



NRJE 2021 Virtual Conference

MAY 2 (SESSIONS A & B), MAY 6 (SESSIONS C & D),
MAY 13 (SESSIONS E, F, & G), MAY 20 (SESSIONS H, I)

12:00-3:00 PM EDT

ALL SESSIONS WILL BE HELD VIA ZOOM. REGISTRATION REQUIRED FOR ACCESS TO SESSIONS (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE SYMPOSIUM FOR DR. SARAH TAUBER Z" L).

SESSIONS WILL BE RECORDED BUT WILL ONLY BE MADE AVAILABLE TO PEOPLE WHO REGISTER.



ROUNDTABLE



PREFORMED PAPERS



INDIVIDUAL PAPERS

Sunday, May 2

May 2, 12:00-12:15 pm EDT

WELCOMING REMARKS

May 2, 12:15-1:45 pm EDT

A1. OPENING PLENARY

FROM IVORY TOWER TO PRACTICE: BRIDGING THE RESEARCH-PRACTICE DIVIDE IN JEWISH
EDUCATION



Jack Schneider
Umass Lowell



Sharon Feiman-Nemser
Brandeis Univ



Larry Cuban
Stanford Univ



Rivka Press Schwartz
SAR high school



Arielle Levites
CASJE

May 2, 1:50-3:00 pm EDT

B1. THE FUTURE OF MODERN ORTHODOX FEMINISM

Discussants:

Tanya Zion-Waldoks, Lecturer at Hebrew University

Caroline Block, Independent Scholar

Tammy Jacobowitz, Chair of the Tanakh Department at SAR High School

Yaffa Epstein, Director of the Wexner Heritage Program

Facilitator: *Talia Hurwich*, PhD Candidate at NYU

The idea for this roundtable comes out of the ongoing debate about women's roles in Modern Orthodoxy. Its goal is to address the questions: where is Modern Orthodox feminism as a movement going? How should researchers and practitioners consider the role that education in its most general definition plays in shaping the debate around Modern Orthodox feminism? How is the current debate being perceived, internalized, and understood by the rising generation of Modern Orthodox Jews? These questions are of great importance to both researchers and practitioners in Modern Orthodoxy as women's roles within the Jewish community have been described as an "outstanding issue" facing Modern Orthodoxy. A flurry of scholarly research as well as educational, synagogue-based, and other initiatives have sprung up over the past several decades resulting from this struggle for the soul of Modern Orthodoxy. What is clear is that as advocates for and against Modern Orthodox feminism actively engage in determining the place of women in Modern Orthodoxy, the status quo will inevitably change. Certain issues will be resolved, additional denominational fragmentation might occur, and opportunities for women will change. It is thus imperative for both practitioners and researchers to engage in an open conversation about this topic to consider the future of these issues and ways to shape and be prepared for the needs of Modern Orthodox Jews as such changes occur.

Discussants will address the following topics:

1. Israeli Ultra-Orthodox Feminism, Modern Orthodox Feminism, and the Implications on Educational Practice (*Tanya Zion-Waldoks*, Lecturer at Hebrew University)
2. Aspiration, Innovation, and Orthodoxy in American Women's Talmud Programs (*Caroline Block*, Independent Scholar)
3. Modern Orthodox Feminism and the Modern Orthodox High School Student (*Tammy Jacobowitz*, Chair of the Tanakh Department at SAR High School)
4. The Future of Modern Orthodox Feminism in Conversation with non-Orthodox Denominations of Judaism (*Yaffa Epstein*, Director of the Wexner Heritage Program)

B2. JEWISH LEARNING DURING COVID-19



Laura Yares, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, Michigan State University

Sharon Avni, Associate Professor of Linguistics and Academic Literacy, CUNY

Shai Goldfarb Cohen, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Wisconsin

Rona Novick, Dean, Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education, Yeshiva University

Andrew Ergas, CEO, Hebrew at the Center

Ziva Hassenfeld, Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Assistant Professor of Jewish Education, Brandeis University

COVID-19 has transformed Jewish education more than any other event in recent memory. The pandemic has changed access to Jewish education, the tools we use during Jewish education, and the settings in which Jewish education takes place. Certain kinds of education may be less transformed than others. After all, listening to a lecture remotely may not be that different than listening to it in person. How has COVID-19 affected the practice of teaching and learning in Jewish education? This roundtable brings together scholars and practitioners from a variety of educational spaces to discuss this pressing question.

B3. PARTICIPATORY INQUIRY AS A SPACE FOR JEWISH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Miriam Raider-Roth, University of Cincinnati, Professor; Mandel Teacher Educator Institute, Director

Mindy Gold, Leader of Graduate Studies Mandel Teacher Educator Institute

Gail Dorph, Founder, Mandel Teacher Educator Institute

This panel/ workshop session will introduce the theory, practice, and possibilities of the Future Creating Workshop (FCW) process, a participatory research method that invites diverse stakeholders to address key issues in their communities through a shared inquiry of envisioning the future. The FCW is rooted in Critical Utopian Action Research, and as such invites participants to take a critical view of their current realities and confront the challenges that “life as we know it” presents. During this session, presenters will introduce the FCW as it was enacted with graduates of the Mandel Teacher Educator Institute (MTEI). Audience members will also have an opportunity to engage in a modified (shortened) FCW process, and then MTEI graduates will present applications of FCW in their settings.

Thursday, May 6

May 6, 12:00-1:25 pm EDT

C1. FIRST FINDINGS FROM CASJE'S EXPLORATION OF CAREER TRAJECTORIES OF JEWISH EDUCATORS



For the last two years, The Collaborative for Applied Studies in Jewish Education (CASJE) has supported a multi-strand study of the recruitment, retention, and development of Jewish educators in the United States. The study seeks to understand what it would take to recruit significantly greater numbers of talented people to the field of Jewish education, and what would be needed to sustain and retain those personnel once they have launched careers in the field.

This work builds upon previous efforts to understand who is working in the field of Jewish education, such as the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education study of educational leaders and teachers in the early 1990s and the Educators in Jewish School Study about ten years later (Kress & Ben Avi 2007). Those two inquiries examined only individuals who worked in day schools, supplementary schools and early childhood settings. This new work employs a more inclusive concept of the Jewish educator as a “paid professional who works directly with people of any age who identify as Jews, in settings—whether virtual, brick-and-mortar, or outdoor—that aim to help participants find special meaning in Jewish texts, experiences, and associations” (CASJE 2019). The research has been structured as four distinct but intimately linked projects. The panel will present findings from each of these four strands.

Paper 1: Preparing for Entry

Alex Pomson, Principal and Managing Director, Rosov Consulting

This paper focuses on a central concern: what does it take to launch a career in Jewish education? The paper draws on a survey and interviews with a sample of 4,500 individuals who graduated college in the last 10 years most of whom do not work as Jewish educators, but all of whom during this time have experienced program frameworks from which Jewish educators often emerge. The paper will examine what distinguishes those young people who chose to start careers in Jewish education from those who did not.

Paper 2: On the Journey

Jeff Kress, Professor, Associate Professor, William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education, Jewish Theological Seminary

This paper explores factors that promote educator self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and retention, with a specific focus on the intersection of workplace climate variables and salary and benefits. Data are drawn from two sources: a) a survey of those who have been in the field of Jewish education between 5 and 20 years and have a job that includes direct service; and b) individual

and focus group interviews of a sub-sample of survey respondents and people who had left the field.

Paper 3: Mapping the Market

Frayda Gonshor Cohen, Senior Project Leader, Rosov Consulting

This paper examines the marketplace in which Jewish educators take up work. Mining data from a survey of employers of Jewish educators across multiple sectors and interviews with a subsample of these individuals, it constructs a picture of the expectations of these employers, how they recruit educators, and the kinds of training and support they provide for those they hire. With data coming from a wide range of settings, the paper asks about the extent to which it is meaningful to conceive of the work of Jewish education in a single cohesive fashion.

Paper 4: National Jewish Educator Census

Ariela Greenberg, The Greenberg Team, Founder and CEO

This paper reports on findings from Year One of a national census of Jewish educators. The purpose of the census is to estimate the number of Jewish educators in the United States. This number, which has never been systematically measured, serves as a critical denominator to inform policy interventions into the recruitment, retention, and development of Jewish educators. Findings to be presented include counts of Jewish educators employed in 2019 (pre-pandemic) and approximate numbers of staff changes (layoffs, furloughs, hires, and salary reductions) after COVID19-related program changes in Spring 2020, as well as discussion about estimation strategies for different institution types in Jewish education.

C2. THE JEWISH LEARNING FELLOWSHIP AS A NEW EXPERIMENT IN JEWISH EDUCATION

Paper 1: Curriculum Design in the Jewish Learning Fellowship

Dan Smokler, Chief Innovation Officer OOI at Hillel

In designing the curriculum of JLF, we faced the daunting task of teaching rabbinic literature to emerging adults, almost all of whom had little to no experience with these texts and doing so in a pluralistic setting. We drew on Rosenak’s theory of “partial translation” as a guiding principle to create a curriculum that could simultaneously engage those less familiar with rabbinic literature and deepen the reflection of those with more experience. This paper will describe our curricular process, and offer some examples of the work produced. It will explain how the approach developed in the JLF curriculum differs from any of Levisohn’s (2010) menu of orientations to the teaching of rabbinic literature. And it will describe how the dialogic process between learners and curriculum designers surfaced the critical place of social networks in the learning process, which then became central to the curriculum.

