

# A Profile of LGBT Jewish Households

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The purpose of this paper is to present a demographic and religious profile of LGBT<sup>1</sup> Jews in the American Jewish community. First, we examine previous research about the LGBT community and identity both among American Jews and people of other religions. This leads us to expect a somewhat different relationship between Jewish LGBT households and community engagement in the Jewish community than may be found for non-Jewish LGBT households and their religious institutions. We turn to the results of local Jewish community studies to develop a profile of the LGBT population and see how this population differs from non-LGBT households both demographically and in terms of Jewish engagement.

## Previous Research

For many years, debate has occurred concerning the number and characteristics of gay households. Based upon very old and disputed studies conducted by Alfred Kinsey, many have assumed that LGBT individuals constitute about 10% of the adult population.<sup>2</sup> These older studies, however, were not based upon a random sample of American adults, making the 10% estimate problematic.

Approximately 4.3% of American adults identified as

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1 Variations of LGBTQ are used in this paper. In each case, we are reflecting the terminology of the authors of the literature we are citing.

2 Kinsey, Alfred C., Wardell B. Pomeroy, and Clyde Martin. *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1948; Kinsey, Alfred C., Wardell B. Pomeroy, and Clyde Martin. *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*. Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1953.

LGBTQ as of 2017.<sup>3</sup> About 10.2% of LGBTQ adults were in same-sex marriages as of 2015.<sup>4</sup> Gary Gates estimated that about 2% of American children had an LGBT identified parent.<sup>5</sup> The proportion was higher among racial and ethnic minorities. Among all households with LGBT adults, 35% included a child under the age of 18.<sup>6</sup>

Using the annual General Social Survey (GSS) 1972-2008, the National Health and Social Life Survey (NHSL), and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (ADD Health), Jacob Felson found that individuals raised Jewish or secular were more likely to admit to non-heterosexual feelings and non-heterosexual identities.<sup>7</sup> Using later GSS data (2008-2014), Christopher Scheitle and Julia Wolf found that sexual minorities do not differ significantly from heterosexuals as to their religious upbringings, but sexual minorities are more likely to move away from Christian traditions and toward disaffiliation or reaffiliation with “Jewish or other” tradi-

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3 Jones, Jeffery M. “Gallup Poll: In U.S., 10.2% of LGBT Adults Now Married to Same-Sex Spouse.” 2017 ([http://www.gallup.com/poll/212702/lgbt-adults-married-sex-spouse.aspx?g\\_source=Social+Issues&g\\_medium=newsf](http://www.gallup.com/poll/212702/lgbt-adults-married-sex-spouse.aspx?g_source=Social+Issues&g_medium=newsf)); Romero, Adam P. “1.1 Million LGBT Adults are Married to Someone of the Same Sex at the Two-Year Anniversary of Obergefell v. Hodges.” Los Angeles, CA: Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, 2017 (<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Obergefell-2-Year-Marriages.pdf>).

4 Romero, “1.1 Million LGBT Adults are Married to Someone of the Same Sex at the Two-Year Anniversary of Obergefell v. Hodges.”

5 Gates, Gary J. “LGBT Parenting in the United States.” Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, 2013.

6 Ibid.

7 Felson, Jacob. “The Effect of Religious Background on Sexual Orientation.” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 7:4, 2011: 1-33.

tions.<sup>8</sup>

Darren Sherkat estimated that 2.6% of Jews had same-sex partners in the five years preceding the GSS surveys of 1991-2000.<sup>9</sup> In the 2007 Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion administered by Synovate, Inc. for the American Jewish Committee,<sup>10</sup> the proportion of LGBT individuals among American Jews was at least 7%. This proportion is considerably higher than the estimated proportion of individuals in the broader American population at the time, 3-5%.<sup>11</sup>

A later estimate from the Jewish Community Study of New York in 2011 includes LGBT individuals and households, combined,<sup>12</sup> and indicates that approximate-

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8 Scheitle, Christopher P. and Julia Kay Wolf. "The Religious Origins and Destinations of Individuals Identifying as a Sexual Minority." *Sexuality & Culture* 21, 2017: 719-740.

9 Sherkat, Darren E. "Sexuality and Religious Commitment in the United States: An Empirical Evaluation." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41:2, 2002: 313-323.

10 Cohen, Stephen M., et al., "Gay, Jewish, or Both? Sexual Orientation and Jewish Engagement." *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* 64:1/2, 2009: 154-166. The sample did not include Jews of no religion, which may therefore have underestimated the number of LGBT respondents, and relied on a previously administered question of religious preference to identify a national sample of Jewish respondents. "Jews of no religion," as defined by the Pew Research Center, are Jews who when first asked: "What is your religion, if any, Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Muslim . . . ?" answered "atheist, agnostic, something else, or nothing in particular," but when asked "ASIDE from religion, do you consider yourself Jewish or partially Jewish, or not? Responded either Jewish or partially Jewish. Thus, Jews of no religion may be thought of as secular, cultural, or ethnic Jews.

