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Does Taglit-Birthright Israel Foster Long-Distance Nationalism?

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Taglit-Birthright Israel has brought hundreds of thousands of diaspora Jewish young adults on tours of Israel. Drawing on data from a large-scale program evaluation, we ask how the program affects participants' feelings of homeland attachment and political views on contentious homeland issues. North Americans who traveled to Israel with Taglit between 2010 and 2012 were surveyed together with a comparison group of applicants to the program who did not participate. In multivariate analysis, Taglit sharply increases feelings of connection to Israel but has no effect on attitudes concerning the future of Jewish settlements in the West Bank. The program modestly increases scores on a "favorability" scale and modestly increases opposition to a possible division of Jerusalem in a future peace deal. In contrast to Benedict Anderson's theory of long-distance nationalism, the findings suggest that feelings of homeland connection can be fostered without triggering ethnonationalist attitudes associated with the political right.

INTRODUCTION

Taglit-Birthright Israel is an initiative designed to engage young adult diaspora Jews with Israel. The program targets 18- to 26-year-olds and brings them to Israel for 10-day educational tours, joined by their homeland peers. Funded by private philanthropy, the Israeli government, and federations of Jewish charities, the program was launched in 1999. Since then, Taglit has brought more than 350,000 diaspora Jewish young adults to Israel and has

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engaged the participation of more than 60,000 of their Israeli peers.¹ In terms of its scale, Taglit is the largest program of diaspora heritage tourism and among the largest Jewish educational endeavors in the world.²

Taglit's trips are outsourced to more than a dozen tour organizations that recruit participants either directly or through partner organizations overseas. The Taglit organization advertises the program, registers the participants, funds the tour providers and—most importantly for our purposes—regulates the trips' educational content. Taglit's educational guidelines require that every tour group be accompanied by a certified Israeli tour guide and include certain core features, including a visit to a Holocaust memorial site (for example, Yad Vashem), a Jewish historical site (for example, the City of David), and a site related to Zionist history (for example, Independence Hall, where David Ben Gurion declared Israeli statehood in 1948). All trips also visit the Western Wall, Masada, and a site related to the modern state of Israel, such as the Knesset or the Supreme Court.

In terms of program content, the educational guidelines require that tour guides address three major themes: the “narrative of the Jewish people,” “contemporary Israel,” and the “ideas and values of the Jewish people.”³ Ethnographic research carried out on a sample of buses in the mid-2000s identified three “master narratives” that tour guides employed to organize and give coherence to their presentations at various tour sites.⁴ The “Land of Israel” narrative highlighted the continuous presence of the Jewish people in the region. The “ashes to redemption” narrative described modern Zionism and the establishment of Israel as a triumphant response to anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. The “besieged Israel” narrative described the Jewish state's various wars waged against hostile neighbors.

In regard to political communication, the program has consistently required that tour guides give a balanced presentation of diverse viewpoints and avoid one-sided political advocacy. The current guidelines formulate Taglit's policy in the following manner:

Taglit-Birthright Israel . . . is committed to a balanced presentation of alternative views on complex issues, and it aims to enable participants to understand the subtleties of diversity within a contemporary democratic society. Taglit-Birthright Israel does not promulgate any specific ideology about forms of Jewish practice, religion, politics or the conflict between Israel and some of its neighbors; Trip Organizers should therefore introduce the existence of multiple perspectives within the context of the broader discourse in contemporary Israeli society.⁵

During the 2000s, a small number of Taglit trips were sponsored by advocacy organizations, including the America-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and the Union of Progressive Zionists (UPZ). In 2011, Taglit announced that it would no longer permit trips to be sponsored by

advocacy organizations. Rather than permit trips that promote a single ideological viewpoint, Taglit explained, the organization would continue to require that *all of its* trips provide a balanced, multiperspectival view of Israel.⁶

Observational studies of Taglit have tended to support the organization's claim that its trips mostly achieve political balance with respect to contentious issues. In *Tours that Bind*, Shaul Kelner summarized the evidence concerning overt political content in Taglit's coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict:

