

GENETICS, JUDAISM, AND SOCIETY
EUGENICS, BIRTHRIGHT, AND THE HOLOCAUST

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this research is to study the overall connection between the experiences of Holocaust survivors and Taglit-Birthright Israel (TBI) participants, both of whom qualified for their experiences through the misuse of pseudo-scientific (racial science/genetics/hygiene) rules, first exploited by scientists within Nazi Germany to qualify citizens of the Third Reich as "Jews." These scientists sought to uncover the "Jewish gene" that was passed down through heredity, identifying Jews by their heritage rather than their religion. TBI uses a "one-quarter Jewish" rule to qualify its participants (and also allows those who have converted to participate) for a free trip to Israel. The subjects of this portion of the project are past participants and staff members of TBI. Subjects were given a brief baseline survey about identity and their experiences, followed by an interrogative interview. Interview material was assessed qualitatively for material (subjective experiences, thematic content) and quantitatively for key words. The overall conclusions indicate some connection between the anxiety felt by participants about their identities and how they were defined for Birthright and the fear and trauma of the Holocaust. Future research could include more of a focus on genetics as well as pre- and post-tests regarding identity and genetic background before and after Birthright.

INTRODUCTION

The institution of Birthright is meant to provide young people with a Jewish background the opportunity to go to Israel and experience the culture and history of the Jewish state. To qualify for Birthright, a participant must be "Jewish" according to set definitions: a participant needs to have at least one Jewish grandparent by birth or have participated in an official conversion in a recognized denomination of Judaism. This is similar to the qualifications for Israel's Law of Return, which allows anyone with one Jewish grandparent to live in Israel.

Therefore, the minimum qualification is having one Jewish grandparent. This is not a new definition of Judaism; rather, the "one quarter Jewish" definition was utilized in Nazi Germany to define a Jew

as part of the targeted racial group, whether first- or second- degree "Mischlinge" (part-Jew). This was an accepted medical concept of the time, despite the apparent falsehood of this "scientific" idea. In Nazi Germany, Mendelian genetics was misappropriated to describe racial and cultural characteristics; this became a major part of the academic world in the Third Reich in the form of "racial biology," "racial science," "racial genetics," or "racial heredity" (the name of the field was widely disputed amongst physicians, biologists, and social scientists).

Medicine and biology are misused here to justify a definition of Jewish that includes far more people than would self-identify as Jewish, as defined by their blood or genetics. This is not an isolated instance of this abuse of medical concepts for the justification of social norms such as the Nazi definition of the Jewish "race." Fascism fed the need for this type "science," and, in turn, this "science" fed the fascist agenda of the Nazi state and allowed for the justification of the systematic genocide committed against the Jewish people in the Holocaust.

This project explores these misappropriations of science in justification of a social concept, or, here, the use of biological science to justify genocide against people traditionally defined by their religious or cultural affiliations. This portion consists of interviews with alumni or leaders of the Taglit-Birthright Israel program. The intent of the interviews is to uncover the multidimensional effects of one's Jewish background on the experience of Birthright and Jewish life and to compare those effects to those of Mischlinges in the Holocaust. This is a prospective, non-interventional, non-randomized, interrogative interview study consisting of a survey followed by an open-ended interview of research subjects.

The essential questions that underlie this portion of this project are as follows: What is the place of religious belief in culture and development? How does one sustain the belief that they are who they are? Where does differentiated exposure to religion and culture come from? The primary hypothesis of this study regards the connection between the pseudo-"racial science" ideals that qualify participants for Taglit-Birthright Israel and those used in the Holocaust to identify someone as Jewish, half-Jewish, or quarter-Jewish. The ideas of

genetics, religion, and heritage were investigated, culminating in the following hypothesis: Do participants in Taglit-Birthright Israel experience similar or different issues of religious, national, ethnic, and/or familial identity as experienced by Jews within the Holocaust, especially half- or quarter-Jews?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Interview Selection and Completion

Interview candidates were contacted through direct email or flyer; after initial consent from participants, interviews were scheduled. Interviews were conducted either via phone or using a secure office location. Before interviews, participants were walked through the consent form and signed their consent to participate. Interviews lasted from 1-3 hours and consisted of an initial general survey followed by open-ended questions meant to facilitate conversation between the participant and interviewer. The questions were split into 6 topics as indicated in Table 1. The interview concluded with a review of the overall project and an agreement for future contact, if necessary.

The general survey consisted of basic demographic information, including age, gender identity, religious identity, trip date, and role on Birthright trips. The participant was also asked for their rating (from 1-10) of their experience on the trip in several categories as well as their knowledge of science/genetics and future career goals. The participants were asked of their scientific knowledge in order to determine if they had previous knowledge of genetics that would potentially skew their answers.

The topics were ordered specifically to allow participants to order their answers in a logical way and so that the connection between Birthright and the Holocaust could be left to the end of the interview. This ensured that, barring previous knowledge of the Holocaust and the information divulged in the consent form, participants were not aware of the connection being made in this study.

1	Background
2	Blood and Judaism
3	Israel
4	Birthright
5	Jewish Identity
6	Holocaust

Table 1: Interview topics

Transcript Analysis

Recordings were transcribed to produce written records and to remove identifying information. Transcripts were then split into sections according to topic number and analyzed using a locally-run version of Voyant tools on a web-based interface. The local version of Voyant tools only stores information on a local server, thus protecting the information of participants.

Voyant tools include word counts, term counts, term frequencies, and document word tracking, which allow for a determination of the objectively significant words in the topic section. Figure 1 shows an example return in the Voyant interface with a basic sentence. In each section, the same “regular” words were removed, as listed in Table 2, including “Jewish” as this was a central term of the study. Additionally, interviewer name (Tess) and subject number were removed from

analysis. From each section, the first five “significant” words were counted for analysis; these were words that stood out beyond any regular but non-insignificant words, such as common verbs.

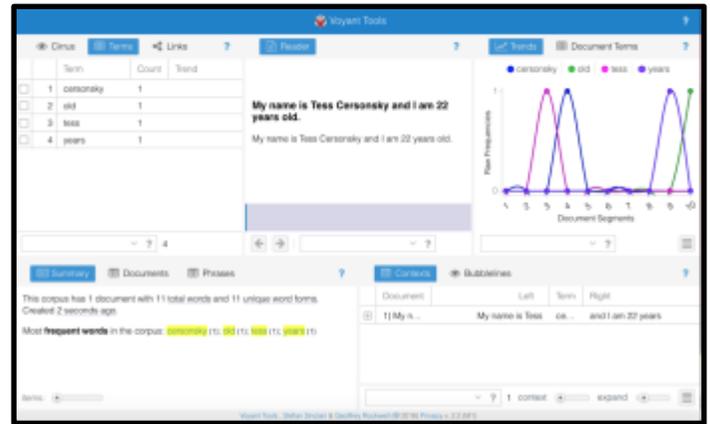


Figure 1: Voyant Tools Interface

the, their, them, of, in, a, as, he, she, they, it, if, like, as, know, sort, Jewish
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Table 2: Regular words

Data Analysis

For each significant word, the number of mentions was tallied using the “terms count” tool in Voyant. The words were then categorized according to the topics listed in Table 3. The totals for each category across all subjects were tallied for each topic, and the totals for each category across all topics were tallied for each subject. Each “word mention” total was normalized against the number of “significant word mentions” (defined by the number of mentions of the top 5 significant words across all categories, either by topic or by subject) in order to give a normalized value for each topic and each subject. The equation for this calculation is shown as Equation 1.

Results were plotted in Excel across all subjects for each topic and across all topics for each subject.

Religious (Jewish)	Religious (Non-Jewish)	Adverse Feelings
Affirmative Feelings	Overall Feelings	Israel
Personal Identification	Genetics/Blood	Ancestry/Culture

Table 3: Categories for Analysis

$$\frac{\text{Mentions of category per topic or subject}}{\text{Total mentions per topic or subject}} * 100\% \quad \text{Equation 1}$$

Aggregation of Interview Quotes

Interview selections were collected based on the context surrounding significant words. Those interview selections were edited for repeated words, grammar, clarity, and anonymity.

