

WHAT CAN JCCS LEARN FROM COMMUNITY AND INSTITUTION-BASED  
ORGANIZING MODELS?

By

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## **Abstract**

Imagine a JCC where every new person who initiates contact or attends an event in the community is followed up with by a staff or lay leader for an individual meeting to learn about their interests; or a JCC that matches every new staff person with another staff or lay leader mentor; or a JCC that cares just as much about the greater community as it does about its own internal community; or imagine a JCC that does all of these things. Some JCCs already do some of these things, and many want to try them. This thesis explores using broad-based organizing (also known as institution-based community organizing) in JCCs to build community, develop leadership through mentorship, and impact the surrounding community.

I conducted twenty-four qualitative interviews with JCCA, JCC, and organizing professionals and lay leaders across the country at organizations with varying demographics. They shared with me the goals of their organizations and how they build community. By comparing the goals and missions of various JCCs and organizing groups I was able to determine where there is alignment and what JCCs may be able to adopt from organizing methods. As a result, this thesis contains recommendations for JCCs to adopt some organizing practices, such as one-to-one meetings in order to help them build community and mentorship programs in order to grow leadership. Based on my research, I developed a ladder of engagement for JCCs to use in order to help them measure and evaluate the way they engage users and members. Additionally, I have written and included a training program for JCC staff and lay leaders in using one-to-ones effectively in JCC settings.

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## Introduction

The vision of the Jewish Community Center Association (JCCA) is to create a vibrant and welcoming Jewish environment that encourages people to lead engaged lives of meaning and purpose ([jcca.org/commentary](http://jcca.org/commentary)). There are over 350 affiliated Jewish Community Centers (JCC), Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Associations (YM-YWHAs) and camps across the country that strive towards this vision through a variety of programming ([jcca.org/about-jcc-association/](http://jcca.org/about-jcc-association/)). JCCs are always trying to improve how they achieve this mission. JCCA has developed an extensive evaluation method called Benchmarking that helps JCCs enhance their practices. Through Benchmarking JCCA has identified the power of relationships between staff and members as part of their success. This Masters thesis focuses on this particular piece of JCCs, including a few methods for building relationships.

As a JCC Fellow I am invested in the JCCA movement and understanding how to best serve the communities I plan to work with after graduation and throughout my career. I believe in community organizing as a model for creating positive and sustainable change in any organization by using relational power. When I say organizing I refer to the act of building relationships among people in order to build power and work towards social/systemic change. This can happen on the local, state, national, and global level. I have some experience with broad-based organizing in synagogues and the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ). Based on these experiences, I believe that JCCs could benefit from adapting similar tools in their own communities.

This thesis explores JCC structures and various organizing models. In particular, it explores the role of relationships in both systems. Some of the questions it addresses include:

- How do relationships and community fit into the missions of JCCs?

- How do JCCs currently build relationships and community?
- How does community organizing build relationships and community and how are organizers trained?
- What can JCCs learn from community organizing models and how can these lessons be implemented in JCCs? What benefits and risks are involved in this implementation?

Based on the answers to these questions this thesis includes a training guide for JCCs.

The purpose of this thesis is to better understand the goals and missions of JCCs and the methods of community organizing to discover where they align. Further, it is important to know how community organizers train individuals to build relationships in order to understand how this may be integrated into JCCs.

The word “community” will be used frequently throughout this thesis; therefore, it is important to define. Often, the word “community” describes groups bound together by geography; however, it can also refer to other types of connections. For the purposes of this project, community is defined as a group of individuals who are connected through affiliation, organization, geography, process, membership, feeling, or some other commonality. The work of building community, which JCCs strive to do, means helping people with commonalities find connections among themselves so that they feel positive about their bonds with other people and organizations.

## **Methodology**

A mixed methodology was used for this thesis including qualitative and some quantitative data. Document review of JCC websites and JCCA publications allowed for background research before interviews. Additionally, through conversations with Andy Paller, Director of Benchmarking at JCCA, the document research was supplemented with correlations

from JCCA's Benchmarking program. This small amount of quantitative data greatly supports the reasoning for exploring the qualitative research that makes up the bulk of this thesis.