At the most prosaic level, if we can call it that, there are few grounds for concluding that the enterprise as a whole gives preference to one set of policy options vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The spectrum of mainstream Israeli Jewish opinion is given discursive expression on the tours. This spectrum ranges from support for withdrawal from the Occupied Territories and the establishment of a free and independent Palestine, on the one end, to support for retaining in perpetuity the biblical patrimony of Judea and Samaria, which was restored to Jewish sovereignty in 1967, on the other. Individual guides vary in the extent to which their presentations hew to an ambiguous center or skew toward either of the poles.⁷

Descriptions of the tours as generally balanced in their treatment of contentious political issues have also been published by journalists and former trip participants.⁸

Other observers, however, contend that the program has a right-wing political bias. Writing in *The Economist*, David Landau, the former editor-in-chief of the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, expressed concern that Taglit's efforts to strengthen Jewish identity may be "coloured by [Israel's] rightist religious *zeitgeist*." If so, he fears that the program "will shore up an aggressive pro-Israel loyalism that denies the only feasible future for a Jewish, democratic Israel: sharing the land with a Palestinian state."⁹ On tour to promote his book, *The Crisis of Zionism*, journalism professor Peter Beinart criticized the program as "intellectually insulting and dishonest" for not introducing participants to the Palestinian point of view. "Ethically, how do we explain the fact that we send all of these kids to Israel and pretend as if essentially Palestinians don't exist?"¹⁰ Some former trip participants, as well, have published essays charging Taglit tour guides with making disparaging remarks about Arabs and criticizing trip itineraries for ignoring the "green line" border during visits to the Golan Heights and Dead Sea.¹¹

The critics' suspicion regarding right-wing bias derives in part from Taglit's funding mechanism, which includes support from the government of Israel (currently led by a right-of-center coalition) and donations from individual philanthropists who are outspoken advocates of nationalistic views.

The critics have expressed particular concern about the contribution of more than \$100 million by Sheldon Adelson, a supporter of the Zionist Organization of America and Republican presidential candidates.¹² But the critics may also be expressing a more general skepticism concerning programs that aim to intentionally cultivate homeland sentiment among diaspora teenagers and young adults. As the size and wealth of diaspora communities in North America has increased, the number of such programs has multiplied.¹³ Although Taglit is the largest of its type, similar tourism and study-abroad programs engage diaspora youth of Armenia, Taiwan, Japan, China, Ireland, Iceland, and Ethiopia. All such programs encourage homeland sentiment by highlighting and emphasizing common ethnic origins. As a result, many believe such programs inevitably foster ethnonationalism, a political orientation that bolsters conservative forces in the homeland.

The widespread notion that homeland sentiment tends to develop along ethnonational lines is rooted in the work of Benedict Anderson.¹⁴ A leading scholar of nationalism, Anderson attributed the “long distance nationalism” of diasporans to their feelings of dislocation and shame and to their lack of political accountability. Not fully integrated in their host countries and beset by misgivings about having abandoned their homelands, diasporans look to their “imagined *heimat*” for political identity and a sense of rootedness.¹⁵ The homeland thus serves as the “phantom bedrock” of an “embattled metropolitan ethnic identity.” Eager to demonstrate total identification with the homeland and unaccountable for the practical consequences of the policies they support, they tend to favor maximalist, militant, ethnonationalist policies. As practitioners of “politics without responsibility,” they are easily manipulated by homeland political actors and tend to embrace more uncompromising positions than their homeland counterparts.¹⁶

Anderson’s long-distance nationalism hypothesis has been widely employed to explain diaspora attitudes and political activity. Case studies have examined the roles of diaspora Croats and Serbs in the independence movements that precipitated the breakup of Yugoslavia,¹⁷ of diaspora Indians in the funding of Hindu nationalist organizations,¹⁸ and of diaspora Tamils in the financing of the Tamil Tiger insurgency.¹⁹ However, in recent years, the long distance nationalism thesis has been challenged by scholars who find that the engagement of diasporas with their homelands can develop along diverse political pathways. As contributors to a recent collection of studies published by the United Nations contend, “diasporas play varied roles in conflict, and different groups and individuals within the same diaspora may have different approaches, organizations, interests and objectives within the same conflict.”²⁰ As a consequence, diasporans occasionally play the role of “peace-makers” as well as “peace-wreckers.”²¹

