

A Research Training Internship (RTI) Report | July 2020

Jewish United Fund  TOGETHER for GOOD

 DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

We the people



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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	1
RTI Cohort 6 Positionalities.....	2
Introduction	5
Gender & Sexual Orientation	7
Disability.....	21
Race & Ethnicity.....	31
Testimonials.....	36
Works Cited.....	38



Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

- Margaret Mead

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Research Training Internship (RTI)

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RTI Cohort 6 Personalities

As feminist researchers, we recognize that no research is objective. Every researcher brings life experience and bias to their work, and these experiences add context and depth to the research. Below, you'll find a statement of each researcher's positionality. Consider these statements a guide to help you better understand the lens through which we view the world and the power structures at play within our research.



CARA MARANTZ (she/her/hers)

Roycemore School, 12th grade

As a straight, white, cisgender teenager, I go through life with a great amount of privilege. I haven't always understood how this privilege affects my perspective, and my goal coming into this was to confront the ways I perpetuate systematic oppression and learn effective ways to actively combat these injustices. Being a part of RTI has opened me up to a whole new realm of resources and educational opportunities. It has changed the way I view the world. Being able to research privilege in the Jewish community, a community which holds immense importance to me, has allowed me to reevaluate my place within it and has begun to show me how I can truly make a tangible change.



SOPHIE LEVITT (she/her/hers)

Deerfield High School, 11th grade

Being Jewish is something more than religion or ethnicity to me. It's a value. It's about justice and healing the world. Thus, as a Jewish girl, I've always felt obligated to advocate for what is right. In RTI, I have found plentiful resources and perspectives in order to confront what is wrong and combat oppression both inside and outside of my community.



SARAH SAROWITZ (she/her/hers)

Highland Park High School, 11th grade

Growing up in a multicultural, interfaith family, I have seen firsthand the way privilege can impact someone's life. I have been exposed to many different communities, some privileged and some not. However, I acknowledge, that as a straight, cisgender girl from an affluent suburb of Chicago, I experience life with a great deal of privilege. As a Latina, I have struggled to find my place within the Jewish community and have always felt most connected to Judaism through the value it places on making the world a better place. RTI's research on privilege within the Jewish community as a means to empower the communities we researched perfectly aligns with my own values of social justice. I am extremely grateful for this amazing program and all the opportunities it has given me.



DANIELA OSTROV (she/her/hers)
Glenbrook North High School, 11th grade

Judaism has always been a defining part of my identity. Because my parents grew up in a country where they weren't allowed to freely practice their religion, I have always been grateful that I am able to openly practice my Judaism. I find an open-hearted and comforting community in Judaism that I can always turn to for help. As a white, straight, cisgender girl from the suburbs of Chicago, I have been able to experience a lot of privilege. During this research project, I have realized that although I find freedom in Judaism, others do not have that privilege. The research has been so eye-opening, and I am now more aware of how people can have different experiences with privilege. RTI has been an incredible program in which I have been able to collaborate with amazing girls to learn more about the world around me.

“Understand that the right to choose your own path is a sacred privilege. Use it. Dwell in possibility.”
- Oprah Winfrey



CARRIE LAMPERT (she/her/hers)
Lane Tech College Prep High School, 11th grade

Judaism has always been a large part of my identity, starting in elementary school when I attended Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Jewish Day School. Since my time at Bernard Zell, I have found ways to stay involved in the Jewish community through programs such as RTI. RTI gives me a space to express my passion about the injustices in the world. The topic of privilege is important to me because I have always lived a life full of privilege as a white, straight, cisgender person from a good neighborhood. However, I am sensitive to the fact that many people do not enjoy this level of privilege, and I want to do what I can to spread awareness and make a difference. RTI has been so meaningful as I have been able to educate myself, learn from my peers, as well as do research to try to make a difference with fellow Jewish teens my age. RTI ties together my passion for social justice and for the Jewish community.



BAILEY HARA (she/her/hers)
Highland Park High School, 11th grade

Growing up as a white Jewish heterosexual girl in the North Shore suburbs of Chicago, I was always bothered by the privilege found throughout the Jewish community. I knew it existed, but I didn't know how to comfortably acknowledge and address it. RTI helped me build the skillset I needed to not only recognize the discrimination around me but to be an advocate for other as well. This group and program sparked a passion for social justice that I didn't know I had, and it brought me closer to my Jewish community and roots through dialogue and education.



JORDANA HOZMAN (she/her/hers)

Deerfield High School, 11th grade

Judaism has been a large part of my identity for as long as I can remember. I have always been guided by the two phrases: *tikkun olam* meaning “repairing the world”, and *tzedek, tzedek, tirdof* meaning “justice, justice, you shall pursue”. While I do feel it is necessary to practice these two principles, I also recognize my immense privilege in doing so. As a white cisgender girl who has grown up in an affluent suburb, I acknowledge the privilege that I inherently hold because of this. Although I do hold lots of privilege with these identities, I am also disabled which has allowed me to explore the intersections between my identities. RTI has given me the opportunity to learn more about systems of oppression, address my own privilege, and have the skills to effectively create change to shape a more equitable and just world.



MADDIE FISHER (she/her/hers)

New Trier High School, 11th grade

As a white Jewish girl growing up in Glencoe, I have experienced extraordinary amounts of privilege. RTI has only reinforced this idea while also showing me what I can do with my privilege. This year, we took a deep dive into privileged groups within the Jewish community. RTI has given me the tools to be able to use my privilege to amplify the voices of people less fortunate than me. I never felt like my passions for social justice had a place in the Jewish community, but this program through JUF helped me find my place in a Jewish community where I’ve often felt lost.



GABI ZUKERMAN (she/her/hers)

Rochelle Zell Jewish High School, 10th grade

As a Jewish girl growing up in the north shore suburbs of Chicago, I’ve only ever known what’s inside my Jewish and suburban bubble. I always consider myself privileged. I am very fortunate to grow up in a Jewish community, attend great schools, have amazing friends, have the opportunities to succeed in the world, and more. Although I have learned about under-resourced societies and areas, I have never come close to imagining what it’s like to not have the opportunities or advantages that I have. RTI has given me the tools I need to gain a better understanding of the world I live in, not just my small community. I’ve been able to explore myself and my identities in new and unique ways that I wouldn’t get anywhere else. I am beyond grateful for RTI, the life-long friendships I have made, the knowledge I’ve gained, and the opportunities I’ve been given.



RACHEL HARRIS (she/her/hers)

Niles North High School, 10th grade

Judaism has been the driving force behind my identity. I have always been involved in our Jewish communities, whether it be going to a Jewish school or belonging to a synagogue. As I have become more educated, I have seen the inequities in, not just society as a whole, but in the Jewish communities I am a part of. I recognize the privilege I hold as a white, cisgender, able-bodied individual. RTI has given me the opportunity to address my privilege and find ways to help educate others.

Introduction

It probably does not surprise you that this year's work is a little different from years past. The world itself is a vastly different place than it was when we started this year's cohort in the fall of 2019.

In the span of a few short weeks, the COVID-19 pandemic went from an abstract issue abroad to a very real and unavoidable American crisis. Schools and businesses shut down, our in-person RTI meetings became virtual, and seemingly everything else came to a screeching halt. Despite the hurdles that the COVID-19 global pandemic put forth, our interns persevered. Their unyielding commitment to their research, and to each other, is a testament to the tenacity of the human spirit, creativity, and engagement in the face of adversity.

The interns' ability to produce quality research amidst a national lockdown has a lot to do with how strong they started off. Despite being a smaller research cohort than previous years, our interns made up for it in their aptitude to learn. Although it truly feels like years since we first met, they came to their first session intent on getting serious about some of the biggest issues of our moment: climate change, LGBTQ+ discrimination, the Black Lives Matter movement, the impending Chicago teachers' strike. To say we were impressed would be an understatement.

When learning about feminist methodologies from Dr. Beth Catlett, our interns were enticed by the idea that there is no single objective truth and that knowledge can come from multiple many sources. In a world that often disqualifies the voices of young people, of women, of non-binary people, of people of color, it is empowering to learn that your experiences and observations are equal to the dominant narratives around us. Our interns wanted to learn about the lives and experiences of others that existed in the margins and hear voices that had been traditionally denied a platform. This curiosity brought the interns to researching the format and creation of zines, and led us to a visit DePaul's special collection of archived Chicago-based zines and work with Lilith magazine to explore this genre. You'll even see how zines inspired and influenced the creation of this very report.

When it came time to pick a research question, our interns wanted to explore whose voices were being left out in their own circles. As female teens in a Jewish space, they were reflexive with their privilege and wanted to make such spaces more accessible. With the help of Dr. Amira Proweller, they narrowed their focus on exploring access in Jewish spaces. Within this topic, our interns decided to further explore intersections of identity: gender and sexuality; race and ethnicity; and disability.

Within their subgroups, they made plans to conduct research through interviews, photo analysis, widespread surveys, and many other different routes. Their vision was enormous and nothing short of spectacular. However, our interns (and the rest of the world) were thrown a curve-ball mid-March. Suddenly schedules and plans were abandoned. In the hectic early days of quarantine, the possibilities of their vision pivoted to what they could manage in unprecedented times.

Our 2020 report, *We The People*, is astounding in what it seeks to answer. Our team did groundbreaking work exploring inclusivity and exclusivity in their own communities. The report itself will be adapted to be accessible for visually-impaired readers for the first time in RTI's history – an important milestone in the program's continued journey of inclusive growth. There is no doubt our minds that this report will be instrumental when the world begins to open itself up again. It was created in a time when collectively, we all had a lot on our plate with the understanding that inclusion in the Jewish community has to happen no matter what. There were days when the world was scary, and it probably would have been easier to do something else. We applaud the interns for their unwavering pledge to not only get the job done, but to get the job well done.