I conducted qualitative research through interviews with twenty-four individuals. Twelve of these are JCC professionals, representing seven JCCs and JCCA. Eight are organizing professionals; one is a very active lay leader; and one is an organizing rabbinic student intern. Additionally, I interviewed two Jewish professionals about Relational Judaism and community engagement. The organizations these individuals belong to span the country and are diverse in size, budget, and constituent demographics. I conducted eleven interviews over the phone, and the rest were done in person, either in the office of the interviewee or, in three cases, at coffee shops. With the permission of the interviewees, most of these interviews were recorded. The interviewees were provided with background information about the research topic and were then asked about their experiences with either JCCs or organizing. These interviews were purposefully exploratory and conversational. Appendix 1 shows the two lists of questions that were used to guide the two different types of interviews (JCC and organizing), but overall, interviewees were encouraged to share as seemed relevant to the topic and their particular context.

Lastly, it is important to note that I have had the opportunity to attend a few community organizing trainings as a participant in various settings prior to this thesis research. During the research process, I attended the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) national training for one of the days that it was in Los Angeles in 2015 in order to observe how they train their leaders. As a JCCA Fellow I also attended the JCCA Professional Conference in Spring 2015 and am an intern at Westside JCC in Los Angeles. All of these experiences have also contributed to this project.



## **Jewish Community Centers of North America**

The JCC movement started when the very first Hebrew Young Men's Literary Association was founded in Baltimore in 1854 ([jcca.org/about-jcc-association/](http://jcca.org/about-jcc-association/)). The first associations started as centers for immigrant integration, Jewish continuity, and celebration. They were based on the settlement house model started by Jane Addams with the Hull House in Chicago. Wealthy Jewish donors supported these organizations, which were originally designed to help poor, immigrant Jews adjust and succeed in American democratic society ([jcca.org/about-jcc-association/](http://jcca.org/about-jcc-association/)). Over the years, JCCs and their umbrella organization have been known by many names, including the following: Jewish Welfare Board, Young Men's Hebrew Academy, Young Women's Hebrew Academy, and The Council of Young Men's and Kindred Associations. Today, there are over 350 affiliated organizations, most of which are known as JCCs, and the national umbrella organization is the Jewish Community Center Association (JCCA).

It is important to remember that when broken down to its most basic level, JCCs are in the business of building community. Last year, Allan Finkelstein, former president and CEO of JCCA, wrote that the original JCC mission was "to strengthen...life in the community" (Finkelstein 2014). In 2012, JCCA published its Vision and Statement of Principles for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century after conducting over one thousand conversations with JCC members, staff, and lay leaders in a two-year period. This document begins: "The vision of the JCC Movement is to create a vibrant and welcoming Jewish environment that encourages people to lead engaged lives of meaning and purpose" (Sidman & Finkelstein, 2012, p 3). This document continues to state that the primary purpose of JCCs is to strengthen Jewish life and build upon the following principles:

- *Creating a Jewish identity is a unique and individual life-long process.*
- *Respecting and supporting diverse Jewish opinions, beliefs, and practices are essential for strong and enduring Jewish communities.*
- *Interaction between diverse groups of Jews is critical for the well-being and future of the Jewish people.*
- *Jewish living and learning sit at the heart of the JCC.*
- *Israel is an eternal birthright of the Jewish people, linking us to our past and to Jews around the world today.*
- *Strong Jewish communities benefit, and benefit from, their larger communities. (p. 3)*

These guiding principles establish a baseline for how JCCs should work to establish a community within each of their organizations.

## **JCC Benchmarking**

### ***What is it?***

JCCA has developed an extensive evaluation system that tracks indicators of organizational health in order to help JCCs know how to improve (Sidman, Finkelstein, Samuels, Posner, & Paller, n.d.). This program is called “JCC Excellence: Benchmarking” and is a two year long process in which JCCs may choose to participate, and, in return, they receive information about the JCC field at large, their individual JCC compared with other comparable JCCs, and longitudinal information about their own JCC ([jcca.org/benchmarking/](http://jcca.org/benchmarking/)). To date, 84 JCCs have participated in the Benchmarking process over its ten-year existence (Sidman et al n.d.). While the data is not fully comprehensive, it does cover a broad scope of JCCs.

Benchmarking collects data from JCC staff, executive teams, members, and users of various programs through a variety of surveys. Through Benchmarking, JCCA has identified the

following measurements of “JCC health:” customer satisfaction and engagement; financial sustainability; “people participation accounting;” and staff satisfaction and engagement (Sidman et al, n.d.). Most of these are fairly self-explanatory, with the exception of “people participation accounting.” This simply means calculating and counting who uses which JCC programs and how these numbers correlate to other categories. “Engagement” is discussed in detail below.