The long-distance nationalism hypothesis has been applied—by Anderson and others—to explain American Jewish support for Israel in general and

the Taglit-Birthright Israel program in particular.²² This particular application of the theory is problematic in several respects. By-and-large, American Jews are well integrated in American society, and they are not emigrants of the modern state of Israel. Although an ancient diaspora that claims its origin in the Biblical Land of Israel, most diaspora Jews trace their family lineage back to other places, including mostly Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. Moreover, American Jewish advocacy on behalf of causes in Israel runs the ideological gamut from right (Zionist Organization of America [ZOA]) to center (American Israel Public Affairs Committee [AIPAC], American Jewish Committee) to left (J Street, Jewish Voice for Peace).²³ Only about 2% of American Jewish donations to causes in Israel goes to support West Bank settlements; a larger portion supports the human rights and civil rights organizations of the left.²⁴ In terms of political opinions concerning the Israel-Palestinian conflict, American Jews appear similar to their Israeli counterparts—or somewhat to their left.²⁵

Notwithstanding the heterogeneity of American Jewish attitudes and political behavior, there are good theoretical grounds for the conjecture that Taglit—and programs like it—have the effect of bolstering support for the Israeli right. As noted, the aim and method of Taglit is to lift participants out of their everyday environments—saturated with diverse identity commitments—and to highlight, to emphasize, and to dramatize the centrality of their Jewish identities. This is done in part through the program's structured exchange between diaspora visitors and Israeli peers, an encounter that draws out the Jewish commonalities that unite the visitors with one another and their homeland counterparts.²⁶ It is also accomplished through tour narratives that stress the historical continuity of the Jewish people and its links to the Land of Israel.²⁷ In the Israeli context, where much political activity is understood as a struggle between “democratic” and “Jewish” value commitments—and in which these terms are often mapped onto the political field in terms of left and right—a program that strengthens diasporans' Jewish identities might reasonably be expected to move their political loyalties and policy preferences to the right.²⁸

The present study explores the impact of Taglit Birthright-Israel on the political attitudes of trip participants. Taglit is important because of the sheer size of the program and the salience of the issues it engages in the public discourse. With hundreds of thousands of alumni in the younger generation, the program is already shaping the attitudes and behavior of American Jewry; it could, as a result, influence US and Israeli policies.²⁹ The study also addresses the related theoretical question of the link between homeland sentiment and political attitudes. Addressing Anderson's concept of long-distance nationalism, the study asks: Does Taglit, a program that encourages homeland attachment, simultaneously foster ethnonationalist political attitudes? More generally, do organized efforts to promote homeland attachment inevitably generate ethnonationalist sentiments?

PREVIOUS STUDIES OF TAGLIT'S IMPACT

The impact of Taglit-Birthright Israel has been the subject of a great deal of social scientific research—much of it by our research group. Previous studies have documented the program's impact on feelings of connection to Israel and the Jewish people, engagement with the organized Jewish community, religious practice, dating and marriage, and attitudes about raising children.³⁰

One previous study examined Taglit's impact on participants' views on contentious homeland issues, including the future of Jerusalem and Jewish West Bank settlements. Questions on these topics were posed to applicants to the program, including both trip participants and a control group of applicants who did not go on to participate 6–11 years after the trips.³¹ Trip participants and nonparticipants did not differ in their likelihood of having an opinion about the future of Jerusalem and West Bank settlements. Among those who had an opinion on Jerusalem, Taglit participants and nonparticipants were 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 liberalizing 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.”³² Overall, this research concluded that Taglit had negligible impact on the views of participants on the politically contentious issues central to the peace process.

The present study of Taglit's impact on attitudes differs from previous research in three ways. First, we examine a broader range of political attitudes, including attitudes about contentious characterizations of Israeli state and society. Second, we examine more recent cohorts of applicants and participants to the program. Third, we examine Taglit's impact 6–18 months after the trips rather than over the longer term.

METHODOLOGY

The article draws on a survey of North American applicants to the Taglit-Birthright Israel program. The survey was conducted July–September 2012 among applicants to the winter 2010–11, summer 2011, and winter 2011–12 Taglit trips. All eligible applicants ($N = 60,470$) were sent an e-mail inviting them to participate in an online survey. The overall response rate was 15%: 17% for trip participants and 13% for applicants who did not go on to participate.

