



Community and Connections among Jewish LGBTQIA+ Young Adults

Contents

Background	2
Participants.....	2
Key Findings: Community and Social Circles.....	5
Key Findings: Relationship between Queer Identity and Building Community	6
Key Findings: Expressing Relationship between Jewish Identity and Building Community	8
Key Findings: Diverse Levels of Jewish Engagement and Connection.....	8
Key Findings: Perceptions of Welcome Within Jewish Community.....	9
Key Findings: Lived Experiences in Jewish Spaces.....	10
Key Findings: Jewish Engagement Looking Forward.....	11
Key Findings: Limitations to Jewish Engagement	13
Key Findings: Practices by Select Jewish Organizations that Celebrate Queer Inclusion.....	15
Research Implications	17

Background

The 2021 Study of Jewish L.A.¹ revealed that eight percent of Jewish adults in Los Angeles identify as LGBTQ² and many limit their participation in Jewish life due to situations that make them feel unwelcome. To understand further the experiences of LGBTQIA+ Jewish young adults in Los Angeles, the UCLA Center for Research on Evaluation Standards and Student Testing (CRESST), in partnership with the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles (JFEDLA), conducted a qualitative study. The study explored the perceptions, patterns, and values related to how LGBTQIA+ Jews build community in Jewish spaces. Our intention was to elevate the Jewish community's ability to reach, welcome, and create a sense of belonging for young LGBTQIA+ Jews.

While this study was not designed to be representative, we interviewed 35 Jewish young adults (age 22-30) from across L.A.'s diverse LGBTQIA+ and Queer population. We explored how they think about, experience, and build community. We asked how their LGBTQIA+ and Jewish identities both intersect and affect how they experience belonging within their communities. Finally, we asked what L.A.'s Jewish community could do to help interested Jewish LGBTQIA+ young adults meaningfully engage and connect to Jewish life.

This report synthesizes interviewees' responses into several themes which were determined through careful analysis of the data. We analyzed the relation of themes to one another and the application of these findings for the L.A. community. We share representative quotes from the interviews. Some quotes have been modified slightly to improve readability.

¹ Aronson, J.K., Brookner, M.A., Saxe, L., Bankier-Karp, A., Boxer, M., Seeskin, Z.H., & Dutwin, D. (2022). 2021 Study of Jewish L.A.: The Diversity Report. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University. www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/community-studies/los-angeles-report.html

² LGBTQ is the term that was used in the Study of Jewish L.A. community survey. The qualitative research subsequently used the terms LGBTQIA+ and Queer.

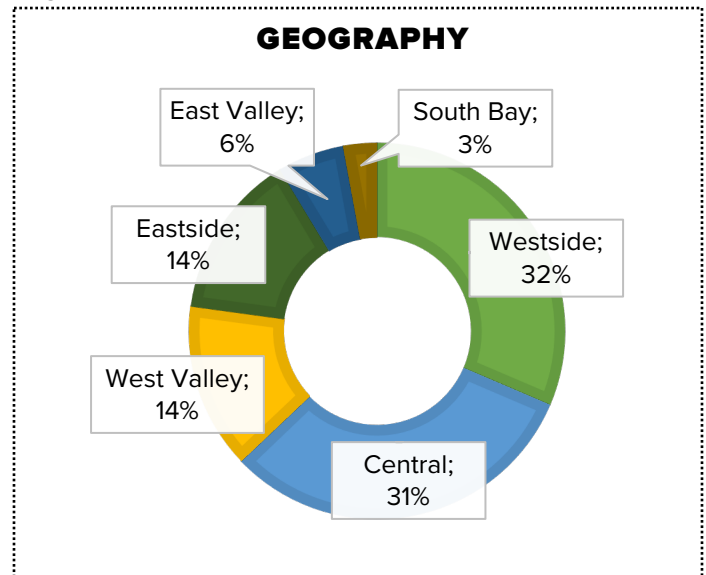
Participants

The interviews occurred between May and September 2023. We interviewed 35 participants, between the ages of 22-30 (*Average Age = 27*)³, who identified as LGBTQIA+ or Queer and Jewish. We recruited participants through JFEDLA's NuRoots Young Adult Initiative (<https://www.nuroots.org/>) and one of its partners, JQ International (<https://jqinternational.org/>). Potential participants were screened for eligibility through a series of demographic questions. Interviews lasted between 25-60 minutes and were completed over video call or phone. Following the interviews, participants were compensated for their time with a \$50 Amazon gift card.