Paper 2: Playing the Whole Game in JLF

Jon Levisohn, Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Associate Professor of Jewish Educational Thought, Brandeis University

While much is made of JLF's "social by design" approach that seeks to address the absence of Jewish social capital among emerging Jewish adults, this paper argues that JLF can equally be understood as an effort to bring Jewish outsiders into a particular Jewish practice, the practice of Jewish learning. In contrast to other approaches such as typical "Jewish literacy" adult education courses and Judaism 101 courses in higher education, JLF resists the entirely natural (but misguided) desire to remediate participants' lack of knowledge or even to systematically introduce them to Jewish life and culture. Instead, JLF takes a page from David Perkins' concept of "playing the whole game" in his *Making Learning Whole* (2008). This is the idea that we ought to think about novices in educational settings like Little League coaches do, creating opportunities to engage in real games (even if, initially, somewhat simplified games) from the first day of participation. JLF, that is, creates an opportunity for students to "play the whole game"—to enact the practice—of Jewish learning in an accessible fashion.

Paper 3: Text Study May Be JLF's Greatest Asset

Ziva R. Hassenfeld: Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Assistant Professor of Jewish Education, Brandeis University

In his framing paper about the goals and design of the program, director Dan Smokler writes eloquently of the central role of Jewish text study in their program. Text study is an important component of the JLF course, alongside building community, creating an appealing ambiance, and making Judaism feel relevant. JLF's inclusion of text study as central to their goal of engaging young, unaffiliated Jewish college students raises the question, what's text study got to do with feeling good about Judaism? This paper explores the theoretical implications of JLF's commitment to studying texts with their students. At its heart, this commitment seems to reflect a conviction about the power of reading texts in community, which Robert Alter once described (in *The Pleasure of Reading in an Ideological Age*, 1989) as "our enlistment by the text as players in one of the most elaborate and various games that human culture has devised." In their need for interpretation, Jewish texts require the reader to become an active participant. As an active participant the reader chooses an interpretation that reflects where she is—emotionally, cognitively, and even ideologically. When a person gives an interpretation of a text, she is reflecting her own personal experiences. Her interpretation then provides an insight into her thoughts. The openness of biblical and rabbinic texts is such that they offer dozens of places for the reader to rest. And as the reader grows, she may move from place to place but the text can still hold her. The study of texts welcomes the multifaceted nature of one's thoughts, feelings and ideas. The implicit hypothesis that undergirds the JLF curriculum, then, is that, through the process of shared text study, the JLF cohort gets to know each other and their most deeply held truths.

Paper 4: JLF in a Time of Plague

Daniel Olson, Research and Evaluation Consultant for Hillel International

In March 2020, JLF shifted online to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Nearly all JLF sessions continued online through Fall 2020 and into Spring 2021. At the end of the Fall 2020 term, more than 1800 students responded to a survey about their participation in JLF online in the middle of a pandemic. Those survey results, plus interviews with JLF educators and observations of JLF classes online on four different campuses, offer an in-depth understanding of what the teaching and learning was like for students and educators under the unusual and trying circumstances of COVID. Hillel educators quickly learned that cohort-based learning opportunities, including JLF, were some of the most popular programs during the pandemic. Students found in the texts and topics of the curriculum an outlet to discuss and confront the challenges of the moment in relationship with peers and a mentor. JLF's successful shift online demonstrates that discussion-based online Jewish learning can provide regular opportunities for productive meaning-making and fellowship during an otherwise isolating time for young adults.

C3. LESSONS FROM ONLINE LEARNING

Paper 1: Leave Meeting: Processing Abrupt Online Class Endings in Jewish Adult Education

Erica Brown, Associate Professor, Graduate School of Education and Human Development, GWU and Director of Mayberg Center for Jewish Education and Leadership

In the transition to online learning, adult educators have struggled to maintain the attention of learners who either are adept at technology and have multiple open windows or are themselves struggling with new technology, since Jewish adult education often appeals to adults in their senior years. The interactivity adult educators have come to expect in their classrooms has, in many instances, been significantly diminished and the effort at sustaining engagement without the ability to read in-person cues has led many such teachers to end classes feeling drained and unsatisfied. This teacher fatigue has been augmented by the abrupt ending of online classes.

Staying within the confines of a Zoom hour has meant that some of the social lubrication that builds intentional learning communities is absent or compromised. In addition, the lingering moments immediately after an in-person class usually help the educator process the learning and assess the worthiness or impact of a particular lesson through the comments and observations of participants. In the absence of the social/educational tail common to such classroom dynamics, the educator who presses the red "Leave Meeting" button and is then greeted by a blank screen is often led wondering what just happened in the hour.

Given the convenience and geographic reach of online adult learning, this problem is likely to persist long after the virus that precipitated its popularity is over. This paper will examine the problem and the challenge of the "leave meeting" phenomenon through a combination of one teacher's professional practice (mine), the anecdotal observations of other adult educators and

the framing of academic literature on exits generally (for example, Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot's *Exits: The Endings that Set You Free*), on inductions and closures in standard and unusual educational literature (for example, Claire Mowling, Brett Jones and Megan Hedgepeth's article, "A Bag of Secrets: Revisiting Set Inductions & Closures," *VAHPERD Journal* (Vol. 38, Issue 1), and in psychological studies of "endings" (for example, Stuart Albert and Suzanne Kessler's article "Processes for ending social encounters: The conceptual archaeology of a temporal place," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 1976, 6 (2), 147–170). The author will then make practical recommendations culled from her experience and that of other adult educators to minimize the suddenness of such class endings that can have a jarring effect on both the educator and the learners and soften the exit ramp.

Paper 2: Online Collaborative Jewish Text Study as a Knowledge-Building Tool

Shai Goldfarb Cohen, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Ph.D. Candidate

In their report, *The Future of Jewish Learning Is Here: How Digital Media Are Reshaping Jewish Education*, Kelman et al. (2019) present several online Jewish learning platforms that reflect changes in current Jewish learning. Their findings suggest that as online learning becomes more accessible, the Jewish learning opportunities and experiences are also changing. These changes include more approachable learning materials, creating new social connections, and engaging with Jewish content in new ways that reflect learning in the 21st century. Also, social and religious changes in Jewish education are viewed as shifting from being "provider centered" to "learner-centered." Learners are taking an active role in shaping their learning, making it relevant to their lives, as learning becomes more accessible with the option of developing personal growth (Rubin Ross, 2017). However, despite the increase in online Jewish education platforms, little research has been done on how or what students learn through this medium.

This paper presents a multiple case study of two informal online collaborative learning spaces for learning Jewish texts including *Project Zug* (www.projectzug.org) (an online *havruta* (paired couple) platform) and *Sefaria* (www.sefaria.org) (a digital library that includes Jewish texts and their translations in Hebrew and English). The goal of this study is to better understand how informal online Jewish text study becomes a tool for supporting a community of practice and knowledge-building communities. I investigate how these websites support (or do not support) collaborative learning by bringing the lenses of connected socio-cultural frameworks of learning: communities of practice (CoP) and knowledge-building communities (KBC) as a pedagogical approach for knowledge creation and innovation.

Data collection included sixteen semi-structured interviews with adult learners between the ages of 29-65 who identify as lifelong and free-choice learners. Preliminary findings highlighting how participants have created a community of learners through the collaborative interpretation of Jewish texts. Thus, using online spaces to learn Jewish texts, became a tool for shared knowledge-building and knowledge creation. As adult lifelong learners, participants describe how they actively create connections between texts and their own life experiences

with others. Thus, the digital spaces provide learners not only access to texts but also a place to continue the old Jewish tradition of learning in a community.

Paper 3: Teachers Learn and Learners Teach: Enacting Presence in Online Havruta Text Study

Mindy Gold, Graduate Program Leader, Mandel Teacher Educator Institute

Miriam Raider-Roth, University of Cincinnati, Professor; Mandel Teacher Educator Institute, Director

The immediate impact of COVID-19 thrust teachers and learners into newly imagined online learning spaces. Mandel Teacher Educator Institute (MTEI) faced this reality while transitioning all our offerings to online environments. Building on our principles for professional development (www.mtei-learning.org), we faced essential pedagogical challenges in creating learner-centered, relational and inquiry based Jewish text study opportunities (Raider-Roth & Holzer, 2009) in an online synchronous space. In the summer of 2020, we piloted an online adaptation of a line-by-line method for text study (Holzer, 2007; Holzer with Kent, 2013). In fall 2020, we revised this version of online text study in a new iteration and with a research lens. The line-by-line text study – a slow-looking, slow-reading approach to text study adapted for online synchronous learning – is the focus of our inquiry. Our paper examines the ways this pedagogical approach invites facilitator and participant enactments of teaching, social and cognitive presences (Garrison, 2017).