The response rate is typical for online surveys (the average response rate in 2012 for Pew Research Center surveys was 9%). The key issue in assessing the significance of the response rate is whether nonrespondents differ from respondents in relation to the variables of interest. Previous surveys of Taglit applicants have found that increasing the response rate through intensive

TABLE 1 Connection to Israel (Weighted Frequencies)

“To what extent do you feel a connection to Israel?”	%
Not at all	13
A little	23
Somewhat	31
Very much	33
Total	100
“How often in the past month did you actively seek news of Israel?”	
Never	26
Once	25
Once a week	26
Every few days	15
Once a day or more	8
Total	100

follow-up does not change the distribution of responses.³³ In the present survey, because the response rate for participants was higher than nonparticipants, we must also consider the possibility of differential response bias. To assess whether the lower response rate among nonparticipants might be a source of bias, we compared the responses of nonparticipants and participants to questions about general political orientation on the liberal-conservative continuum and political-party preference. No differences were found between the two groups in relation to these measures of political orientation, increasing our confidence in the validity of the comparison group.³⁴

The survey included questions about feelings of connection to Israel, perceptions of Israel, and political views on contentious issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The analyses that follow compare the feelings, perceptions, and political views of trip participants with the control groups of applicant nonparticipants. Small differences in the background characteristics of participants and nonparticipants are controlled through multivariate regression. To give a sense of the relative magnitude of the estimated impact of the trip on different outcome measures, predicted probabilities derived from the regression models in question will be presented for participants and nonparticipants.

CONNECTION TO ISRAEL

The survey included two questions—one attitudinal and one behavioral—that probed the overall connection to Israel among respondents. Both participants and nonparticipants were asked “To what extent do you feel a connection to Israel?” and “How often in the past month did you actively seek news about Israel?” Table 1 shows the weighted frequencies for all survey respondents, including Taglit participants and nonparticipants.

To analyze Taglit's impact, ordered logistic regressions of these questions on Taglit participation and factors associated with Taglit participation were performed. The results of these regressions are presented in Table 2. For both questions, the coefficient for Taglit participation is positive and highly significant. The substantive magnitude of Taglit's effect can be most easily seen by computing predicted probabilities from the model for Taglit participants and nonparticipants. Holding all other variables in the model at their mean values, the probability of participants feeling "very much" connected to Israel is nearly three times that of nonparticipants (44% versus 15%). Similarly, the probability of participants seeking news of Israel more than once weekly is nearly twice that of nonparticipants (27% versus 14%).

PERCEPTIONS OF ISRAEL

Taglit's impact on perceptions of Israel was assessed by eliciting responses to a series of statements. Table 3 shows the bank of statements and weighted frequencies for all survey respondents.

To assess whether these questions tap one or more underlying or latent variables, a factor analysis was performed.³⁵ One factor emerged comprised of five items: Israel is *not* violating the human rights of the Palestinians, *not* treating non-Jews as second-class citizens, *not* being a society with significant economic inequality, being part of God's plan for the Jewish people, and upholding the social and political equality of all its citizens. These five items scale together with a Cronbach's α of .82. These items touch on disparate aspects of Israeli state and society and do not seem to reflect a specific political or social perspective. They do, however, seem to reflect an overall favorable evaluation of Israel. Consequently, this factor is interpreted as a construct of general "favorability" towards Israel. A scale was also created to represent a respondent's average response across all five items. The scale has a range from 1 to 6, reflecting the six possible responses for each question.

TABLE 2 Ordered Logistic Regression of Connection to Israel and Frequency of Seeking News about Israel on Taglit Participation and Variables Associated with Taglit Participation

	Connection to Israel	Seeking news about Israel
Went on Taglit	1.47 (0.05)***	0.78 (0.05)***
Orthodox	1.77 (0.16)***	1.14 (0.14)***
Age at application	-0.11 (0.01)***	-0.04 (0.01)***
Times applied to Taglit	0.07 (0.02)**	-0.01 (0.02)
In Israel prior to application	1.23 (0.08)***	0.67 (0.07)***
Parents both Jewish	0.35 (0.05)***	0 (0.04)

Note. Standard errors in parentheses.