11 Sherkat, "Sexuality and Religious Commitment in the United States: An Empirical Evaluation."

12 Based on the question, "On another topic, do you consider yourself (or does anyone in the household consider themselves\*) to

ly 5% of Jewish households in the service area of the UJA-Federation of New York include at least one LGBT individual.<sup>13</sup> Among these NY households, 21% included a married couple (who may or may not be LGBT), a smaller proportion than among other Jewish households (among whom more than half include a married couple); 13% of these households included a child under age 18.

The majority of these LGBT households in New York were non-Orthodox (only 4% of Orthodox households were LGBT compared to 20% of other households); there were also fewer Conservative households among the LGBT, but there was a higher proportion of Reform and an even higher proportion with no denomination. As we shall see below, this is related to significant differences in the acceptance of sexual minority lifestyles among the Orthodox compared to other Jewish denominations.

Among the New York non-Orthodox LGBT households, Cohen found few differences in patterns of Jewish engagement, but the LGBT households were less comfortable with being involved with Jewish institutions than non-LGBT households, even though they did feel part of the Jewish community.

A number of qualitative studies analyze the manner in which LGBT Jews handle their Jewish identity and sexual identity.<sup>14</sup> Many LGBT Jews feel that they must choose

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be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender?" (Language in parentheses was added if there were two or more persons in the household.)

13 The Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, State Island, Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester. Cohen, Steven M., *Special Study on Jewish Households with LGBT Individuals*. New York: UJA-Federation of New York, 2014.

14 E.g., Schnoor, Randal F., "Being Gay and Jewish: Negotiating Intersecting Identities." *Sociology of Religion* 67:1, 2006: 43-60; Etengoff, Chana. "Petitioning for Social Change: Letters to Religious Leaders from Gay Men and Their Family Allies." *Journal of*

between the two identities, since Jewish institutional life, particularly traditional and Orthodox institutions, reject the viability of an LGBT lifestyle.<sup>15</sup> Even when they become part of an inclusive congregation or other organized Jewish group, conflicting elements in their identity often need to be considered and undermine a feeling of religious or ethnic solidarity with other Jews. Some LGBT Jews retreat from organized Jewish life,<sup>16</sup> while others attempt to broaden the boundaries of organized Jewish life to be more inclusive.<sup>17</sup>

Conflicts between LGBT status and religious life are not confined to Jews. Much research has spotlighted LGBT Evangelicals, for example, and how they navigate the contradictions between their religious and LGBT identities and communities. Mark Henricksen found that LGB individuals in New Zealand tended to view religion as more of a difficulty than a source of support;<sup>18</sup> Eric

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*Homosexuality* 64:2, 2017: 166-194.

15 Cohen, Stephen M., et al., "Gay, Jewish, or Both? Sexual Orientation and Jewish Engagement;" Meladze, Pikria and Jac Brown. "Religion, Sexuality and Internalized Homonegativity: Confronting Cognitive Dissonance in the Abrahamic Religions." *Journal of Religious Health* 54, 2015: 1950-1962, and Balkin, Richard S., et al., "A Conversation about the Intersection of Faith, Sexual Orientation, and Gender: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives." *Journal of Counseling & Development* 92, 2014: 187-193 review the denominational differences.

16 Aviv, Caryn and Schneer, David. *New Jews: The End of the Jewish Diaspora*. New York, NY: NYU Press, 2005.

17 Ibid.; Mulligan, Amy, "Colours of the Jewish Rainbow: A Study of Homosexual Jewish Men and Yarmulkes." *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 12:1, 2013: 71-89; Somerson, Wendy E. "The Intersection of Anti-Occupation and Queer Jewish Organizing." *Tikkun* 25:4, 2010: 58-93.

18 Henrickson, Mark, "Lavender Faith: Religion, Spirituality and Identity in Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual New Zealanders." *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work* 6, 2007: 63-80.

Rodriguez found that LGB persons involved in religious communities experienced higher levels of conflict than those not involved in any religion.<sup>19</sup> Andrew Yip found that sexual minorities tended to move away from institutional religion to spirituality (a personal, non-institutional relationship with God).<sup>20</sup> Nadine Rosechild-Sullivan found that even in inclusive organized settings, the individual's theological conceptualization of a divine being affected how welcome and integrated the LGBT individual felt.<sup>21</sup> It was their theology (which may or may not be the product of their childhood upbringing), which made them feel accepted or not accepted in organized settings and allowed for successful negotiation of identity conflict for gays and lesbians in religious settings, whether or not the organized setting was inclusive.