***What do we know from it?***

Through the ten years of Benchmarking research, JCCA and JCCs have learned so much. It will not be possible to list all acquired knowledge here, so this section will focus on a few general findings and those specific to the topics of user engagement and informal conversations. Benchmarking has defined excellence as JCCs that stand out in the following qualities: Jewish impact, programmatic leadership and user engagement, attracting and retaining the best staff, and financial sustainability and growth (Sidman et al, n.d.).

According to Weisbart (1997, p. 1), all things being equal, Jews prefer to join Jewish organizations over non-Jewish organizations. However, more often than not, people will only join or renew JCC membership if what is offered is better than what they can get elsewhere (Weisbart, 1997, p. 1). Benchmarking has narrowed in on what sets JCCs apart. One aspect of this is that most of the time when people can get services elsewhere, they report choosing the JCC because of the personal connection they feel there (Brand-Richardson & Paller, 2013), often stemming from a sense of community.

Benchmarking has studied some of the elements of community that impact JCCs. The following numbers are from benchmarking reports produced by JCCA, which are made available to staff through their [jcca.me](http://jcca.me) website. According to Andy Paller, Director of Benchmarking, all correlations reported by JCCA have statistical significance in which  $p < 0.05$  (A. Paller, personal

communication, June 30, 2015). There are three main elements related to community that show where JCCs and organizing might align. One aspect is that JCC members like to perceive the JCC as part of the broader community outside of the institution. Benchmarking shows this through the correlation between a member's likelihood of future giving and their perception of the JCC as a broad community institution (Sidman, et al., 2014). One way to interpret this result is that members like to see their JCCs involved in the greater local community. Another communal element benchmarking has uncovered is the relationship between a member's intention to renew and whether or not they have developed new friendships at the JCC. According to Benchmarking data 69% of members who intend to renew say they developed new friendships as a result of their membership at the JCC (Sidman, et al., 2014).

The third element of community that benchmarking has shed some light on is user interaction with staff. Benchmarking has shown that members who report having frequent informal conversations with staff are more likely to do the following things: renew their membership; donate to JCCs above and beyond their dues; recommend the JCC to others; participate in more programs; and feel impacted Jewishly (Brand-Richardson & Paller, 2013; JCC Association, 2012). Since informal conversations seem to have such a high impact on JCCs, there is a lot of emphasis on staff training in this area (JCC Association, 2012; Sieden, Hazan Arnoff, Posner, & Paller, 2015).

### **What Engagement Training Currently Exists?**

Currently, JCCA offers a few webinars and a couple of opportunities at national events such as JCCA Professional Conference and JCCA Biennial each year for learning about best practices from JCCs that excel in engagement. One webinar, led by Joy Brand-Richardson and Andy Paller, even focused on informal conversations. Overall, however, even though there is

acknowledgement of the importance of training, there does not seem to be consistency or concrete evidence about what works.

Research for this thesis found that JCC training varies greatly from center to center. For the most part JCCs offer training opportunities to their staff, but very few of them have developed training that focuses on relationship building with members or informal conversations. Some JCCs have rules like *Staff must schedule 20 minutes a day in the halls of the JCC for socializing with members*, or *Staff are not allowed to be on their phones when walking through the halls of the JCC so as to allow for opportunities to chat*. Other JCCs set staff up in the center to talk to members and guests. For example, JCC of San Francisco sets up an “Ask Lucy” booth based on the Peanuts cartoon booth so that members and guests are encouraged to ask questions and chat with staff at the booth. Westside JCC in Los Angeles just started tabling for youth events at their pool during swim lesson time.

These are all great ways to encourage informal conversations, but they are not really training on how to get the most out of the conversation. In fact, several JCC administrators who were interviewed for this thesis talked about hiring the “right person” or a “friendly person” for the job and that the ability to have informal conversations and engage in relationship-building are characteristics innately part of a person and cannot be taught. While this thesis did not explore the validity of this idea, it did discover some concrete ideas about how to actually train, coach, and mentor individuals so that they can improve their skills in specific kinds of conversations and relationship-building. These ideas are further discussed below.