Interviewees resided across greater Los Angeles (see Figure 1), but most were from the Valley (20%), Westside (32%), and Central L.A. (31%). All identified as Jewish in some way. About 20% (7) identified as a Person of Color.

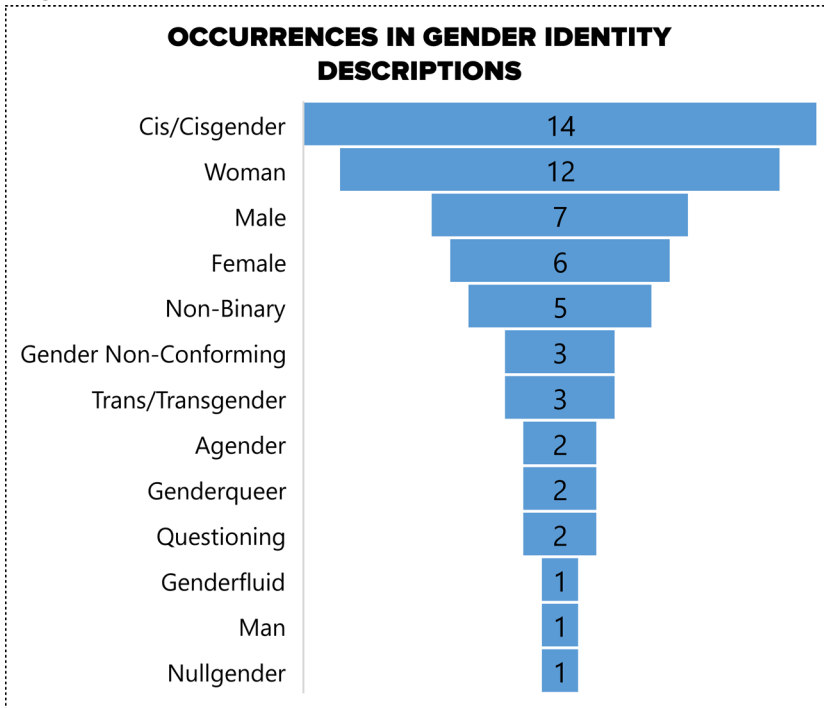


Figure 1.



³ Two respondents, age 31 and 34, were contacted in error and interviewed. We kept these data in the study.

Figure 2.



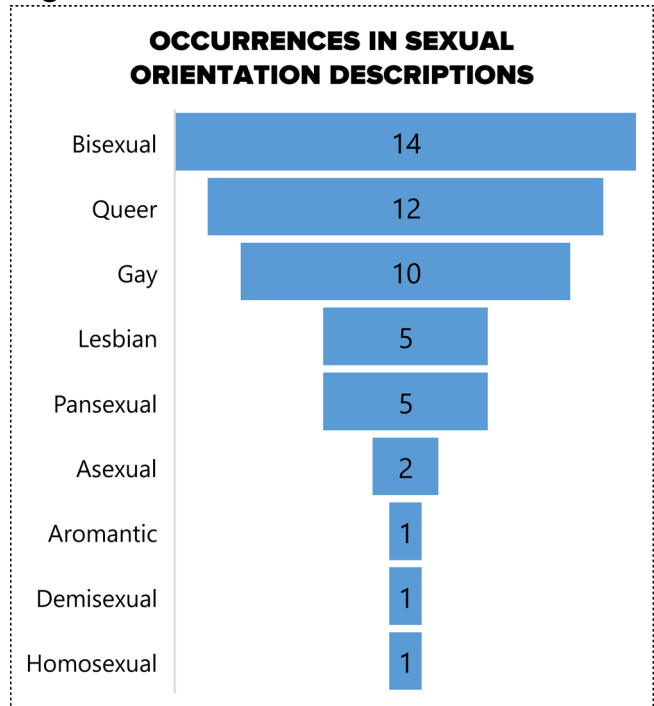
Participants reported 18 unique gender identity descriptions, with three identifying as Transgender (see Figure 2). About 40% (14) specified they were Cisgender with or without also specifying another identity (e.g., man, woman, female, male, Questioning). Beyond specifying Cisgender and something else, another 23% (8) specified at least two ways of identifying gender (e.g., Gender Non-Conforming/Non-Binary, GenderQueer/Trans).