Nonetheless, the majority of American Jews are more accepting of homosexuality than other religious groups.<sup>22</sup> According to a 2013 Pew Research Center study, Jews are one of the most strongly liberal Democratic groups in US

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19 Rodriguez, Eric, "At the Intersection of Church and Gay: Religion, Spirituality, Conflict, and Integration" in *Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual People of Faith. Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering*, 67:3-B, 2006: 1742.

20 Yip, Andrew, "The Persistence of Faith Among Nonheterosexual Christians: Evidence for the Neosecularization Thesis of Religious Transformation." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41, 2002: 199–212.

21 Rosechild-Sullivan, Nadine, *Intrinsically Disordered or Gay by God? The Negotiation of Sexual and Religious Identity in Three Sites*. Unpublished manuscript, 2004.

22 Pew Research Center, *A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2013; Adamczyk, Amy and Cassidy Pitt, "Shaping attitudes about homosexuality: The role of religion and cultural context." *Social Science Research* 38:2, 2009: 338-351.

politics.<sup>23</sup> Table 1 summarizes the results from the Pew study on attitudes of the Jewish community toward the LGBT population. Jews are significantly more likely to indicate that homosexuality should be accepted by society than is true for the US public, at 82% compared to 57%. The difference widens to 32 percentage points when Jews are compared to Christians. Note that in 2012, Pew found that 78% of Jews were accepting of gay marriage, compared to 50% for the general public.

Some significant differences in acceptance can be seen within the Jewish community. Jews by religion (as defined by Pew) are less likely to be accepting of homosexuality than “Jews of no religion” (see footnote 10) by 80% to 91%. Significant differences in acceptance are seen by denomination, from only 32% of Orthodox to 80% of Conservative Jews, 92% of Reform Jews, and 89% of Jews with no denomination. These differences parallel differences in official doctrines and policies related to the LGBTQ population that are followed in each of the denominations.<sup>24</sup> Within the Orthodox community, the Modern Orthodox (50%) are much more accepting than the Ultra-Orthodox (20%).

More educated Jews are more likely to be accepting, increasing from 64% of Jews with a high school degree or less to 89% of college graduates. Democratic Jews (92%) are far more accepting than Republican Jews (51%), but Republican Jews are more accepting than Republicans in general (38%). Relatively little difference is seen in the

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23 Pew Research Center, 95.

24 Summarized well in Cohen, Stephen M., et al., “Gay, Jewish, or Both? Sexual Orientation and Jewish Engagement,” and Balkin, Richard S., et al., “A Conversation about the Intersection of Faith, Sexual Orientation, and Gender: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives.”

responses by gender or by age.

Despite the acceptance of homosexuality and gay marriage by most American Jews, Jewish organizational institutions are divided as to the extent to which they embrace sexual minorities, and even organizations that are inclusive often feel they could do more. Caryn Aviv, Stephen M. Cohen, and Judith Veinstein interviewed rabbis and lay leaders in Jewish institutional life, and found that many congregations and Jewish institutions found it difficult to integrate LGBT individuals into the organized Jewish community, and felt their institutions could do a better job at being welcoming and inclusive.<sup>25</sup> The extent to which this attitude has changed in the past decade is unknown.

How can we reconcile the acceptance by American Jews of homosexuality with what appears to be persisting institutional and organizational climates of discomfort, resulting in challenges for sexual minorities' identity negotiation among American Jews? Gill Valentine and Louise Waite offer some insights.<sup>26</sup> They differentiate attitudes toward private, every day personal encounters from the framing of "abstract understandings about who has the right to belong in the public sphere."<sup>27</sup> "For those who remain embedded in the collective traditions of faith, this social 'normalization' of LGBT lifestyles may be experi-

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25 Aviv, Caryn, Stephen M. Cohen, and Judith Veinstein. *Welcoming Synagogues Project: Preliminary Results from the 2009 Synagogue Survey on Diversity and LGBT Inclusion*. Berman Jewish Databank, 2009, <https://www.jewishdatabank.org/databank/search-results?search=welcoming+synagogues+project&sortBy=-Publication+Date+%28Newest+First%29>. Accessed 4/10/19.

26 Valentine, Gill and Louise Waite. "Negotiating Difference through Everyday Encounters: The Case of Sexual Orientation and Religion and Belief." *Antipode* 44:2, 2012: 474-492.