### **Membership vs. Engagement at JCCs**

One important trend in the JCC movement to notice is the shift from membership to engagement on all levels. Membership refers to the transactional relationship of individuals

paying dues in order to belong to JCCs and receiving services such as fitness center access, preschool, camp, and even community. One JCCA professional called membership the “fee-for-service” part of JCCs and notes that it is important to recognize that this is different and separate from engagement. Engagement relates to a communal and emotional attachment to the JCC. That does not mean it is void of transaction, money, or a business plan, but it is more holistic.

Gallup Business Journal has developed a four level hierarchy of emotional attachment to a business or a product, which they use to measure customer engagement. It starts with confidence, continues to integrity and pride, and culminates in passion (Reiger 2013). Confidence refers to the trust that customers have in a company; integrity has to do with the company treating customers fairly; pride reflects how appreciated customers feel by the company; and passion deals with the customers’ feelings that the company and its brand is irreplaceable in their lives (Reiger 2013). These definitions of customer engagement definitely attempt to take a transactional relationship and make it more relational.

While this may not directly relate to the work at a JCC, it is important to think about the different ways in which a JCC engages people and what markers for success may be. Later in this thesis a “Ladder of Engagement” is proposed as one means of distinguishing these ideas and measuring success in these areas. Additionally, a report about financial sustainability for JCCs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century mentioned that membership can no longer be the only way of measuring engagement, nor can it be a way of attributing value to the JCC itself (Sidman, Finkelstein, Russin, & Posner, 2011). In fact, this same report used strong wording: “membership is a poor substitute for belonging in any other way than a transactional sense” (Sidman et al., 2011, P 5). The authors continue to suggest that JCCs should move from having membership directors to community engagement directors. This shift was visibly relevant at the JCC Professional

Conference in March 2015 where there are now dozens of community engagement directors whose positions were formerly membership directors.

One example is the position of “Chief Jewish Officer,” held by Rachel Brodie at the JCC of San Francisco. While her title is not community engagement director, her position is designed with a similar goal in mind. Ron Wolfson, in his book *Relational Judaism*, quotes Brodie: “We are looking to move from a transactional relationship with our members to something deeper...there is also value in putting resources in individuals. For the kind of transformative experiences of relationships, everybody knows that has to be done on a smaller scale” (2014, p. 157). One small-scale example from my interview with Brodie was when she did a staff training with the JCC of San Francisco pool staff. She challenged them to find a way to let every person they interacted with over the course of a single day know that “I’m glad you’re here.” This could be through sustained eye contact, a smile, a wave, the use of a first name in greeting, or a conversation of any length. The daylong experiment impacted the staff and members greatly and has been piloted in other areas of the Center. According to Brodie, it created lots of positive energy that encouraged people to see themselves in relationship with the JCC and not just as program participants. Brodie is just one example of many innovative engagement professionals across the county, and hers is only one method.

Another reason that JCCs appear to be considering new models of engagement, like community organizing, is that their keynote speaker at the JCC Professional Conference in March 2015 was Stosh Cotler of Bend the Arc. Bend the Arc is a Jewish nonprofit based in New York, with offices in Washington, DC, Southern California, and Northern California. Its mission is to mobilize Jewish resources and partner within communities in order to fulfill its purpose of creating a just, fair, and compassionate America ([bendthearc.us](http://bendthearc.us)). Bend the Arc uses community

organizing tactics to further its mission and purpose. At the JCC Professional Conference Stosh Cotler challenged JCCs to work on the following four goals: (1) Build new relationships outside of JCCs with vulnerable populations and broad-based organizations that can serve as authentic partnerships; (2) Pray with our feet, not just learning about issues, but acting on them; (3) Establish an organizational culture in order to form institutions that reflect the larger community and demonstrate communal values; and (4) Practice compassion. If JCCA chose Stosh Cotler with her relationship-building, community organizing background as the keynote speaker with the main message for their largest annual event, it leads one to believe that they are interested and invested in trying organizing models.