Participants self-described their sexual orientation using nine unique identities (see Figure 3). About 40% (14) specified two or

three of the listed identities. About 23% (8) identified Queer and another identity (e.g., Queer/Bisexual, Queer/Lesbian, Queer/Pansexual/Demisexual). A few specified Gay/Lesbian or Gay/Homosexual (3) and a few specified Bisexual/Pansexual (3).

What became clear as we analyzed the interview data was that there was no single “typical” profile of a young LGBTQIA+ Jewish adult in the Jewish community in Los Angeles. There were no clear emerging patterns of responses based on age, gender, sexual identity, or race. Interviewees had a multiplicity of identities that played a variety of roles in their lives. The interviews highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of the role of identity in community engagement. Some participants expressed a desire to be part of communities that embrace intersectional identities, valuing connections with “great human beings” rather than strictly Queer or Jewish communities. This reflects a nuanced view of identity and community involvement.

Figure 3.



Key Findings: Community and Social Circles

1. The idea of community elicited a variety of associations for the LGBTQIA+ Jewish young adults interviewed. Close to half describe their ideal community as one comprised of like-minded individuals who share common values (17). Many mentioned characteristics or benefits of community such as belonging and welcome (16); support, loyalty, or dependability (16); ease, safety, and non-judgment (15). Less than 20% of the sample mentioned shared interest in activities (8), consistency (7), diversity (7), familiarity or shared history (6), and proximity (5) in their descriptions of community.

A group of people that can come together, have fun, do things together, support each other, come together in times of need for support, and maybe they have some sort of shared thing that brings them together whether it's religion or an activity [or] something else that unites them.

I think community is ... just an incredibly important part of being human. Finding a way to ground yourself in a world that can seem very overwhelming and hectic and crazy at times. Community can be your group of friends. Community can be your family. Community can be through an organization ... It's ultimately a support system that you can rely on ... during good times and bad. You can celebrate events with them ... If you're really struggling, you can lean upon them.

2. When discussing social circles and the identity markers within those (some mentioned Jewish and/or Queer), participants described groups that span multiple contexts and life stages. For some, there is marked separation between social circles — that is, they have a group of Queer friends and a separate group of Jewish friends. However, this was not necessarily seen as negative. Two-thirds mentioned groups from stages of their lives (e.g., grade school, college, etc.). About half of the group (18) mentioned common features of the members of the social circle (e.g., all are flexible, caring, tight knit). Just under half specifically mentioned identity-based social circles such as Jewish or Queer (15). Many commented on work friends (13), family (9), interest groups (e.g., hiking, crafts; 7), and circumstances (e.g., just moved to L.A.; 6).

I have a hybrid of several smaller social circles. Various groups of friends representing different parts of my life. Some from L.A., some from N.Y., college, Gay friends, Jewish neighborhood, and family.

I have many social circles. I bring them together sometimes, but mostly separate ... One group is all Queer girls. Another group all Straight and Jewish.

I have my tight-knit group of friends that I've been friends with since preschool ... [a] wider group that I've accumulated over during college or post grad.

My primary social circle is young adults who have moved to L.A. from somewhere else to pursue a career in entertainment ... transplants from other

parts of the country [who] don't have that same community, say if we grew up here.

Key Findings: Relationship between Queer Identity and Building Community

3. Most consider their LGBTQIA+ or Queer identity as an inherent and significant part of their community building, yet not the only requirement for a community to feel welcoming. Ultimately, people want to feel that those present within a community are accepting, and the space feels safe.

It's not that people have to be Queer. It's that the people there need to have a level of acceptance and if they are accepting, then that's great.

It won't preclude me from going to an event or a space that I'm interested in if I don't see [my LGBTQIA+ or Queer identity represented], but it definitely makes me feel safer and more welcome.

It's important for me to find people that either are like minded or that are accepting and are allies and don't judge. I want to feel like I'm accepted and that I'm in the right space.