Explanation of Zines

Did you ever notice a table at a DIY craft fair or swap meet that displayed an assortment of colorful pamphlets and booklets, usually priced at a couple dollars, or free (if you wanted to trade)? These publications might have seemed small and insignificant, but they're a part of a long history of marginalized and underground voices creating a platform for themselves where other outlets were hard to find.

Zines (shortened from magazine) are loosely-defined as self-published works of original or appropriated text, collage, illustration, and photography. Traditionally, they have been confined to small circulations, typically under 1,000 copies, and distributed within a localized region. The internet has allowed zines to become more widely circulated, either through shipping or through web-based publication. Genres range from explorations into various subcultures, niche interests, and personal journals to creative writing and visual art. The common thread binding zines is that content often veers away from mainstream media and documents dissenting ideas and the communities that harbor them.

Perhaps the earliest examples of zines can arguably be traced back to 1517 when Martin Luther published *Ninety-five Theses*, as the Gutenberg Press permitted mechanical reproduction. Self-publication was to become a political medium that disseminated ideas which sparked the French and American revolutions. In the late 19th century, as amateur presses and printers became more present, zines continued to grow in popularity. Yet it wasn't until the 1930s when zines took off in popularity by exploring radical conceptual art and science fiction. Zines saw another spike in circulation and readership as counter-culture music scenes, such as Punk in the 1970s and Riot Grrrl of the 1990s, created new content opportunities.

Though zines are known for being a mere fraction of the size and might of commercial publishing houses, they do hold significant academic and cultural variety. Harvard, The University of Chicago, and DePaul University are just a few examples of institutions that house archives of zines. Zines are becoming more widely recognized as a medium after Lynda Barry, a prominent zine author, comic artist, and art professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison won the 2019 MacArthur Prize for her life's work.

Both Feminism and Judaism are prevalent topics in the Zine World. Feminists took to creating zines as comic book artists failed to feature their work, opting for overtly sexist and racist material. Zines became a space for feminist creators to not only explore and distribute their own art and content, but also exchange ideas with others. Today Jewish Feminist publication *Lilith Magazine* offers workshops into zine creation for those wishing to document issues ranging from global pandemics, civil unrest, and personal reflections and ruminations. The RTIs were fortunate enough to explore the zine archives housed at DePaul as well and partake in the workshops offered by *Lilith*, which served as a springboard for their own research. Throughout our research, you'll find our take on zines: our contribution to the form and to feminist research.

Gender & Sexual Orientation

After spending about 6 months learning about the different ways that oppression and privilege manifests in our world, we decided to dive deeper into the privilege seen in the Jewish community. While the four of us found the Jewish community equally as inclusive as secular spaces, we were curious to hear from the perspective of a range of non-heterosexual folks.

When we first began our research, we had hypothesized that straight cisgender folks would find the Jewish community more inclusive than would non heterosexual folks. We recognized that at a first glance, the Jewish community is mostly composed of straight, cisgender people. So, we elected to focus our research on everything from straight folks to people who identified as “tired.”

We surveyed and interviewed people of varying gender, sexuality, and levels of practice, and in the end, our results left us feeling proud and hopeful for the future. We found that 94.7% of participants find Jewish spaces to be equally if not more inclusive than secular spaces when considering gender identification. The remaining 5.3% were all cisgender women. That being said, most of the concerns coming from the 5.3%

who find Jewish spaces less inclusive than secular spaces were related to Orthodox practices.

“I went to the western wall and felt very looked down upon and for holidays with women of the wall I felt like I needed a voice I didn’t have.”

(Marissa, she/her, cisgender woman, age 18)

“My in-laws are Orthodox, and as women, we are excluded from all aspects of celebrations.”

(Amy Milner, she/her, cisgender woman, age 49).

After analyzing all of our data, we decided to take our findings with a grain of salt, being that almost 80% of all participants identify as Reform or Reconstructionist, and of the 20% who identify as Conservative or Modern Orthodox, many of them found the Jewish community less inclusive. Ultimately, we concluded that members of the Reform and Reconstructionist community didn’t find nearly as much inequality as people in the Conservative and Modern Orthodox community did.

In addition to our findings from the gender portion of our

survey, the sexuality portion followed a similar trend. 92.6% of participants found the Jewish community equally if not more inclusive than secular spaces when considering sexuality, with a remaining 7.4% who find the it to be less inclusive. Of those 7.4%, 71% are either conservative or Modern Orthodox in practice. So, again, we found that members of the Conservative and Modern Orthodox community found the Jewish community to be less inclusive than did members of the Reform and Reconstructionist community.

From both our interviews and survey results, we have concluded that many people, but specifically women and LGBTQ+ identifying people have found more observant Jewish communities such as the Orthodox community to be less inclusive, accommodating, and accepting. Is this shocking? No. As women growing up in the Jewish community from various levels of practice, we have observed the discrimination that comes with higher levels of practice. We’ve been denied the privilege of reading Torah at the Western Wall, and in many Orthodox communities’ women have also been denied the privilege of becoming a rabbi, and praying alongside men.

Another survey respondent seems to note this as well. "At my usual conservative shul, I feel fully included, but in the orthodox synagogues I sometimes attend it can be more challenging for me. I find the gender essentialism of some congregations to be really frustrating." (Rachel Doherty, she/her, asexual cisgender woman, age 22).

When also looking at our survey results further, we noticed that several respondents mentioned that the Jewish community has work to do in terms of making spaces more inclusive for non-binary folks. In particular, we focused on the responses of Al, a queer non-binary person who is age 34 and Avery, a non-binary genderfluid person who is age 25.

When asked about if they believe that the Jewish community is inclusive in terms of gender, Al says: "It's actually yes and no - the broader community is very good about using my correct pronouns, and the temple provides pronoun tags for our name tags. However, the clergy have a lot to learn about gender and the ways to talk about it."

We also saw that both Al and Avery answered that they do not have bathrooms that they are able to use within their synagogue or other Jewish spaces because of their gender identity. Al also mentions how they find programming in Jewish spaces to not be gender

inclusive and only aimed toward specific groups.

"A Jewish institutional life in Chicago is really aimed at cis het Jews and gay cis men. Barely any thought is put toward gender inclusion. Again - lots of programming for cis gay men, but not much for other LGBTQ folks."

(Al, they/them)

We noticed that many cisgender people also noted that their synagogues or other Jewish settings are not as inclusive of non-binary and gender non-conforming people as other identifies within the LGBTQ+ community.

For example, Juliana, a 17-year-old bisexual cisgender woman mentions, "My synagogue has been making conscious efforts to discuss how the role of women in Judaism has changed, but past that there is barely any mention or inclusivity of gender-non-conforming or transgender individuals in the context of Judaism."

Jo, a 45-year-old bisexual cisgender woman says that her synagogue does a good job supporting women, but notes, "I think we have a really long way to go with supporting non binary and trans folks but we're taking small steps."

These comments show that even people who aren't non-binary, gender non-conforming, or genderfluid still see that there is

an inclusion and representation issue for non-binary folks. It seems that non-binary people may not be fully included in the Jewish community, especially if they do not have a bathroom to use in. Jewish spaces, or programming isn't gender inclusive.

Furthermore, we realized that several people mentioned that their identity lacked representation within their synagogue or that the clergy did not get rid of outdated language.

Juliana, a 17-year-old, bisexual cisgender woman does not feel included in her synagogue in terms of her sexual orientation and says that "there is a lot of emphasis on heterosexual relationships and giving birth to the next generation of Jewish leaders."

Also, Madeleine, a 27-year-old bisexual cisgender woman does not feel her identity represented because she "rarely sees other bi people visibly in most Jewish settings."

Another very insightful statement we read was from Leora, a queer cisgender woman who discussed her experiences with inclusion and pride at her synagogue.

"Generally, my synagogue is queer affirming, I would say it's a work in progress. I was disappointed that during "Pride Shabbat," our straight male rabbi talked for a really long time about all of the wonderful things the synagogue has done for

queer people. That's not really what allyship is - allyship is allowing queer people to speak for themselves. They have been working on changing the way they call people up for aliyot, but I think they could be doing more. Because they are a fairly traditional synagogue in terms of liturgy, there are still norms that need to shift there. I also was disappointed that no mention was made during the week of the reading of Parashat Kedoshim - which includes the verse calling homosexuality an "abomination" - about the fact that we were reading that verse and how that might impact people in the room."

From her statement, we can see that Leora believes her synagogue is well intentioned, but there is still much room for improvement in terms of representation and amplification of LGBTQ+ people and their voices as well as updating some liturgical practices to be more inclusive.

To conclude, from both of our interviews and survey results, we have come to several conclusions. Based on several personal anecdotes from our interviews and surveys, we have seen that some non-binary and gender non-conforming people face many barriers to inclusion such as non-gender inclusive bathrooms, programming, and outdated binary practice.

We also found that many women and LGBTQ+ folks found higher levels of observance such as the

Orthodox community to be non-inclusive. Although this is the case, our survey showed that an overwhelming amount of our 94 respondents did find the Jewish community to be inclusive of their identities.

However, this does not mean that the problem of inclusion has been solved. There is always room for improvement and progress and many people, in particular non-binary folks and other LGBTQ+ identifying people are still excluded from Jewish spaces and programming. Different Jewish communities need to ensure that they are not using outdated gendered language, ensuring that an all gender bathroom is available in all Jewish spaces, and making sure that there is LGBTQ+ representation in these spaces as well.

Another common theme that we noticed throughout our survey when looking at results was the amount of heterosexual (straight and cisgender) people who noted that their identity has never been a problem for them or that they have never been discriminated against because of it. Some respondents noted their privilege because they're heterosexual and how because of that, their identity was never marginalized.

Although, other respondents said that "they never pay attention to their inclusion", it's "a non-issue", or that "they never felt being gay was looking down upon within

their synagogue". We found these responses particularly interesting because these folks are heterosexual and therefore have never worried about inclusion. The fact that they believe inclusion is not an issue within their community may show that they are not aware that others may be experiencing marginalization because these heterosexual folks are in the majority.