Paper 4: Sisterhood of the #NoTraveling #Sweatpants: Creating a virtual holding environment for doctoral candidates during the COVID-19 pandemic

Esther Friedman, Doctoral Candidate at HUJI

Talia Hurwich, Doctoral Candidate at NYU

Allison JoAnn Lester, Doctoral Candidate at University of Cincinnati

This paper shares our personal experiences as members of a virtual writing accountability group, where we adopt holding environment practices to address our individual's emotional and professional needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. This writing group was formed from Brandeis University's Mandel Center for Jewish Education doctoral fellowship, which provides intellectual and professional support to four current doctoral candidates across multiple universities whose research is, in one form or another, related to Jewish education. At our initial fellowship meeting we used Jamboard, a collaborative brainstorming platform, to identify our needs and establish group norms and practices. From our needs, we identified feedback on scholarly writing, career development, and writing accountability as key challenges in this stage of doctoral work. In addition to the bi-monthly meetings, where we engage in writing workshops and roundtable discussions relating to career development, three fellows decided to meet weekly, which eventually evolved into daily writing sessions. This paper will illuminate practices from our writing group meetings as well as outline some of the limitations. Specifically, we used asynchronous and synchronous remote platforms for accountability to sustain progress towards individually set goals and regularly check in with

each other. Using holding environments practices, such as learning with and from each other, establishing presence, intentionality, and mutual empathy, enabled us to focus on self-care and resilience during social isolation, and find ways to collectively and individually support each other's unique needs and aspirations.

Scholarship from the start of the pandemic has noted the challenges advanced doctoral researchers face during the COVID-19 pandemic, and efforts to understand the pandemic's impact on scholarship are ongoing and continue to be explored. Within this context, universities as well as individuals have been exploring innovations in their tools and practices to empower doctoral students through these times, yet such work and the challenges remain ongoing. This paper contributes to this ongoing discussion by illustrating one group's challenges and efforts to function and thrive.

We present individual vignettes that illustrate the role that our weekly writing accountability and feedback sessions have had on our scholarship during COVID-19. Additionally, we identify holding environment principles for application to other educational and professional areas where independent work benefits from continued mutual support.

May 6, 1:30-3:00 pm EDT

D1. STUDYING REMOTE LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT IN JEWISH EDUCATION



Whether conceived as “social experience” (Dewey 1938) or as “encounter with another” (Buber 1947), for most of human history education has been assumed to occur through in-person interactions, or what Goffman (1963) coined as “co-presence.” People can learn alone from books, and for more than a century have been learning through correspondence courses, but until the emergence of on-line communication media in the 1980s, most education involved both the instructor/facilitator and the learner being together in the same physical space (Garrison 1985).

Since March 2020, there have been few educational interventions and initiatives that have not had to pivot to the remote delivery of services and programs. For some, this has involved the expansion of already existing capacities; for others, it has required a radical reimagining of educational practice. In some cases, it has resulted in uncovering ways of reaching never previously imagined audiences. For others it has led to being unplugged from the core activities that make them relevant.

The three presenters have had an opportunity to study such adaptations, and how educators and learners have experienced them, within different domains of Jewish education. They have explored the effectiveness of these new modalities and the outcomes they produce, in and of

themselves, and compared to face-to-face alternatives. Drawing on this work, we present three papers that report on findings from these studies.

Paper 1: Rosov Consulting Remote Israel experiences

Nettie Aharon, Senior Project Associate

One paper will present survey-based data from work with Onward Israel. During this past summer Onward supported close to 500 remote internship experiences in Israel to college age students from North America. The study examines professional, Jewish and Israel-related outcomes from this experience, and contrasts these with outcomes produced by in-person internships within the same program framework during the last five years.

Paper 2: Remote professional development

Meredith Woocher, Senior Project Leader, Rosov Consulting

A second paper looks at the experience of participants in remote professional development and adult education as offered by 14 different organizations. Drawing on survey-data, interviews with participants and program providers, and program observations, the paper explores what participants feel they gained and didn't gain from these experiences, and what educational practices they found most effective.

Paper 3: Remote schooling

Alex Pomson, Principal and Managing Director, Rosov Consulting

A third paper examines data gathered from Jewish day students in North America, Europe and Latin America about their experiences of remote schooling during the first four months of the COVID-19 pandemic. The paper provides an opportunity to probe profound cultural and structural differences between day school education in different cultural contexts.

Moderator and discussant: *Josh Troderman, Chief Program Officer and Director of Community Engagement, Shalom Learning*

D2. WHAT IS “GOOD” PEDAGOGY IN ISRAEL EDUCATION?

In recent years, “Israel education” has emerged as a distinct subfield of Jewish education aimed at “more deeply and explicitly weave[ing] present-day Israel into the enterprise of American Jewish education” (Horowitz, 2012, p.2). This emerging field remains divided over questions about best practices and educational goals. The place of Israel in the curriculum is often unclear (Gerber & Mazor, 2003) and there is little consensus about the goals and purposes of Israel education (e.g. Grant, Marom, & Werchow, 2012; Zakai, 2011). Even more so, there is no field-wide consensus about what constitutes essential content knowledge, good pedagogy, and pedagogical content knowledge in Israel education, in part because there is no consensus about whether Israel ought to be situated as part of social studies education

(Grinfas-David, 2012) or as part of Jewish education more broadly (Grant and Kopelowitz, 2012).

The three papers that comprise this panel take different methodological and philosophical approaches towards addressing a common question: what constitutes “good” pedagogy in Israel education. Drawing upon the work of historian Larry Cuban (n.d.), we assume that understanding good pedagogy requires us to consider: good for what purposes? Good for whom? Good when?

Grinfas-David’s paper begins with an assumption that “good” Israel teaching is a multi-disciplinary enterprise. Drawing upon interview and focus groups of teachers in Jewish and general studies positions, she demonstrates how teachers think, plan, implement, and assess their own teaching. Reingold’s practitioner action research considers how--and with what pedagogical tradeoffs--it is possible to build a single approach to teaching Israel that challenges a group of students with varying degrees of background knowledge. Situated in a Jewish history class, his study draws on student surveys that identify the ways that the teacher helped to bridge knowledge and understanding gaps and how the teacher challenged students at levels that respected their different backgrounds. Zakai’s paper posits that “good” pedagogy responds to the most pressing questions and concerns of the learners. Through interviews and storytelling exercises with Jewish children, she demonstrates that young learners often want to learn more about civic and political questions, and her paper takes this as the starting point for considering what constitutes “good” teaching about Israel. As a trio, these papers draw upon different research methods, different institutional contexts in the U.S. and Canada, and different answers to the question: what is “good” pedagogy in Israel education?

Paper 1: Israel Education Through STEAM: How Teachers View Their Evolving Practice

Tal Grinfas-David, Vice President, Center for Israel Education

One school in North America has chosen to develop and implement a new interdisciplinary model to teaching Israel in 4th-7th grades in order to address multiple commonly faced challenges, such as managing time constraints, meeting standards and benchmarks, living the school mission, fostering critical thinking, developing Jewish identity, and programmatically enticing enrollment and retention of students. This study will qualitatively explore how general and Judaic studies teachers view the issues, challenges, and dilemmas that arise from the teaching of Israel in general studies subjects (science, technology, engineering, art and math) and in traditional Judaic subjects (Jewish history, prayer, bible, holidays, etc.), including but not limited to how they chose to balance content and affective learning experiences, what content and skills they acquired through the process of redesigning and implementing the interdisciplinary curriculum, how they made choices that reflected their personal and collective philosophies about teaching Israel, how they plan to assess and measure the impact of their choices, how they see their work as impacting the broader community, and how their roles as teachers and innovators have evolved over time.

Teachers and school leaders will be asked in individual interviews throughout the year and in a focus group at the end of the year to reflect on their practice in developing Israel content and connections, individually and collaboratively, and may make recommendations based on their experiences. Through the identification of themes in transcribed responses, a thorough case study will be presented examining teachers' thoughts, opinions, feelings and reflections about teaching Israel in an interdisciplinary and innovative setting. This study will be relevant for teachers considering their own Israel instruction, for schools seeking models for Israel innovation, for teacher training organizations seeking to support Israel education through professional development and for researchers wanting to replicate or build on the research herein.