RESULTS

General Survey and Participant Demographics

Participants had a range of demographic identifications, as shown in Table 4. Participants also reported generally positive experiences on their respective Taglit-Birthright Israel experiences, with 75% of participants reporting “fair” or “good” experiences. With a small sample size (n = 4) there is no statistical significance to be found here, and the final participant’s lack of answer could be attributed to a length of time since the trip (approximately 8.75 years). No participant had significant experience in biology or genetics, nor did any participant have a career or career goal based in biological sciences.

Gender Identity	Male/masculine presenting	50%
	Female/feminine presenting	50%
Religious Identity	Jewish	75%
	Agnostic/Other	25%
Birthright Trip Role	Participant	75%
	Staff	25%
Age	18-24	50%
	25-30	25%
	30-35	25%

Table 4: Participant Demographics

	1-3 Bad	4-7 Fair	8-10 Good	No Answer/ Prefer not to Answer
Religious Experience	0%	25%	50%	25%
Emotional Experience	0%	25%	50%	25%
Cultural Experience	0%	50%	25%	25%
Personal/Overall Experience	0%	25%	50%	25%

Table 5: Trip Experience Results

Significant Word Mentions by Topic

Each topic contained percentages of word categories worth noting. The first topic, Background, consisted most significantly of Jewish religious terms, which is reasonable as the questions asked of Jewish upbringing. Additionally, overall feelings and other religious backgrounds were of high percentage within this topic. Of interest are the mentions of ancestry and culture, which point to the significance of ancestry and culture in one’s Jewish background. Finally, Israel was of a portion of the significant word mentions in this section, as well as personal identification.

Within the topic Judaism and blood were mentions of genetics and blood, which is to be expected. However, other significant portions included ancestry and culture, connecting genetics and blood to ancestry and culture. Additionally, overall feelings were significant, bringing a

subjective and emotional look to something supposedly objective such as genetics. Jewish religion was also significant, providing a link between genetics and religiosity. Adverse feelings also were a significant portion.

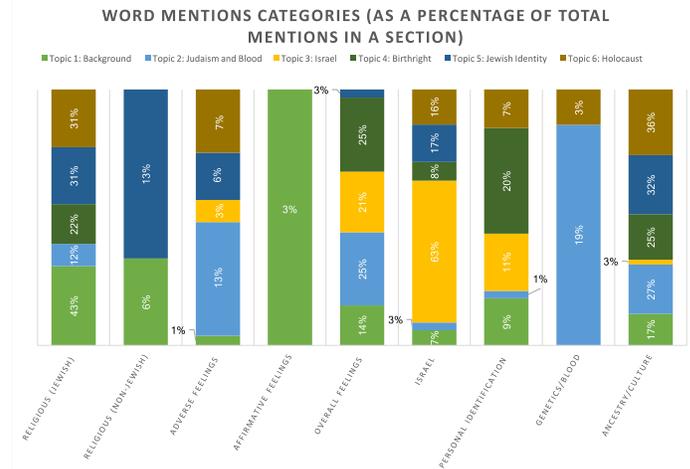


Figure 2: Significant Word Mentions by Topic (See appendix for values and larger chart)

Within the topic Israel, fittingly, Israel was of the highest percentage, followed by overall feelings and personal identification, connecting personal feelings and identification to feelings about Israel.

Within the topic Birthright, the percentages were split among Jewish religiosity, overall feelings, personal identification, and ancestry and culture. Each of these were significantly involved in participants’ feelings about Birthright.

Within the topic Jewish identity, ancestry and culture were significant, as well as Jewish religion. Additionally, Israel and non-Jewish religion were a portion of these significant mentions. Israel plays a part in Jewish identity, as well as culture and ancestry.

Within the topic of the Holocaust, ancestry and culture and Jewish religiosity were of similarly large percentage, followed by Israel. Ancestry fittingly is related to feelings about the Holocaust.

Significant Word Mentions by Subject

The purpose of this section is to provide a comparison by which one can see the focus of each subject. Subject 1 had a stronger focus on religious subjects, Israel, and ancestry and culture. Subject 2 focused on overall feelings, Israel, and ancestry and culture. Subject 3 focused also on religious subjects, Israel, and ancestry and culture. Finally, subject 4 focused on overall feelings, ancestry and culture, and personal identification.

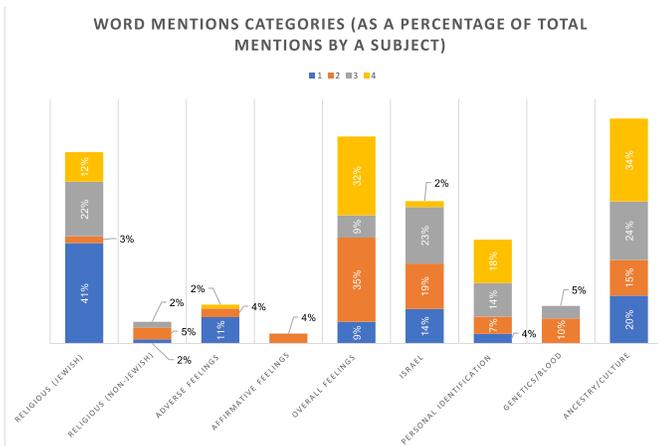


Figure 3: Significant Word Mentions by Subject (See appendix for values and larger chart)

Interview Quotes

Beyond the results indicated by the significant word mention analysis are those results that indicate subject perceptions and thoughts. These are in the form of quotes from subjects, which are not tied to any specific subject. Categorized by topic, Table 6 gives specific quotes that are relevant to the understanding of each participant’s experiences. Interview quotes have been edited for clarity and to maintain subject anonymity.

Table 6: Significant Interview Quotes

<u>Topic 1: Background</u>	
1.	And that was my first sense of Jewish legitimacy, where I was like, everything used to feel like a litmus test. It stopped, and then the litmus test started feeling like just another step of exploration for me as I figure out what this means to me to be Jewish. That feeling of legitimacy and of wanting to inspire others and empower them to feel enough in whoever they are and whatever identity they are has only grown.
2.	I’m sort of in the funny position where I have to be anxious about people because the idea of Judaism being passed through the mother’s line. My mother is not Jewish, her mother is not Jewish, nowhere as far as I know in my direct maternal line is there any Jewish ancestry, even with my grandfather. So this is two paternal lines, two generations through my father’s line removed from me, and I also wasn’t raised Jewish. There’s so much about my personal history that makes me anxious whenever I talk about my experience and connecting with Judaism or going on Birthright.
3.	If my grandfather didn’t get to choose whether or not he was going to embrace a Jewish identity, it’s the perverse fact that by Hitler’s standards he was Jewish. By Hitler’s standards, I’m Jewish, it’s one grandparent, whatever it is. And so, I hope that you would be able to choose for yourself whether you assume that identity and sort of obligations that go with it.
4.	Judaism started becoming something important to me, or the concept of Jewish identity, when I was ten. I read The Diary of Anne Frank, I stole it from my sister who was reading it in seventh grade. I remember falling in love with this, this amazing teen girl. I thought she was the coolest thing, I wanted to follow her around and be her best friend. That was my first time realizing that there was some form of significance to being Jewish and being part of the same narrative that Anne Frank was a part of.
5.	My grandfather - he died when I was 21, and I was just looking into his sort of family path and I always knew that he and my grandmother immigrated from Hungary. He came before the war

in 1939, and my grandmother survived in Budapest through World War II and then met my grandfather afterwards and then they married and came to the United States together. He would have had to fight for Hitler if he stayed there and so he decided to leave. I was reading a biography of him that referred to him as a Hungarian Jewish refugee. It came out that he was a Hungarian Jewish refugee, but for a variety of reasons he decided to keep it a secret when he came, mostly to his family. I know that he told colleagues, and we knew that his father died in the Holocaust; we know he died during World War II but it turns out that he was wearing a star and was pulled off the streetcar and was never heard from again. No one knows what happened to him. I think he decided, sort of out of fear that there just might be another time that anyone with some Jewish ancestry might be sort of hunted down and so I interpreted it as him choosing to just try to erase that part of his identity, especially when it comes to family. But he did sit my father down when he turned 21 and told him about this. So it was clear that the family secret was something that, clearly, he felt needed to be secret.

