

Concluding Thoughts

Beyond the Count illustrates many of the beautiful and challenging ways that race and Jewish identity intersect for the Jews of Color whose voices are gathered in this research. With equal passion, they described their love of Jewish ritual, family, values, and tradition, along with the experience of being asked to defend and explain their Jewishness. Respondents spoke powerfully about their desire for Jewish communities that could honor their whole selves and shared the pain of encounters with racism and prejudice in Jewish contexts. They revealed common strategies for managing friction, avoiding conflict, and maintaining the integrity of their selfhood both in and outside of Jewish communities.

The findings reported from both interviews and survey data focus on broad themes. These create a dynamic narrative, unearthing many questions that were beyond the scope of this preliminary research. There is still much to learn about the nuances, parallels, and distinctions that exist among and between Jews of Color. Future research could focus on the specific experiences of various sub-populations of JoC, such as biracial JoC, those who are unaffiliated, have converted, have a disability, are Orthodox, and/or are queer and trans, among many other possibilities. A stratified sampling method could be employed to include a greater number of respondents who are not women (men and nonbinary people). In addition, to better understand the generalizability of the findings presented in *Beyond the Count*, follow-up analyses of the data could explore differences in perspectives and experiences between and among JoC.

Responses could be compared across variables such as socio-economic status, race and ethnicity, gender, Jewish parentage, religiosity, and geographic location.

While accentuating numerous areas of inquiry still in need of attention, *Beyond the Count* presents a rich and complex portrait of a vital and vibrant segment of American Jewry that has been previously overlooked and excluded. In doing so, this research offers a corrective to the problematic social norms that have long minimized the experiences of JoC and marginalized their very existence. By amplifying the voices of JoC and acknowledging their variety, *Beyond the Count* can be used to move the Jewish communal discourse toward a more accurate understanding and portrayal of American Jewish life in all of its complexity.

Looking beyond the count means recognizing the inherent and perennial diversity, intersectionality, and multiplicity of Jewish people. This acknowledgement presents an opportunity for American Jews to reckon with traumas faced by JoC and pursue a much needed process of healing and repair. *Beyond the Count* can serve as a catalyst for pushing American Jews to confront their individual and collective role in American racial structures and empower Jewish leaders to create just, enriching, accessible, and welcoming experiences for all. Done with care, this will contribute to a more equitable alignment of individual and communal values, needs, and actions.



Recommendations

Creating an American Jewish community that honors all American Jews requires introspection and change at every level—individual, organizational, and structural. Drawn from interview and survey data, the following recommendations highlight four strategies for intervention:

- 1. Support organizations and initiatives led by and serving Jews of Color.** The research strongly illustrates the value and power of JoC-centered communities. Participating in retreats, study groups, holiday celebrations, social justice circles, and leadership training cohorts has had a profound impact on JoC, who found in them support, validation, and ease that had eluded them elsewhere. Increased capacity building, leadership development, and funding for current initiatives and efforts is needed, along with support for the expansion and development of additional opportunities for JoC to enrich their Jewish lives and communities.
- 2. Shift organizational leadership to more accurately reflect the diversity of American Jews.** Professional and lay leadership in most American Jewish organizations remains largely, and in many cases exclusively, white. Organizations need to evaluate and change their hiring and recruitment processes to increase racial equity so they can better serve all American Jews. The effort to diversify leadership must come with appropriate support and mentorship for Jewish leaders of color. Elevating JoC to positions of communal leadership is not only a question of representation, but of making room for a broader array of influence and adapting organizational aims and cultures around a more expansive understanding of American Jewry.
- 3. Prioritize creating spaces and places for discourse and dialog with and among JoC.** Productively reckoning with the impact of racism in American Jewish life requires organization- and community-wide reflection and action. This communal priority must be supported at all levels: funders need to invest in racial justice within and beyond the Jewish community; leaders need to encourage difficult conversations and be prepared to adapt to emerging narratives of American Jewry; and individuals need to be equipped to be effective allies. These conversations must be guided by the experiences and needs that JoC themselves articulate.
- 4. Promote further research by and about JoC.** The findings from this report contribute to a nascent body of research that requires further attention. Additional research conducted by and about JoC is needed to advance our understanding of a more holistic and diverse American Jewish community. Moving forward, including questions about racial and ethnic identities and experiences must become standard in research and evaluations of all kinds. The ability of Jewish communal organizations to serve the full range of American Jews requires the full and intentional incorporation of a broader range of voices in the production and content of future research.