Paper 2: Meeting the Academic Needs of All Learners: Equitable Teaching in the Israel Studies Classroom

Matt Reingold, practitioner-researcher, TanenbaumCHAT

A challenge for the Israel Educator who wants to deliver meaningful and 'good' Israel education is how to ensure that all students are able to be equal learners and members of the classroom. If the learning is too challenging or too simplistic, students will turn away from the course and the opportunity to have a transformative Israel experience is lost. This paper makes use of data from a practitioner-research study about how high school seniors with different levels of knowledge learn about Israel. As part of the study, students answered a demographic survey about their knowledge and understanding of Israel and the frequency of Israel-related interactions they have. Students were then clustered into one of two groups: high degree of Israel knowledge and low degree of Israel knowledge. The presence of two very different communities of learners in a shared space raised fundamental questions about the nature of Israel education. How do educators effectively manage student expectations, keep all learners engaged, and challenge students at different levels? At the conclusion of the course (so as to preserve anonymity), students responded to open-ended questions about the instructional strategies employed by the teacher and whether the teacher was able to effectively blend the disparate groups of learners into a cohesive whole and whether all students felt challenged by the learning. The data highlighted that the teacher did accomplish this goal and the learners provided sophisticated answers about how the teacher was able to create a learning environment that was challenging to the two groups. The significance of the paper is in the ways that students are able to reflect on what instructional strategies were beneficial and useful in helping to create an effective Israel studies classroom that included a diversity of learners.

Paper 3: "You never told me!" Rethinking Pedagogical Approaches to Teaching Israel in Light of Student Reflections

Sivan Zakai, Sara S. Lee Associate Professor of Jewish Education, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

This paper starts from an assumption that "good" teaching responds to the most pressing questions and concerns of the learners. Drawing upon a longitudinal study of Jewish children in

California, the paper demonstrates how and why questions about civic (Lichterman, 1996) and political (Barrett and Pachi, 2019) life in Israel are of deep concern to many young Jewish learners. Using a combination of semi-structured interviews, photo and music elicitation, and storytelling exercises, the research traces a group of Jewish day school students throughout their elementary school years (grades K-6). It demonstrates that the children situated themselves as members of both the American and global Jewish communities, and as such they viewed themselves as responsible for helping other members of those communities in both the United States and Israel. By the middle of elementary school, as the children began to develop an understanding of political issues, institutions, and leaders, their experiences of and feelings towards U.S. and Israeli societies diverged. They came to understand that the United States grapples with important and contested political questions, but they developed little sense of Israeli civic and political matters. As a result, when children *did* encounter the civic and political issues that permeate contemporary Israeli life, they were caught off guard, and they expressed profound anger towards the adults in their life whom they believed inadequately prepared them to understand civic and political life in Israel. Reinforcing concerns that Jewish schools often teach about Israel in a way that “communicate[s] developmentally inappropriate messages” (Pomson, Wertheimer, & HaCohen-Wolf, 2014, p. 48), this paper highlights a gap between the civic and political questions children are capable of understanding (as is evident by their reflections about U.S. civic and political life) and the kinds of civic and political education they typically receive about Israel. In doing so, it frames students’ reflections as a challenge to all those concerned about “good” teaching in Israel education.

Respondent:

Laura Novak Winer, Director of Clinical Education, Rhea Hirsch School of Education, HUC-JIR/Los Angeles

D3. LET’S STOP CALLING IT “HEBREW SCHOOL”: RATIONALES, GOALS, AND PRACTICES OF HEBREW EDUCATION IN PART-TIME JEWISH SCHOOLS

Discussants:

Sarah Bunin Benor, Professor of Contemporary Jewish Studies and Linguistics, Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion

Netta Avineri, Associate Professor, Language Teacher Education and Chair, Intercultural Competence Committee, Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey

Nicki Greninger, Director of Lifelong Learning, Temple Isaiah, Lafayette, CA

Nachama Skolnik Moskowitz, Director of Curriculum Resources, Jewish Education Center of Cleveland

Andrew Ergas, CEO, Hebrew at the Center

Facilitator: Michelle Lynn-Sachs, Spotlight Consulting & Coaching and Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

In 2018-20, Benor, Avineri, and Greninger conducted a mixed-methods study investigating how Hebrew is taught and perceived at American part-time Jewish schools (also known as

supplementary schools, religious schools, and Hebrew schools). Phase 1 consisted of a survey of 519 school directors around the United States, focusing on rationales, goals, teaching methods, curricula, and teacher selection. Phase 2 involved brief classroom observations at 12 schools and stakeholder surveys (376 total) at 8 schools with diverse approaches.

Findings from this study highlight the diverse ways that constituents orient to Hebrew as a symbol of identity, history, religiosity, and community. During 2-5 hours per week in after-school and weekend sessions, students learn about Jewish values, holidays, lifecycle events, Tanakh, prayers, Israel, and what is commonly called “Hebrew.” Whereas many complementary schools of various immigrant groups emphasize language proficiency, part-time Jewish school directors have different primary goals, including decoding Hebrew characters, chanting Hebrew with minimal comprehension, and strengthening ideological and affective affiliation with a worldwide metalinguistic community (Avineri, 2012, 2019) that values Hebrew as a sacred diasporic language. These goals are accomplished through communal prayer and song, Hebrew loanwords in English sentences, engaging activities involving Hebrew, and visual representations of Hebrew in the schoolscape - a constellation of practices known as ethnolinguistic infusion (Benor, 2018). This emblematic approach to language can sometimes be a site of ideological contestation. Directors and other constituencies differ in their ideologies, rationales, and goals for Hebrew education. Some believe schools are failing because students cannot have a basic Hebrew conversation after years of instruction. Others feel a positive affective relationship with Hebrew is a meaningful goal.

In this roundtable, the scholar-practitioner research team will briefly review the study’s findings, and the two practitioner respondents will discuss the study’s implications and applications. The conversation will focus on several recommendations for part-time Jewish schools:

- A collaborative visioning process for Hebrew education involving teachers, clergy, parents, and students;
- Making affective goals explicit;
- Infusing Hebrew throughout the curriculum;
- Teaching decoding in one-on-one and small-group configurations;
- Offering gamified homework;
- Offering multiple tracks for families interested in conversational Hebrew;
- Working with stakeholders to decide what name is best for the school / program, which might not be “Hebrew school,” unless proficiency is the primary focus.

Guiding questions for the discussion:

- What reactions do you have to these recommendations?
- Are there other changes you’d recommend based on the study’s findings?
- What role do organizations like JECC and JEP play in changing the ways part-time schools approach Hebrew? What additional organizations might be mobilized?
- If unlimited resources and support were available, what would you do to hasten the implementation of these recommendations?

- In a more realistic scenario, where might your organization, or others, begin to make changes?
- What changes in Hebrew education have you seen brought about by necessity during the pandemic? What impact might these changes have on schools moving forward?

The facilitator will collect questions and comments in the chat and incorporate those into the discussion.

D4. HASIDIC EDUCATION: INPUTS AND OUTCOMES

Discussants:

Zalman Newfield, assistant professor of sociology at BMCC CUNY

Joel Engelman, doctoral student, Bowling Green State University

Nechumi Yaffe, faculty at Tel Aviv University

Eliyahu Stern, associate professor in the department of religious studies and history, Yale University

Yitz Finkelstein, former teacher in Hasidic yeshiva

Facilitator: *Miriam Moster*, doctoral student, CUNY Graduate Center

This multi-disciplinary roundtable will discuss ultra-Orthodox education, with a focus on Hasidic education, a subject that has received increased scholarly and public attention in recent years. Zalman Newfield, assistant professor of sociology at BMCC CUNY and an alum of Lubavitch yeshivas, will share his insights based on qualitative research he conducted among former Satmar and Lubavitch Hasidim. Joel Engelman will talk from experience as an alum of a Satmar Hasidic yeshiva, and will also share his findings based on quantitative research he conducted as a doctoral student in psychology at Bowling Green State University. Yitz Finkelstein is a former teacher in a Hasidic yeshiva and will share about his experience as a practitioner. Nechumi Yaffe, a faculty member in the public policy department of Tel Aviv University, brings her expertise on Haredim in Israel, and will talk about her earlier work designing curricula for Haredi schools. And Eliyahu Stern, associate professor in the department of religious studies and history at Yale University, will share a proposal that integrates social science research together with historical research, looking at similar educational patterns at other times in modern Jewish history. Miriam Moster, a doctoral student in sociology at CUNY Graduate Center working on a quantitative analysis of Hasidic educational and economic outcomes, will facilitate the roundtable discussion. Together, the data of our discussants will help us come to a clearer picture of what Hasidic education in the United States looks like in practice and how it compares to Orthodox education in other sects, places and times; as well as an understanding of the outcomes of that education. Some of the questions this roundtable will consider are:

1. What does Hasidic education specifically, and ultra-Orthodox education more broadly, look like today?

2. How does Hasidic education compare to the education of other Orthodox sects?
3. How does ultra-Orthodox education vary in different locations?
4. Are there differences in outcome among those who remain in the Hasidic community compared to those who leave the community?
5. What are those differences and how do we account for them?
6. How does the data collected by our roundtable discussants align with their lived experiences?
7. How do other published accounts align with their data and lived experiences?
8. What are the limitations of the data?