6. [My mom] grew up Protestant and was very, very much committed to raising a Jewish child and it was very important to her that her children be raised with a strong faith tradition. [A kid at camp said] “You have a non-Jewish mom?” I always feel like in the context in the conversation I bring up my mother’s not Jewish I just have to say, by the way I had a conversion when I was little. So many people I find myself in community with perhaps wouldn’t see me as halakhically Jewish [according to strict Jewish law] if they knew exactly my background.

7. One of one of my earliest memories is [my grandfather] sort of hating the idea of like genealogy or ancestry, period, and saying you should make of your life what you want to make of it, it shouldn’t matter where you came from. And so, then put into the perspective that he actually had to flee a country, leave his family, lose your father because of this identity that was ... he didn’t have a choice whether to assume or reject. That made a lot more sense to me.

8. The first Jewish ritual that I ever did in my entire life was lighting Shabbat candles. For the first time, I looked up the tune on YouTube, I learned that blessing, and I said it in my apartment. I felt a surprising level of connection to that moment that to this day it’s still my favorite ritual. And for me, that was like an awakening; it was like an entirely different door opening in front of me, and all that was there was this warmth and this light, and I knew it wasn’t always going to be easy but that it was going to be so much more authentic to who I am than what I experienced in Catholicism.

9. This then led me on Birthright, because people often asked me when I would meet - people wouldn’t say have you been to Israel, they would say it with the expectation of an affirmative answer, you’ve been Israel, right? And I would say, actually, I have not. And they couldn’t believe that, because here is somebody who is deeply interested in learning about Jewish content, involved in two Jewish communities — Columbia and JTS’s — two incredibly strong college Jewish communities, somebody who’s taking on his own personal ritual, and observance level, and hasn’t been to Israel. And for a long time, I felt a little like hm, they were right.

10. What in the world gave me the authority or the knowledge that anyone would need in a Jewish leader? I was like oh my God, I’ve only been technically a Jew for a couple of years, I really felt new to this whole being Jewish thing.

11. When I was younger my experience of being a blond-haired blue-eyed Jew was different for me than someone whose parents were Jewish. I looked very much like my mother and so I knew [my Aryan features] were from my mother, and so having that be a reason that people saw me as not Jewish I think was interesting. And it’s not like anyone ever saw me as not Jewish but it’s just that people were surprised to learn that I was Jewish. Jews would be like, oh, you don’t look Jewish.... yeah, totally part of it really bothered me.

Topic 2: Judaism and Blood

1. Being born Jewish doesn't mean a child of Abraham to me, it doesn't feel like that. It doesn't feel like I was standing at Sinai getting the Torah. It feels like the Torah is mine, and now I'm being asked what am I going to do with it.
2. Does being Jewish mean going to a synagogue, does being Jewish mean just feeling Jewish? I don't know how something can be passed down if it's supposed to be a feeling one experiences. It's such a complicated formula, it's not logical. I definitely don't think it's blood. For some people it may be, and they are 100% legitimate in that feeling, but I personally feel that that is the minority case. That maybe they'll say it's heritage, but ask them what, how they are Jewish, and ask and explore that with them, and I'm willing to bet they're not going to start talking about blood. I think sometimes that just feels like a more accessible explanation for why someone is something that seems complex.
3. I don't ever want to delegitimize someone's experience of feeling ethnically Jewish or feeling that this is something their blood inherited. My own belief stems from the concept of identifying with, whether it's a part of the Jewish community, whether it's a part of Jewish memory, whether it's part of the cultural customs, the religion. That to me is the dominant, determine factor of one being Jewish. But again, I know some people who don't identify with any part of Judaism but just they feel they have Jewish parents ergo they inherited some Jewishness. I didn't grow up feeling like I had Jewish blood. I don't believe it's something that will disappear even if I change my actions, even if I were to experience another Catholic renewal and go back to that and make it my life, for some reason I still feel like that's still a part of my identity, regardless of that. I don't personally feel that it's blood but I don't know why it's something that cannot be removed from if there was a slate that identified my identity, as redundant as that sounds, I don't think there's something on it I can't scrub it away, I can't chip it away, it's just there, and I don't know why. I don't know if it's a Jewish soul, I don't know if it's Jewish blood, I don't know if it's something I inherited or something I developed that is now irrevocable.
4. I wish identity hadn't been whittled down to something so demeaning, so unimportant as blood, especially when we realize now with genetic testing that if a vast proportion of today's Jews do not have the same mitochondrial DNA as supposed Jews who actually descended from the tribes.
5. If you asked people, well, why are you Jewish? They'll probably bring up something they either do with friends or family, or they'll mention some obscure connection to Israel or a Passover memory. I think a lot of it has to do with memory, I think it has a lot more to do with memory than blood, with feeling some sort of connection with a narrative, even if you don't feel a connection today. That's what I think they're going to mention, they're going to mention memories. I doubt that they're going to want to dive into some kind of Punnett square for why they feel that they are Jewish. Because then, if that, if it's all about blood, then why don't people feel that they are Irish, why don't they feel that they are Italian? Why does this one little piece of their heritage somehow become something that they want to put on a piece of paper when they're filling out a census, that they want to put on a piece of paper when they're applying for colleges. I just don't think it's as simple as blood, I think it has to do with so much, something bigger, more philosophical than that, ideological than that.
6. So when I first hear about ancestry and Judaism, one thing that comes into my mind is opinions that my parents taught me, and then ones that I've developed in relation to this. To me, the idea of all Jews being descendent of Abraham and Sarah seems too far for me. In other words, I don't wake up and say I feel like the son of Abraham. When I read about Abraham and Isaac, I don't feel like oh that's my great great great father. ... I still don't even feel if I'm reading later texts, medieval texts, that these rabbis of the 1400s in Spain were also Jews and I'm a Jew maybe we're

related. I don't find a sense of relation through the blood. I feel a sense of relation in terms of ideology in terms of practice.

7. The Torah is mine because - I first feel a little why me. I didn't choose to be Jewish, I didn't choose to have Jewish parents, I was kind of thrown into a faith that then tells me all these things. So I first feel, I feel lucky, like, Judaism is a beautiful tradition, and I'm still figuring out what it means to me. But why me? Is an answer that I don't feel that I ever developed.
8. To be born Jewish to me means plateau. Means, this kind of flat, not rocky thing. My parents were Jewish, they have a Jewish child, sent him to Jewish nursery school. To me being born Jewish is very comfortable, felt comfortable, because it was like my parents were continuing their way of life with their children and be smooth. Me personally being born Jewish feels a sense of ownership of ideas and texts that I've been reading about, have been written about Judaism.
9. We've just had this amazing conversation of like what it means to be Jewish and to have a Jewish nishama [soul], no, no, let's talk about DNA and there's a Jewish gene that's dominant, like, the f***?