We believe it is incredibly important to recognize your privilege and realize that others might be marginalized within your community.

Here is an assortment of quotes from heterosexual folks that have been pulled from our survey results:

- "As a cisgender person, my gender identity has always been respected."
- "I'm a cisgender girl lol I'm fine"
- "I'm in the majority"
- "I don't really pay attention to my inclusion"
- "Never had an issue."
- "Heterosexual is easy"
- "I'm heterosexual. It's kind of self-explanatory."
- "I am straight person and experience no discrimination based on my sexuality."
- "It's a non-issue to me."
- "I have never felt that being gay was looked down upon in my synagogue."

Gender & Sexual Orientation Data

94 TOTAL SURVEY RESPONSES



82-85 respondents go to synagogue

82 respondents said they **do** have a bathroom in their synagogue they are **comfortable** with using

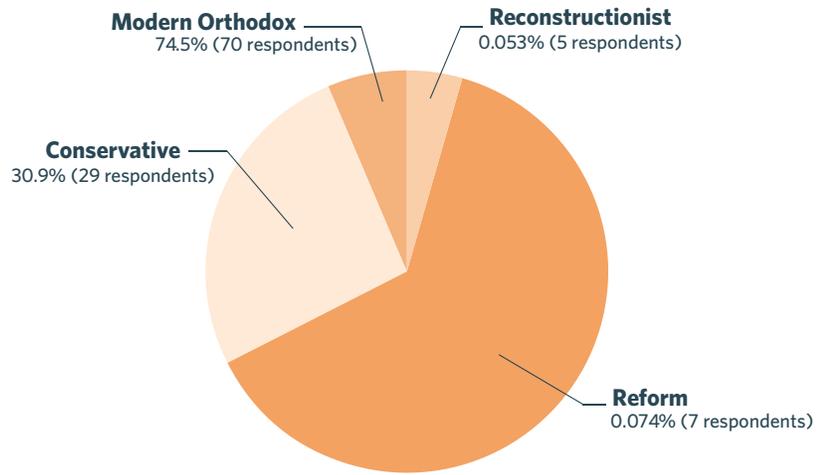
The **3** who said no, they were **non-binary/demi girl/genderfluid**.

43% of not cis-gendered respondents said they did **not have a bathroom** in their synagogue they are comfortable using.

65 respondents said they **do** have a **same gender role model** in their synagogue

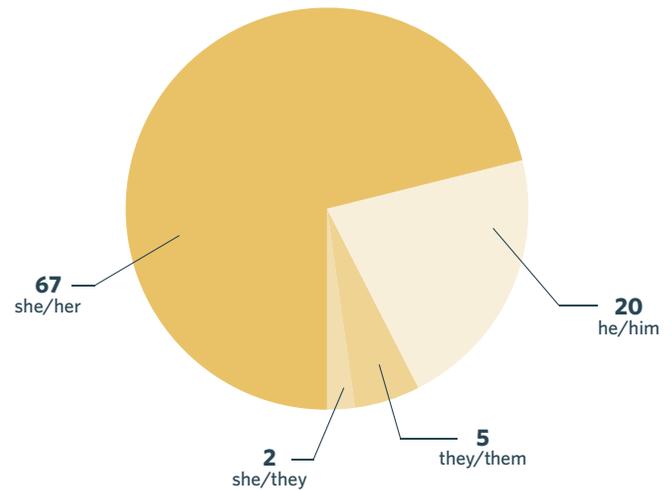
The **19** who said no were women, men, and non-binary (**mostly women and non-binary people**)

Denomination Breakdown

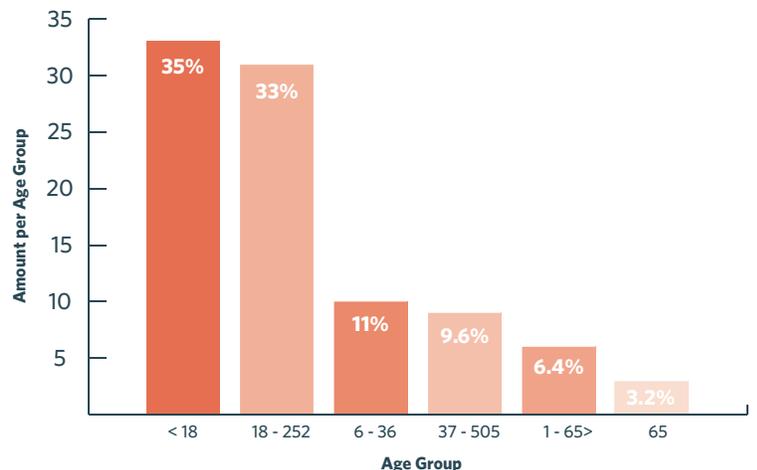


*Note: Percentages do exceed 100%, but this is because several respondents selected multiple denominations such as "Reform and conservative".

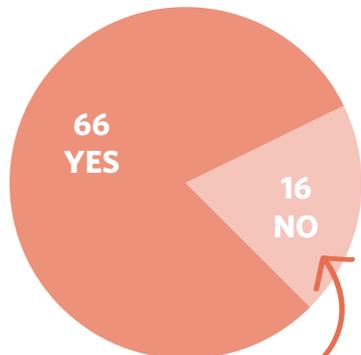
Pronoun Breakdown



Age Breakdown

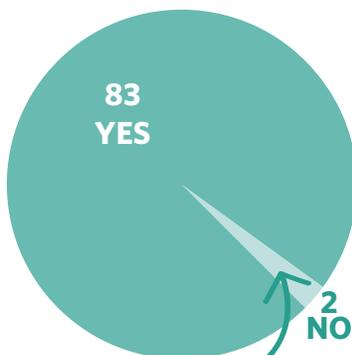


Are you comfortable being open about your sexuality in your synagoge?



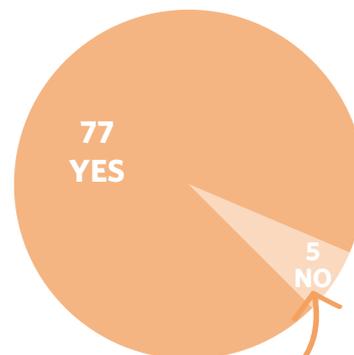
respondents were gay, bi, straight, pan, and queer

Are you comfortable being open about your gender in your synagoge?



respondents were non-binary

Do you feel protected in your synagoge in terms of your sexuality?



respondents were bi, pan, and gay

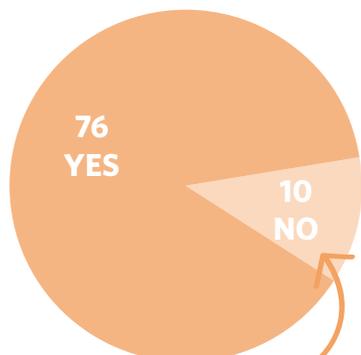
78 respondents said they **feel included** in other **Jewish settings** in terms of their **gender**

The **7** who said no were **women and non-binary**

77 respondents said they **feel included** in other **Jewish settings** in terms of their **sexuality**

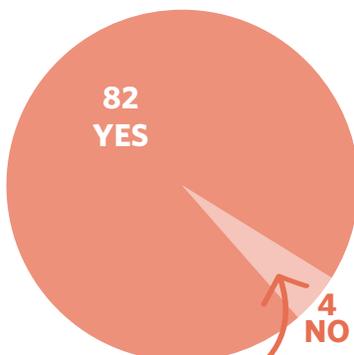
The **8** who said no were **bi, pan, straight, queer, and gay**

Are you comfortable being open about your sexuality in other Jewish settings?



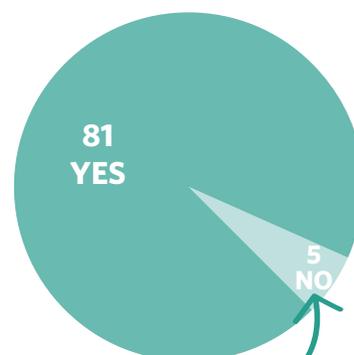
respondents were gay, straight, bi, pan, unsure, fluid, and asexual

Do you feel protected in other Jewish settings in terms of your sexuality?



respondents were bi, straight, pan, and fluid

Do you feel protected in other Jewish settings in terms of your sexuality?



respondents were women and non-binary

Introduction to Research

Our group researched privileged and LGBTQ+ folks within the Jewish community in an attempt to discover how privilege manifests, how inclusive the Jewish community is, and where there is still work to be done.

We chose to research this topic because we wanted to hear about the personal experiences of Jewish LGBTQ+ folks. Prior to beginning our research, all of us believed that the Jewish community was fairly inclusive of LGBTQ+ people. However, we felt that we needed to receive this feedback directly from Jewish LGBTQ+ people, rather than assuming our community's inclusivity as straight, cisgender people.

We utilized a variety of methods when conducting our research. We chose to employ two main research methods: a lengthy survey that included multiple choice and written questions, six interviews with LGBTQ+ Jewish teens, and two interviews with Reform Rabbis. We specifically chose these methods for our research because we believe that they allow for a more comprehensive understanding of our topic that includes quantitative and qualitative aspects.

We received 94 responses

from our survey that was sent out on a variety of platforms including Instagram, Facebook, and through personal circles. For our personal interviews, we interviewed LGBTQ+ identifying teens that we knew from different settings such as school, camp, or synagogue.

Although we did receive a large amount of responses on our survey and gained insight from our interviews, we do have to acknowledge that there are several limitations to our research and findings. In terms of our interviews, we only interviewed people that we knew, rather than completely random people. In general, we did not have a large variety of LGBTQ+ identities in our survey. While we did receive some responses from transgender, non-binary, and gender non-comforting people, they did not make up a sizeable percentage of our results which does not make our research fully representative.

