondents not raised Orthodox. Predicted probabilities from a logistic regression model controlling for Taglit participation, parental inmarriage and age. Odds ratio = 1.50,  $t(1,718) = 2.88$ ,  $p < .01$ .

<sup>13</sup>See [http://convio.birthrightisrael.com/site/PageServer?pagename=next\\_homepage](http://convio.birthrightisrael.com/site/PageServer?pagename=next_homepage).

<sup>14</sup>For participants after 2005, all groups included a mifgash experience of at least five days. Prior to that time, the length of the mifgashim varied.

## References

- AAPOR. (2000). *Standard definitions: Final dispositions of case codes and outcome rates for surveys*. Lenexa, KS: American Association for Public Opinion Research.
- Cohen, S. M. (2006). *A tale of two Jewries: The "inconvenient truth" for American Jews*. New York: Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation.
- Cohen, S. M., & Kelman, A. Y. (2010). Thinking about distancing from Israel. *Contemporary Jewry*, 20(2-3), 287-296.
- Cohen, S. M., & Kopelowitz, E. (October 2010). *Journeys to Israel: The impact of longer-term programs upon Jewish engagement & Israel attachment*. Masa Israel Journey.
- Deaux, K., Reid, A., Mizrahi, K., & Cotting, D. (1999). Connecting the person to the social: The functions of social identification. In T. R. Tyler, R. M. Kramer & O. P. John (Eds.), *The psychology of the social self*. (pp. 91-113). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Hogg, M. A. (2012). Social identity and the psychology of groups. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity (2nd ed.)*. (pp. 502-519). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Kadushin, C. (2010). Social networks and Jews. *Contemporary Jewry*, 31, 53-73. doi: 10.1007/s12397-010-9030-y
- Kadushin, C., Wright, G., Shain, M., & Saxe, L. (2012). How socially integrated into mainstream America are young American Jews? *Contemporary Jewry*, 32(2), 20.
- Sasson, T., Kadushin, C., & Saxe, L. (2010a). Trends in American Jewish attachment to Israel: An assessment of the "distancing" hypothesis. *Contemporary Jewry*, 30(2-3), 297-319.
- Sasson, T., Kadushin, C., & Saxe, L. (2010b). On sampling, evidence and theory: Concluding remarks on the distancing debate. *Contemporary Jewry*, 30(2-3), 149-153.
- Sasson, T., Mittelberg, D., Hecht, S., & Saxe, L. (2008). *Encountering the other, finding oneself: The Birthright Israel mifgash*. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University.
- Sasson, T., Phillips, B., Kadushin, C., & Saxe, L. (2010). *Still connected: American Jewish attitudes about Israel*. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University.
- Sasson, T., Phillips, B., Wright, G., Kadushin, C., & Saxe, L. (2012). Understanding young adult attachment to Israel: Period, lifecycle, and generational dynamics. *Contemporary Jewry*, 32(1).
- Saxe, L., & Chazan, B. (2008). *Ten days of Birthright Israel: A journey in young adult identity*. Lebanon, NH: Brandeis University Press/ University Press of New England.

- Saxe, L., Kadushin, C., Hecht, S., Phillips, B., Kelner, S., & Rosen, M. (2004). *Birthright Israel: Evaluation highlights 2004*. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University.
- Saxe, L., Kadushin, C., Kelner, S., Rosen, M. I., & Yereslove, E. (2001). *The impact of birthright israel*. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University.
- Saxe, L., Kadushin, C., Kelner, S., Rosen, M. I., & Yereslove, E. (2002). *A mega-experiment in Jewish Education: The impact of birthright israel*. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University.
- Saxe, L., Phillips, B., Boxer, M., Hecht, S., Wright, G., & Sasson, T. (2008). *Taglit-Birthright Israel: Evaluation of the 2007-2008 North American cohorts*. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University.
- Saxe, L., Phillips, B., Sasson, T., Hecht, S., Shain, M., Wright, G., & Kadushin, C. (2009a). *Generation Birthright Israel: The impact of an Israel experience on Jewish identity and choices*. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University.
- Saxe, L., Phillips, B., Sasson, T., Hecht, S., Shain, M., Wright, G., & Kadushin, C. (2009b). *Generation Birthright Israel: The impact of an Israel experience on Jewish identity and choices, Technical Appendices*. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University.
- Saxe, L., Phillips, B., Sasson, T., Hecht, S., Shain, M., Wright, G., & Kadushin, C. (2011). Intermarriage: The impact and lessons of Taglit-Birthright Israel. *Contemporary Jewry*, 31(2), 151-172. doi: 10.1007/s12397-010-9058-z
- Saxe, L., Sasson, T., & Hecht, S. (2006). *Taglit-Birthright Israel: Impact on Jewish identity, peoplehood, and connection to Israel*. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University.
- Saxe, L., Sasson, T., Hecht, S., Phillips, B., Shain, M., Wright, G., & Kadushin, C. (2011a). *Jewish Futures Project, The impact of Taglit-Birthright Israel: 2010 update, Technical Appendices*. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University.
- Saxe, L., Sasson, T., Hecht, S., Phillips, B., Shain, M., Wright, G., & Kadushin, C. (2011b). *Jewish Futures Project, The impact of Taglit-Birthright Israel: 2010 update*. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University.
- Saxe, L., Sasson, T., Phillips, B., Hecht, S., & Wright, G. (2007). *Taglit-Birthright Israel evaluation: 2007 North American cohorts*. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University.
- Sheskin, I. M., & Kotler-Berkowitz, L. (Summer 2007). Synagogues, Jewish Community Centers, and other Jewish organizations: Who joins, who doesn't? *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, 82(3).
- Swann Jr, W. B., Gómez, A., Jetten, J., Whitehouse, H., & Bastian, B. (2012). When group membership gets personal: A theory of identity fusion. *Psychological Review*, 119(3), 441-456. doi: 10.1037/a0028589
- Taglit-Birthright Israel. (2012). *Standards & Requirements, The educational platform: STAGE 3*.



The Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University is a multi-disciplinary research institute dedicated to the study of American Jewry and religious and cultural identity.

The Steinhardt Social Research Institute, hosted at CMJS, is committed to the development and application of innovative approaches to socio-demographic research for the study of Jewish, religious, and cultural identity.

---

Brandeis University



Maurice and Marilyn Cohen  
Center for Modern Jewish Studies