Thursday, May 13

May 13, 12:00-12:55 pm EDT

E1. ENCOUNTERS WITH DIFFERENCE

Paper 1: Experiences of Sephardi Students in Ashkenazi Schools

Elana Rand, Azrieli Graduate School, doctoral fellow

This paper will explore the retrospective experiences of Sephardi millennials who attended Orthodox day schools rooted in Ashkenazi traditions, laws, and cultural norms. Interview data is drawn from an ongoing mixed method doctoral dissertation examining cultural discontinuity, dissonance, and connectedness of Sephardi middle schoolers in predominantly Ashkenazi day schools. In a country where Jews are a minority, Sephardi Jews are what some call “a minority within a minority: required to navigate their own culture not only within a secular American context but also within a normative Ashkenazi context. Many American Jewish day schools, in which the vast majority of personnel and students adhere to Ashkenazi traditions, perpetuate the normativity of Ashkenazi culture, both reflecting and reinforcing Sephardi “minority within a minority” status. How might Sephardi students, whose familial practices, values, and/or norms likely misalign with those of the school, effectively navigate their potentially distinct worlds?

The interviewees for this paper, all in their mid-20s to mid-30s, reflect on their day school experiences and the evolution of their Sephardic identities. As of the writing of this proposal, eleven interviews have been conducted with members of Sephardi communities in the greater New York area, the Northwestern United States, and Southern California. As the interviews are still in progress, they have not yet undergone formal coding, but several themes have already begun to emerge. Interviewees often describe their relatively distinct worlds of practice during elementary and middle school, when the liturgy, language, and textual practices in the classroom differed from those of their homes and synagogues; and the assertion of

their “Sephardiness” over the course of high school and beyond. The role of faculty and administrators throughout K-12 proved integral to interviewees feelings of acceptance and comfort, or feelings of otherness. Teachers and administrators who treated Ashkenazic laws, customs, and norms as the default mode of Jewish practice reinforced interviewee “minority within a minority” status, while teachers and administrators who recognized and appreciated the diversity of Jewish practice engendered connectedness and belonging. The differing experiences of men and women are explored, as are the influences of geographic context.

Paper 2: Two Teachers, One Story: How Orthodox Teachers’ Assumptions Shape their Interactions with non-Orthodox Students

Esther Friedman, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, PhD candidate

This research is interested in the ways that both teachers and students interpret interactions over culturally sensitive Tanakh texts. A framework of philosophical hermeneutics is applied to these encounters, because interpretation, as Gallagher (1992) explains, “goes beyond the interpretation of text, [and] deals with non-textual phenomena such as social processes” (p.6). As the complete findings, which include the students’ point of view, are too complex to be shared fully here, I will focus on two teachers, who presented disparate accounts and sets of assumptions about what was later determined to be, a single event.

This paper looks at the assumptions that Orthodox teachers who are religious, social and cultural “strangers” in the non-Orthodox school milieu make about their students. Semi structured interviews were conducted with twenty-five Orthodox high school Tanakh teachers and forty of their students, using a constructivist grounded theory approach. Multiple qualitative analysis methods were used to delve deeply into the relationships between teachers’ personal beliefs, ideological narratives, and assumptions about student beliefs and their world.

The Orthodox Jew studies Tanakh as a way to inform his religious practice and considers this study to be a form of religious practice, creating challenges when teaching students who do not share fundamental religious beliefs. Ideologically challenging issues, such as Biblical notions of Jewish particularism and their implications for the modern world, compound this difficulty and are therefore the lens through which these interactions are explored here.

The ways that teachers respond and react to their students’ questions, statements and behaviors based on these assumptions are both a result of, but also shape, their pedagogical responses, and can even impact their identity and personal beliefs. These reactions, in turn, impact the ways that students respond to both teachers and subject matter, creating a continuous cycle of impact and influence. This is what Raider-Roth and Holtzer (2019) have named the relational triangle, based on David Hawkins (2002) conception of the I–Thou–It relationship, that of learner, teacher, and

subject matter. I will offer a typology of Orthodox teachers' pedagogical stances with regard to pluralism, and the implications for relational learning, as they apply to the two teachers highlighted in this presentation.

E2. SPIRITUAL AND MORAL PERSPECTIVES

Paper 1: Transformative Play: Ecologies of Play That Support Moral Development and Character Development

Judd Kruger Levingston, Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy, Director of Jewish Studies

While students see play as fun, as not-work, as exercising choices, and as something they do that distinguishes themselves from their adults, it is essential not just in recreation and social development, but also in moral development. The thoughtful use of play in school can help students to cultivate their religious, spiritual and cultural identity while also providing an arena for students to wrestle with relevant moral issues in history and in their own lives. The presenter will share a relevant theoretical background from psychology, anthropology and folklore together with findings from field-based observations and interviews conducted in Reform, Orthodox and community-based Jewish schools, faith-based Quaker and Roman Catholic schools, and non-sectarian boys', girls' and progressive independent schools. This session proposes a new definition of play, illustrated by three moral ecologies of play. In one classroom ecology, a teacher may concede that play is a useful hook to attract student interest and plan classroom play cautiously; in a second, a teacher may use play as a vehicle for advancing the curriculum while engaging students creatively; in a third, play is used to promote character development and self-expression. Participants in this session will be encouraged to consider how to apply these findings to their own lives and professional settings.

Paper 2: Foundations of a Hermeneutic-Spiritual Pedagogy for the Teaching of Hasidic homilies

Elie Holzer, Head of the R. Dr. Ochs Chair for Teaching Jewish Religious Studies & School of Education Bar Ilan University; Senior faculty at the Mandel Teacher Educators Institute

Educational scholars have explored and articulated subject matter-based theories of practice and pedagogy, understanding that pedagogical practice ought to be rooted in (though not confined to) epistemological foundations of the subject matter. The Hasidic homily is a distinct literary genre of Jewish discourse that awaits serious attention by Jewish educational scholars interested in teaching and learning. This interest is not solely intellectual but also a practical need, particularly in the wake of emerging study of Hasidic literature in non-Hasidic, cross-denominational institutions of Jewish learning in Israel and in the United States.

In my research, I conceptualize the Hasidic homily ('the subject matter') as a central educational, formative, and transformative literary *genre* designed to help readers cultivate forms of religious consciousness through subtle engagements with written language.

Philosophical hermeneutics (primarily the works of Hans Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur) engages with three major turns toward immanence: the subjective/interpretive, the linguistic, and the experiential. It offers an analysis of the foundations of interpretation and of meaning-making while considering humans as interpretive beings and the reciprocal impact of reader and textual language. In my work, I use philosophical hermeneutics as a heuristic device to conceptualize foundations of the interpretive and formative experiences in the teaching and learning of the Hasidic homily.

This paper conceptualizes one progression from theory to pedagogical practice for the *teaching* and learning of the Sfat Emet's homilies (authored by R. Alter, 1847-1905) as a model case of this genre. It focuses on the potential power of homiletic language to transfigure the learner's consciousness of reality and offers a number of critical reflections on subsequent practices for the teaching and learning of the Hasidic homily as an instance of a hermeneutic-spiritual pedagogy.

In the first part of the paper, I draw on Paul Ricoeur's theory of poetic discourse to analyze the awakening effects of the Sfat Emet's poetics, and its innovative exegetical work designed to cultivate the reader's consciousness while evoking trans-subjective responses. In that perspective, exegesis serves as far more than a means of legitimizing new ideas by grounding them in Scripture or traditional rabbinic texts. Rather, where lived experiences and the work of language intersect, homiletics – their structure, discourse, and interplay with exegesis – evoke instances of the *Lebenswelt* (the world of lived experiences, as opposed to the conceptualized world), and their power of reference sets forth novel ontologies that reorient the reader by way of an ever-expanding vision of such reality.

Building on the above, I then explore intentional modes of reading and dynamic pedagogical activities (e.g., meditative reading practices) for the teaching and learning of Sfat Emet's homily, designed to be conducive for the learner's spiritual growth. I conclude by pointing out a few topics for research in the aim to further ground this type of spiritual pedagogy. In particular for teachers who seek forms of vivid, post-critical Jewish theologies in ways that might be intellectually and educationally accountable.

E3. THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF ONLINE JEWISH LEARNING

Hannah Kober, Stanford Graduate School of Education, EdJS; PhD student

Caitlin Murphy Brust, Stanford Graduate School of Education, EdJS; PhD candidate

Rafa Kern, Stanford Graduate School of Education, EdJS; PhD student

What makes online Jewish education possible? We're interested in studying the hidden assumptions and mechanisms that undergird online Jewish education. Starr (2002) calls our attention to the necessity "to 'deconstruct' the boring, backstage parts of infrastructure, to disembody the narratives it contains and the behind-the-scenes decisions... as part of material culture" (p. 3). The current boom in online Jewish learning for adults and the diversity of offerings available grant us the opportunity to cast a wide net and inquire about the tangible and intangible systems that enable this learning to take place. We envision this analysis as a useful framework for researchers and practitioners alike.

As part of our Stanford EdJS research group's inquiry into online Jewish learning, we've each engaged in a long-term participant observation process of individual sites: (1) a study group that meets daily on Zoom to study a selection from the Mishna (2nd century text that forms the basis of the Talmud) through a queer lens, with a rotating cast of teachers, (2) a weekly virtual meditation program that incorporates poetry and prayer, and (3) a weekly course in intermediate Hebrew, stressing conversational, reading, and writing competencies revolving around a set theme.