It's who I am. I would obviously be gravitating towards people that can understand the experience. And it doesn't have to be my exact experience. It doesn't have to be Gay Cis male. It could also be Trans. It could also be females, female friends, and everything in between. I tend to create connections easier with people who understand what I'm going through, you know, specifically in our generation.

Some feel most comfortable in specifically Queer spaces.

I feel more comfortable in Queer spaces, and I find that it eases a little bit of social anxiety to know that other folks are probably coming from similar backgrounds and mindsets.

More of a safety concern. Am I going to be outing myself if I'm the only Trans person who does this activity? Am I drawing attention to myself? Am I making myself a target? And that's just something that's constantly on my mind whenever I do anything.

A shared Queer identity is one attribute which can attract people to a community, although it is not always necessary. For some, the most important feature of a community is having something in common, whether that is an identity, experience, worldview, goal, or hobby.

I also think of community in terms of brand-new people that I am just meeting for the first time, it feels a lot easier to forge a connection, usually bound by some kind of theme, whether that is Judaism or, you know, gardening or volunteering.

I don't need every community I'm a part of to represent all aspects of myself. But I do want to feel that there's something about me that's reflected in that community.

I think [seeing my Queer identity represented is] fairly important, but that's even just through the activities. If it's a choice between a bar night or a hike, then I would gravitate more towards the hike, because it's more where my interests are and probably where other people who have similar interests would be.

Those moments where I feel that I'm with other people that share more than one of my identities are especially wonderful in establishing community and belonging.

If you don't know anyone, it's nice to have something already in common. All Jewish, or Queer, or went to the same school ... And after a while it starts not to matter where I know the person from in the beginning.

My ideal community [includes] people that aren't like me, people that I can learn from, [and] the people that are like me [in] their moral values.

A couple of people noted that their Queer identity does not automatically lead to community building. To them, this identity does not ensure that they will find community in an associated space because of the vast diversity within the LGBTQIA+ community.

There is so much talk about gender identity which is a whole different thing than being Gay. I don't feel a kinship to Trans people. I support them, but we are different. The LGBTQIA+ community is not as similar as people think it is.

I have more Straight than Queer friends. [My Queer identity] doesn't inform my connections. I don't strongly identify with my Queer identity. I'm not loud and proud about it. I also feel a bit conflicted because I don't always feel like the general Jewish community is super accepting of Queer identities and then I also don't feel like a general Queer group or community would be accepting of Jewish or Zionist identities.

Key Findings: Expressing Relationship between Jewish Identity and Building Community/Social Circles

4. Three-quarters of the participants agreed that their Jewish identity is very important to them and emphasized the importance of having other Jews in their social groups.

I think that my Jewish identity is like a guiding light. It makes me feel connected to something bigger than myself and ... has always really been very important to me.

A lot of times when I feel completely overwhelmed by this world and feel like there's just not a place for me, it's other Jewish people that remind me that, even though it doesn't seem like it, there is a place for us and we will survive, and that there is community.

[Having other Jews in my community is] literally the first thing that I think about before moving to any place.

I do think it's really important to have a set of friends that identifies as Jewish ... there is a level of connection that I've noticed with my Jewish friends over the years that I don't necessarily have with my friends who aren't Jewish.

Key Findings: Diverse Levels of Jewish Engagement and Connection

5. All interviewees had some level of Jewish community engagement, and the ways they expressed that engagement varied. The most common past engagement included participation in Jewish day schools and Jewish summer camps, for example (20). The most common current Jewish practices were having semi-regular Shabbat dinners (22), attending Jewish organizational events (21), and celebrating holidays like Passover (17).

Shabbat a couple of times a month. I don't have a lot of regularity in my routine, but it would be nice to have a weekly cadence of being able to tap into a Jewish space.

Usually around certain holidays especially like Passover ... I will sometimes try to seek out and find a place that is doing things that are open to folks who are not regular members.

One of the best parts about being in rabbinical school is that my friends and I, who are in school together, can observe Jewish holidays and practice Jewish rituals on our own ... I would say that I like to engage with Jewish ritual and prayer at least once a day, if not more.

Those who indicated that their expression of Jewishness was part of their everyday life tended to describe expression as connected to identity, values, or relationships. Fewer referenced engaging in traditional Jewish practices or events.

I consider myself Jewish, all day every day. That said, I'm not Orthodox or traditionally observant or anything like that, but my partner is a rabbinical student. We don't keep Shabbat or anything, but I would say that my day-to-day life is very Jewish.