27 Ibid., 476.



enced in tension with orthodox religious teachings.” Yip elaborates on this tension.<sup>28</sup> Especially among Jews with their traditionally strong emphasis on family and heteronormative procreation, the conflict may be intense. One strategy to resolve the conflict is to relegate sexual identity to a private domain in contrast to a public space, thus supporting boundaries that are less than inclusive in the religious public space. For those who identify as a sexual minority, they may find that if they accept the traditional religious space, they are faced with hostile LGBT groups who are resisting the heteronormative social order.<sup>29</sup> Thus, even if the majority of American Jews are accepting of sexual minority lifestyles, there may be resistance in the public organizations and a desire to compartmentalize sexual and religious identity, which may be a source of discomfort to sexual minority Jews. Kath Browne, Sally Munt, and Andrew Yip explain more about sexuality and sacred spaces in their *Queer Spiritual Spaces*.<sup>30</sup>

Given American Jews’ general acceptance of homosexuality, yet many previous studies that show some variation in how well integrated LGBT American Jews feel in the organized Jewish community, we turn now to a larger and more recent sample than has been studied in the past, to learn from the households in which the Jewish LGBT population lives. Are they fully integrated into Jewish life,

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28 Yip, Andrew. “The Persistence of Faith among Nonheterosexual Christians: Evidence for the Neosecularization Thesis of Religious Transformation.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 31:2, 2002: 199-212.

29 Wilcox, Melissa M. “‘Spiritual Sluts’: Uncovering Gender, Ethnicity and Sexuality in the Post-Secular.” *Women’s Studies* 41, 2012: 639-659.

30 Browne, Kath, Sally R. Munt, and Andrew K.T. Yip. *Queer Spiritual Spaces: Sexuality and Sacred Places*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2009.

as current attitudes of the American Jewish community would lead one to hypothesize? On the other hand, do they express hesitation in terms of Jewish engagement, reflecting a discomfort with organized Jewish life?

## **The Data**

No national study of Jews has inquired as to LGBT status. Until relatively recently, local Jewish community studies also did not inquire. The reasoning was that respondents were unlikely, in many cases, to respond honestly. Thus, if a demographic study identified X% of adults as LGBT, many would (rightfully) argue that the true percentage was higher. In addition, in a survey that completed, for example, 600 interviews, and 5% identified as LGBT, only 30 interviews with LGBT households were available for analysis. The 30 is enough to calculate the 5% (30/600), but not enough to develop a profile of the LGBT households themselves.

However, over the past 15 years, 19 Jewish community studies have inquired about LGBT status.<sup>31</sup> Depending on the community, anywhere from 1% to 11% of households indicated the presence of an LGBT adult (Table 2). Broward and Houston are 11% and 10% LGBT, while many communities are less than 5%. San Francisco is at 8%, but it is 8% of a much larger Jewish population than in Broward or Houston, so San Francisco clearly has a larger absolute LGBT population.

One might wonder if the differences among the com-

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31 Sheskin, Ira M., *The 2018 Detroit Jewish Population Study: A Profile of Jewish Detroit*. Detroit: The Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, 2018:3-22. The basic wording is the same as New York: Is any adult in your household, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer?

munities are because LGBT persons and gay marriage have become more accepted by society over time. Indeed, the Pearson correlation between year of the study and the percentage LGBT is 0.422 (significant at the .05 level) indicating that studies completed more recently have higher percentages of LGBT households. If San Francisco is removed from the analysis due to its special nature, then the correlation rises to 0.597 (significant at the .01 level). The correlation may be due to more voluntary disclosure of LGBT identities because of perceived social acceptance, as well as greater willingness to answer survey questions on the topic in later years.<sup>32</sup>

Of course, San Francisco (8% LGBT), one of the older studies (2005) in the table, is known nationwide for its gay community and for its general acceptance of homosexuality which continues to attract LGBT individuals from elsewhere and no doubt explains its relatively high percentage (8%). Broward has a well-known gayborhood (Wilton Manors).<sup>33</sup> Despite Miami's also well-known gayborhood (South Beach),<sup>34</sup> only 2% of Jewish households in Miami are LGBT.

For the purpose of this study, we have combined the results of seven of the studies, resulting in a sample size of 335 LGBT households and 6,662 non-LGBT households. While not a random sample of all American Jewish house-

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32 Jans, Matt, Joseph Viana, David Grant, Susan D. Cochran, Annie C. Lee, and Ninez A. Ponce, "Research and Practice: Trends in Sexual Orientation, Missing Data over a Decade of the California Health Interview Survey." *American Journal of Public Health* 105:5 E43-E50, 2015.

33 Brown, Michael, "Gender and Sexuality II: There Goes the Gayborhood?" *Progress in Human Geography* 38:3, 2014:457-465.