Topic 3: Israel

1. How in the world did we, did that law evolve from just any Jew, anyone who sees themselves or herself or theirselves or zirselves as a Jew to now having this specific Nuremberg-esque requirement that you have a Jewish grandparent? How the hell do you prove you have a Jewish grandparent? I can tell you how, because I tried to immigrate to Israel. And you prove it by either having some sort of death certificate that shows that they were Jewish or burial certificate that shows they were buried in a Jewish cemetery, or ketubah, that shows that they had a Jewish marriage, or letter from their rabbi, or proof of their bris, which ew, what is the proof of a bris? I think do they give you a certificate? I don't know, I've never had one.
2. I'm kind of indifferent to the state of Israel, because I don't have any real close family relatives who are survivors of the Shoah. I feel like that makes this a very different conversation in that context.
3. If someone wants to go to Israel to explore their Christian roots, I don't think we speak enough about that in the Jewish community, that's an option. And Muslims in Israel, there's a Muslim quarter of Jerusalem and Muslim Holy Sites in Jerusalem, and if somebody can explore those roots, they should still be able to go do that. So in other words, I don't think just because you have a Jewish grandparent, you should go to Israel unless you actually want to consider your religion in general.
4. It was a deep homecoming to be not because I felt that my ancestors were coming to the Western Wall to offer sacrifices, the same way that I walk up to the Western Wall. But it was a homecoming for my ideology, for my study. Coming to see the ancient history of Israel brought my knowledge home.
5. It's not that you wash something away, it's that you gained something by emerging [from the mikveh, Jewish ritual spring]. And I loved that image and I always wanted to do it, so I did it. I also had the advantage of then getting the actual certificate that says I used to be a non-Jew and now I'm not, and that's so interesting to see that on paper, especially when I'm like that's not true, I'm Jewish. It's who I am, it's not about how I was born, it's just who I am. It's who I was before I was born, it's who I am after I was born, that's why I don't believe it has anything to do with blood. And, lo and behold, of course the law that would have permitted me to move to Israel with a Reform conversion was repealed, and so now I can't immigrate to Israel unless I get an Orthodox conversion. So that law sucks. That, there's nothing that makes you feel less than enough more than that f***ing law. I hate that law.
6. It's particularly when singing on Shabbat in Israel, there's something about knowing that so many other places within just a square mile radius in Israel are doing the exact same thing, singing

with their families. I don't feel that anywhere else. That to me, yeah, that to me is, I can almost cry like when I think about.

Topic 4: Birthright

1. I think Birthright should be open to non-Jews. No, back back. I think if an individual cares about developing his or her Jewish understanding, even if they're a non-Jew, they should be allowed to go. I think Birthright can't just take anybody. It's really controversial. I think they need to interview people, and accept them based on why they want to, why they care about their Judaism enough. And what the trip can do for them to help them figure that out. What makes somebody Jewish? Their desire to be Jewish. Anything they say about being Jewish.
2. I think that Birthright should be open to people who I would say who feel a connection to a Jewish identity, which is a little bit of a more amorphous statement than what I think they define as who they allow to participate.
3. I think that if I was anxious at first, because of sort of these feelings of not being like authentic enough or not being Jewish enough. I was always sort of completely upfront, because you do a series of interview stages if you want to do Birthright, and I told them exactly what I told you. So I knew that it wasn't defrauding anybody but still I was anxious that I would be perceived in that way. And I didn't feel like that once I sort of got to know the people on the trip.
4. I think they do want evidence of conversion, which I remember filling out the application, and them being like, is your mother or father Jewish, and if not, did you convert? It was basically a check all that apply. So I was like well my father's Jewish and I converted. And as soon as I pressed the "did you convert thing," they were like, please attach a certificate and I was like, what the f***? So I just unchecked I converted.
5. If it hurts enough to already have someone totally disregard your identity, to have them disregard it like that, to the point where it leads to the murder of your family, I can't imagine the trauma that someone rejected sustains on so many different levels, on a spiritual level, on an emotional one, on a psychological level. That is just traumatizing for anyone to have to endure.
6. So my religious experience was shaped by the bus. Or was it? My religious experience was shaped not by the fact that we had a community, by the fact that it was this community of people. It was shaped by the by the people whom I got close with on the trip, not by the fact that this was a bus of forty or thirty Jews riding around together. In other words, the people whom I got close with helped me to think critically about my religiosity. You go on a bus with people who are so intentional about their Judaism, that's what helped me develop religiosity.
7. Why isn't it Jews that self-identify as Jewish? In which case, that's the only thing that matters.... Birthright doesn't just want to have a bunch of people who don't identify as Jewish be like, oh, I'll check that box! So I understand that's some of the reason behind why they're criterion is currently set up as it is in terms of, if you converted let's see a picture.

Topic 5: Jewish Identity

1. I believe people should be able to affiliate as they choose not as they're defined. And this is probably, you know, my grandfather speaking through me.
2. I still don't sort of see myself as Jewish, but I think of myself as partly Jewish, but it's a complicated thing that, I don't know, I guess I haven't completely sorted out.
3. So I actually think I wasn't born Jewish... Which says a lot about what it means to me to be Jewish. Or at least my experience of being Jewish, if that makes sense. I feel it's very commonly either you

were born Jewish or you're a convert. I converted, so I wasn't born Jewish... I have a non-Jewish mother and was raised in a Conservative Jewish world where you're only born Jewish if your mother is Jewish. So when I was six months old they took me to the mikveh [ritual spring] and I had an actual conversion. I was very much raised Jewish and very much do not have the experience of being a convert, although I am technically a convert.

4. There's just so many different definitions of being Jewish... I hadn't thought when I was in high school, am I really Jewish? Yeah, I'm Jewish all of the time. But if I'm not doing something Jewish am I really Jewish? Like part of being Jewish is doing things. So if I'm not doing Judaism... no one is a writer, or like, as soon as anyone starts writing, they're a writer in that moment. But then when they stop writing, they're not a writer anymore. But when you're doing something Jewish, you're a Jew, or you're Jewish. And when you're not doing something Jewish, you're not Jewish?

Topic 6: Holocaust

1. I think everyone agrees that sort of the rules about defining Jews in the context of World War II and the Holocaust are pretty evil. But that doesn't mean that, you know, who you're from the parents and grandparents doesn't matter at all.
2. If anything you pointed out the further irony of not only using the sort of racial laws of Nazi Germany but then adding a little addendum of, oh, by the way, you can either be secular or practicing Judaism. I find that incredibly fascinating. If you're going to claim that it is this sort of blood heritage of Judaism, especially when, if you have someone who was adopted by Jews, you have to prove that they converted to go on Birthright, if I'm not mistaken. There should not be a question like that that will scare away people who otherwise could really have an amazing transcendent transformative experience on this trip because they weren't considered enough. So Birthright itself is already this crazy heritage-heavy concept which is simply not true.
3. Imagine that you feel excluded by the Nazis and that matters to you. Why in the world should it matter to us what they thought of us? It shouldn't matter, but it does. And I wonder if we are all sort of raised to sort of have this ongoing internal existential crisis about our own Jewishness. So many times we think we're not Jewish enough. It's like, any time we're given any sort of structure for belonging we try to see if we belong. I just tried to see if I belong with the families who went on the trains. Why? I don't know. I don't know why that's so important. But it's the first thing that came to my mind is I started analyzing my own family tree.
4. That next elimination round [post-full Jews, to 'preferred' mischlinge first-degree] was determined by identity. And I find that fascinating in that it actually alarmingly reminds me of the Birthright application. Right after the question about your parents being Jewish it then asks a ton of questions about your synagogue involvement or if you went to Jewish day school or anything like that... like there is a certain type of Jew out there. I don't think there is, there's just a Jew.
5. There's a lot of people who have a lot of "Jewish blood;" Hitler would think were super Jewish, and looked totally Aryan. When I was younger, [my mother and I] looked very similar and people could always tell she was my mother. So it was funny that she was my parent who was not Jewish, because my mother's family's history is much more well documented than my father's family history. But I am really so much more invested and interested and passionate [in my father's]. Not that I'm super invested in my father's family history but it's so much easier for me to connect to. I look at my mother's family and I see that's a nice family tree, but I don't see it as my own family. I look at my father's family and I see that is my family. It all has to do with being Jewish and that's completely where it comes from. Me being Jewish is a vehicle through which I connect with the rest of my family. I don't have that vehicle when it comes to my mother's side... I don't see myself in it, I sort of only see myself at the very end, like in the very last line

I see it. Whereas in my father's family tree I see it, the Judaism is very clearly there and I see myself in the last generation and in each generation back. There's just a way in which I sort of relate. A hundred years ago, some of my family members were getting up in the morning and putting on tefilin [a Jewish ritual].