In my values in life, in the way I dwell, I lean into beautiful values in Judaism that I love and respect. I'm not part of any Jewish group per se.

Several (9) reported that while their Jewish identity was important to them, it changed over time and sometimes they were still figuring out exactly what that looks like in their day-to-day life.

It changes a lot. I'll say that when I was a kid, it was much more important. I went to an LGBTQ synagogue in San Francisco. I liked growing up in extremely Reform synagogues, because I think it gave me the groundwork for figuring out who and what I wanted to believe in. Ethnicity-wise I'm Jewish, but spirituality-wise, I do not find myself as connected to the idea of a God organized religion. And that's right at this moment. It changes often.

I feel it is really important to me as my identity and [I am] trying to figure out how that fits into my life ... I'm at a stage right now where I'm actively trying to mold it more towards my day-to-day.

There are opportunities in the future for me to feel included. Like right now, my Jewish community life is relegated to ... family stuff, but I do think there's an opportunity in the future ... when it's my wedding or when [I have] kids. How are they going to be treated?

Key Findings: Perceptions of Welcome Within Jewish Community

6. Nearly two-thirds of the interviewees felt that the Jewish communities they engage in are welcoming. However, a prominent theme was the acknowledgment that the Jewish community is not a monolith. Participants emphasized the need to distinguish among different Jewish spaces and communities, understanding that not all of them are equally welcoming. As such, they expressed a tendency to opt into spaces where they feel welcomed and out of community spaces — Jewish or not — in which they do not feel welcome or safe.

If I'm in a space that I feel like is not accepting of that piece of my identity, then I choose not to remain in that space ... or I try to limit it as much as possible.

I tend to know enough which spaces will not be welcoming, and I just don't join them to begin with.

I honestly don't tend to join communities, unless I know there are Queer people involved, because when there's Queer people, I know that there's going to be inclusivity. I know that there's going to be accountability and there's going to be openness to learning. And if I don't see Queer people specifically involved in something I am not so quick to join.

Some respondents explained their preference to create their own spaces.

The community that I've built for myself, my circle, is very influenced by willingness to not only tolerate but accept who I am and my sexuality.

I ended up finding a bunch of friends through Hillel. But we all became friends because we felt we didn't really fit in that much with the main Hillel group.

Key Findings: Lived Experiences in Jewish Spaces

7. Interviewees cited direct and indirect experiences where they or others felt different or excluded by the people in Jewish spaces or institutions. Many experiences were explained in relation to the religious-backed disavowal or disapproval of LGBTQIA+ or Queer identities, or gender expectations.

Growing up it was not acceptable to be Gay. I grew up in a hostile environment for Gay people. Places have changed, but I still remember when I wasn't accepted. Maybe I have some resentment.

I see Pico-Robertson and there's a lot of more Orthodox and Conservative views there. I don't know whether or not they will be okay with me being there. I don't have a grasp other than what I see from the outside ... I [stay] on the side of caution by not finding out.

The spaces in which I've chosen to remain ... are welcoming. There are many Orthodox communities that I doubt would be welcoming to me.

I feel like with any religion, the more disciplined one is in that religion I often find there's a lot of sexism and homophobia. So I am wary of very religious people — feeling judged that I'm not living the way they want me to.

I went to an Orthodox service. I don't come from an Orthodox home, was separated from my dad and my brother (gender segregation). It was hard for me to focus on the service or on prayer or reflection because it just felt a bit exclusionary.

The more Orthodox ... want to convert me into the woman that would follow their rules. I think that organized religion when it gets anything other than Reform [is] brainwashed and filled with hate.

Key Findings: Jewish Engagement Looking Forward

8. Despite the concerns about welcoming and safety in traditional Jewish spaces, about 60% said they would be interested in engaging more in Jewish community. This desire for greater engagement took on various forms.

There are so many beautiful concepts and community ideas that I love and want to start integrating more into my life.

I am really excited, actually, that there's a synagogue down the street from me, because I want to go to Shabbat more. I want to be more involved. I want to be on a first name basis with my rabbi again. I want to feel that connection with my community in a more immediate way.

My parents left their synagogue and as a family we've been trying to find a new place to feel that sense of Jewish community.