Following up on that, we also did not have a large amount of diversity in terms of the different denominations within Judaism. Over 85% of our survey respondents identified as either Reform or Conservative with a small percentage of respondents identifying as Modern Orthodox or Reconstructionist.

We would have liked to continue our research by interviewing Orthodox rabbis to hear about their views and ideas of inclusion directly since many survey respondents expressed that they have felt least included in the Orthodox community. It also would have been helpful to speak with more members of the Orthodox community to gain some insight into their experiences because we had very few Orthodox respondents.

Lastly, to further our research, we would have liked to have spoken with or gotten survey responses from more transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming folks. So many of our respondents were cisgender which did not allow for a representative conclusion. Even though we did not receive nearly enough responses from trans, non-binary, and gender non-confirming folks, we concluded that they may have a different and ultimately less inclusive experience in Jewish spaces than other identities within the LGBTQ+ community because of the outdated binary system.

Teen Interviews and Analysis



We interviewed six LGBTQ+ identifying teens and asked them about their experiences within the Jewish community regarding inclusion in different settings. From our interviews, we drew a few conclusions. We will primarily be focusing on Kai, a non-binary person, Melanie, a bisexual cisgender woman, Morgan, a cisgender lesbian woman, and Sawyer, a transmasculine non-binary person.

Kai, who is non-binary, expressed that they don't usually feel comfortable expressing their identity in most Jewish spaces. They also mentioned that they believe most Jewish settings and the people in them are not aware of gender-non conforming and transgender identifies. Kai also says that they look up to Jewish LGBTQ+ activists and celebrities on social media because it provides them role models and representation. They noted that it sometimes can be difficult when visiting their grandparents' synagogue because it is split up by female and male which is not gender inclusive. We noticed that Kai also mentioned that gender splitting has been a problem for them in other spaces including their overnight camp which they could not continue attending due to binary gender splitting. Lastly, we noted that Kai does not usually have a bathroom that they're able to use in Jewish spaces.

In our other two interviews with **Morgan** and **Melanie**, they both said that they felt very included in the Jewish community regardless of their identifies and that the Jewish community as a whole is very LGBTQ+ friendly. Another common theme we noticed between both of their responses is that Morgan and Melanie both said that the Reform and Conservative movements are inclusive, but other branches/denominations of Judaism may not be as inclusive and accepting. All three of our interviewees seemed to mentioned that more observant branches of Judaism may not be or are not as accepting, such as when Kai mentioned visiting their grandparents' gender split synagogue.

Another common theme that we became aware of was how few of the teens we interviewed, including **Lexi**, **Morgan**, and **Sawyer**, said that they felt most comfortable in specific spaces. Morgan and Lexi both mentioned their youth groups (USY) and how that space created a welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ folks. Sawyer said that they feel most comfortable in their own synagogue and Hillel at college. These answers showed us that

it is important for LGBTQ+ identifying people to have spaces where they are accepted and able to be themselves.

However, we also observed that Kai reported their level of inclusion to be very different than Melanie's and Morgan's which can probably be attributed to them being non-binary. Specifically, Kai mentioning that they have faced many situations within Jewish settings where they have not been included because of clear binary gender-splitting shows how some Jewish settings are very outdated and not aware or accepting of gender non-conforming identities. Another example is Kai talking about how they were not able to share their gender identity outside of their close friends at camp because other campers were not accepting and did not use their correct pronouns. Kai also said they do not usually have a bathroom to use in Jewish spaces. Sawyer, a transmasculine non-binary person, similarly mentioned that they faced problems with gender splitting and hostility towards their identity in Orthodox spaces. Sawyer specifically noted a time when they went to Hillel for Simchat Torah, and Orthodox people were not accommodating to their gender identity when creating a minyan (a group of people needed to pray). This is another example of how some Jewish spaces are outdated and are not taking steps to make gender non-conforming people feel included.

Overall, from these interviews, we have concluded that non-binary folks have different experiences with inclusion than that of cisgender folks because of the way that so many Jewish spaces are still very binary and outdated.

“Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.”
- Elie Wiesel

What is your name?

Kai Austin

How old are you?

17

How do you identify and what pronouns do you use? (Gender/sexuality)

I identify as Queer and Non-Binary/ Gender Non-Conforming/ Transgender, any of them work! They/ them pronouns.

What branch or branches of Judaism do you identify with?

Reform

Do you belong to a synagogue?

No

How often do you attend synagogue?

At most once a year

What other Jewish settings are you involved in?

None, mainly just keep updated on Jewish issues!

Do you feel accepted in the Jewish community?

As a whole, yes but in specific environments no.

Do you feel comfortable expressing your identity in Jewish settings?

It depends on the setting. But mostly not.

Do you believe that Jewish settings are gender inclusive? Why/Why not?

It also depends, I think in most Jewish settings people are usually ignorant to the idea of Gender-Nonconforming/ Transgender identities, but I believe Jewish people are more open to learning

than most more specifically younger generations. I really identify with Jewish LGBT+ celebrities/ activists especially on social media, that is where I usually find a sense of an accepting community. In more conservative settings, for example my grandparent's synagogue is physically split in the temple by male and female which makes it difficult for me to be there.

Does your gender impact your participation in the Jewish community? If so, how?

Yes, in the example above it makes me feel uncomfortable in non-open-minded settings. Sometimes I feel like most places of worship and Jewish spaces don't change binary language such as "men and women". Gender splitting is also a reason it was hard for me to continue going to my summer sleep away camp due to things being very "binary orientated".

In what (If any) Jewish spaces do you feel comfortable and accepted in and why?

The last temple I went to I did feel accepted at one point after meeting a person who was like me there and we got to teach a workshop on gender, I feel like that community was very open minded and accepting.

Do you have a bathroom that you feel comfortable using in Jewish spaces?

Not usually.

Can you tell me a scenario that you've experienced in which you didn't feel comfortable expressing your identity in a Jewish space (if applicable)?

I did not feel comfortable sharing my gender identity outside of my friend circle when I went to sleep away camp, boys would usually not be accepting and would usually mock it. Even if I knew a person would be accepting, it is hard to explain pronouns and have people follow through with them.

What is your name?

Melanie Cohen

How old are you?

17

How do you identify and what pronouns do you use? (Gender/sexuality)

Female (she/her) and bisexual

What branch or branches of Judaism do you identify with?

Conservative

Do you belong to a synagogue?

Yes

How often do you attend synagogue?

Since high school has begun, not frequently. Before high school, I went Tuesdays and Sundays (my final year I worked there). Now I only spend high holidays there.

What other Jewish settings are you involved in?

None (I am not in any youth groups)

Do you feel accepted in the Jewish community?

Yes

Do you feel comfortable expressing your identity in Jewish settings?

Yes

Do you believe that Jewish settings are LGBTQ inclusive? Why/Why not?

Yes. Personally, my temple has a sign outside of the pride flag with a Star of David, so before I even started coming out to my friends and family, I felt in a comfortable setting to do so.

Does your sexuality impact your participation in the Jewish community? If so, how?

My sexual orientation has no impact on my participation. It is simply where I commit my time to due to my interests in school.

In what (If any) Jewish spaces do you feel comfortable and accepted in and why?

In all Jewish spaces I have been in, I feel comfortable. The tone set by my temple is a very accepting and inclusive environment, so I never feel out of place.

Would you consider Jewish spaces to be more inclusive than secular spaces? Why/Why not?

I believe it depends on the branch of Judaism. It can be debated that within different branches there can be a different amount of inclusivity. Secular spaces contain different ideas, which may include more homophobia than in Jewish settings.

Can you tell me a scenario that you've experienced in which you didn't feel comfortable expressing your identity in a Jewish space (if applicable)?

N/A

What is your name?

Morgan Anders

How old are you?

16

How do you identify and what pronouns do you use? (Gender/sexuality)

I am a cisgender lesbian. I use she/her pronouns.

What branch or branches of Judaism do you identify with?

I am a conservative Jew.

Do you belong to a synagogue?

Yes, I do.

How often do you attend synagogue?

I attend pretty often, usually once a week.

What other Jewish settings are you involved in?

I am involved in USY and Moving Traditions.

Do you feel accepted in the Jewish community?

I feel accepted.

Do you feel comfortable expressing your identity in Jewish settings?

Yes, I do.

Do you believe that Jewish settings are LGBTQ inclusive? Why/Why not?

I believe most Jewish settings (conservative and reform) are LGBTQ inclusive because Jews are taught to be kind to one another and tolerant of one another, therefore most Jewish people tend to be open minded.

Does your sexuality impact your participation in the Jewish community? If so, how?

It has not yet impacted my participation in the Jewish community.

In what (If any) Jewish spaces do you feel comfortable and accepted

in and why?

I feel most comfortable among peers in USY and Moving Traditions youth groups. In these groups, we have programs where we discuss things like sexuality, gender, and more. They are making more Jewish LGBT youth groups such as Keshet.

Would you consider Jewish spaces to be more inclusive than secular spaces? Why/Why not?

I wouldn't consider it to be any more inclusive because stricter Jews tend to have a more closed mind when it comes to the LGBT community. Orthodox Jews already have many opinions when it comes to gender roles and such.

Can you tell me a scenario that you've experienced in which you didn't feel comfortable expressing your identity in a Jewish space (if applicable)?

N/A



What is your name?

Lexi Cohn

How old are you?

17

How do you identify and what pronouns do you use? (Gender/sexuality)

Cisgender woman, she/her/hers

What branch or branches of Judaism do you identify with?

Both the Reform and Conservative movement

Do you belong to a synagogue?

No

How often do you attend synagogue?

Programming at least once a week and once a month service

What other Jewish settings are you involved in?

United Synagogue Youth (USY), Leaders for Tomorrow (AJC), United States Holocaust Museum Teen Board

Do you feel accepted in the Jewish community?

Yes

Do you feel comfortable expressing your identity in Jewish settings?