6. Well first of all anything coming from the Nazis is pure bulls***, something with which I hold deep hostility. And there's so many times when I ask myself, is the current fixation with heritage in terms of Jewish identity something that was born of what the Nazis construed as their means for screening out those who were too impure for their society? Or is it something that we gave the Nazis and that they turned into a tool? And I can't figure out that answer. I don't know if they got it from us, and something that literally right now is giving me chills and makes me feel so anxious to think is that someone was able to reach into our history and pluck out something that was turned into such a deadly weapon against us. And it is— or is it something that was really born out of just an age of old and not identity specific fixation with purity and perfection in humanity?

DISCUSSION

The subjects in this study participated in interviews, which provided insight into the connections in issues related to identity between Birthright and the Holocaust. The participants' interviews were analyzed for instances of significant words and significant quotes, which produced both quantitative and qualitative results that shed light on this relation.

Do participants in Taglit-Birthright Israel experience similar or different issues of religious, national, ethnic, and/or familial identity as experienced by Jews within the Holocaust, especially half- or quarter-Jews? Aspects of this question have been partially answered in this study, and these will be discussed in length in the following sections. Overall, participants in Taglit-Birthright Israel do experience issues of religious identity in that their religious identities do not match their familial or ancestral identities. In other words, the participants in many ways felt a dissonance between how they self-identify and how they would be identified based on their parentage. While religious and familial identity were addressed by the interview questions, national and ethnic identity were not, leaving this as an unanswered portion of the question. While participants discussed their relationship with citizenship and Israel at length, little was discussed about ethnic or social identifications, such as their interaction with American Jewry.

Further questions underlie this portion of the project. Religious belief, for these subjects, seemed to have a significant place in culture and development, in that each of them focused on different aspects of religious life that are part of their background. Differentiated exposure of religion came from interactions these participants had in educational situations, often with people of different backgrounds from them. However, the question of differentiated culture was not directly addressed, although some participants discussed their experiences with what they perceived as religious culture, such as day school or Jewish camp involvement.

How does one sustain the belief that they are who they are? This essential question was addressed by this study. For some, this belief is sustained by an external validation of identity. In regard to religious identity, acceptance in a religious group or by a religious institution made it easier or more comfortable to hold up that religious identity. This does not need to be directly conferred by the institution, but, rather, the support and confirmation of identity by peers offers that validation. Ancestry and background also allowed some to sustain their belief of who they are, but only in the context that they had others to think about

and find similarities in in order to validate. The overwhelming response to this question seems to be that one can only sustain this belief if they are given validation from others, especially when someone has anxiety or trepidation about their Jewish identity.

Significant Word Mentions by Topic

The quantitative results yielded insight into the influences on the subjects' feelings about each topic. Although the classification of the words into categories, and even their classification as significant, is innately subjective, this type of analysis is impossible to avoid and in fact should not be avoided in processing results based on perceptions and feelings. The small sample size also made this sort of analysis necessary, as, without a large sample size, there is no way to prove causality (and such causality would be far-fetched even with a large sample size due to the nature of the topic). Thus, the percentage of significant mentions provided insight, and such insight can be used to address the quotes given by the subjects.

Within the topic "Background," the most significantly mentioned classification was Jewish religion, which one could interpret as representative of the subject pool. However, only 75% of subjects self-identified as Jewish, and, although there were high percentages of significant word mentions of Jewish religion by subject (Figure 3), this topic (Background) had the highest percentage of Jewish religion word mentions. For the subjects, Jewish religion was a significant portion of their background, meaning that their backgrounds were made up more so of religion than cultural or secular Judaism. This points to a definition of Jewish background as something that is based in religion more so than other aspects of Judaism. Although one cannot prove causality in this, the small subject population indicated that these four people from different backgrounds have similar views on the role of Jewish religion in their backgrounds.

Additionally, within background, ancestry and culture did contribute a large percentage of the total word mentions in this topic, which points to possible intersectionality between the religious aspects of Judaism and the ancestral and cultural aspects. However, this was not true for all of the religious aspects, as the percentages are far from equal. Nonetheless, it was important to note that in background, ancestry and culture is not insignificant; the subjects defined their background as mostly religious, but also cultural and ancestral.

Background also had the largest variety of categories, with 8 out of 9 categories represented in this section. Of these were affirmative feelings (the only topic to have words in this category as significant word mentions), overall feelings (pointing to the innate subjectivity and emotionalism of this topic), Israel (indicating the significance, whether positive or negative, of the Jewish state in the backgrounds of some subjects), personal identification (indicating that how one personally identifies is significant in their background, not just how their family identifies), and a small portion of adverse feelings (indicating some animosity towards aspects of subjects' backgrounds). The only category not represented was genetics and blood, which juxtaposed how that category was insignificant for background but significant for Nazi identification, which is the original basis for Birthright identification.

Within the topic "Judaism and Blood," genetics and blood made up a significant percentage of word mentions within this topic; however, overall feelings and ancestry and culture made up larger percentages than genetics and blood. When asked what makes someone Jewish, almost all of the subjects argued against something having to do with genetics and blood, but rather discussed the ancestral and cultural bases for Jewish inheritance. This points towards a clear contradiction from the Nazi ancestral narrative, as, to these subjects, Judaism has very little to do with actual science, genetics, or Mendelian inheritance but rather is based in cultural and religious values that are transmitted from one

generation to the next. Additionally, the strong percentage of overall feelings points towards the non-objective nature of this question; essentially, concepts of ancestry, culture, and passing on of religion cannot be defined in non-emotional, objective terms, as it is an individual or familial phenomenon.

Other categories also were significant within this topic, including religion (Jewish), adverse feelings, Israel, and (to a small extent) personal identification. As already mentioned, being Jewish to many of these subjects is related to religion, and, for some, Israel is also significant. Adverse feelings made up a large portion of the topic “Judaism and blood,” most likely due to the negative feelings that participants had surrounding the diminution of their Judaism to a simple scientific concept.

Within the topic “Israel,” the category “Israel” was fittingly the largest represented category of words. Other than Israel, categories such as overall feelings, personal identification, adverse feelings, and ancestry/culture were also represented. Overall feelings and adverse feelings related to the participant’s thoughts about their experiences with Israel, which were positive in many regards but also negative in others. Some of that negativity (also connecting to personal identification) was due to some participant’s views about how they were identified by the state, especially among those who had converted.

Within the topic “Birthright,” some of the significant categories were religious (Jewish) and ancestry/culture, which were equally significant in this category. This partly stems from the questions asked about religious experiences on Birthright, and also based on the understanding that participants had regarding the qualifications for Birthright. In its current manifestation, the qualifications for Birthright are based on one’s religious beliefs (i.e. proof of conversion to Judaism) or their ancestry (at least one Jewish grandparent), in addition to certain restrictions on previous travel to Israel. Thus, it is fitting that these categories dominated the discussions of Birthright. However, it is problematic when one thinks of those who consider themselves Jewish but do not qualify under either of these categories, having not completed a formal conversion or having no Jewish parents or grandparents. This ties in a third significant category for Birthright, personal identification, which signifies the amount of personal self-identification and determination that these subjects, who had all participated in Birthright, attribute to their experience. Essentially, these subjects found personal identification to be important to their growth on the trip, as well as their reasons for going on Birthright. Also significant were overall feelings, which relate to the emotional and/or meaningful experience that Birthright can be.

Within the topic “Jewish Identity,” a broad range of categories pointed to a diverse range of thoughts about identity. For many subjects, this was not the first time in this interview that they discussed Jewish identity, so these results are more skewed than others because the subjects did not have uniform thoughts about the point of the questions asked. For example, if a subject had already addressed religious identity in great detail, a question about that within this section yielded fewer novel ideas than it would for someone who had not yet deeply discussed all of their ideas about the topic. Within this topic, Jewish religion and ancestry and culture were of fairly equal percentages, showing that religion, ancestry, and culture are significant for subject’s descriptions of Jewish identity. Additionally, non-Jewish religion and Israel were also of significant percentages, indicating some importance of other religious backgrounds and Israel in forming Jewish identity.