## **Community Organizing**

### **The History of Community Organizing**

Saul Alinsky is considered the father of community organizing. In 1940 he founded the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) in Chicago in order to raise up the voices of ordinary people and allow them to execute power in political and communal decision-making ([www.industrialareasfoundation.org/content/history](http://www.industrialareasfoundation.org/content/history)). In his book, *Rules for Radicals*, Alinsky says that his “aim here is to suggest how to organize for power: how to get it and how to use it” (1971, p. 10). He really emphasized the importance of understanding power in both of its forms: organized money and organized people. Alinsky believed that power plays a huge role in every aspect of a person’s life, which is why organizing power is so important (Alinsky, 1971, p. 52-53). Contemporary community organizing draws inspiration from grassroots figures in American democracy such as Jane Addams, Cesar Chavez, and Martin Luther King, Jr. It also pulls from union organizing and all of the civil rights movements (Wood, Partridge, & Fulton, n.d.).



Today, institution-based community organizing (IBCO) is in over 40 states and has expanded to reach not just core metropolitan areas, but entire regions. In both 1999 and 2011, Interfaith Funders conducted surveys of the field of community organizing. According to their most recent report the community organizing field includes approximately 3,500 religiously affiliated congregations and 1,000 public schools, labor unions, neighborhood associations, and faith-based organizations. (Wood, Partridge, & Fulton). Combined, these groups represent over five million Americans, and from 1999 to 2011, the field grew by 42% (Wood, Partridge, & Fulton).

IBCO and broad-based organizing are essentially synonymous. This is the type of organizing that Just Congregations of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) and Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) do. It differs from traditional community organizing in that IBCO and broad-based organizing build networks using established institutions as the building blocks, while community organizing starts by focusing on individuals. Most people recognize the term community organizing as the work with which President Obama started his career. The terms institution-based community organizing (IBCO), congregation-based community organizing (CBCO), and broad-based organizing (BBO) are all generally used to refer to the same process, but each one occurs in a slightly different setting. IBCO is organizing that occurs within an institution, CBCO is organizing specifically in the faith-based community, and BBO takes place in a combination of institutions, including those that are faith-based and those that are not. It is particularly important to note that broad-based organizing occurs within each institution and across a network of institutions that work together on a larger scale. Since the research for this thesis looked at all of these models and is combining them to adapt for use in JCCs, the terms are used interchangeably moving forward.

One Bay Area IAF organizer said broad-based organizing usually engages institutions that have a mission related to social justice. He said that broad-based organizing is “a way to organize institutions that want to take seriously that social mission.” In order to distinguish broad-based organizing from community organizing he said that “those institutions live in a place, live in a context, live in a community, so you can transform a community, can transform a county, can eventually transform a state. But you do that through the institutions because the institution is not going to pick up and leave.”

### **What is community organizing and how does it work?**

Community organizing itself ranges in definition depending on who is speaking. For the purposes of this thesis the following definition, which has been compiled through a variety of sources, will be used: Community organizing aims to build relationships in order to harness power and create positive social change. According to Weill & Winkelman (2003), community organizing gets people talking through strong community leaders, both on the staff and volunteer level. They note that building relationships takes time, and this may require measuring success using different terms and on a different timeline than an organization may be accustomed to doing.

According to the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning (CCESL), the community organizing process contains the following phases:

- *Relationship Building* to determine self-interest, agitate, and build power.
- *Issue Selection* to determine which part of a societal problem the community will address.

- *Issue Research* means collecting information, including facts, experiences and relationships about the root causes of the issue and what power can be accessed to address them.
- *Taking Action* publicly to hold individuals, groups, and organizations accountable to addressing the issue.
- *Reflection and Evaluation* means critically reviewing and assessing the process used and how it can be improved in the future.

(Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning, 2014)

The organizing process is fluid so that communities are constantly moving in and out of these phases in order to work towards and achieve certain goals. In fact, a community can simultaneously be in multiple of these phases. For example, relationship building is ongoing and should be happening whenever another phase is also happening.

In community organizing models there is a concept of reorganizing in which there is a building up and breaking down that is part of the cycle. Once a group restarts the organizing cycle, it must break down some of the structure that was built up around a different issue using a different organizational structure. Since groups are constantly organizing around communities, people and issues, they regularly switch leaders and constituents as relevant to the current action items. Therefore, reorganizing is a healthy part of the organizing cycle. As such, organizing entities are often much more adaptable than nonprofits, committees, or other agencies because this idea of regular transition is built into their model.