*** $p < .01$. ** $p < .001$.

TABLE 3 Perceptions of Israel (Weighted Frequencies)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total %
Israel is a world center for high-tech innovation.	1	3	7	22	32	36	100
Israel is under constant threat from hostile neighbors who seek its destruction.	1	2	5	20	31	41	100
Israel was established as a refuge for persecuted Jews.	2	4	7	24	38	25	100
Israel upholds the social and political equality of all of its citizens.	5	11	18	30	24	11	100
Israel is part of God's plan for the Jewish people.	18	15	14	25	15	13	100
Israel is guilty of violating the human rights of the Palestinian people.	17	23	20	23	10	7	100
Israel treats non-Jews as second-class citizens.	15	27	22	22	9	5	100
Israel is a society with significant economic inequality.	3	14	27	32	17	7	100

To analyze Taglit's impact, a linear regression of the five-item favorability scale on Taglit participation and factors associated with Taglit participation was performed (see Table 4). Once again the coefficient for Taglit participation is positive and significant after controlling for other factors associated with Taglit participation. Holding all other variables at their mean values, the predicted scale score for participants is 3.80, compared to 3.61 for nonparticipants, representing a 5% increase in favorability towards Israel due to Taglit participation. This is a substantially smaller effect than the effects observed in relation to "connection to Israel" and "seeking news of Israel."³⁶

TABLE 4 Linear Regression on Israel Favorability Scale

	Favorability scale
Went on Taglit	0.18 (0.03)***
Orthodox	0.98 (0.06)***
Age at application	-0.06 (0.01)***
Times applied to Taglit	0.03 (0.01)*
In Israel prior to application	0.03 (0.04)
Parents both Jewish	0.27 (0.03)***

Note. Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

There were three additional items that the factor analysis suggested were not part of the construct discussed above. Ordered logistic regressions of these items on Taglit participation and factors associated with Taglit participation were also performed. Controlling for all other variables, Taglit participation was positively (with $p < .001$) associated with viewing Israel as a world center of high-tech innovation, viewing Israel as under constant threat, and viewing Israel as a refuge for persecuted Jews.

WEST BANK AND JERUSALEM

Respondents were asked about two contentious issues related to the Israel-Palestine conflict. In relation to the future of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, we asked the following: "As part of a permanent settlement with the Palestinians, should Israel be willing to dismantle Jewish settlements in the West Bank?" The possible response categories were "all," "some," "none," or "don't know." In relation to Jerusalem, we asked: "In the framework of a permanent peace with the Palestinians, should Israel be willing to compromise on Jerusalem's status as a united city under Israeli jurisdiction?" The possible responses were "yes," "no," or "don't know." Table 5 shows the weighted frequencies for all respondents.

To analyze Taglit's impact, multinomial logistic regressions of these questions on Taglit participation, and factors associated with participation, were performed (see Table 6).³⁷ In relation to West Bank settlements, participants were significantly more likely to have an opinion at all. Holding other variables at their mean, Taglit participants were 11% more likely to have an opinion compared to nonparticipants (62% versus 56%). There was, however, no significant Taglit effect on the distribution of opinions across response categories. Thus, in relation to dismantling Jewish West Bank settlements in a peace agreement, participation in Taglit had no impact.

In relation to the question concerning division of Jerusalem, participants were similarly more likely to have an opinion (see Table 7). Holding all

TABLE 5 West Bank and Jerusalem Views (Weighted Frequencies)

“As part of a permanent settlement with the Palestinians, should Israel be willing to dismantle settlements on the West Bank?”		%
All		13
Some		30
None		17
Don't know		40
Total		100
“In the framework of a permanent peace with the Palestinians, should Israel be willing to compromise on Jerusalem's status as a united city under Israeli jurisdiction?”		
No		39
Yes		29
Don't know		33
Total		100

TABLE 6 Multinomial Logistic Regression on Attitudes towards Dismantling Settlements in the West Bank

	Dismantle all	Dismantle some	Dismantle none	Don't know
Went on Taglit Orthodox	0.04 (0.09)	Omitted Category	0 (0.08)	-0.25 (0.06)***
Age at application	-1.26 (0.6)*		2.03 (0.19)***	0.37 (0.21)
Times applied to Taglit	0.05 (0.02)**		-0.08 (0.02)***	0.01 (0.01)
In Israel prior to application	-0.17 (0.04)***		0.01 (0.04)	-0.07 (0.03)*
Parents both Jewish	0.01 (0.11)		-0.33 (0.11)**	-0.59 (0.09)***
	-0.17 (0.08)*		0.43 (0.08)***	0.13 (0.06)*