As we continue to gather data at our various sites, we are taking note of the ways in which infrastructure(s) influence the interpersonal dynamics that are often taken for granted. In these spaces of online learning, students and educators employ technologies, texts, etc. to create meaning of the information and inquiries at stake in the sessions. In each of the cases, some of the facets of online learning we've set out to examine include the ways in which communication between all parties is mediated by subsets of the technological platforms (texting groups, chat boxes, breakout rooms, etc.), the role of texts and pedagogical content knowledge play in constructing and maintaining authority and or community, as well as the visible role of instructor personality and the less visible role of the administrators, moderators, and philanthropy.

E4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: TURN YOUR RESEARCH INTO A JOURNAL ARTICLE

Sivan Zakai, Sara S. Lee Associate Professor of Jewish Education, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

Jonathan Krasner, Associate Professor, Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Chair of Jewish Education Research

This is a session for aspiring authors about how to prepare a manuscript for the Journal of Jewish Education.

May 13, 1:00-1:55 pm EDT

F1. Historical Perspectives on Holocaust Education

Participants:

Daniela R. P. Weiner, Jim Joseph Postdoctoral Fellow, Graduate School of Education, Stanford University

Tzipora Weinberg, Ph.D. Student in Modern Jewish History, New York University

Ryan Abt, Ph.D. Candidate in United States History, Texas A&M University

Facilitator: *Thomas Fallace*, Professor of Education, William Paterson University

What are the goals of Holocaust education? How have these goals varied over time and across national and community contexts? How effectively have these goals been accomplished? What can the last seventy-five years of debates about how to teach the Holocaust tell us about how to successfully educate about a dark past? In today's environment of resurgent antisemitism and white nationalism, these questions are increasingly relevant.

The roundtable will cover "Historical Perspectives on Holocaust Education" in both Europe and the United States. It will explore how Holocaust education has been historically approached in various national and community contexts, what the goals of this education were, which pedagogical strategies were employed, and how successful the strategies were in accomplishing these goals. The roundtable will also discuss how scholars can effectively study these historical efforts at Holocaust education. Daniela Weiner, Jim Joseph Postdoctoral Fellow in the Concentration of Education & Jewish Studies at Stanford University, will discuss Holocaust education in the textbooks of postwar East Germany, West Germany, and Italy. Tzipora Weinberg, Ph.D. student in Modern Jewish History at New York University, will speak about Holocaust education in Orthodox communities, and Ryan Abt, Ph.D. candidate in United States History at Texas A&M University, will address the topic in the context of the public school system in the United States. Thomas Fallace, Professor in the Department of Teacher Ed: PreK-12 at William Paterson University, will facilitate the roundtable discussion.

F2. THE CAPACITY OF ONLINE TOOLS TO ALTER THE GRAMMAR OF SCHOOLING IN PART-TIME JEWISH EDUCATION

Isa Aron, Emerita Professor, HUC-JIR; consultant BJE LA

Adam Lutz, Rabbi at Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills, CA

Rebecah Yussman, Rabbi at Temple Menorah, Redondo Beach, CA

The “grammar” of public schooling (Tyack and Cuban 1995; Cuban 2018; Mehta and Fine 2020) has remained unchanged after more than a century of well-intended and well-funded innovation. Synagogue schooling too has a pervasive grammar (Lynn-Sachs 2011; Aron 2014). Today’s congregational schools retain many of the core features of their 1940s predecessors, despite widespread criticism and initiatives funded by foundations and Federations.

The pandemic of 2020-21, which precipitated a sudden move to online learning, presented a unique opportunity for educators to transform the grammar of synagogue schools. Yet despite the rhetoric of innovation, the vast majority congregational schools have chosen to reproduce the conventional grammar on Zoom, through age-graded classes, time-worn curricula and teaching methods that haven’t changed in at least 30 years (Moskowitz 2021).

This roundtable focuses on the work of two directors of congregational schools, Rabbis Rebecah Yussman and Adam Lutz, who had begun, even before the pandemic, to introduce a range of interactive online tools into their schools. In contrast to colleagues who feel constrained by teaching online, rabbis Lutz and Yussman believe that online tools, judiciously chosen, can increase student participation, foster creativity and higher order thinking, and even create and solidify classroom community. The session will include:

- A brief review of the grammar of the synagogue school, and the attempts, over the decades, to modify that grammar.
- Short video clips demonstrating how Rabbis Lutz and Yussman employed free and/or inexpensive tools online tools to teach *parashat hashavua* and to lead all-school *tefillah*.
- A discussion of themes that have emerged from a study of teachers like Rabbis Yussman and Lutz who possess “technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK)” (Mishra and Koehler 2006). Data for the study was collected through semi-structured interviews (Patton 1990), stimulated recall interviews (Ericsson & Simon 1984) and an examination of lesson plans, videotapes, and student work. These themes include:
 - How these educators acquired, TPACK, and how they juggle the elements of TPACK in their planning.
 - What student engagement (or disengagement) looks like when students are using an interactive online tool. What evidence Rabbis

Lutz and Yussman have that students are engaged and that they are learning.

- What the two rabbi/educators have learned about teaching and learning through their use of online tools
- Despite the necessity of teaching online in during the past 18 months; the wide-spread complaints about the limitations of Zoom; the high attendance (20 – 40 education directors) at each of the ten webinars Rabbis Yussman and Lutz led for their Los Angeles colleagues; and the availability of instructional videos and sample lesson plans for each tool on the BJE website, very few congregational schools used any of these tools other than Zoom.

A number of recent articles in the Jewish press (Pomson 2020; Jacobs 2021) have expressed optimism that the pandemic may perhaps serve as a catalyst for transforming congregational schooling in fundamental ways. Data collected from this study of educators with exceptional TPACK offers evidence that both buttresses and undermines this hope.

F3. JEWISH COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS: IMPLICATIONS OF TURNING INWARD AND OUTWARD

Paper 1: “Is it all or nothing? If I choose a Jewish day school, do I have to give up on [being] anti-racist?”

Meredith Katz, Clinical Assistant Professor of Jewish Education, Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Ed., Jewish Theological Seminary

Abigail Uhrman, Assistant professor of Jewish Education, William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education, Jewish Theological Seminary

Jeff Kress, Associate professor, William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education, Jewish Theological Seminary

As critical sites where issues of class, race, and Jewish identity converge, Jewish day schools are beginning to grapple with their own stances vis-a-vis these frameworks. This study explores how one subset of stakeholders, day school parents, engage with issues of race within the educational lives of their children. In summer 2020, 9 mothers (all married and identifying as white Ashkenazi Jews) of students at a suburban Conservative day school met for 4 ninety-minute sessions to discuss Hagerman’s (2018) *White Kids: Growing up with privilege in a racially divided America*. Hagerman argues that the decisions White parents make for their children, particularly regarding education, reflect the parents’ own racial socialization and shape that of their children. In the day school context, these decisions reflect both a diversity of Jewish experience and that Ashkenazi Jews in the United States have been racialized as white Europeans and benefit from the structures of white privilege and wealth (Goldstein, 2006) Book group conversations touched upon how

participants experience race in their own lives, how they engage with race within the family, and how they understand their children's school to be engaging with issues of race as it serves a diverse constituency.

Paper 2: Free Foreign Language Units, Continuity, or Advocacy? The Case of An Initiative for Hebrew in L.A. Public Schools

Hannah Kober, Stanford Graduate School of Education, EdJS; PhD student

During the early summer of 2020, Israeli-American leaders and advocates in the Los Angeles area began circulating a survey to gauge interest in and demand for Hebrew as a second language offerings at local public high schools within the L.A. Unified School District (LAUSD). On the survey, the authors tout Hebrew language as a versatile, universalistic resource, providing students with the opportunity to tap into the language's vast history and culture, a marketable credential in tech and government sectors, and a deeper "tolerance" for other cultures through language learning and intercultural engagement. This initiative, developed by the Israeli-Americans for Civic Engagement (IACE) in partnership with local parents, community leaders, and educational consultants, is one of a few recent attempts by members of the Israeli-American diaspora to center communal needs through public advocacy. While language education and intergenerational linguistic and cultural transmission are salient priorities in and of themselves, in this case, Hebrew represents much more than a guarantor of communal continuity. I attempt to define the contours of the purpose of Hebrew as employed and described by the drivers of this initiative and members of the broader target community.

The emergence of a Hebrew language initiative instantiated by and for Israeli-Americans (and others) within public institutions opens a timely critique of prior scholarly and practitioner assumptions regarding the "who", "what", "why" and "where" of Hebrew language education. As a scholar of Hebrew and Jewish education in the United States, the somewhat novel development of modern Hebrew education outside of the confines of Jewish supplementary and day schools, camps, and university/Jewish Studies contexts is of significant interest. The existing literature on Hebrew education in the United States leaves a gap with regard to the self-organization and education of Israeli-heritage Hebrew learners/consumers. And, critically, literature on heritage language learning could benefit from ways in which Israeli-heritage Hebrew learners in the United States complicate the definition of "heritage" through prisms of engagement with other American Jewish communities.