The building blocks of organizing used in this process include one-to-one meetings, training and development of leaders, house meetings, research meetings, public actions, accountability sessions, and evaluation (Wood, Partridge, & Fulton; Gecan, 2002). The one-to-

one meeting, training and development of leaders, and evaluation are the three things that this thesis is primarily concerned with, but as a brief overview, it may be important to define the others.

According to CCESL, “a house meeting is a guided, small-group discussion held in an informal free space, in which people get to know one another deeply through discussion of their interests, values and ideas for action” (p. 19) They serve to identify issues and brainstorm potential solutions while also facilitating relationships between community members.

Additionally, it is important for house meetings NOT to be focus groups nor support groups; they should not be purely for gathering information the way a focus group does, and they should not be solely about sharing feelings the way a support group is. Rather, by balancing both feelings and information, they can work towards collective action. In fact, what distinguishes a house meeting more than anything is the fact that it results in some sort of action item or ask that participants may respond to in order to continue to be part of the conversation and work of the community.

Research meetings include getting to know local implementation leaders and decision-makers while learning about problems in the community. For example, a community exploring their constituents’ self-interests in school safety may conduct research meetings with anyone from police officers and the mayor’s office, to school crossing guards and school administrators. Public actions and accountability sessions are large gatherings with all stakeholders in which leaders and officials agree to address specific social issues. Some people from outside of the organizing world may call action sessions “rallies,” but not all rallies are related to community organizing.

### *One-to-one meetings*

These strategic meetings involve two individuals meeting to learn about one another's self-interests in order for the individuals to be in relationship with one another (Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning 2014). This phrase has become quite the buzz phrase in the nonprofit world. It is important to note that similar relationship-building meetings may be effective for member recruitment, member retention, and donor relations. However, a true one-to-one based on organizing is purely for the purpose of learning another person's self-interest, not as it relates to these other ideas.

So what does a one-to-one meeting look like? Weill & Winkelman say that it is a conversation between two people that was arranged in advance, lasts approximately one hour, and serves the purpose of building a relationship, not "getting business done." It also includes each individual sharing at least one personal story, discussing what motivates them most in life, and identifying their values and highest concerns (Weill & Winkelman, 2003). One Los Angeles lay leader involved in organizing says that the best one-to-ones are when the other person asks "Where can I sign up?" while the worst one-to-ones are when nothing can evoke a story or the other person only wants to get on their soapbox. While this may seem counter-intuitive to the idea in which one-to-ones are not for the sake of "getting business done," the truth is that neither party in a one-to-one goes in with an agenda. Rather, through sharing and learning about each other's self-interests, energy surfaces, which inspires one or both individuals to want to join the other's cause. This is the piece of community organizing that most closely aligns with what JCCs want to do. As already mentioned above, JCCs have identified the importance of informal conversations between staff and members. If staff, members, and users are in conversation about

their self-interests like a one-to-one conversation, what are some of the actions that they can be inspired to work on together?

A Bay Area IAF organizer spoke about the importance of trust in a developing relationship. He said that this trust is initiated in one-to-one meetings, and it grows as both individuals show up for one another: at other meetings, at events, at actions, etc. Once two people follow through on a campaign and take on an issue together there is enough trust for one person to say to the other, “you know, you really blew that back there,” and the other person takes it as constructive feedback and an opportunity for reflection and growth rather than a time to be defensive. That is what trust looks like in a relationship and why it is so important to develop. Another key piece this organizer spoke about is the mutuality of the relationship. He said that one should never ask a question that he is not willing to answer himself. In this way, the relationship develops mutually and so the work is not just about the issue; it is much more about the relationship. This trust is important in order to engage in a vital part of organizing: agitation.

Agitation is an important organizing term used to describe when someone is challenged to act upon his or her self-interest. Someone can agitate another properly when they are in relationship with one another, and it can be done through respect and concern. It is NOT about directly causing someone to be angry or attacking vulnerabilities (Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning 2014). The purpose of agitating someone is to move him or her to act upon his or her passions. People who are agitated and trained to act appropriately are great assets to an organizing campaign.