Note. Coefficients represent change relative to the omitted category. Standard errors in parentheses.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 7 Multinomial Logistic Regression on Attitudes towards Compromising on the Status of Jerusalem

	No to compromise	Yes to compromise	Don't know
Went on Taglit Orthodox	Omitted Category	-0.26 (0.06)***	-0.33 (0.06)***
Age at application		-2.67 (0.34)***	-1.51 (0.18)***
Times applied to Taglit		0.05 (0.01)***	0.03 (0.01)**
In Israel prior to application		-0.04 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)
Parents both Jewish		-0.22 (0.09)*	-0.62 (0.09)***
		-0.49 (0.06)***	-0.22 (0.06)***

Note. Coefficients represent change relative to the omitted category. Standard errors in parentheses.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

other variables at their means, participants were 8% more likely to have an opinion compared to nonparticipants (68% versus 63%). In addition, Taglit participation was associated with a lower likelihood of believing that Israel should compromise on the status of Jerusalem. Holding other variables at their mean, participants were 24% more likely to oppose compromise (41% versus 34%). Thus, on the question of Jerusalem's future, Taglit participants are slightly more likely to have an opinion and were more strongly opposed to division of the city.

DISCUSSION

The present study finds that Taglit had a large effect on participants' feelings of connection to Israel and attention to news about Israel. Specifically, compared to the comparison group of nonparticipants, the likelihood that participants would feel very connected to Israel was three times larger, and the likelihood that participants would frequently seek news of Israel was twice as large. The program had much smaller but statistically significant effects on perceptions of Israel and attitudes regarding the future of Jerusalem. It had no effect on attitudes regarding West Bank settlements.

Taglit's main effect on disaporans' perceptions of Israel was to foster a generally favorable evaluation of the Israeli state and society. Participants were less likely to believe that Israel is guilty of violating the human rights of Palestinians and of treating non-Jews as second-class citizens; and they were less likely to view Israel as a country with significant economic inequality. They were more likely to believe that Israel upholds the social and political equality of all of its citizens, and that Israel is part of God's plan for the Jewish people. Alongside the favorability effect, Taglit increased the tendency to view Israel as a refuge for persecuted Jews, a world center for high-tech innovation, and under constant threat from hostile neighbors.

The current study's finding that Taglit has no influence on attitudes about West Bank settlements echoes the results of a previous study.³⁸ Taglit's impact on participants' views concerning the possible division of Jerusalem in the context of a peace deal, however, was not previously observed. There are several possible explanations for this discrepancy. Previous studies examined samples of participants 6–11 years following trips that occurred during 2001–06; the current study draws on a sample of participants 6–18 months after trips that occurred 2010–12. The finding that Taglit increases opposition to dividing Jerusalem may therefore reflect either changes in the program from the early 2000s to the late 2000s or the shorter duration of time that elapsed in the current study between the trips and the follow-up survey. Given that there were no obviously relevant changes in the design of the program or instructions to tour guides, we are inclined to favor the latter interpretation. It is therefore possible that the Jerusalem effect observed in the present study is

a short-term phenomenon that fades over time. In contrast, both the current research with alumni of recent trips and previous research with older alumni of earlier trips find a robust trip effect on emotional attachment to Israel.

Does Taglit's impact on perceptions of Israel and attitudes about Jerusalem mean that the program fosters diaspora "long-distance nationalism"? In the Israeli-Palestinian context, opposition to dividing Jerusalem and viewing Israel favorably—including believing that Israel does not violate Palestinian human rights—are attitudes with political consequences. Supporters of the peace process and partisans of the left may contend that a program that fosters these attitudes qualifies as a "peace wrecker" rather than "peace maker."³⁹ Nevertheless, these attitudes are quite common both among American Jews and Israelis, as reflected in the responses of nonparticipants in the current study and in public opinion surveys. For example, the American Jewish Committee's 2011 survey of American Jewish opinion—which posed an identically worded question about Jerusalem—reported that 59% of American Jews opposed any compromise that would divide the city.⁴⁰ Similarly, Hebrew University's 2010 survey of Israeli Jews reported that 65% opposed sharing Jerusalem as a capital city of both Israel and Palestine.⁴¹ Thus, the opinions of Taglit participants hardly qualify as "armchair nationalism" that is out-of-step with homeland opinion.