34 Kenttamaa Squires, Kai M., *Declining Gayborhood or Homonormative Playground in the Making? South Beach Reinvented*. Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami, 2014.

holds, it is a random sample of the seven communities. Note that these seven studies (Broward County (FL), Detroit, Houston, Indianapolis, Miami, Omaha, and St. Petersburg) were completed from 2014 to 2018, somewhat controlling for the fact that attitudes have changed over the past 15 years. The more recent studies probably have more accurate information on which households have LGBT individuals and which are not.

While the question was not asked as to who in the household was LGBT, a detailed analysis of the household structure for all 335 cases yields an estimate of the percentage of adults in Jewish households who are LGBT.<sup>35</sup> For the seven communities combined, the percentage of adults who are LGBT is 4.5% compared to an average percentage of LGBT households of 7.4% in the 7 communities. The percentage of adults who are LGBT is lower than the percentage of households with at least

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35 The procedure used to develop estimates of the number of LGBT persons per household proceeded as follows. In an LGBT household with only one adult, there clearly is only one LGBT individual. In a household with two adults and the second adult is the spouse, partner, etc. of the respondent and is of the same sex, then there are two LGBT individuals. In a household with three adults in which an adult child was the respondent and the other two adults are the adult child's parents and the parents are of different sexes, then there is one LGBT individual (the adult child). In total, eight rules were developed to estimate the number of LGBT individuals per household. In some cases, we may have an underestimate of the number of LGBT individuals in a household. Imagine a household with a mother and father (who are of different sexes) and two adult children. Such a household was assigned as having one LGBT individual. As we could find no evidence that having an LGBT sibling makes it more likely that both siblings are LGBT, and assuming that the Gallup Poll estimate that 4.3% of American adults are LGBT, the probability that both sibling are LGBT is 4.3% times 4.3%, or 0.2%. The fact that the result is that Jewish adults are 4.5% LGBT compared to the 4.3% in the Gallup Poll validates these results.

one LGBT person because the number of LGBT adults in LGBT households is below the number of adults in non-LGBT.

First, we should note that the 4.5%, while NOT derived from a nationwide random sample of American Jews, is not significantly different from the 4.3% of American adults identified as LGBTQ as of 2017.<sup>36</sup>

Second, the number of LGBT persons per household is quite low, averaging 1.22 for the seven communities combined. This is because only a minority of LGBT individuals are living as couples, either married or not. Many are living with their parents or other family members.

### **Profile of LGBT Jewish Households**

Until now, outside of New York<sup>37</sup> the Jewish community has had no data suggesting how LGBT households may differ demographically from non-LGBT households. In addition, do Jewish LGBT households feel part of the Jewish community and are they more or less likely to perform home religious practices, attend services, join synagogues, etc. than non-LGBT households?

Table 3 presents a profile of LGBT and non-LGBT households in the seven communities. Rows with no asterisks in Table 3 show no significant difference between LGBT and non-LGBT households. One asterisk means that we can make the statement that the two percentages in that row are significantly different with less than a 5% chance of being wrong; two asterisks means less than

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36 Jones, "Gallup Pole"; Romero, "1.1 Million LGBT Adults are Married to Someone of the Same Sex at the Two-Year Anniversary of Obergefell v. Hodges."

37 Cohen, *Special Study on Jewish Households with LGBT Individuals*.

a 1% chance of being wrong; three asterisks means less than 0.1% chance of being wrong.

***Demographic Difference***

Seven demographic variables are shown in Table 3: length of residence, age of the head of the household, household size, household structure, number of employed persons per household, housing tenure (own or rent), and income.

No significant difference is seen by length of residence, indicating somewhat similar levels of migration behavior for the two groups.

Only 4% of LGBT households are age 75 and over, compared to 20% for non-LGBT households. This could be a real difference or it could be due to younger LGBT individuals being more likely to “come out” about their status than older LGBT individuals. Note that such is not the case for households age 65-74. This group is composed mostly of baby boomers who likely differ from persons age 75 and over in the willingness to “come out.”

The heads of the household in LGBT households (13%) are more likely to be under age 35 compared to non-LGBT households (9%) and much more likely to be age 50-64, by 46% to 31%.

Only 15% of LGBT households have minor children at home, compared to 22% of non-LGBT households. Only 4% of LGBT households contain an elderly couple (age 65 and over) and 5% an elderly single, compared to 18% for both household types in the non-LGBT population. LGBT households are also less likely to be non-elderly couples than non-LGBT households, by 3% to 11%.

On the other hand, LGBT households are much more likely to contain adult children (with no minor children at home) by 27% to 11%. The LGBT person may be the adult child, suggesting that perhaps adult LGBT children

are more likely to return home as adults after college.