Appendix A: Methods

The findings of this mixed-methods study are derived from two unprecedented data sources: the first national survey of Jews of Color and the largest dataset of interviews with self-identified Jews of Color to date. It also draws on secondary source research on Jews of Color and Jews and race in the United States. The Institutional Review Board of Stanford University approved and supervised this research.

Interviews

Using a semi-structured interview protocol, we conducted 61 interviews with self-identified Jews of Color. Respondents were encouraged to share autobiographical narratives, an approach based on the work of social psychologist Dan McAdams, one of the leading theoreticians of the narrative-based, qualitative interview.¹ According to McAdams, the act of turning information into a story is fundamentally social, allowing a person to make sense of their life with both “internalized” and “external” audiences in mind.²

Interviews sought to address the following five research questions:

- 1. What are the experiences, attitudes, feelings, voices, interests, and beliefs of JoCs?**
- 2. How have systems of racism impacted JoC experiences within Jewish spaces and organizations?**
- 3. What pathways support/allow for JoCs to thrive?**
- 4. What are the experiences, perspectives, and beliefs of Jews of Color in the United States?**
- 5. What are JoC’s racialized experiences within the broader, predominantly white, Jewish ecosystem?**

Data were drawn from in-depth interviews conducted via Zoom or by phone between October 2020 and May 2021. Interview participants were

selected using a purposive sampling method designed to reflect a broad range of perspectives. Interviews were conducted with members of three populations: JoCI key stakeholders (n=9), professionals and lay leaders (n=39), and selected respondents from the JoC survey (n=13). As an incentive, all interview participants received a \$20 online gift card. Email invitations were sent to a total of 97 people and interviews were conducted with the first 61 who responded. Most interviews lasted about one hour, though several lasted nearly two hours.

Contextualizing interviews with select key stakeholders in the JoCI network (n=9) were used to articulate learning goals and key issues, clarify the characteristics of the sample, and contribute to the development of research instruments. These individuals were identified by JoCI staff members. With the input of the key stakeholders and JoCI, a purposive sample of professionals and lay leaders was created with consideration to variables such as age, gender identification, geographic location, and Jewish background. The final question on the survey asked respondents to indicate their interest in participating in a follow-up interview. Respondents were selected from a group of those who opted in. They were randomly chosen from a subset of respondents’ whose demographic characteristics were underrepresented among the first 48 respondents interviewed. These interviews were conducted to support the interpretation of survey findings and offer a deeper understanding of the diversity of the population.

Data Collection and Analysis

All of the interviews were conducted and recorded on Zoom. The audio was retained in a secure location and was transcribed automatically using the web-based platform, Temi.

¹ McAdams, Dan P. 2001. “The Psychology of Life Stories.” *Review of General Psychology* 5(2):100; McAdams, Dan P. 2005. *The Redemptive Self: Stories Americans Live By*. New York: Oxford University Press; & McAdams, Dan P. 1997. *The Stories We Live by: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self*, 1st ed. New York: The Guilford Press.

² McAdams, Dan P. 1997. *The Stories We Live by: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self*, 1st ed. New York: The Guilford Press.

³ Glaser, Barney G., and Anselm L. Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Transaction.

Interview transcripts were cleaned in Temi and collaboratively coded using the qualitative data analysis platform Dedoose. Transcribed interviews were analyzed using a grounded theory approach which was inductive, iterative, and collaborative.³ Using this method, findings were derived from themes and outlying ideas that surface organically. Data was analyzed by grouping recurring ideas into a series of codes, which are then grouped into concepts. To reduce bias in coding, all members of the research team were responsible for coding primarily interviews which they themselves had not conducted.

Survey

The Count Me In survey was designed to substantiate, challenge and/or expand upon findings from interviews. Data obtained from interviews and feedback from the JoCI advisory committee directly informed the creation and revision of the survey instrument. The survey was administered through nonprobability sampling methods, which are particularly useful with small populations that are hard to reach through conventional probability sampling. The survey enabled the systematic collection of perceptions and experiences from a large number of JoC respondents.