A much better test of the long-distance nationalism hypothesis is the question concerning the future of West Bank settlements. In contrast to dividing Jerusalem, most American Jews and most Israelis would support dismantling some or all West Bank settlements in the context of a peace deal. The American Jewish Committee's 2011 survey, for example, reported that 51% of American Jews would support dismantling "some" settlements, and an additional 8% would support dismantling "all" settlements, in the context of a peace deal.⁴² Similarly, Hebrew University's 2010 survey reported that 56% of Jewish Israelis would support dismantling "most" settlements.⁴³ A program of homeland tourism that fostered long-distance nationalism would substantially reduce support for dismantling West Bank settlements. However, the current study finds no Taglit impact on attitudes regarding the future of West Bank settlements. Taglit participants were no more likely to oppose dismantling settlements for the sake of peace than were applicants to the program who did not ultimately participate.

Indeed, the fact that Taglit affects attitudes on Jerusalem but not the future of West Bank may be an exception that proves a rule. Although East Jerusalem is a disputed territory, Taglit participants spend more time there—in particular, the Jewish quarter of the Old City—than any other single location on the tour itinerary.⁴⁴ In contrast, Taglit avoids bringing trips to the West Bank, and guides are cautioned to provide a balanced view of Israeli attitudes and debates regarding West Bank settlements. As a result, participants may tend to view the whole of Jerusalem—but not the West Bank—as part of Israel, and their increased tendency to oppose the city's

division may express what they take to be a consensus view rather than a partisan political position.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study calls for a refinement of Anderson's perspective, along the lines indicated by Christophe Jafferot and Ingrid Therwat.⁴⁵ In their study of Hindus living in the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada, they dismiss the notion that Hindu nationalism develops spontaneously, as a result of nostalgia for the homeland. Instead, they attribute the rise of diaspora Hindu nationalism to the political entrepreneurship of homeland activists from the Sangh Parivar, a network of nationalist organizations that includes the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The diasporans' Hindu nationalism is "latent" until "activated" by the homeland political activists.⁴⁶ The general implication of their work is that the valence of diaspora mobilization—whether ethnonationalist or cosmopolitan—is partly determined by homeland political actors.⁴⁷ Applied to the case of Taglit, although participants may or may not be ripe for mobilization to the causes of the right, the program does not seek such mobilization. The Israeli guides tend to describe West Bank settlement as a contentious issue, and they do not bring their visitors to visit West Bank settlements. For these reasons, we believe the program has been able to encourage homeland attachment, predicated upon shared diaspora-homeland Jewish identity, without promoting the ethnonationalist projects of the Israeli right.

CONCLUSION

Taglit is one of the largest Jewish educational programs in the world, and it addresses a topic of broad political significance: the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In relation to contentious political issues, program guidelines call for a "balanced presentation of alternative views."⁴⁸ The program aims to foster homeland attachment without promoting more narrowly constructed political narratives. Nonetheless, critics have charged the program with bias, and warned that it likely moves participants to the political right.

The present research generally finds that Taglit achieves its declared aim of fostering forms of homeland attachment that are politically neutral in the Israeli context. This general finding can be qualified in two ways. First, the program fosters general favorability toward Israel, an effect that likely dulls the edge of the left-wing critique of Israeli policy toward the Palestinians. Second, it fosters a modest increase in opposition to the division of Jerusalem in a peace deal. Compared to the program's impact on attachment to Israel, however, these program effects are small. Moreover, there was no program effect on the topic that most directly engages the long-distance nationalism hypothesis: the future of Jewish settlements in the West Bank. In the case of Taglit, homeland sentiments appear to develop independently of views on contentious homeland political issues. As a case study, Taglit suggests

that programs that aim to promote homeland sentiment do not inevitably generate long-distance nationalism.

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NOTES

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4. Theodore Sasson, *The New American Zionism* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 95–97.

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9. David Landau, "Judaism and the Jews," *The Economist*, 27 July 2012. See also Kiera Feldman, "The Romance of Birthright Israel," *The Nation*, 15 June 2011.

10. "Peter Beinart and Boston Federation Head Spar over Birthright," *The Jewish Week*, 5 April 2012.

11. See, for example, Feldman, "The Romance of Birthright Israel"; Sandra Y. L. Korn, "The Illuminations of Birthright," *Harvard Crimson*, 6 July 2012.