LGBT households are also more likely to have been coded under the “other” category, which includes “unmarried couples.” This is most likely because gay marriage did not become legal in all 50 states until 2015 (although Indiana legalized gay marriage in 2014). Thus, while gay marriage was legal when almost all seven studies were conducted (Miami being the exception) it is probably true that many gay couples had not yet made a decision on formalizing their relationship. In addition, more LGBT individuals move in with siblings, cousins, roommates, etc.

Note as well that LGBT households are significantly larger (average of 2.61 persons per household) compared to only 2.36 persons per household for non-LGBT households. This could be due, in part, to more LGBT individuals returning home after college.

The median income of LGBT households (\$78,500) is considerably lower than the median for non-LGBT households (\$91,500). While 33% of LGBT households earned under \$25,000, such is the case for only 28% of non-LGBT households. Thirty-six percent of LGBT households earn \$100,000 and over compared to 45% of non-LGBT households.

Note that for households under age 50, the median income for LGBT households (\$81,500) is well below the median income for non-LGBT households (\$121,000), despite the fact that LGBT households average 1.52 workers, compared to 1.11 in non-LGBT households. The median income for households age 50 and over does not differ significantly from non-LGBT households (\$3,000 difference).

Finally, only 31% of LGBT households own their home, compared to 37% of non-LGBT households.

In sum, Table 3 shows no difference in migration be-

havior, but LGBT households are younger, live in households with more people and more workers, are less likely to live as married couples or with minor children, have lower incomes than non-LGBT households (due to lower incomes among younger LGBT households) and have a lower home ownership rate.

### ***Jewish Identification***

LGBT respondents are less likely to identify as Orthodox (3% to 6%) and Conservative (20% to 26%), as likely to identify as Reform (33% to 31%), but more likely to identify as Just Jewish (44% to 36%).

### ***Home Religious Practices***

Relatively little difference is seen in the extent to which LGBT and non-LGBT households are involved in home religious practices. The percentages for the two groups are about the same for Passover Seder, Chanukah candles, Sabbath candles, kosher home, kosher in and out of the home, and refraining from electrical use on the Sabbath. Only for having a mezuzah on the front door do we find a difference, with only 65% of LGBT having a mezuzah compared to 73% of non-LGBT households.

LGBT households (32%) are more likely to always/usually/sometimes have a Christmas tree in their home than non-LGBT households (25%).

### ***Practices/Education outside the Home***

No significant differences exist between LGBT households and non-LGBT households on synagogue service attendance.

While LGBT households are less likely to attend formal adult Jewish education in the past year (20% to 25%), they are much more likely to be involved in informal adult Jewish education (42% to 33%). Similar percentages attended a Jewish cultural event in the past year.

### ***Intermarriage***



The couples intermarriage rate for LGBT households is much higher than for non-LGBT households (43% to 29%).

### ***Membership***

The percentages for synagogue membership, attending Chabad in the past year, participating in a JCC program, and being a member of a Jewish organization do not differ significantly between the two groups. JCC membership is only 10% of LGBT households compared to 15% of non-LGBT households.

### ***Feeling a Part of the Jewish Community***

Respondents were asked how much they feel part of the Jewish community: very much, somewhat, not very much, or not at all. The percentage who responded “very much” or “somewhat” is about the same for both groups, although the percentage “very much” is five percentage points lower for respondents in LGBT households than for respondents in non-LGBT households.

### ***Formal and Informal Jewish Education***

Little difference is seen between the two groups in formal Jewish education as a child with 19% of LGBT respondents having attended Jewish day school as a child, compared to 14% of non-LGBT respondents. About 75% of both groups has some type of formal Jewish education as a child. The percentage who participated in a Jewish youth group as a teenager is also about the same, but more LGBT respondents attended or worked at a Jewish overnight camp (by 45% to 32%) and participated in Hillel/Chabad while in college (by 30% to 25%).

### ***Familiarity with the Jewish Federation***

No significant differences are seen in the percentage very familiar, somewhat familiar, and not at all familiar with the local Jewish Federation.

### ***Israel***

No significant difference exists in the percentage of households with at least one adult who has been to Israel. The 20% of LGBT respondents who are extremely attached to Israel is significantly lower than the percentage of respondents in non-LGBT households (26%).

### ***Philanthropy***

LGBT households do not differ significantly in the percentage who donated to the local Jewish Federation and other Jewish charities, but a significant difference exists for non-Jewish charities: 77% for LGBT households and 72% for non-LGBT households.

### ***Politics.***

No significant difference exists between political parties.