Those who were not interested in engaging more in the Jewish community (9) gave varied explanations, including being satisfied with their current involvement, not having time, feeling they were an odd demographic (e.g., not in their 20s, no children), or feeling unsure about how to engage.

I'm at the level of connection that I really want to be. I'm involved in JQ and I'm meeting other young, Jewish, Queer people my age, and I'm actually making Jewish friends on my own.

I am Bi, married, no kids, and 30. So we don't really fit in with the 20s crowd, but also not with the families.

9. While a few cited a desire to engage in traditional and/or denominational Jewish practices or services, more desire social, active, and fun ways of connecting with Jewish culture and other Jews.

Ideally, I would be a part of a temple that's nearby so I could engage with Shabbat and holidays and everything.

I would love to be doing Shabbat every Friday whether that's a small thing in my house or going to someone else's house. I'd get a lot of fulfillment out of that.

I'd like to find more activity-focused events ... [it] gives you another reason to engage.

I really wish there was a club for Jewish Atheists for people who wanted to hang out and build a community on Shabbat. A group of people who weren't actually really religious, just culturally ... [or] ethnically Jewish.

I don't see a lot of events where the entry point is actually not Jewish, but it's still a Jewish event, right. It could be a Jewish event, and we're going on a hike or ... to a park.

10. About one-third said they relate to certain parts of Judaism more than others. Usually, this was revealed as a preference for culture and spirituality versus practices perceived as traditional or religious.

I feel like there's some additional part of who I am that I'm able to express more comfortably in [Jewish] spaces. Not really on the spiritual level. I'm not very faith focused, but the culture, and community of Jewish spaces I definitely cling to.

I don't believe in the really religious aspects, but I very much feel ethnically and culturally that it's a really big part of my identity.

I would like to learn more about Judaism from the perspective that I am not a very religious person. I'd like to learn about the culture and the customs, less focus on the religious parts.

My Jewish identity is something I take pride in [and] is something that I really want to perpetuate. It's not coming from a religious place. It's coming from a completely secular place. I take pride and I love talking to people about Judaism. I think it's beautiful.

I don't want to talk about politics. I want to talk about spiritual things. There is a presumption that everyone has the same liberal feelings. I want to be part of the Reform Judaism. I like those services, but I don't like the sermons.

Key Findings: Limitations to Jewish Engagement

11. Those who do want to engage more in Jewish life cited barriers to doing so much like those from the Study of Jewish L.A.⁴ One resounding concern was feeling that they were not knowledgeable enough about Judaism to take part in Jewish events (11).

I don't want to be the one person in the room who doesn't know the Hebrew or needs to ask: What is this? What are we doing?

When I went to a Mourner's Kaddish, I didn't know the words and I didn't know how to process my grief in that way ... I didn't grow up religious and that's not something my parents taught me.

Something that keeps me from engaging more is not knowing everything there is to know about Judaism.

Several (8) mentioned not enjoying the feeling of being the only new person or feeling different from the group in some way (e.g., having political differences).

[If] I feel like I'm the only new person or that I'm standing out. I think about walking into a room with people and the image in my head is people in a circle, and I'm walking in ... I don't like that feeling.

If I don't fit in for some reason. [If there is] too much wealth, the way I dress [is different], I don't feel cool enough ... or if everyone is a couple or a family.

If I found that a place was not welcoming to ... newer converts or new members, that would definitely deter involvement.

If I'm explicitly seeking out a Jewish space that's politically minded or explicitly concerned about Palestinians, or there's social justice orientation, it feels a lot easier.

Over a third of respondents (15) mentioned they liked to be intentionally welcomed into a group by other members or the organizers, and some mentioned the appeal of existing members or attendees being open to new people vs. staying in their own clique.

⁴ Aronson, J.K., Brookner, M.A., Saxe, L., Bankier-Karp, A., Boxer, M., Seeskin, Z.H., & Dutwin, D. (2022). 2021 Study of Jewish L.A.: Community Connections Report. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University. www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/community-studies/los-angeles-report.htm

When people connect with me. Ask questions, take an interest. Taking in who I am and as a whole person like as opposed to, oh, you're this identity. Let me sort of latch on to that. Being thoughtful ... asking if you came here alone, maybe you'd like to sit next to me.