Yes

Do you believe that Jewish settings are gender inclusive? Why/Why not?

Not completely, part of it has to do with the fundamentals of extreme religion (of any kind) women sitting on the side/doing things differently between genders. I don't think it's particularly accepting to people who don't identify with a specific gender.

Does your gender impact your participation in the Jewish community? If so, how?

No

In what (If any) Jewish spaces do you feel comfortable and accepted

in and why?

Mostly Jewish youth group because she's not the only one and she's close with her friends there. The organization does a very good job with prioritizing rights. USY has a LGBTQ meetup for all Jewish LGBTQ teens to call and meet up.

Do you have a bathroom that you feel comfortable using in Jewish spaces?

Yes

Can you tell me a scenario that you've experienced in which you didn't feel comfortable expressing your identity in a Jewish space (if applicable)?

Never happened

What is your name?

Sawyer

How old are you?

19

How do you identify and what pronouns do you use? (Gender/sexuality)

Transmasculine nonbinary he him/they them

What branch or branches of Judaism do you identify with?

Conservative/traditional

Do you belong to a synagogue?

Yes

How often do you attend synagogue?

When at home every week and at school goes to Hillel twice a week

What other Jewish settings are you involved in?

Hillel on campus and the school they attend is Jewish

Do you feel accepted in the Jewish community?

Yes

Do you feel comfortable expressing your identity in Jewish settings?

Depends on the setting (in orthodox settings no) in most traditional or conservative spaces yes but it depends on a class (professor) and their viewpoints or rabbi

Do you believe that Jewish settings are gender inclusive? Why/Why not?

They're working on it. Most traditional spaces have become fully egalitarian but for non-binary people they're still working on how they can call someone up to the Torah. Not all Jewish spaces have adapted that yet.

Does your gender impact your participation in the Jewish community? If so, how?

No

In what (If any) Jewish spaces do you feel comfortable and accepted in and why?

Definitely minion at Hillel, for the most part at school, at synagogue too. Some of their classmates are less accepting so they choose to not tell people.

Do you have a bathroom that you feel comfortable using in Jewish spaces?

Most places have an all gender bathroom that they feel comfortable in, some do not.

Can you tell me a scenario that you've experienced in which you didn't feel comfortable expressing your identity in a Jewish space (if

applicable?)

At Hillel on Simchat Torah, for the last Halacha all three minyanim gather and the Orthodox were only accommodating to the Orthodox. To compromise they made a men's women's and mixed section.

What is your name?

Casey Golding

How old are you?

17

How do you identify and what pronouns do you use? (Gender/sexuality)

Non-binary, lesbian. They/them.

What branch or branches of Judaism do you identify with?

Reform

Do you belong to a synagogue?

I do, Lakeside congregation

How often do you attend synagogue?

3 times a year, high holidays

What other Jewish settings are you involved in?

None

Do you feel accepted in the Jewish community?

Yes. I have gone to many services dressed in a suit (born female) and has never felt stared at or judged. I

know that in many other scenarios like restaurants when dressed in masculine clothing they do get stared at and judged.

Do you feel comfortable expressing your identity in Jewish settings?

Totally comfortable.

Do you believe that Jewish settings are gender inclusive? Why/Why not?

Yes, personally has never seen a segregation between any form of any genders at their synagogue.

Does your gender impact your participation in the Jewish community? If so, how?

No

In what (If any) Jewish spaces do you feel comfortable and accepted in and why?

None, all.

Do you have a bathroom that you feel comfortable using in Jewish spaces?

Yes

Can you tell me a scenario that you've experienced in which you didn't feel comfortable expressing your identity in a Jewish space (if applicable)?

No



Rabbi Marantz & Rabbi Baden Interviews

We interviewed Rabbi Craig Marantz of Emanuel Congregation in Chicago and Rabbi Ilana Baden of Temple Chai in Long Grove. They are both Reform rabbis with over forty years of combined experience. During our discussions with them, we asked about their personal views on how their congregations approach inclusivity with regard to people's gender expression and sexual orientation. These conversations were extremely informative—ranging from comments on how to address Torah's exclusively binary language to how the Reform movement works to include people from all different walks of life. It was fascinating to learn where these two rabbis' opinions diverged and came together, and it taught us that although we may see Judaism as an inclusive and welcoming religion, there is always more work to do.

Below, you can see Rabbi Marantz's exact responses to our interview questions as well as a summary and analysis of Rabbi Baden's responses.

“Great thoughts speak only to the thoughtful mind,
but great actions speak to all mankind.

- Theodore Roosevelt

RABBI CRAIG MARANTZ

Age: 53

Pronouns: He/Him/His

Rabbi at a Reform Synagogue,
Emanuel Congregation in
Chicago, IL

Rabbi Background

What branch of Judaism are you a rabbi for?

Reform.

How long have you been a rabbi?

I was ordained in '99.

How long have you been a rabbi at Emanuel Congregation?

Going on four years.

Have you been a rabbi at other congregations? If yes, what branches?

Yes. All reform.

For you, what is the role of a rabbi?

To serve a community—make sure that it fulfills its mission of Torah and acts of loving kindness and seeking justice and building sacred community and having inspiring and uplifting prayer and having a strong outward face, making a difference out in the world—being a collective force for good.

Gender

Does your congregation integrate both males and females into the practice of Judaism? How so?

Everything's egalitarian. Men and women can participate equally in all facets of our congregational mission. Every activity is open to men, women,

those who identify in other ways, transgender. It's totally open—LGBTQ+.

What are the differences in practicing Judaism if you are a female versus a male? Why do those differences exist?

Hard for me to answer that question as a cisgender, hetero male. I think you'd have to ask women in my community. But I think by and large they feel pretty welcome and pretty active, there are women on the pulpit, there are women who preside over the community. I think the more compelling question is how do people in the LGBTQ+ community feel in our legacy institution which sometimes isn't always clear on how it needs to welcome those out of kind of the cisgender, heterosexual reality. So, I think we're a lot better at including women than any other group of people who might feel in some ways marginalized.

Are there places in the Torah that

Sexual Orientation

discuss genders other than male and female? What does it say about them?

Other than male and female? Well, I mean, I think if you... Let's see, I know that... I think when we talk about human beings created in God's image, they use, for a human being, both male and female, so it tends to sort of blend them together in a way—am I making sense? Some people feel that that is a reflection of a gender identity that is different than male or female. As far as sexual identity, that for sure is dealt with in essentially negative ways in the Torah...

Does your congregation have staff/clergy that aren't cis men?

Yes.

Do you believe that there is an imbalance of equality in terms of gender within the world of Judaism?

Well, I mean, I think in our community, although we strive to be open, I'm sure there are examples—I can't think of specific ones as it relates to women, but, you know, there may be some women who don't feel completely included, just as other people who sometimes feel marginalized don't feel completely included. Now, as far as the Jewish community at large, I think you find a lot more sexism because people feel a certain religious responsibility to act in certain ways—those ways, however pious they may be to those acting, to some of us observing, those practices feel sexist. For example, I find separating men and women in prayer because women's voices can be alluring and men don't have the capacity to block out the distractions of the alluring voices, it feels like a sexist perspective. Now, there are men and women within these settings that seem to be comfortable with these realities and live with it, but I think that it has a bit of disrespect about it, so that's my opinion. So, I mean, I think the Jewish community has practices that are sexist.

Does your congregation allow for people in the LGBTQ+ community to participate in prayer?

Yeah. Everybody is fully welcome. The question is striving for diversity the same as being inclusive, and I think the answer is no, not always. I think you have to be aware of the kinds of things that create barriers for the LGBTQ+ community or anybody else who may feel marginalized. Just because you feel a part of things doesn't mean that everybody else feels a part of things, and I think that's where we sometimes are challenged. We're not nearly as inclusive, and that can come out on the way we talk about gender, for example. For example, I'll do a story about a boy or about a girl. You know, sometimes I'll go out of my way to change the character from boy to girl to be more inclusive, but I haven't really chosen to do a child who's trans, right, so what happens to the trans kid who sits in my congregation and all he ever hears from the rabbi is a story about a boy or about a girl, but never about somebody who is transgender or non-binary. I find it most complicated with respect to those who identify as non-binary because Torah, for sure, is binary in its language. Now, as I'm working with somebody who's non-binary, they feel that the Torah is the Torah, it is what it is, and it's important for us to go forward knowing that it's binary, but trying to figure out a bridge that connects those who are non-binary with a binary system—that may not change, but doesn't have to be meaningless. My student loves to study Torah, despite the fact that they're non-binary. Interestingly enough, what we're studying now is a book called Torah Queeries... and it's a bunch of Divrei Torah written by people in the LGBTQ+ community. It's a wonderful piece.

Does your congregation officiate same-sex weddings?

The congregation allows it because I allow it. So, yeah, and it's interesting: I wouldn't even think - I wouldn't even talk about it in terms of whether I allow it or permit it - I celebrate

with anybody who feels the want to create a sacred relationship under a chuppah. So, I'm happy to marry two heterosexual individuals or two gay or lesbian or trans [people], whatever, it's all good. It's all good. Everybody's capable of creating a sacred relationship. That's the key to a marriage.

Do you have congregants that are a part of the LGBTQ+ community?

Yes, quite a few.

Are there any verses from the Torah that explain why/why not people in the LGBTQ+ community can participate in Judaism?

Well, if you think about the notion that all people are created in God's image and are full of intrinsic worth, then people feel they belong. If you invoke some of the sexual laws, whether men can sleep with one another, for example, you might find people saying "hey, this is not for me, I feel very excluded."

Does your congregation have staff/clergy that are a part of the LGBTQ+ community?

Not that I know of—I think everybody's hetero. Wait - I take it back. I take it back. One person is, I think, bi.

Do you believe that there is an imbalance of equality in terms of sexual orientation within the world of Judaism?