As the Israeli diaspora in the U.S. grows and continues to settle, more families may depend on private institutions to teach Hebrew to their children, while others, as in the case of the IACE group, may look outside of the extant infrastructure for programming that speaks to their unique needs. In this work, I seek to advance an analysis of the language ideologies that undergird the IACE initiative, specifically with regard to perceptions of the differentiated linguistic and political priorities of the target community.

F4. UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORTING JEWISH EDUCATORS AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP



Paper 1: The Social Networks of Jewish Educators

Sara Shapiro-Plevan, CEO & Co-Founder, Gender Equity in Hiring Project and Rimonim Consulting

This paper examines the role that social networks play in the relationships of Jewish educators. An investigation into the most basic nature of social relationships, in an effort to understand their connections and their relationships using social network analysis as a tool, this research considers simply what the social networks of Jewish educators look like. While previous research on social networks in the Jewish community indicated their historical significance and their contemporary relevance and value, this research integrates a particular analytical frame with an area of Jewish communal life that has not previously been studied.

A social network analysis of a five-year cohort of 118 graduates of a master's degree program in Jewish education in the William Davidson Graduate School of Education was conducted, first using a respondent questionnaire which provided data integrated into a tool to construct a network map, and further selecting members of the network for in-depth interviews. In this research, I have woven together a hybrid framework that offers a new theoretical orientation not previously applied to this type of social network research in Jewish education, specifically by layering qualitative and quantitative research methods. This may in fact lend itself to possibilities for richer, layered analysis, not just on an interpretive level as described earlier, but by offering and confirming multiple perspectives on complementary datasets.

We'll contemplate relational connection as a worthwhile investment in the course of degree programs for Jewish educators, both for the short- and longer-term benefit accrued, and perhaps most importantly, the application of social network analysis as a tool to understanding the relationships of any groups or networks of learners. This research suggests that the mere existence of these relationships is of value, and that working to understand the relational facets of networks are vital, in order to understand and appreciate what exists inside them and what power they hold to foster change through relationship.

Paper 2: Voices from the Field: Proposing a Conceptual Framework for Leadership in Jewish Early Childhood Education

Lyndall Miller, Director of the Jewish Early Childhood Education Leadership Institute at JTS

There is a lack of clarity in a definition of leadership in early childhood education, in general, and in Jewish early childhood education, in particular. While this lack is being addressed in the field at large by research, as of this writing, there were no extant

research studies focused specifically on leadership in Jewish early childhood education. The purpose of this study was to identify potential emergent leadership capacities essential to educators in Jewish early childhood programs by comparing and contrasting general research with voices from this specific field “seven national leaders who themselves have developed and provided professional development programs in Jewish early childhood education. Primary research questions were: what were critical capacities developed by these leaders in their own life experiences (open coding); which leadership capacities in the general field do they feel are essential (based on the literature review), how do these capacities relate to Jewish early childhood education, and if, indeed, a framework can be proposed for further consideration to help fill the current vacuum. Semi-clinical interviews of 60-90 minutes were conducted with the seven leaders to determine if these same characteristics in the literature review would emerge, if other capacities related to the Jewish context would appear, and if a framework of leadership capacities in Jewish early childhood education could be proposed based on the findings. The Atlas.ti8 coding program was used to create categories from the literature and then to code emergent trends and the appearance of these categories in the semi-clinical interviews. The findings revealed a surprisingly close correlation between the leadership capacities identified in the literature and the capacities cited by the leaders. However, all of these capacities were deeply informed by a Jewish meta-context across the board that infused them with intense meaning, as seen in the leaders’ quotes. The basic foundations of Jewish perspectives, processes, content, and culture were expressed through their comments about their own lives and in their insistence on necessary specifics of the capacities of leaders in Jewish early childhood education. At the conclusion of the research, a unique framework of proposed capacities for leaders in Jewish early childhood education was indeed formulated and is proposed for further consideration and research.

Moderator and discussant: *Mindy Gold*, Leader of Graduate Studies Mandel Teacher Educator Institute

May 13, 2:00-3:00 pm EDT

**G1. SYMPOSIUM: MARKING AND CELEBRATING THE LEGACY OF RABBI DR. SARAH
TAUBER Z"L**

The untimely 2020 passing of Rabbi Dr. Sarah Tauber Z"L calls for a consideration of the meanings of her bridge-building scholarship and teaching.

In this vein, mentors, colleagues, collaborators, and students have assembled to offer a testament to her contributions in and beyond academia.

Dr Jenny Haddad Mosher of the REA will shed light on Rabbi Dr. Tauber as colleague and interfaith bridge-builder.

Dr. Elliot Ginsburg will consider Rabbi Dr. Tauber in her capacity as academic seeker and Aleph rabbinical-school-student-mentee.

Rabbis Blair and Phreddy Nosanswich will call attention to Rabbi Dr. Tauber as graduate school Jewish Education professor and educator.

Maciej Kawalski will engage Sarah in her capacity as screenwriter and memorializer.

Dr. Joshua Krug and Rabbi Jonathan Lipnick will respond, and Dr. Rebecca Shargel will moderate.

Thus, we will begin to understand what Rabbi Dr. Tauber offered our field, and beyond.

At the end of the session, there will be time for questions, insights, and reflection. There will also be additional contributions and offerings to mark a beloved Jewish education scholar, colleague, teacher, and friend.

Thursday, May 20

12:00-1:25 pm EDT

H1. EXPERIMENTING WITH LEARNING MODALITIES

Paper 1: Prepping Teachers for Controversial Conversations through an Online Simulation

Meredith Katz, Clinical Assistant of Jewish Education, William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Ed, Jewish Theological Seminary

Rebecca Shargel, Towson University

Civic education promotes the development of skills and dispositions for engaged citizenship including appreciation of multiple perspectives and practice with expressing and responding to these. As Hess (2009) writes, “discussion is a proxy for democracy itself” (p 15). She promotes discussion around controversial issues, as a tool for students to practice negotiating different viewpoints. Yet in practice few teachers incorporate controversial issues in discussion-based lessons (Tannenbaum, 2013). Moreover, civic education in Jewish educational settings is little studied.

Methodology: Both authors teach courses where graduate students explore civic education through role playing. Our students coach Jewish day school students by engaging in an online simulation, The Jewish Court of All Time (JCAT), that features a current ethical dilemma. Our students play specific characters in order to support, encourage, and even provoke middle school students through dialogue. As educators interested in examining how teachers develop facility with engaging in controversial issues discussions, we conducted qualitative research from the Fall 2019 JCAT simulation. We asked: How did graduate students experiment with engaging in controversial conversations through role playing in a virtual simulation?

We explore the experiences of three graduate students who participated in a simulation illuminating the tension between free speech and hate speech. The simulation involved a plan to commemorate the events of Skokie, Illinois in the late 1970s when neo-Nazis tried to march. A major twist occurred when Holocaust denier Art Jones demanded to speak at the commemoration. Students deliberated whether or not a neo-Nazi should be given a platform at a public event meant to bring people together.

Findings: We identify three approaches that our students used to engage in controversial conversations, as well as three types of concerns that emerged. Our students initiated unique strategies stemming from the perspectives of their characters: white nationalist Art Jones, Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal, and Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg. They also articulated challenges of “role tension,” wanting to play their characters authentically but keeping in mind their [unrevealed] parallel simulation roles as educators.

Types of Controversial Interactions:

- Jones created controversy purposefully. He spoke in coded messages to communicate secretly with other extremists.
- Wiesenthal inadvertently created controversy by authentically playing his character. He expressed his desire for revenge against Nazis, even to the extent of excluding a middle school student playing a Nazi accomplice.
- Zuckerberg strove to diffuse controversy by questioning the purpose of racist and anti-Semitic comments.

Wrestling with Role Tension:

- Jones wrestled with exposing middle school students to racist ideas. On the one hand, he wanted to play the neo-Nazi authentically, (as requested by the Project Directors), but he also worried that middle schoolers might be too young to process racist ideas.
- Wiesenthal wrestled with the tension between personal experience as the grandson of a survivor and his professional teacher role. While he felt strongly that a Nazi hunter would never allow a Nazi accomplice (Chaim Rumkowski) to join a Holocaust victim group, he also recognized that as an educator, he was responsible to include the middle school student.
- Zuckerberg wrestled with his belief in an abstract, expansive right to free speech versus feeling the responsibility in practice to censor a middle school student character (David Duke) who used antisemitic language.

Our study illustrates the complex work of teachers to facilitate controversial issues discussions, especially with the added layer of role playing. We demonstrate how controversy may be integrated into a discussion and introduce a set of moves that a teacher could consider and work towards developing comfort and proficiency. In order for teachers to become more adept at teaching to encourage dialogue among multiple perspectives they must engage in their own experience and reflection.