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13. Audrea Lim, "Birthright Journeys: Connecting the Dots from the Diaspora," *Dissent*, Summer 2012.

14. Benedict Anderson, *Long-Distance Nationalism: World Capitalism and the Rise of Identity Politics* (Amsterdam: Center for Asian Studies, 1992).

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16. See also Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, South East Asia, and the World* (London: Verso, 1998). For additional discussions of Anderson's conception of long-distance nationalism, see Joell Demmers, "Diaspora and Conflict: Locality, Long-Distance Nationalism, and Delocalization of Conflict Dynamics," *The Public* 9(1): (2002); Dereje Feyissa, "The Transnational Politics of the Ethiopian Muslim Diaspora," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35(11): (2012).
17. Zlatko Skrbis, "The Mobilized Croatian Diaspora," in Hazel Smith and Paul Stares, eds., *Diasporas in Conflict: Peace-Makers or Peace-Wreckers?* (Tokyo: United Nations, 2007); Sam Pryke, "British Serbs and Long-Distance Nationalism," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 26(1): (2003).
18. Biju Mathew and Prashad Vijay, "The Protean Forms of Yankee Hindutva," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23(3): (2000).
19. Oivind Fuglerud, *Life on the Outside: Tamil Diaspora and Long-Distance Nationalism* (London: Pluto, 1999).
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21. Some writers use the concept "long-distance nationalism" in a more general fashion, that is, to include general expressions of support for homeland political sovereignty. For example, Nadine Blumer analyzes "March of the Living" trips that bring diaspora Jewish teenagers to Poland and Israel as fostering "long-distance nationalism," which she defines as support for the "homeland nation-building project"; Nadine Blumer, "'Am Yisrael Chai! (the Nation of Israel Lives!): Stark Reminders of Home in the Reproduction of Ethno-Diasporic Identity," *Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37(9): 1334 (2011).
22. Daniele Conversi, "Irresponsible Radicalisation: Diasporas, Globalization and Long-Distance Nationalism in a Digital Age," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 38(9): (2012); Anderson, "Long-Distance Nationalism"; Skrbis, "The Mobilized Croatian Diaspora"; Lim, "Birthright Journeys: Connecting the Dots from the Diaspora."
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25. Theodore Sasson, *The New Realism: American Jewish Views About Israel* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 2009); Theodore Sasson and Ephraim Tabory, "Converging Political Cultures: How Globalization Is Shaping the Discourses of American and Israeli Jews," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 16(1): (2010).
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31. Saxe et al., "Jewish Futures Project."
32. *Ibid.*, 18.
33. Graham Wright, "An Empirical Examination of the Relationship between Response Rate and Bias in Online Surveys," *The Statistical Journal of the International Association of Official Statistics* (in press).
34. Respondents were asked to classify their general political views on a 7-point scale ranging from "extremely liberal" to "extremely conservative." An ordered logistic regression of general political

views on Taglit participation and factors associated with Taglit participation was performed, and Taglit participation was not a significant predictor (exp $\beta = 1.00$, $p = .949$).

35. Factor retention decisions were made using parallel analysis with the 95th percentile criterion, see James Hayton, David Allen, and Vida Scarpello, "Factor Retention Decisions in Exploratory Factor Analysis," *Organizational Research Methods* 7(2): 2004.

36. Individual ordered logistic regressions of each item in the scale on Taglit participation and factors associated with Taglit participation were also conducted (not shown). Taglit was a significant predictor of positive attitudes toward Israel for each item.

37. Omitted categories: "Some" for West Bank and "No" for Jerusalem.

38. Saxe et al., "Jewish Futures Project."

39. See Smith, "Diasporas in International Conflict," 9.

40. "Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion," American Jewish Committee, 2011, <http://www.ajc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=7oJILSPwFfjSG&b=8479755&ct=12476755>.

41. The Israeli survey was administered by Hebrew University's Truman Institute. The wording of the Jerusalem question posed to Israeli respondents was the same as the one posed to AJC and Taglit respondents. See <http://www.truman.huji.ac.il/upload/Polls%202010%202011.pdf>.

42. The other response categories were "none" (31%) and "not sure" (2%).

43. Thirty-seven percent opposed dismantling most settlements and 7% had no opinion. See <http://www.truman.huji.ac.il/upload/Polls%202010%202011.pdf>.

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