Oh, for sure. Well, I think you need to operate under the notion that we're all created in God's image and full of intrinsic worth and so you need to try and see the inherent value in all people and not judge. That is easier said than done, right, like I can just say it easily and I think deep in your heart you have to understand that's what it's all about. It means that whether you're Reform or you're Conservative or you're Orthodox or you're some other branch of Judaism, you have a responsibility to try and be inclusive of everybody that wants to be a part of the community that's Jewish or Jewish adjacent and wants to belong.

RABBI ILANA BADEN

Age: 53

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers

Rabbi at Temple Chai

We interviewed Rabbi Baden, a Reform rabbi who leads the reform congregation, Temple Chai and she has been a rabbi for over 20 years. She has been a part of the Temple Chai clergy for five years now. We asked her a variety of questions regarding gender and sexuality within Judaism and in the context of her synagogue. She describes her role as a rabbi as one where she “provides context, helps guide people, and helps them to become connected to Judaism.” She notes that her congregation does not have gender distinctions between males and females and that genders are usually balanced. She understands that some people may choose to follow traditional gender roles within the context of Judaism and that is their choice. When asked about whether the Torah discusses other genders

besides female and male, Rabbi Baden notes, “The Talmud has 7 categories of gender. God created man and woman together, and the first human had both genders together and then separated them.” We also asked Rabbi Baden whether she believed there was an imbalance in terms of gender within the world of Judaism. She said that “the Reform Jewish community tries to catch this and help mitigate it, but some Jews are reluctant to accept the need for equality, name it, talk about it, and normalize it.”

Additionally, we asked her a few questions about sexuality and inclusion within her synagogue. A few of the questions asked included whether her synagogue officiated same sex weddings, allowed LGBTQ+ people to participate in prayer, and if her synagogue had congregants who were a part of the LGBTQ+ community. She answered yes to all these questions. To follow up, we asked if there were any verses in the Torah that may explain why or why not LGBTQ+ people can participate in Judaism. She

mentioned that many people state a portion of the Torah that says “man shouldn’t lie with a man like he should a woman”, although this can be interpreted in many different ways. She acknowledges that there are some homophobic portions of the Torah, but all people are ultimately “created in God’s image”. Temple Chai does not have any known members of the LGBTQ+ community represented on its clergy. To wrap up our interview with Rabbi Baden, we lastly asked her if she believed that there is an imbalance of equality and representation of LGBTQ+ people within Judaism. She responded by saying that she believes there is an imbalance of representation and equality, but some movements are better at working on this than others. She believes that the Reform movement is actively working to help promote equality and increase representation. Overall, we learned from this interview that the Reform movement actively works to promote equality and inclusion for the LGBTQ+ community and are accepting of different gender identities and sexualities.



Disability

What Our research is missing...

We would like to preface our zines with an acknowledgement of a gap in our research. Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, we were not able to interview any people with disabilities, only administrators in the Jewish disability spaces. Therefore, our zine should be taken as a message for what can be done to accommodate people with disabilities from an organizational standpoint, not from the perspective of people in the disabled community.

All of our interviews were done with people from organizations that are notably affluent and therefore have the financial ability to provide many resources to their community. Many people with disabilities and many organizations hoping to provide accommodations do not have the same level of financial freedom. In addition, all of the organizations we interviewed lacked any significant presence of People of Color. The experiences of People of Color both in the Jewish community and the disabled community often differ from their White counterparts.

We want to avoid condemning any organizations for not providing the same services or accommodations that the organizations we interviewed here have. We chose these organizations because they are leaders in the Jewish disability space and should be something other organizations aspire to achieve. We hope readers will use this as a guide and inspiration for actions they can take in their own communities. With that said, we hope you enjoy our zine and learn a little something too!



A word cloud on a dark grey background. The word 'inclusion' is the largest and most prominent, centered in the middle. Surrounding it are various related terms in different sizes and orientations, including: 'modification', 'support', 'welcoming', 'safe advocate', 'accommodation spaces', 'freedom', 'progress', 'recognition allies', 'integration', 'participation', and 'acknowledgment'.

Kadi House
and
Rabbi Anne Persin

Both work at reform temple Am Shalom located in Glencoe Illinois!

Rabbi Anne is the associate director of education at Am Shalom and feels very involved with the Jewish community and feels very connected to Jewish life by being a rabbi, attending jewish social events, and living her life with jewish values.

Kadi House is the director of youth engagement at Am Shalom and feels connected to her jewish life by finding ways to be social in jewish young adult life in chicago and working at am shalom. She is even a part of a jewish acapella group!

What does **INCLUSION** mean to you?

“Inclusion means everyone had an opportunity to be a full member of the community, with equal access to education for all!” - Rabbi Anne Persin

Kadi agrees, but also notes...

“Inclusion means having a safe space where everyone can feel proud and celebrated!” ♥

LIFE AT AM SHALOM

- ~ we make physical space as inclusive as possible, taking away barriers, ramps, and having elevator accessibility.
- ~ make accommodations for people to have specific needs or desires. If new seating makes you anxious, you can have a designated seat for Friday night services!
- ~ learning differences often seen during bar/bat mitzvah tutoring and are met with our awesome teachers figuring out ways to teach that are catered to the individual learner.
- ~ Religious school one-on-one buddies are often assigned. At registration parents are asked if their child has a 504 or an IEP, and if so, have a meeting with a temple inclusion specialist.

The group then decides if a one-on-one aid is needed, or if a strong madric h will do the trick.

Changes to inclusion in the jewish community :

Rabbi Anne has seen it get BETTER with time. The ideas of segregated learning, developmental delays, learning disabilities are now met with safe and open spaces to cherish ALL members of our community.

SECULAR vs JEWISH LIFE

KADI BELIEVES

IT DOESN'T MATTER RELIGIOUS or non RELIGIOUS AS A SOCIETY, WE HAVE TO BE BETTER.

RABBI ANNE ADDS:

Am shalom is great becuase we have a commuinnity mindset. If there is a challenge the answer is always "we are going to do it, yes, we just have to figure out how to get there". "no your kid is on the spectrum cant do it" has never been an answer. Here, it's "yes we will figure out how".

THIS is how Am Shalom has always been. **A place for inclusion when there wasnt always inclusion.**

ZINE PLAIN TEXT: Kadi House and Rabbi Anne Persin

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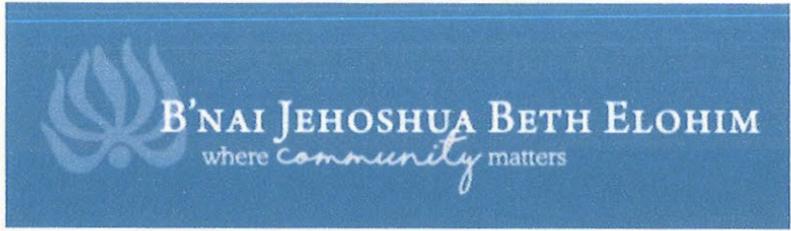
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Secular vs Jewish Life

Kadi believes it doesn't matter religious or non religious, as a society, we have to be better.

Rabbi Anne adds: Am shalom is great because we have a community mindset. If there is a challenge the answer is always “we are going to do it, yes, we just have to figure out how to get there.” “No, your kids is on the spectrum, can't do it” has never been an answer. Here it's “yes we will figure out how.” This is how Am Shalom has always been. A place for inclusions when there wasn't always inclusion.



Congregation B'nai Jehoshua Beth Elohim (BJBE) is a Reform congregation in Deerfield, Illinois placing an emphasis on fostering an inclusive and welcoming community for all who seek a connection to Jewish life regardless of...



Diana Slatopolsky - Inclusion Coordinator at BJBE

What you need to know...

- ★ Bilingual School Psychologist
- ★ Sunday School Teacher
- ★ BJBE member
- ★ Reform? Humanistic?
- ★ Celebrates Judaism through Education

starting in college!

technically reform but prefers no labels

humanistic values

The Work...

"The idea is to be able to support those needs in home (at BJBE)"

She works with **children of all ages** in BJBE programs.

- * 1 on 1 Madrichim Program
- Hebrew School Program
- Sunday School Program
- High School Program



Her process...

- 1 → Learn the child's strengths and interests
- 2 → Find out if they have an IEP, or an accommodations page that they get in school
- 3 → Work with the teachers to introduce them to the child and any specific accommodations the child may need
- 4 → Continue to monitor and adapt child's accommodations as needed

Comprehensive system to identify children with 3 approaches

1. **Parents:** When parents register for a program through BJBE they are asked if they would like to meet with the inclusion coordinator (Diana) or they can reach out to her at any time.
2. **Herself:** If she is aware of a child coming in with specific needs, but the parent does not specify they want to meet with her when signing the child up, she will email them. Her policy is to email them 2x before giving up. She may also identify a child if she sees them struggling in the classroom.
3. **Teachers:** If they see children struggling in the classroom, they can reach out to her (Diana) to provide accommodations.



She set up an **Inclusion Cart** for the temple. It contained items such as noise cancelling headphones, fidgets, weighted lap pads and sensory tools.

* **1 on 1 madrichim program:** A high school student is matched with a child to support their needs within the classroom.

Diana writes the schedules for this program

BJBE and specifically her work operates on a full-inclusion model

What does this mean?

"Inclusion" means that everyone is participating as much as possible with the rest of the class, temple, student body, etc. and they are NOT isolated. Students should not be taught separately, and while they might have different learning styles and materials, they should learn within the same space."

"This is an important cause because every Jewish person deserves a Jewish home (as in a safe Jewish institution that welcomes them). When you have a child with individual needs you have a family with individual needs. When the child is not welcomed, the family is not welcomed and therefore won't attend. There are a lot of families with children with individual needs who are not connected to Jewish institutions because the child's needs are not met. They are an overlooked group."

Inclusion over time...