Good energy. Authentic people. Open to anyone regardless of ethnicity, race, or religion. We're all human people going through the human experience at the end of the day, and that everybody deserves to be seen and welcome for who they are, so that everyone can show up with their unique capabilities that only they have and be allowed to flourish within those capabilities.

When people are smiling and more open versus just being there with their group of friends, and clearly more closed off. That's not always possible to find in L.A. when it's just a bunch of friends going out together.

Many also mentioned practical constraints such as proximity (19), lack of time (7), cost (6), and difficulty finding information about events or overwhelm about the options available (4).

Distance is a big thing that prevents me.

I'm not always available for Friday night Shabbat, I had to miss a lot of Passover this year because of the work that I'm in and that really breaks my heart.

I don't drive, so Uber gets expensive.

I'd like to join a temple but it's so expensive.

There isn't a cohesive community calendar. I think that you end up having to find out a lot of things through word of mouth or social media.

I would like to know more about what's going on. Things are happening, but it's not always clear how you find out about events.

In L.A. I'm very overwhelmed by the amount of organizations and temples ... and trying to find which one works for me.

A notable barrier to engagement, especially relevant to this population, related to others' acceptance of LGBTQIA+ and Queer people, and diverse expression of this identity. Some (7) worry about being Queer enough according to other's standards, in addition to being Jewish enough — this push and pull of not being too much or not enough of either identity.

I feel excluded from Jewish spaces that are uninterested in people who are openly Gay being a part of them.

Am I Queer enough? Do I count to come to this event? Am I Jewish enough to come to this event?

I am not necessarily on the side that people presume I am. Gay people may want the same things as Straight people (find a partner, have a family, etc.). I would [like] support in establishing a more traditional life.

I'm currently dating a Straight man and sometimes I feel [like] I don't know if I would be welcomed at Queer events or I'm just nervous because I'm walking around with all the privilege of being in a Straight looking relationship.

Being someone who is Bisexual – like [a] femme Cisgender woman who's in a relationship with a Cis man – it's very easy for me to go into spaces and for people to not recognize that I'm part of the LGBT community.

Some were still looking for a fitting Queer Jewish community.

Honestly, as someone who's so involved in Jewish life and also involved in Queer life in L.A., I don't think they mix for me. I haven't found a Jewish community that's also Queer yet that feels right. So, I would like to find something like that.

I would love to see a community that is both able to have nuanced conversations about Israel and the American Jewish experience, along with the inclusivity of Queer and People of Color within Judaism, and those voices being amplified.

I would love to see the overlap between religion or cultural similarities with Judaism and Queer spaces. They both feel really warm but very separate.

Key Findings: Select Jewish Organizations Celebrate Queer Inclusion with Common Practices

12. Some Jewish organizations were perceived as effectively bridging Jewish and Queer communities, so that Queer Jews do not have to think of these communities as mutually exclusive. Interviewees who found this to be the case tended to mention the same organizations (such as JQ, IKAR, At the Well, etc.)

JQ International ... hosts a lot of events for Jewish Queer intersectional groups ... I've met some really nice people that way. I definitely feel that we're making progress and molding this space for ourselves.

I have attended a lot of JQ events and IKAR, [and] met a lot of Queer people. It definitely makes me feel more supported that I don't have to see the Queer community and the Jewish community as separate.

I've led a few Birthright trips to Israel and I really loved that I was able to do that as a Queer Jew because there were other Queer Jews that I was able to connect with.

13. Interviewees mentioned specific practices select Jewish organizations have implemented that have helped them feel welcomed and/or embraced in both their Queer and Jewish identities. Some of these practices include increasing visibility of Queer Jews in Jewish spaces, asking about pronouns, elevating Queer Jewish voices, and publicly acknowledging inclusion of LGBTQIA+ people. These methods and organizations implementing them currently may be useful models for other Jewish organizations to bridge these connections.

This past year there was a diversity week at work. I spoke on a panel ... about being Queer and Jewish. It felt really good. I like it when pronouns are asked.

I went to a couple of 'At the Well' events ... I felt really welcomed and I felt it was valuable that I was there and that I had something to offer and something to gain ... there was sharing and music and poetry ... there were the same number of people [as] were chairs or spots to sit ... So, it gave us a sense of ... there's a spot for everybody.