Instrument design

Item creation was guided by feminist and participatory research principles and informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT). The overall aim of this approach was to create an instrument in which respondents felt seen and understood as holding complex identities that are not easily accounted for in a questionnaire. This was enacted at the item level through non-exclusive answer options wherever

applicable and the opportunity to provide an alternative (“Other”) response for many questions, including race, gender, discrimination setting, and Jewish expressions. Respondents were also invited to share open-ended feedback at multiple points of the survey, which yielded rich supplementary qualitative data.

The questionnaire is comprised of 3 thematic sections:

1. FAMILY & COMMUNITY
 - a. Jewish origins and practices
 - b. Social contexts and relationships
2. PERSPECTIVES & BELIEFS
 - a. Being Jewish, a Person of Color, and a Jew of Color
 - b. Expressing Identities
 - c. Jewish Organizational Experiences
 - d. Connectedness with Individuals and Communities
3. EXPERIENCES
 - a. Tension in the Experience of Intersectional Identity
 - b. Types of Discrimination
 - c. Treatment, Behaviors, and Affirmations
 - d. Importance of In-/Out-Group Dialog
 - e. Jewish Organizational Leadership

The 42-item questionnaire also included two eligibility screening questions. Information on respondents’ racial, ethnic, and Jewish background was additionally collected, as well as standard demographic characteristics, including age, gender, marital status, political views, location, LGBTQ, and disability identity.

⁴ Friedlander, Myrna L., Michelle L. Friedman, Matthew J. Miller, Michael V. Ellis, Lee K. Friedlander, and Vadim G. Mikhaylov. 2010. “Introducing a Brief Measure of Cultural and Religious Identification in American Jewish Identity.” *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 57(3):345-60; Hartmann, Douglas, Penny Edgell, and Joseph Gerteis. 2003. “American Mosaic Project: A National Survey on Diversity.” Data file and codebook; Mayer, Egon, Barry Kosmin, and Ariela Keysar. 2001. *American Jewish Identity Survey*. New York: Center for Cultural Judaism; Paradies, Yin C., and Joan Cunningham. 2008. “Development and Validation of the Measure of Indigenous Racism Experiences (MIRE).” *International Journal for Equity in Health* 7:9; Pieterse, Alex L., Nathan R. Todd, Helen A. Neville, & Robert T. Carter. 2012. “Perceived Racism and Mental Health Among Black American Adults: A Meta-Analytic Review.” *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 59(1):1; and “Va’adat Teshuvah (Repair Committee) Survey” shared by the Kadima congregation in Seattle, WA, 2020.

⁵ Adler, Nancy, and Judith Stewart. 2007. “The MacArthur Scale of Subjective social status.” San Francisco: MacArthur Research Network on SES & Health; and Aron, Arthur, Elayne N. Aron, and Danny Smollan. 1992. “Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale and the Structure of Interpersonal Closeness.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 63(4):596-612.

The creation of substantive items was informed by existing measures of identity.⁴ Two validated items,⁵ one measuring social status and the other social connectedness, were also included.

Data Collection

The online survey was hosted on Qualtrics for 6 weeks between January and February, 2021. Nonprobability sampling methods were used to recruit respondents. The survey was promoted via social media, primarily on Facebook and Twitter, including the use of viral sharing and strategic post blasts using the hashtags #CountMeIn #JewofColor #Jews of Color #JoC #JoCsurvey. The survey link was also shared widely via email among established Jew of Color networks, including to all Hillel directors in the US. Additionally, as part of this referral/snowball sampling,⁶ survey respondents were asked to forward the survey to others they thought might be interested.

The invitation to complete the survey was extended to those who self-identify as JoC. The survey was started 1,875 times. Of those, 1,512 individuals responded affirmatively (“Yes, I do” or “I’m not sure”) to the single screener question: “Do you identify as a Jew of Color, however you understand that term?” Of those, 1,474 also responded affirmatively (“Yes, I do” or “Not currently, but I used to”) to the second screening question: “Do you live in the United States?” Of the 1,474 screener eligible respondents, 1,089 completed the full survey, with 1,118 completing at least 50% of the survey (maximum reported n).

A small number of respondents who self-identified as Jew of Color identified as “white” in response to a question about their racial identity (n=12). Their contextual racialized experiences were indeterminate based on their responses. Those individuals were

retained in the sample in service to the complexity of self-identification and belonging. The responses for these individuals do not deviate notably from the larger sample.