## **Discussion**

In this paper, we have analyzed seven Jewish community studies conducted from 2014-2018, the proportion of households with an LGBT member ranging from 1-11%. Compared to non-LGBT households, LGBT households are younger, have more household members and more workers, are less likely to live as married couples or with minor children, have lower incomes than their counterparts among non-LGBT households (holding age constant), and have a lower home ownership rate. Their youth, lower incomes, and lower home ownership rate is not unlike LGBT households in the broader population, nor is their lower rate of marriage or fewer children under age 18 in the household.<sup>38</sup>

As in the previous study of New York Jews in 2011, LGBT households are less likely to be Orthodox or Con-

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38 Cenegy, Laura F., et al. "Family Diversity and Child Health: Where Do Same-Sex Couple Families Fit?" *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 80, 2018: 198-218.

servative than non-LGBT households, have a similar proportion who are Reform, and a significantly higher proportion Just Jewish (unaffiliated with the major denominations).

However, LGBT and non-LGBT differ little in their home religious practices, nor do they differ in terms of synagogue attendance or membership, or Jewish philanthropy. Their patterns of Jewish education as children are quite similar. While LGBT are less likely to have attended formal Jewish education in the past year, they are more likely to have attended informal Jewish education. A higher proportion of the households include a non-Jewish spouse, and accordingly, a higher proportion usually have Christmas trees.

LGBT and non-LGBT households differ little in terms of feeling a part of the Jewish community. This, despite the qualitative literature that emphasizes the challenges of negotiating two minority identities, being Jewish and a sexual minority, and earlier literature that suggests the inadequacy of the Jewish communal organizations in embracing sexual minorities. The overwhelming support of American Jews for alternative lifestyles, as evidenced in the Pew 2013 survey of American Jews, has apparently filtered to interpersonal encounters in the Jewish community, resulting in greater inclusivity.

As the climate of acceptance of LGBT lifestyles has broadened, it behooves forthcoming Jewish community studies to include more direct questions of the respondents, so that it will be easier to estimate the proportion of LGBT individuals in the American Jewish population, and ask LGBT individuals directly (rather than through the household in which they reside) about their experiences with the Jewish community as well as their own private practices.

**Table 1**  
**Jews' Views of Homosexuality**  
*% who say it should be accepted by society*

Population Group	Percentage Accepted
Total Jewish population	82
Jews by religion	80
Jews of no religion	91
Men	80
Women	85
Age 18-49	84
Age 50+	81
College graduate or higher	89
Some college	79
High school or less	64
Republican	51
Democrat	92
Independent	82
Total Orthodox	32
Ultra-Orthodox	20
Modern Orthodox	50
Conservative	80
Reform	92
No denomination ("Just Jewish")	89
US general public	57
Christian	50

Source: (Pew Research Center 2013, 101)

**Table 2**  
**Percentage of Jewish Households**  
**Containing One or More LGBT Person**

Community	Date of Study	Percentage of Households Who Are LGBT	Percentage of Adults Who Are LGBT	Sample Size of LGBT Households
Broward *	2016	11	6.60%	100
Houston *	2016	10	6.60%	95
San Francisco	2005	8		
Indianapolis *	2017	7	3.80%	29
St. Petersburg *	2017	7	4.50%	29
Columbus	2013	6		
Detroit *	2018	5	2.40%	24
New York	2011	5		
Philadelphia	2009	5		
St. Louis	2014	4		
Chicago	2010	3		
Cleveland <sup>1</sup>	2011	3		
Denver	2007	3		
Omaha *	2017	2	1.30%	14
Miami *	2014	2	1.30%	44
Baltimore	2010	2		
Howard County (MD)	2010	2		
Cincinnati	2008	2		
San Diego	2003	1		
Total Number of LGBT Households in Sample				335
Source: (Sheskin 2018, 3-22)				
<sup>1</sup> Question was asked of the respondent only.				
* The seven communities in the Century 21 data set.				

<b>Table 3</b> <b>Profile of LGBT and Non-LGBT Households</b> <b>in Seven American Jewish Communities</b>		
Population Sub-group	LGBT Households	Non-LGBT Households
<b>Length of Residence in Local Community</b>		
0 - 4 years	10.20%	8.60%
5 - 9 years	5.9	8.9
10 - 19 years	18.4	19.3
20 or more years	65.4	63.2
Total	100.00%	100.00%
<b>Age of Head of Household</b>		
Under 35	13.3% **	8.90%
35 - 49	16.4	17.8
50 - 64	45.9 ***	30.9
65 - 74	20.6	22.4
75 and over	3.8 ***	20
Total	100.00%	100.00%
<b>Household Structure</b>		
Average Household Size	2.61 ***	2.36
Household with Children	15.2% **	22.10%
HH with Only Adult Children	27.3 ***	10.6
Non-Elderly Couple	2.7 ***	11.3
Non-Elderly Single	9	10.1
Elderly Couple	4.4 ***	18.4
Elderly Single	5.1 ***	18.2
Other	36.3 ***	9.2
Total	100.00%	100.00%