Finally, within the topic if “Holocaust,” the most represented categories were Jewish religion and ancestry/culture. The subjects were asked about the rules used during the Holocaust to identify Jews, and these categories point towards a disagreement between these rules and the definition given by the subjects. The high prevalence of Jewish

religion points towards a preference for a definition of “Jewish” more based on religion, while ancestry and culture points towards a familial definition of “Jewish.” The Nazi rules did incorporate both religion and ancestry in defining half-Jews; for people with one Jewish parent (Mischlinge 1st degree), those who did not practice Jewish religion were “preferred,” while those who did were “not preferred,” defining Jews both by religion and parentage. Despite the apparent similarity, these two definitions are not the same, as the subjects in this study would define someone as Jewish regardless of their ancestry if they identified as religiously Jewish. Thus, the subjects introduced necessary nuance that is absent from both the Nazi definition and the Birthright definition, in that one can be Jewish regardless of heritage if they self-identify.

Among the other represented categories within this topic was Israel, pointing to an understanding of the Law of Return or migration to Israel following the Holocaust. The subjects understood this need and the connection between the two. Also of remarkable percentage were adverse feelings (toward the Nazi definition of Jews) and personal identification, pointing towards a desire to connect personally with the question. In other words, some of the subjects attempted to put themselves into the definitions given or in the place of those in the Holocaust. This is a reasonable human desire, especially when one strongly identifies with those involved. Finally, a small but non-insignificant portion of the word mentions was made up of blood/genetics, which signifies the subjects’ understanding of the nature of the Nazi rules.

Overall, these results offered tenuous, but meaningful connections. They point towards the ideas that the subjects found meaningful in each section, particularly when defining Jewish identity and the significance of Birthright.

Interview Quotes

While the significant word mentions offer tenuous connections, the quotes are much less ambiguous; each quote offers insight into each subject’s ideas about Birthright and Judaism. Each quote was chosen for its ability to represent the ideas stated by the subjects in each section. While choosing these quotes, it was important to not “cherry pick” and only choose those that supported the idea stated in the introduction. Therefore, quotes of all different outlooks were chosen in order to represent the ideas of the subjects.

Each quote is analyzed below and is designated by the Topic number followed by the number within the Topic. For example, the third quote in Topic 1, Background, is 1-3.

Topic 1: Background

1-1: This subject talks about the effect of Birthright; these trip(s) provided this subject with a feeling of legitimacy. This is possibly due to the connections formed while on the trip(s) with the country, the people, or the culture, or possibly due to the feeling of “being Jewish enough.”

1-2: Even when going on Birthright, this subject did not feel as though their connection to Judaism was enough, or it made them anxious. Here, having not enough of a Jewish connection made them anxious.

1-3: This subject points to a common theme within this background section: the idea of self-determination. Here, the subject points to an idea of obligations that come with that identity.

1-4: This subject points to a collective narrative as something that makes people Jewish.

1-5: This subject’s background directly relates to the Holocaust, as their only connection is through their grandparent. This is what allowed this subject to go on Birthright. The subject’s grandfather did not disclose his Judaism to his family, hoping it would be erased from his

identity. This is interesting, and there is no clear conclusion that can be made. The grandparent is the only thing that connected this subject to Judaism, and, yet, the grandparent is the one who wanted to remove Judaism from his identity. Is it possible, then, that this connection was found out of history more so than ancestry? In essence, is it still considered ancestry when there was no personal connection to that portion of ancestry? Or is it more like history, and more like making a connection to the Holocaust stories that are told that these subjects stated their connection to regardless of the actual ancestral or familial basis? These questions point to a collective memory or history rather than a real genetic or familial connection.

1-6: Although this subject had one Jewish parent, they felt the need to justify their non-Jewish mother by bringing up their conversion. In traditional Jewish law, a person is not Jewish unless their mother is Jewish, thus leaving Judaism to only one parent, and a particular parent. If someone does not have a Jewish mother, they are not considered to be Jewish under strict Jewish law. This is contrary to what was seen in the Holocaust, as any parent qualified someone as Jewish.

1-7: This is the same subject as 1-5, whose grandfather chose to hide his Judaism. This subject discusses an idea of non-determinism, meaning that one's identity is not determined by their genealogy or ancestry. This is one perspective on what Judaism could be - something that is determined by your life as you live it. The subject connects this to their grandfather, who chose, after fleeing Nazi persecution, to no longer identify as Jewish. This self-determinism comes after being persecuted for something over which he had no control.

1-8: This subject converted from Catholicism to Judaism, and found a connection through Jewish ritual.

1-9: This subject talks about something that is part of so many people's Jewish identity: traveling to Israel. For this person, going to Israel was considered to be just as important as studying Judaism or following ritual.

1-10: This subject talks about a feeling of authority over Judaism that seems to come from being born as such. This subject converted later in life, therefore pointing to a stigma of being "not as Jewish" as a convert. This is interestingly similar to Holocaust-era thoughts about Judaism, which did not consider people who had converted to be Jewish, or at least as Jewish, as those who were born Jewish. This idea exists in genetic or ancestral pre-determinism, which defies ideas of self-identification or self-determination. When thinking about this in the context of Birthright, it is important to note that such self-determination or identification does not make someone "Jewish enough."

1-11: This subject experienced their difference in the Jewish world as a blonde-haired, blue-eyed Jew. This basis of this is not unlike those in the Holocaust who "got by" with their Aryan features. However, the experience is much different; here, the subject saw it as something that changed their Jewish interactions and bothered them, while it would have potentially improved someone's situation in the Holocaust.

Each of these subjects points to a different reason for why they are Jewish, highlighting much of the nuance of Jewish identity and background. For some, this is ancestry, even Holocaust experiences. For others, it is their memories or experiences as an individual. The question that arises from this, that might be answered in later sections, is whether or not that identification is not in agreement with their Birthright experience or with their thoughts about the Holocaust and identification in the Holocaust.

Topic 2: Judaism and Blood

2-1: This subject talks about the ancestral or genealogical connection to Judaism, through Abraham or Sarah. This is a concept in Judaism that says that each person is a descendent of the patriarchs and

patriarchs. For this person, even that is not true; rather, they are given the Jewish texts and rituals and self-determine what they will do with them.

2-2: This subject recognizes the necessary nuance to the question of blood as a foundation for Judaism. For some, this is an entirely important or valuable reason as to why they are Jewish. However, this is not the only connection. The Nazi definitions, based in finding the "Jewish gene" ignore this nuance.

2-3: This subject points to the above-mentioned nuance.

2-4: This subject, like had been said in the previous two quotes, rejects the idea that blood/genetics needs to be the only way that Judaism is passed down. Although none of the subjects had a previous genetics background, this subject discussed the actual genetic basis for Judaism not being entirely based in one's genes.

2-5: Once again, this subject points to the non-biology based aspects of Judaism, which seem to be more inclusive and more applicable for many people.

2-6: This subject finds a connection between Judaism and ideology, not Judaism and blood.

2-7: This subject questions the deterministic nature of Judaism, in that it is passed down but that the receiver does not necessarily know why they were chosen to receive it.

2-8: In this statement, this subject brings into question the idea of what one must do to be Jewish; to them, it is more than to be born Jewish. One must take a sense of ownership over their Judaism, whatever that means.

2-9: In this statement, this subject points out the apparent ridiculousness of tying Judaism directly to blood when we talk about having a Jewish soul.

The overwhelming response here is that, although it may be important to some, blood and genetics has very little importance in these subjects' ideas about Judaism.