Data Analysis

Data were cleaned and analyzed using a combination of IBM SPSS and MS Excel. The primary analytic methods used were: filtering, aggregation, and cross tabulation. Filtering enabled the organization and visualization of subsets of data based on the isolation of select variables. Aggregation allowed for the summarizing of broader trends across items and groups. Cross-tabulation was used to explore possible relationships between two or more survey questions.

Neither design (sampling) nor post-stratification weights were applied to the data prior to analysis. Design weights could not be calculated due to the nonprobability sampling methods. Post-stratification weights could not be calculated because there are no known demographic population parameters for Jews of Color. As a result, the values presented reflect raw proportions of respondent answers.

In addition, nonprobability sampling methods do not support the calculation of statistical margins of sampling error (none are reported here) or the reliable generalizability of the sample to the broader JoC population. Within these limits, though, the survey findings are illustrative of broad themes of experience and perspective among respondents, and the strong patterns of response for key items suggests that the findings are robust and not merely an artifact of the unique sample.

⁶ Referral/snowball sampling is a method of research sampling in which initial participants identify and/or recommend other potential participants in their social networks that would also be eligible. Snowball sampling is particularly useful in situations where the total size of the population being studied is unknown. Given, Lisa M. 2008. “Nonprobability Sampling.” Pp. 562-3 in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Appendix B: Who We Are

In every study, a researcher's positionality affects the subject of inquiry, the methods used, and how the data are analyzed. As social scientists, we are never separate from the social processes we study. We acknowledge that our cultural, historical, and political contexts influence our orientations toward this work. In doing so, we are purposefully rejecting the presumption of neutrality so often present in studies of American Jewry. By reflecting on and disclosing our roles in the power dynamics that are inherent in any research process, we aim to increase the transparency, validity, and ethicality of this work.

Tobin Belzer PhD is a queer, feminist sociologist and the cisgender daughter of two Christmas-celebrating, secular, white, Ashkenazi Jews. Her life has been profoundly shaped and enriched by her participation in predominantly white Jewish spaces since she joined a Conservative synagogue in the San Fernando Valley as a teen. Her interest in understanding and lifting up the perspectives and experiences of typically-marginalized voices animates her commitment to this work.

Tory Brundage PhD is a Black, atheist, cisgender man raised with complex family dynamics and an expansive notion of what family means, having spent formative time throughout California, Oklahoma, Nebraska, and Idaho. His research applies a critical race framework to identity development and study abroad learning in higher education while his work aims to support undergraduate men of color at a predominantly-white institution. His race centered, mixed methodological, and critical epistemological perspective informed this work.

Vincent Calvetti MA is a queer, working-class, Chicano, Jewish cisgender man and a first-generation graduate student and researcher of comparative religion, Critical Race Theory and Jewish histories. Born and raised in the Bay Area and currently living, working, and studying on Duwamish land, Vincent is deeply interested in understanding the intersections of race, ethnicity, and Jewishness in American and Israeli societies and the historical trajectory and liberatory social and political possibilities of the Mizrahi Struggle.

Gage S. Gorsky PhD is a half-Mexican, half-Ashkenazi, neurodivergent radical nonbinary trans queer Millennial interdisciplinary researcher raised by their single white Jewish mom in Chicago. Their intersecting marginal identities and feminist, activist spirit inform and shape their methodological approach to this deeply personal project.

Ari Y. Kelman PhD is an Ashkenazi, cisgender man, born and raised and living in California. His approach to research and scholarship is informed as much by the social histories of American Jewry as it is by the critical theories of Cultural Studies and American Studies. He has benefitted from his identity as a white American Jew, and is working to expand the access he has been afforded to others by probing the social and conceptual structures that govern American Jewish life.

Dalya Perez PhD lives and works on Duwamish and Coast Salish land and gives thanks to the first peoples. She is the daughter of an immigrant father from the Philippines and a refugee mother who is a Sephardi Jew from Egypt. She is a diversity, equity, and inclusion strategist, educator, and qualitative researcher with expertise in Critical Race Theories and frameworks. Her research has focused on the intersections of race and gender for men of color; historical consciousness and erasure for Filipinx Americans, and is currently researching equity and inclusive design for mixed reality technologies. Being a Jew and a person of color has informed all of her work and deeply called her to this project as a collaborator.