Jewish Education

- Slow to change
- Started inclusion work relatively recently
- Children used to be kicked out of programs or were alienated or ignored
- Several synagogues have programs now that did not exist when she was a child
- Variety of inclusive ways to have a bar or bat mitzvah

Secular Education

- Changed relatively rapidly
- Started inclusion work sooner
- Children used to be bussed to different schools 
- Children now have access to great programs within regular public schools
- Education for teachers regarding special education

FUTURE...

- ◆ Would like to see the Jewish world not just provide more programs for the students but focus on education of the teachers and the teenage helpers.
- ◆ Teachers in Jewish schools still need more education with regards to inclusion, modification, accommodations, etc.
- ◆ The attitude taken at many Jewish institutions is that if you know Hebrew, you can teach it. However, just because you can do something doesn't mean that you can teach it well. Jewish education needs to address this flaw in their education systems.

→ more qualified + quality teachers!

By: Sarah Sarowitz

ZINE PLAIN TEXT: Congregation B'nai Jehoshua Beth Elohim (BJBE) is a Reform congregation in Deerfield, Illinois placing an emphasis on fostering an inclusive and welcoming community for all who seek a connection to Jewish life regardless of...

Diana Slatopolsky - Inclusion Coordinator at BJBE

What you need to know...

Bilingual School Psychologist

Sunday School Teacher

BJBE member

Reform? Humanistic?

Celebrates Judaism through Education

The Work...

"The idea is to be able to support those needs in home (at BJBE)"

She works with children of all ages in BJBE programs.

1 on 1 Madrichim Program

Sunday School Program

Hebrew School Program

High School Program

Her process...

Learn the child's strengths and interests

Find out if they have an IEP, or an accommodations page that they get in school

Work with the teachers to introduce them to the child and any specific accommodations the child may need

Continue to monitor and adapt child's accommodations as needed

Comprehensive system to identify children with 3 approaches

1. Parents: When parents register for a program through BJBE they are asked if they would like to meet with the inclusion coordinator (Diana) or they can reach out to her at any time.

2. Herself: If she is aware of a child coming in with specific needs, but the parent does not specify they want to meet with her when signing the child up, she will email them. Her policy is to email them 2x before giving up. She may also identify a child if she sees them struggling in the classroom.

3. Teachers: If they see children struggling in the classroom, they can reach out to her (Diana) to provide accommodations.

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The Friendship Circle is a nation-wide organization that pairs neurotypical teenagers with children with special needs. Their goal is inclusion throughout the world.

Bassie Moscowitz--Co-directs the Stuart I. Raskas Friendship Circle of IL, together with her husband, and the assistance of their dear children.

Background:

Bassie is a native of Beverly Hills, CA. From a young age, she assisted my parents in running youth programs, holiday programs, visiting nearby nursing homes, and many other outreach programs as well.

“My husband and I, along with our 10 children, are fortunate to serve the Chicagoland community with our own special Shlichus (life mission) of directing and running The Stuart I. Raskas Friendship Circle of IL”.

Jewish Affiliations:

Rebitzen Moscowitz and her family are Chabad followers (Orthodox), although they don't focus on the level of observance of fellow Jews. Their belief is that a Jew is a Jew, whether observant or not. The goal is to constantly strive higher and higher in our connection to Hashem (G-d) and our Torah (Bible) observance.

“Judaism IS my life. I and my family's entire existence is infiltrated with Jewish Halacha (law) and practices, to the best of our abilities. Preparing for and hosting guests for Shabbos (the Sabbath) and Holiday meals enhance their Jewish experiences”.

The Missions of the Friendship Circle:

- The Friendship Circle was founded on the idea that within each person is a soul, regardless of any limitations that may surround it, regardless of whatever natural gifts we may have or lack, regardless of what obstacles and challenges we may confront, our souls are sacred and worthy of boundless love.
- Our Mission is to empower today's teens to bridge the gap between families of children with disabilities and the rest of the community, through a dynamic range of social, Judaic,

and educational experiences. The connections formed provide love and acceptance for the child, respite for the family, and purpose for the teen volunteer.

What does inclusion mean to you?

“Inclusion is accepting others for who they are--as they are. By recognizing their beauty and authenticity, and avoiding judgment and focus upon people’s material abilities, we can appreciate what they have to offer.”

“Every person born has a mission unique to him or her that no one else can accomplish. When we recognize this we can appreciate every individual’s contribution to society. This, in my opinion, is the meaning of true inclusion”.

What actions do you take to promote inclusion in the Jewish community?

Our primary program is perhaps the most beneficial program for our clientele.

- Friends@Home matches where neurotypical teens visit children with disabilities in their homes for a weekly interactive visit also provides much-needed respite for the parents.
- Friendship Circle Talmud (a central text of Jewish law) Torah (the Bible) is a 30-week Hebrew School for children with disabilities.
- Holiday programs and Shabbos dinners, Winter and Summer Camps, Moms Night Out, and “Unity in the CommUNITY are other programs I work on to help foster inclusion in the Jewish community.
- Our annual Walk4Friendship brings the entire community together in support of people with disabilities.

How have you seen inclusion in Jewish life change over your career?

I believe the world, in general, has come a long way over the past 15 years during which we have been running Friendship Circle. People are more accepting and understanding of the needs of individuals with disabilities. There is still a way to go, but there is thank G-d progress and improvement in the overall perception of and attitude towards special needs.

Where do you hope inclusion goes?/What are your goals?

“I envision the world to become a “Friendship Circle World”, where everyone will be accepted and appreciated for their worth, values, and Neshamos. I anticipate more and more inclusion opportunities and that amenities will be more accessible: necessary equipment will be found in public places, resources will be provided, and perhaps most important of all, everyone’s attitudes will be positive and accepting!”

By: Gabi
Zukerman

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Written By: Gabi Zukerman



Keshet is an organization that does whatever necessary to allow individuals with disabilities to achieve their full potential.

Jennifer Phillips - Chief Program Officer at Keshet (oversees operations and programming)

- A reform Jew who works for a Jewish organization and belongs to a synagogue

→ that's a long time!

Started working for Keshet 20 years ago when she was a one on one counselor in college as part of a camp group.

- Then she became a special ed teacher and taught in public school.
- Now at Keshet, she runs their programming and camping.

“INCLUSION means that everyone has the opportunity to fully participate in a community in the way they want.” - Jen Phillips

→ she supports + speaks out!

- She is an inclusion advocate and does this by speaking and training.
- She runs the largest inclusion program in the country and also runs the inclusion for Camp Chi.
- Works closely with other community partners.



This **IS** an important cause because everyone should be able to do whatever anyone else does. ALL humans have different needs and ideas and everyone should have the SAME life and opportunities.

who know there was a difference!

Inclusion over time...

HUGE difference. There used to be more integration than inclusion, but now inclusion is now part of the Jewish community in Chicago, which relates to Keshet.

Camp as a role:

Jen thinks that **CAMP** plays a big role in shaping kids. So important since they are the ones who are going to be advocates for the next generation

Inclusion at camp at is a different level. She really believes this will help shape kids.

^a At young age, Jen did not know that camp would be so impactful, but looking back she sees that *who knew camp was so impactful*

Inclusion in the Jewish Community...

She feels that the Jewish community takes better care of their community. Jen goes and speaks around the country to other camps because she really believes in inclusion and wants to see it next level.

FUTURE...

- Jen hopes that inclusion is going to take a step in the **next direction**.
- One specific area is that adults can be a part of the Jewish community. Inclusion with programs like **Keshet** is really good at school and camp age, but there are not as many programs for adults, so they are often excluded.
- Jen wants to continue to **ADVOCATE** and be someone who is teaching about inclusion. Not just talking but really doing it. She does not like the idea of "yea I believe but I'm actually not helping." She wants to work closely and make sure we are taking things seriously.

By: Carrie Lampert

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By: Carrie Lampert

Race & Ethnicity

The Jewish community is not a monolith. There are multitudes of identities. Yet, there aren't many active efforts to include these identities.

We explored race and ethnicity and how it affects people's abilities to participate and identify with the Jewish community. In doing so, we wanted to bring more awareness to the intersectionality in our community and better suit everyone's needs to make it more inclusive. Continue reading to see what we discovered.

Our research first started off with a survey to get a handle on if, and how, people of color and non Ashkenazi participate in and identify with the Jewish community. We received 137 responses. Of those responses, 27 people identified themselves as people of color and/or non

Ashkenazi.

Our specific focus was how white, Ashkenazi Jews and non white, non Ashkenazi Jews lives differed. The biggest difference was found in synagogue attendance. 67% of white, Ashkenazi people attend synagogue, while 48% of non white non Ashkenazi people attend synagogue.

These differences can be found throughout the survey, in places like camps, community centers, and organizations. It is clear that participation differs between how white, Ashkenazi Jews and non white, non Ashkenazi Jews.

The lack of participation means that not everybody is being represented in Jewish spaces. Whether it is a cause or a consequence, racism is directly tied into this lack of representation. 50% of

people say they have seen racism occur in the Jewish community. Anecdotal evidence from non white, non Ashkenazi Jews shows this in glaring detail.

The second part of our research, interviews, solidified our understanding that there was a problem in the Jewish community surrounding race and ethnicity. Some of our interviewees talked about the connection they had to the Jewish community, but all talked about being othered.

Time and time again, their Judaism was called into question by fellow Jews. non white, non Ashkenazi Jews were not made welcome. The racism and exclusion we saw spurred us to action. Our work brings light to and tries to remedy the attitudes and behaviors of the Jewish community.

“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.

- Audre Lorde



Race & Ethnicity Interview

These quotes all come from the people we interviewed. We interviewed a diverse group of non-White Jews (not all of them identified as Jews of Color) in the Chicago area about their experiences with race and ethnicity within our Jewish community and how it affects their participation. What follows is some of their experiences in their own words.

Community

- “ I like going to temple and stuff like that occasionally because it makes me feel like there is a sense of community and culture.
- “ The Jewish community has a stronger bond than most communities I know of.
- “ The community that helped us and made us feel at home as Americans was the Jewish community.
- “ It's hard to be in a community that's trying to push me out.