Paper 2: The Impact of Questioning on the Student Experience of Holocaust Survivor Testimony

Cynthia Kozierok, Doctoral Student, Jewish Theological Seminary

The testimony of Holocaust survivors has always been an integral component of Holocaust education. As time has passed, and the majority of survivors have passed away, educators no longer have individuals who can engage in discussions directly with their students. In the place of living survivors, educators have turned to video recordings of survivor testimony to augment learning. The purpose of this practitioner research study was to explore the impact on middle school students of being able to interact actively with the

recorded testimony of a Holocaust survivor as opposed to watching videos passively. Using the iWitness educational platform created by the University of Southern California's Shoah Foundation, I compared the experience of learning from video clips of a survivor's testimony to the experience of engaging in a question/answer period with the same survivor from within the Dimensions in Testimony (DiT) interface.

DiT is intended to be a museum installation; there is a large projector that displays what appears to be a hologram of a Holocaust survivor who has been recorded over the course of many hours, answering a multitude of questions about their experiences. After the interviewing is completed, hundreds more hours are spent cataloguing the interviews and entering questions into a program that will allow students to 'ask' questions of the survivor as if they were in the same room together. Individuals can interact with the hologram by asking questions into a microphone or typing them into the computer and waiting for the artificial intelligence program to search its database of video clips and select the most appropriate one to respond through the hologram. The Shoah Foundation has recently added a web-based version of DiT, allowing individuals to interact with a flat screen version of the hologram from any computer. The survivor 'answers' the question, both orally and in a running chat dialogue along the side of the screen.

In this study, I worked with four middle school students to explore the differences between watching video clips of testimony and engaging in the question/answer process. Using the same survivor, Pinchas Gutter, we first watched selected video clips of his testimony and then followed up with the interactive DiT component, in which students were encouraged to ask questions that were meaningful to them. In addition to observing the students as they interacted with both types of testimony, students were interviewed as a small group and kept personal journals of their experiences which were analyzed in order to identify the academic and affective impact of engaging in the questioning process. I found that when the students were able to formulate their own questions and engage with the survivor directly, they understood the testimony better and made significant personal connections to the learning.

Paper 3: Insights from Adolescent Game Design

Rinat Levy, Fordham University, PhD Candidate

Over the past decade, there has been an increased interest in what children learn from making their own games. Most research on children game design examines the potential for children to develop a range of skills through digital game making, such as programming skills and problem solving. While these skills are valuable for learners to develop, they potentially overshadow the value in learning about the design process itself. The design process involves understanding and influencing complex social systems and has the potential to prepare children for future roles in society. It remains, however, under-explored in the context of children game making. In this exploratory case study, we examined the challenges and opportunities for learning when children design games of their own interest. In a 3-part after-school workshop held over 3 weeks, 4 middle school students (from a Jewish day school) worked in a design team to create a game of their

choosing. Data were collected from observations and audio recordings of children's teamwork and interviews, design artifacts, and questionnaires. We will discuss how children's perceptions of games, of necessary skills, and of the design process, impact their game design. We conclude with suggestions for future game design challenges that stem from children's own interest.

H2. BIG MATTERS, SMALL PEOPLE: PROCESSING DIFFICULT TOPICS IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Discussants:

Miriam Udel, Associate professor of Yiddish language, literature, and culture, Emory University

Joanna Krongold, University of Toronto

Jonathan Branfman, Visiting Assistant Professor of English and Jewish Studies, Cornell University

Golan Moskowitz, Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies, Tulane University

Facilitator: *Jodi Eichler-Levine*, Associate professor of Religion Studies, Lehigh University

Contemporary Jewish childhood takes place in a cultural landscape colored by evolving attitudes toward social diversity in communal spaces, concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic, anxiety about global antisemitism, and collective investment in Holocaust memory as it recedes into history. Considering scholarly characterizations of childhood as a site of negotiation between specific social agendas and lived or inherited realities that may exceed available schemas, this roundtable explores how current and historical works of children's literature grapple with sensitive or allegedly "adult" concerns, including representations of embodied otherness, trauma, loss, illness, disability, violence, death, gender identity, sexuality, and sexual orientation. We will also discuss how these representations in children's writing have informed older readers and impacted scholarship in the field of Jewish Studies.

Facilitated by Jodi Eichler Levine, this conversation features scholars who work on childhood and children's literature in the contexts of Yiddish, Holocaust studies, popular culture, and gender and sexuality studies. Miriam Udel will draw from her recent book *Honey on the Page: A Treasury of Yiddish Children's Literature* (NYU Press, 2020) to examine Sholem Asch's story "A Village Saint," about a boy with learning differences and possible neurodivergence, as well as Zina Rabinowitz's pandemic story "The Mute Princess," about a girl who temporarily loses her ability to speak after the trauma of losing both parents to respiratory disease in Casablanca's Jewish mellah. Golan Moskowitz will speak about his new book *Wild Visionary: Maurice Sendak in Queer Jewish Context* (Stanford University Press, 2020), which examines Sendak's challenging vision of childhood as impacted by the artist's queer and Holocaust-conscious perspectives. Joanna Krongold will offer reflections from her work on representations of trauma in children's Holocaust literature, focusing on Jane Yolen's use of metaphor, fairy tale, and multilayered narrative in her young adult novel, *Briar Rose*. Jonathan Branfman will speak about approaching

early education on sex, gender, and intersectionality, as handled in his children's book *You Be You!: The Kid's Guide to Gender, Sexuality, and Family* (Jessica Kingsley, 2019).

H3. TAKING THE PULSE OF JEWISH DAY SCHOOLS DURING COVID-19

Marc Wolf, VP, Program Strategy and Impact, Prizmah
Odelia Epstein, Director, Knowledge Center, Prizmah
Rachel Barber Schwartz, Board Chair, Ben Porat Yosef
Daniel R. Weiss, Head of School, Bornblum Jewish Community School

Over the past year, Prizmah has served the day school field by taking a series of "pulse surveys," brief, rapid samplings of the health and functioning of Jewish schools during the extended and multifaceted Covid crisis. Information collected ranged from enrollment and expenses to educational methods and fundraising. These surveys have proven remarkably popular with the field, garnering a high percentage of respondents and thousands of reads. Hear a conversation among Prizmah researchers and day school leaders about the goals and uses of these studies, and more generally about the role of aggregate research in providing vital data for leadership assessment and planning.

H4. VALUING A GENDER EQUITY LENS ON JEWISH EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Discussants:

Andrea Jacobs, founding partner, RallyPoint for Change
Beth Cooper Benjamin, Director of Girls Leadership Programming, Westover School
Ariela Greenberg, Founder and CEO of The Greenberg Team Research and Evaluation Consulting
Benjamin M. Jacobs, Associate Research Professor, The George Washington University

Facilitator: *Sara Shapiro-Plevan*, CEO & Co-Founder, Gender Equity in Hiring Project and Rimonim Consulting

In much of social science research, including Jewish education, gender often sits at the extremes. On the one hand, gender can be a primary focus, such as a study exclusively. On the other hand, gender, or more accurately, sex, can be a characteristic merely used in a subgroup analysis with no further interpretation or attention to context. What often lacks is a balanced approach that embeds a lens to interpret context, maintain academic rigor, and promote gender equity. A gender equity lens throughout the research process could provide this balance. However, the field is missing a framework or guidelines on creating and implementing this lens for a balanced approach throughout the research process. For example, the various research steps - study design, data collection tools, participant sampling, qualitative and quantitative analysis, and dissemination of findings - each needs to have value in the gender equity lens.

Given this need, the goal of this roundtable is to 1) host a conversation about research in the Jewish education sector on how to incorporate a gender equity lens and 2) take a contextually-based researcher approach to gender equity. To address this goal, the roundtable will bring perspectives from various backgrounds, including researchers, practitioners, gender equity experts, and open the conversation to session attendees. The roundtable participants will answer the following questions to guide the gender equity lens in Jewish educational research:

- What does it mean to look at Jewish educational research with a gender equity lens, and why is this valuable?
- How are gender-based assumptions brought into research?
- How do researchers ensure they represent all gender voices in Jewish educational research?
- How do we establish criteria for maintaining a gender equity lens at each stage of a research study? (e.g., conceptualization, funding, data collection, analysis, authorship, dissemination, etc.)

For research without a specific gender focus, how might we add a gender lens to expand the main purpose of our work? Roundtable participants may use and cite existing published studies, ongoing research, and research presented in earlier sessions of NRJE to exemplify their responses. After the participants respond to the above questions, the conversation will open up for attendees' additional responses. As a group, the participants and attendees will devote time to gather further questions this conversation raises. Ideally, the discussion's outcome is a brainstormed list of questions and answers that advances the field toward guidance and better practices for a gender equity lens in Jewish Educational research.

1:30-2:45 pm EDT

I1. CLOSING PLENARY: LEARNING ON BOTH SIDES OF THE MECHITZA



[Naomi Seidman](#)
University of Toronto



[Jonathan Boyarin](#)
Cornell University



[Leslie Ginsparg Klein](#)
Women's Institute of
Torah Seminary & College



[Moshe Krakowski](#)
Yeshiva University

2:45-3:00 pm EDT

AWARDS AND CLOSING REMARKS