Topic 3: Israel

3-1: This subject points to the connection between the Holocaust laws and the Law of Return. These are innately connected; the Law of Return was created in order to give haven to those who had been persecuted in the Holocaust. This Law offered refuge to so many, and continues to do so. However, it does limit those who can emigrate to Israel to those who had at least one Jewish grandparent, as stated by this subject. The subject identifies how limiting that can be, even for someone who is actively living a Jewish life but cannot prove what needs to be proven in order to verify that they are Jewish, even if they self-identify as so.

3-2: This subject points to the connection between the Holocaust (Shoah) and Israel, in that it is an important place because of the Holocaust. For this person, they don't have that connection, but others do. For many, though, they do not need a personal connection to the Holocaust in order to have feelings towards Israel.

3-3: This subject points to the religious connections in Israel; for them, these are the most important, regardless of religious identification.

3-4: This subject talks about ancestors as those who were around in the very early days of Judaism, up to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. This ancestry is important because of the practice and the ideology, which provides a homecoming for this subject.

3-5: This subject talks about the indelible nature of their conversion in conferring something Jewish upon them. They also remark on their Jewishness before that as well; they identify Judaism as something they had always that was realized in their conversion. This subject then talks about the frustration of not being able to emigrate to

Israel because they had a Reform conversion, which is not accepted, and makes one feel like they are not enough.

3-6: This subject discusses the aspects of Birthright that connect them to the Jewish people in Israel; it is ritual practice that establishes that connection.

This section raises some significant controversial ideas about Israel, all of which relate to how these subjects self-identify. The subjects connect to Israel, but seem dismayed by the limits that are set upon them by the rules for who can emigrate to Israel.

Topic 4: Birthright

4-1: Many of the subjects discussed their thoughts about how people should qualify (or not) for Birthright. This subject suggests an idea that those who care about their Jewish understanding should be allowed to apply, and then be interviewed. This is not uncontroversial; this subject suggests that Birthright be open to those who have some Jewish connection, but it is not well-defined.

4-2: Similarly, this subject suggests more open qualifications.

4-3: This subject talks about their experience with Birthright and feeling anxious about their background even though they were very up front about it. This is an interesting find, which seems to raise a question regarding the qualifications. If the qualifications are made to be more inclusive, can it lessen these feelings of anxiety and inadequacy before the trip?

4-4: Some of these ideas about conversion and the pressure in filling out the application for Birthright are worth noting as well; if someone who self-identifies as Jewish is made uncomfortable by filling the application out, what is the possible effect that it can have on someone who does not self-identify as such, or has the anxiety of 4-3?

4-5: This subject talks about trauma, specifically regarding trauma in the Holocaust, in reference to the qualifications for Birthright. This subject raises an important question: if that was a traumatic experience of loss of self-identity, how could that impact someone today in terms of trauma?

4-6: This subject brings up the religious experiences on Birthright as being particularly formative.

4-7: Once again, a more nuanced definition of who can go on Birthright.

When talking about Birthright, the subjects overwhelmingly supported more open qualifications, citing the need for more inclusion and more room for exploration of Jewish identity. Others cited anxiety and trauma as reasons to turn away from a definition that can cut out people who feel as Jewish as any other, thus producing more trauma and more feelings of not being Jewish enough.

Topic 5: Jewish Identity

5-1: This subject plainly states that identity should be something entirely in control of the individual. This is valuable in many ways, as it opens up Jewish identity to those who identify as Jewish.

5-2: This subject, even after going on Birthright, does not identify as Jewish.

5-3: This subject cites the different experiences of those who are born Jewish and those who convert, but claims to have neither of the experiences fully. The subject was not born Jewish and converted, but does not feel like a convert. This introduces nuance into the idea of converts vs. born-Jews, as it may not be as clear cut as one expects.

5-4: This subject further complicates the idea of who is Jewish by bringing in deeds and acts that make someone Jewish. Do you truly need to be doing Jewish things in order to be defined as Jewish?

This section offered fewer distinct quotes, mostly due to the connections to the previous subject matter. However, the ideas of Jewish identity prevail as being nuanced and unique to the individual.

Topic 6: Holocaust

6-1: This subject seems to disagree with the issues inherent in the Holocaust qualifications for who is Jewish, but rather, this is not inaccurate. Though for some, parents and grandparents don't have as much of an impact on their Jewish identity, for many, it is vital to their identity, and that should never be discounted. However, the ruling in the Holocaust had less to do with parents and grandparents and more so with what they pass on in terms of "biological Jewishness."

6-2: This subject makes a critical connection here: the rules for preferred or nonpreferred Mischlinge ignores genetics and blood heritage all together and refers only to practice, and, yet, the Birthright rules only recognize this if you have converted. The subject brings up, again, the idea that potential participants could be turned away and not have the experience can have nothing to do with heritage and everything to do with individual identification.

6-3: This subject turns the idea back around, and makes a connection to some Holocaust narratives. For some, it felt awful to have to send along their parent to a concentration camp and be separated and never know if they would see them again. Of course, no one wanted to go to the camps, but the separation from one's family was devastating. And, if someone felt Jewish but could deny it and say they were only a Mischlinge, it could feel like denying one's own identity. This subject brings that full circle, citing that external identification as something that removes one's own confidence in their identity.

6-4: When talking about the Mischlinge rules, this subject connects it back to the Birthright application. After being asked about heritage and background, the participants are asked about their Jewish involvement. This does not disqualify anyone for any reason, but it could make someone feel, yet again, not "Jewish enough" because of their upbringing or their involvement.

6-5: This subject talks in length about their family tree and the greater connection they had to their Jewish side because of practice.

6-6: The anxiety about these ideas is expressed yet again.

These subjects present the issues found in the rules of the Holocaust, and relate them back to their experiences with Birthright. There is anxiety and disgust for the rules as they are laid out, particularly because of the Holocaust connection.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there seems to be no connection between Birthright qualifications and what people perceive as who is Jewish. Even in this small sample, there is an overwhelming understanding that these rules created by Birthright are not at all in conjunction with each individual's self-identification.

The interview quotes raised questions related to this conclusion. If the qualifications are made to be more inclusive, can it lessen feelings of anxiety and inadequacy before the trip? While not being of traditional Jewish background could still be anxiety producing when one feels as though they are not "Jewish enough," if the concept of being Jewish as self-identifying as Jewish is normalized, institutions could decrease this anxiety. In regard to trauma related to this loss of self-identity, more inclusive qualifications could decrease traumatic experiences felt by participants related to identity.

FUTURE WORK

Although this study yields significant results, there are many areas for improvement. Within this study, expanding sample size would yield more diverse results and provide further insight into the questions asked here.

In regard to further tests and studies, adding pre- and post- tests for Birthright participants would assess pre-trip ideas about these concepts and provide a control by which one can assess how Birthright affected an individual's thoughts about religion, culture, and ethnicity.

As many results yielded answers related to trauma and anxiety, it would be pertinent to investigate feelings of trauma and anxiety related to Jewish identity in order to determine if the same feelings are found in Birthright participants as were found in Holocaust survivors. This would allow one to address the detrimental effects of the shared identification rules.