<b>Employment, Tenure, and Household Income</b>		
Own Home	31.0% *	36.90%
Average Number of Full or Part Time Workers	1.52	1.11
Median Income (under Age 50)	\$81,500	\$121,000
Median Income (Age 50 and over)	\$77,500	\$80,500
Median Income (All Households)	\$78,500	\$91,500
Under \$50,000 (All Households)	33.20%	28.30%
\$50 - \$75,000	14.5	13.3
\$75 - \$100,000	16.6 *	12.7
\$100 - \$200,000	26.6	27.1
\$200,000 and over	9.1 **	18.8
Total	100.00%	100.00%
<b>Jewish Identification</b>		
Orthodox	2.6% **	6.20%
Conservative	19.6 **	26.3
Reconstructionist	1.3	1.1
Reform	32.7	30.6
Just Jewish	43.9 **	35.9
Total	100.00%	100.00%
<b>Religious Practice/Jewish Behavior</b>		
Have a Mezuzah on the Front Door	65.1% **	72.90%
Always/Usually Participate in a Passover Seder	72.30%	74.30%
Always/Usually Light Chanukah Candles	70.30%	73.30%
Always/Usually Light Sabbath Candles	26.60%	24.10%

*A Profile of LGBT Jewish Households*

<b>Religious Practice/Jewish Behavior (continued)</b>		
Keep a Kosher Home	13.50%	14.30%
Refrain from Using Electricity on the Sabbath	3.10%	4.10%
Always/Usually/ Sometimes Have a Christmas Tree in the Home	32.2% **	25.10%
Attend Services Once per Month or More	17.00%	21.30%
Never Attend Services	33.00%	29.80%
Attended Adult Jewish Education in the Past Year	19.8% *	25.00%
Engaged in Informal Jewish Education in the Past Year	42.3% ***	33.10%
Attended Jewish Cultural Event	54.50%	52.50%
<b>Type of Marriage</b>		
In-married	50.6% *	60.80%
Conversionary	6.6	10.3
Intermarried	42.8 ***	28.9
Total	100.00%	100.00%
<b>Membership</b>		
Synagogue Member	31.50%	34.30%
Attended Chabad in the past year	22.00%	21.30%
JCC Member	10.3% *	14.80%
Participated in a JCC Program in the Past Year	30.80%	31.60%
Jewish Organization Member	18.30%	21.20%



<b>Feel a Part of the Local Jewish Community</b>		
Very Much	14.0% *	19.60%
Somewhat	35.6	31.4
Not Very Much	33.4	28.8
Not at All	17	20.2
Total	100.00%	100.00%
<b>Respondent Attended Jewish Education as a Child</b>		
Jewish Day School	18.7% *	14.40%
Supplemental School	57.5	54.4
Israeli Education	0.7	1.2
Tutor	0.7	1.8
No Formal Jewish Education	22.3	23.8
Total	100.00%	100.00%
<b>Respondent Attended Informal Jewish Education as a Child</b>		
Respondent Attended or Worked at Jewish Overnight Camp as a Child	45.3% ***	31.70%
Respondent Participated in Jewish Youth Group as a Teenager	41.30%	42.80%
Respondent Participated in Hillel/Chabad While in College (Excluding High Holidays)	30.3% *	24.80%
<b>Familiarity with Jewish Federation</b>		
Very Familiar	24.30%	20.00%
Somewhat Familiar	42.6	42
Not at All Familiar	33.1	37.9
Total	100.00%	100.00%

*A Profile of LGBT Jewish Households*

<b>Any Adult Visited Israel</b>		
On Jewish Trip	22.30%	25.00%
On General Trip	35	35.4
No	42.7	39.6
Total	100.00%	100.00%
<b>Level of Emotional Attachment to Israel</b>		
Extremely Attached	20.0% *	25.8
Very Attached	26.9	29.2
Somewhat Attached	40.1 ***	30.9
Not Attached	13	14.1
Total	100.00%	100.00%
<b>Donated to Charities in the Past Year</b>		
Local Jewish Federation	27.20%	30.20%
Other Jewish Charities	49.20%	48.40%
Non-Jewish Charities	77.3% *	72.20%
Total	100.00%	100.00%
<b>Political Party</b>		
Republican	16.50%	20.80%
Democrat	54.5	53.1
Independent	29	26.1
Total	100.00%	100.00%
* Significant at .05 level		
** Significant at .01 level		
*** Significant at .001 level		
All significance tests are reported as two-tail tests.		
Sample Size = 335 for LGBT households and 6,662 for non-LGBT households, except for the intermarriage variable for which the samples sizes are 130 and 4,050		