Racism

- “ The most racism I've experienced is from my own Jewish community.
- “ My Judaism coming into question is a constant thing.
- “ It was very exhausting to be the only Jew of Color and have to represent all of them yet also an honor.
- “ Racially, I felt different, I didn't feel like I was connecting with everyone on the same level they were connecting with each other.

(Lack of) Diversity

- “ There are Jewish people of color of all kinds.
- “ My Jewish communities are vast and various.
- “ It's weird to go to a tikkun olam social justice fundraiser and be the only one aware of the problems that are being spoken about.

George Floyd was recently murdered by police officers. Protests have occurred across all 50 states in the USA demanding change in the systems that enact police brutality. For Jewish people, standing up against police oppression is more than just allyship with the Black community but it's also something embedded in our values.

We can look at our history in the civil rights movement. In March 1965, rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel walked beside Martin Luther King Jr on the Selma to Montgomery march for voting rights.

We can look at our religious texts.

וְתֵיֵא לַחֲנֹכַּ הַקִּדְצוֹ טַפְשָׁם מִיַּמַּח לַגִּיּוֹ

But let justice well up like water, Righteousness like an unfailing stream.

Amos 5:24

חֲבִצְמַת הַוְהִיל רַחֲבֵנּוּ טַפְשָׁמוֹ הַקִּדְצַ הַשֶּׁעַ

The doing of righteousness and justice is choicer to the L-rd than a sacrifice.

Proverbs 21:3





- look at your security plan - you may have a different relationship with police than others in your community
- believe people when they say they are jewish
- commit to helping oppressed people
- attend meetings and events focused on joc

if there aren't any in your area

Do...

- start your own!
- talk to jewish community leaders about being more inclusive
- learn about joc without making them teach you
- support and amplify joc

The only way to change something is with action

Ask Yourself...

- what privileges do you hold?
- do you have a specific image of what jew looks like?
- do you ever question someone's jewishness?
- what to you do create a more welcoming space for people who don't look like you?

Inviting someone in, making sure someone's voice is being heard, and just a friendly smile can go a long way in showing people they belong

Privilege means an unearned right available to only some

Resources

- for your security plan: 
- for additional research: 
- on being an ally to joc: 

Know...

- not all jews look like you
- you can and will be wrong
- even if you feel welcomed, the jewish community isn't always welcoming to all
- not everyone has access to jewish communities
- the jewish community can be where someone experiences the most prejudice

types of activities offered and participation can all affect your experience

prejudice is a preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience.

So You Want to Be Better?

a guidebook to making a better community for jews of different races and ethnicities



How to fold a zine

Today, I am going to teach you how to fold your zine. All you need is your printout and a pair of scissors. You can also watch a video and follow along at juf.org/RTICohort6

Step 1

You are going to take your zine and fold it once in half the long-ways and crease.

Step 2

You are going to fold it short-ways in half and short-ways in half again.

Step 3

You are going to completely unfold it and fold it once short ways.

Step 4

Next you are going to take your scissors, and you are going to cut from right in the middle of the crease bottom of paper to the middle center point.

Step 5

Once you've done that, you're going to unfold it again and fold it long ways, so that you have the "Know" and "Ask Yourself" on one side and the "Do," "Resources," and "Title" on the other.

Step 6

You are going to take it and fold your paper so that "Know" and "Ask Yourself" are facing you. Push your two hands together and then fold so that "Resources" is on one side and "So You Want to Do Better" is on the other.

And now, you have your zine!

Testimonials

Sophie: RTI has been an eye-opening opportunity that has enabled me to learn more about my community, be more involved in it, and help to make it more inclusive for others. I've learned more about the intersections within my identity than I have in any other groups and have felt the safest within this close group of people than elsewhere as well. I think anyone who has the capabilities to attend should apply.

Cara: RTI is the best community that I have had the opportunity of being a part of. It is beautifully inclusive, and my favorite part is that it is such a safe space to learn. Every opinion is valued, and if you have a question or say something that isn't necessarily correct, people do not judge you. Rather, it sparks even more conversation and everybody comes out of each session with even more knowledge. I've learned a lot about who I am and how I can use my specific voice within the world, and I would recommend this program to anyone and everyone who can participate.

Daniela: RTI has been an incredible opportunity in which I have been able to learn about social justice, conduct academic research, and make amazing friends. RTI is such a welcoming environment that allows for creativity and uniqueness. RTI has opened my eyes to the issues that

people in the world face daily and allowed for discussion on how to fix those issues. The experiences and lessons that I have had in RTI will stay for me forever!

Rachel: RTI has been a wonderful space for me. It has given me the tools and vocabulary to understand the world I live in. RTI is a space where I don't have to worry about how I will be perceived. I can just learn and grow without any pressure. It has been amazing to be surrounded by people who support me. Every time I walk into RTI, I know that I will have an amazing time. It has given me the space to learn surrounded by wonderful people. RTI is for anyone who wants to learn and be surrounded by great people.

Maddie: RTI has been an amazing experience. It has been great to meet people who share the same passion for social change and equity in our country. I have grown more aware of the world I live in and has given me the tools to engage in meaningful conversations in and out of the cohort. After every session we discuss what we are going to take away from that day. This simple ritual makes me realize that we learn so much each and every week. I am so grateful for all the connections, experience, and skills I have gained from RTI this year.

Jordana: RTI has been an incredible experience that has

allowed me to learn more about systems of oppression, recognize my own privilege, and help to foster inclusion within the Jewish community. In addition to the invaluable skills I've gained, RTI has given me an amazing space to share my thoughts with a like-minded and welcoming group of people. Every time I come to RTI, I always feel very safe to share my true thoughts and feelings without judgement. I have learned so much about intersectionality and how I can best use my voice to help advocate for change. The community that I have been a part of while participating in RTI has been nothing short of wonderful and I would highly recommend that anyone who is able to should apply!

Bailey: RTI has been a completely transformative experience for me. Throughout the first six months, I was thrown into the deep end of topics I knew nothing about. The unique environment and dialogue that RTI offered taught me much more than I would have learned in any classroom, and left me with a deep understanding of many social justice issues as well as an acknowledgement of the oppression and privilege in my life. RTI was such an amazing, safe, and inclusive space for anyone seeking nuanced conversation with teens just like yourself. I would highly recommend this program anyone!

Glossary

Ability: Possession of the means or skill to do something.

Accessibility: The degree to which a building or other structure provides access for (mainly physically) disabled people.

Accommodation: An arrangement to make something more convenient.

Advocacy: A process of supporting and enabling people to express their views, to access information and services, to find out about options and make decisions, and to secure their rights.

Ally: A supporter of a group or movement —often now used specifically of a person who is not a member of a marginalized or mistreated group but who expresses or gives support to that group.

Asexual: A person who has no sexual feelings or desires.

Barrier: Obstacle preventing a person with disability from living independently, working, travelling and/or having access to buildings, services, forms and information.

Bisexual (bi): A person who is sexually attracted to both men and women.

Cisgender (cis): A person whose sense of personal identity and gender correspond with their birth sex.

Demi girl: Someone who feels a partial but not full connection to the female gender.

Developmental delays: The condition of a child being less developed mentally or physically than is normal for its age.

Differentiation: Instruction that helps students with diverse academic needs and learning styles master the same challenging academic content. Providing interrelated activities that are based on student needs for the purpose of ensuring that all students come to a similar grasp of a skill or idea.

Disability: A physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities.

Ethnicity: Identification on the basis of common nationality or shared cultural traditions.

Gay: A person who is sexually attracted to people of the same sex.

Gender fluid: A person who does not identify themselves as having a fixed gender.

Gender non-conforming: People who do not follow the stereotypes about how they should look or act based on the sex assigned to them at birth.

Heterosexual: A world view that promotes heterosexuality as the normal or preferred sexual orientation.

Heterosexual (het): A person who is sexually attracted to people of the opposite sex.

IEP/504: The Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) is a plan or program developed to ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the law and is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives specialized instruction and related services. (washington.edu)

Inclusion: The practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those who have physical or mental disabilities and members of other minority groups.

Integration: The inclusion, participation and acceptance of people with disabilities in society at large.

Intersectionality: The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

Modern Orthodox: A movement within Orthodox Judaism that attempts to synthesize Jewish values and the observance of Jewish law with the secular, modern world.

Modification: To change somewhat the form or qualities of; alter partially; amend.

Neurotypical: A term that's used to describe individuals of typical developmental, intellectual, and cognitive abilities

Non-binary: A spectrum of gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or feminine; identities that are outside the gender binary.

Pansexual: A person who is not limited in sexual choice with regard to biological sex, gender, or gender identity.

Queer: An umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities who are not heterosexual or are not cisgender.

Race: Identification of people on the basis of various sets of physical characteristics.

Racism: One group carrying out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices.

Safe space: A place or environment in which a person or category of people can feel confident that they will not be exposed to discrimination, criticism, harassment, or any other emotional or physical harm.

Segregated learning: Segregation occurs when students with disabilities are educated in separate environments (classes or schools) designed for students with impairments or with a particular impairment. Segregation is most blatant when students with disabilities are forced to go to a school only for students with disabilities, but it also happens when students are educated in separate classes in a regular school. These are sometimes called resource classes.

Special education: A range of educational and social services provided by the public school system and other educational institutions to individuals with disabilities.

Transgender: A person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with their birth sex.

Works Cited:

Tobin, Diane, and Aryeh Weinburg. "Racial Diversity and the American Jewish Community." *Be'chol Lashon*, Fall 2014,

**JUF amplifies our collective strength
to make the world a better place — for everyone.**

Community powered, we consider the totality of local
and global Jewish needs and how to address them.
From generation to generation, we help people connect
to Jewish life and values, fueling a dynamic, enduring
community that comes together for good.



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