I've been lucky to find places that are being active about being inclusive [and] have inclusion statements. Public acknowledgment is important.

Research Implications

Considerations for Increasing LGBTQIA+ Inclusion in Jewish Spaces

Many Jewish LGBTQIA+ young adults are seeking Jewish community but are somewhat wary to enter traditional spaces. There is a unique value-add to embracing them, ensuring their safety, and helping them to feel welcome. Some of these young adults may, in the future, have families and children and wish to turn to traditional Jewish institutions if they have not already. The 2021 Study of Jewish L.A. showed that L.A.'s LGBTQIA+ Jewish population is younger than L.A.'s overall Jewish adult population.⁵ Thus, LGBTQIA+ Jews will likely comprise a larger proportion of the Jewish population moving forward. Considering how to include and welcome them now is increasingly important for ensuring the Jewish community's future.

As a thought partner in this research throughout the design, implementation, and write-up, the following considerations emerged from discussions of the interview data and its implications with executive leadership at JQ International.

- 1. Visibility of LGBTQIA+ people in traditional Jewish spaces:** The interviewees showed how the visibility of LGBTQIA+ and Queer people in a community space can help them feel welcome and safe. Some practical ways in which Queer inclusion can be made visible is by having representatives attend LGBTQIA+ events such as Pride or Jewish Queer events hosted by Jewish organizations, actively recruiting Queer Jews to join synagogues/congregations, and prioritizing their well-being and sense of belonging.
- 2. Queer and inspirational leadership:** In addition to increasing LGBTQIA+ Jews' representation in congregation or organization membership, appointing Queer leadership in Jewish institutions uniquely impacts how Jewish Queer individuals view their inclusion and inspires community members to embrace LGBTQIA+ members.
- 3. Explicit messages about LGBTQIA+ inclusion:** Explicit public statements of inclusion (LGBTQIA+ are welcome) and not just general tolerance (All are welcome) are appreciated by LGBTQIA+ Jews and help them feel safe and comfortable in Jewish (and other) spaces.

⁵ Aronson, J.K., Brookner, M.A., Saxe, L., Bankier-Karp, A., Boxer, M., Seeskin, Z.H., & Dutwin, D. (2022). 2021 Study of Jewish LA: The Diversity Report. Waltham, MA: Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University. www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/community-studies/los-angeles-report.html

- 4. Queer, non-traditional, and non-denominational content:** Many LGBTQIA+ Jewish young adults desire programming that is social and culturally focused. They gravitate toward programming that allows people with various levels of Judaic knowledge and Jewish expression to participate and feel comfortable.
- 5. Community training and support:** Jewish institutions' membership may appreciate guidance about how to engage with LGBTQIA+ or Queer community members. Jewish organizations doing this work can serve as models for these efforts. For example, respondents pointed out the LGBTQIA+ community's culture of accountability, inclusion, and openness to learning as creating a sense of welcoming. There are many resources, professionals, and research available to facilitate change here.
- 6. Celebration of diversity within LGBTQIA+:** These findings point to a difference between tolerance, welcoming, and celebration. Respondents' sense of inclusion is elevated when their identity is celebrated. Organizations can reflect on how their practices are perceived in dialogue with members of their LGBTQIA+ community and/or others within the Queer L.A. community.
- 7. Investment in Jewish Queer organizations:** The LGBTQIA+ Jewish community is thriving, and its needs and desires are increasing. Jewish Queer young adults crave connection and socialization opportunities. To help Jewish Queer organizations meet this demand, Jewish institutions can invest more support (e.g., funding, resources) in the LGBTQIA+ Jewish community.

For Jewish institutions who are interested in increasing inclusion of LGBTQIA+ Jews but are uncertain about where to begin, there are promising strategies and efforts to try. As with any efforts to shift practices and/or culture, these strategies will likely be most effective as part of an ongoing and thoughtful collaboration among staff and lay leaders. These interviews with Jewish Queer young adults highlight the unique ways they would like to connect to Jewish spaces and how Queer Jewish organizations have successfully connected with them. Ideally, we want all people to feel safe and celebrated in Jewish spaces. The more we learn about how different groups connect to Jewish life and how to foster welcoming environments — the greater probability we will have the knowledge to continue creating the most inclusive Jewish L.A.