Finally, although this is a study related to genetics, an additional genetic component would shed more light on the results given here. Running genomic sequencing, such as commercial sequencing through 23andMe, would allow for the quantification of what is considered to be Jewish background, which is determined by related genes from areas of the world commonly thought to be where large Jewish populations originate. This would provide an additional metric.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Table of Word Mentions, as a percentage of total mentions in a section or by a subject

	Religious (Jewish)	Religious (non-Jewish)	Adverse Feelings	Affirmative Feelings	Overall Feelings	Israel	Personal ID	Genetics/ Blood	Ancestry/ Culture	Total Word Mentions	Percentage of Total Word Mentions
Topic 1: Background	43%	6%	1%	3%	14%	7%	9%	0%	17%	265	12%
Topic 2: Judaism and Blood	12%	0%	13%	0%	25%	3%	1%	19%	27%	210	10%
Topic 3: Israel	0%	0%	3%	0%	21%	63%	11%	0%	3%	155	7%
Topic 4: Birthright	22%	0%	0%	0%	25%	8%	20%	0%	25%	251	11%
Topic 5: Jewish Identity	31%	13%	6%	0%	3%	17%	0%	0%	32%	72	3%
Topic 6: Holocaust	31%	0%	7%	0%	0%	16%	7%	3%	36%	135	6%
1	41%	2%	11%	0%	9%	14%	4%	0%	20%	362	17%
2	3%	5%	4%	4%	35%	19%	7%	10%	15%	226	10%
3	22%	2%	0%	0%	9%	23%	14%	5%	24%	384	18%
4	12%	0%	2%	0%	32%	2%	18%	0%	34%	124	6%

Appendix B: Charts

WORD MENTIONS CATEGORIES (AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL MENTIONS IN A SECTION)

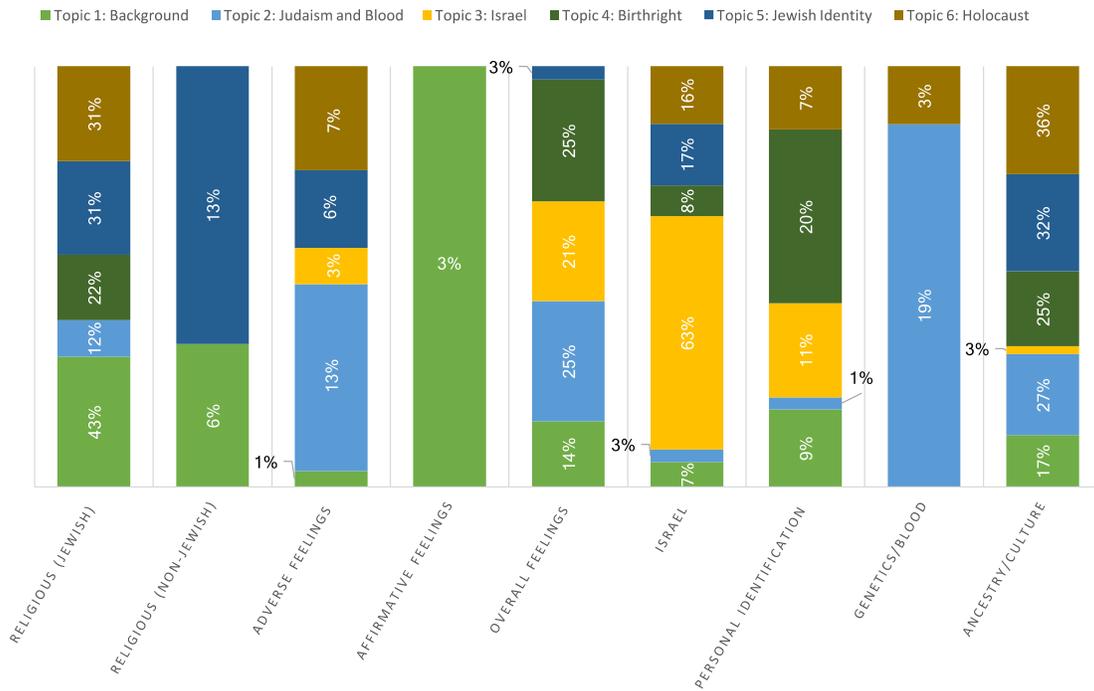


Figure 2: Significant Word Mentions by Topic

WORD MENTIONS CATEGORIES (AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL MENTIONS BY A SUBJECT)

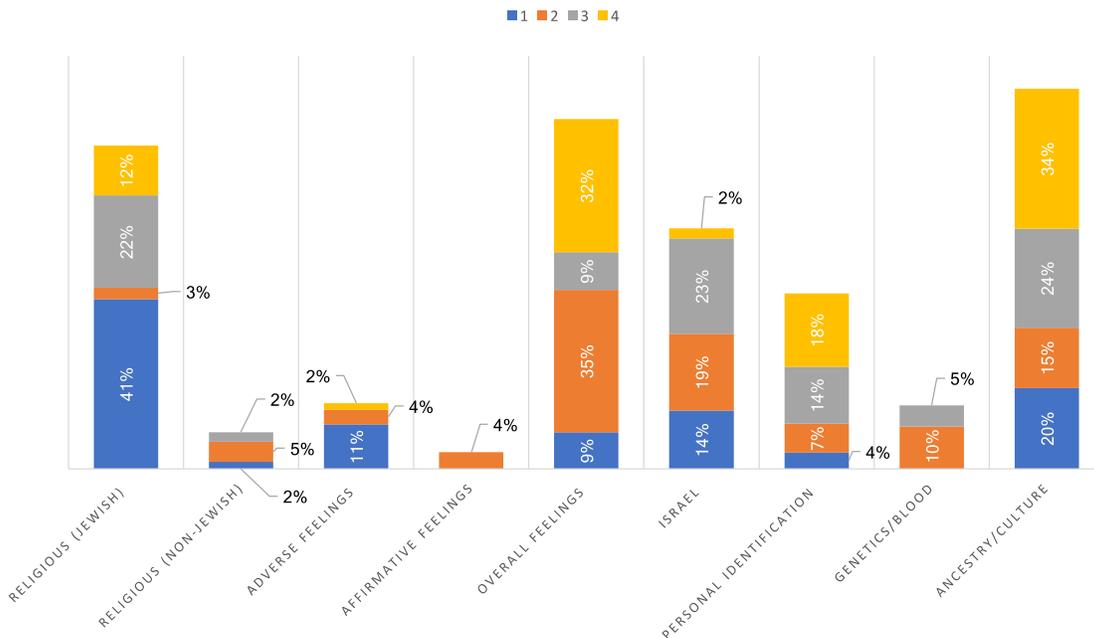


Figure 3: Significant Word Mentions by Subject

General Information

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Originating Department Code:		A&S Biological Sciences (404100X)	
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Title:	Genetics, Judaism, and Society: Eugenics, Birthright, and the Holocaust		
Protocol Version #:		Abbreviated Title:	Genetics, Judaism, and Society

Appendix D: Interview Questions

1. Topic: Background

Talk about your upbringing. What Judaism did you have? What did you not have? What was it like to come to college and experience Jewish life on campus? Were there any disconnects? If you grew up with different faiths/with parents of different faiths, what were your experiences like? How did it feel to be part of a group of Jewish students on Birthright?

2. Topic: Blood and Judaism

What does it mean to you to be born Jewish? To be ethnically Jewish? Religiously Jewish? Culturally Jewish? How does ancestry inform your practice of Judaism? How do you think Judaism is passed down? When do you “lose” your Judaism?

3. Topic: Israel

Do you see going to Israel as a Homecoming? Do you connect with Israel? With Israeli life? Before and after? What, if anything, about your views on Israel changed from before to after Birthright? The Law of Return says that anyone with one Jewish grandparent can move to Israel, even though they are not considered to be Jewish by the Chief Rabbinate? How do you feel about this?

4. Topic: Birthright

How do you feel the program has affected/encouraged/pushed your religious identity? How did you feel participating in religious and/or spiritual aspects of the trip? How do you think others on your trip reacted to this? If you are non-practicing, why did you go on Birthright? How do you feel about continuing Jewish life upon your return?

5. Topic: Jewish Identity

What was your Jewish life before Birthright? After Birthright? If you are not self-defining as Jewish, why did you go on Birthright? Do you think Birthright should be open to non-Jews? What, to you, defines someone as Jewish? Can you be culturally and religiously Jewish? Where is the defining line? Do you think religious Judaism and cultural Judaism are in conflict?

6. Topic: Holocaust (MUST BE LAST QUESTION)

People in the Holocaust were identified as Jewish regardless of faith based on their blood and ancestry, most often going back to their grandparents. A person with one Jewish grandparent was considered a “Mischlinge 2nd degree” and a person with two (or one Jewish parent) was considered a “Mischlinge 1st degree,” regardless of practice. Converts were not accepted as having switched, whether to or from Judaism. How do you feel about this?