## Why Organizing?

*The trouble with many of us, and with our culture as a whole, is that we don't take the time to 'relate,' to connect publicly and formally but meaningfully with others. Instead, we live in what Richard Sennett called a 'tyranny of intimacy'—presidents pretending to share our pain or talk show hosts prying into the most intimate corners of private life. Or we feel the need to maintain a constant and superficial contact with others. We see and are seen by others. We sit in meetings and conferences and dinner sessions with scores and hundreds of others. We 'touch base' with others or 'make an appearance' or 'give brief remarks.' We don't take the time to meet one to one with others, to hear their interests and dreams and fears, to understand why people do what they do or don't do what they don't do. (Gecan, 2002, p. 21).*

Robert Putnam has written extensively about the rise of privatism and the decline in group membership exhibited by Americans (2001). The above quotation from Michael Gecan speaks to this factor. Gecan also says that in today's world of technology and market culture, "We forget or deny that the appetite to relate is fundamental, and that willingness to relate is nearly universal" (Gecan, 2002, p. 21). This is the reason for organizing: to reclaim relationships with others and to care about something bigger and greater than oneself, something that is part of the common good. Organizing provides a vehicle for doing just that.

Just as the goal of JCCs is to build community, organizing's main aim is to establish a relational culture in a community. Ron Wolfson's book *Relational Judaism* has the subtitle "Using the Power of Relationships to Transform the Jewish Community." In it, he talks about the importance of relationships for sustaining Jewish community, institutions, and continuity. When he wants Jewish organizations to be more relational, he wants organizations to facilitate

conversations and encourage people to tell stories: Not for the purposes of getting an annual donation check or membership renewal, but for the sake of sharing in the power of relationships. This is different than a transactional relationship, in which the main purpose is for each individual to gain some benefit from the relationship. Being relational means going beyond a person's basic needs, understanding what a person truly wants, and working towards that in a common way. All relationships can be relational or transactional. Organizing tries to have as many relational ties in its community as possible and limit the number of transactional relationships.

Ari Lipman writes that a relational culture should be the first emphasis in our organizations: “one on one, among clergy and lay leaders, both within congregations and across our membership. These relationships, forged in common action, become the glue that holds our organizations together” (2003, p. 25). He continues by saying that “Community happens not out of email lists and *onegs*, but when people invest in relationships and common action. In a sense, community is like happiness – it cannot be found by searching for it. Rather, it appears in the process of common pursuit.” (p. 28). Too often, organizations like JCCs focus more on their programming than on the people for which they are programming. Community organizing ensures that the people and relationships are at the center of community.

In *Relational Judaism*, Ron Wolfson also tells the story of a woman who was a member of a synagogue for twenty years and then resigned suddenly. When asked why, she told her rabbi that in spite of attending every event she never actually met anybody (2014, p. 17). In a community or institution that organizes, this would not be possible. This woman would have to know people before attending events, or would be followed up with for a one-to-one conversation after the first time she showed up. Organizing gives people a reason to show up at



an institution, because they are the mind, body, and soul of the organization through their responsibility, accountability, and commitment.

In addition to the question, “Why organizing?” it is important to consider, “Why organizing in a JCC?” One east coast organizer at Bend the Arc suggested that organizing has the potential to affect JCCs just as much as JCCs have the potential to impact organizing movements. She said that JCCs already have a captive audience. By already having constituents that are involved, JCCs already have organized people, which is one form of power. Additionally, organizing can help build a JCC community from the inside out by creating stronger connections within the JCC that have the potential to impact the larger community greatly. She envisioned lay leaders at a JCC as part of local coalitions that work on issues JCC members care about, whether it is elderly transportation, youth literacy, or community safety. Therefore, JCCs seem to be an interesting untapped source of collective power that could benefit internally from the community building work offered by organizing tools.

## **Findings and Recommendations**

Based on the research described throughout this paper and outlined in the methodology section above, there are some recommendations and conclusions to be made. These ideas can be divided into the following categories: General Analysis of JCCs’ Capacity and Use for Organizing; A Ladder of Engagement Approach for JCCs; Other Topics to Explore; and A Training Guide for JCCs.

### **General Analysis of JCCs’ Capacity and Use for Organizing**

The original design and purpose of this research was to determine where the goals and missions of JCCs and organizing align. From an organizing perspective I was interested to know

whether or not any JCCs were already doing any institution-based organizing or if there was energy around any part of the organizing process. My initial research led me to the following hypotheses: (1) While JCCs do great social justice work and community building, they are not at this time doing any kind of organizing. (2) JCCs may be interested in learning more about one-to-one meetings as a tool to help them enhance their community building skills through increasing the quantity and quality of informal conversations JCC members and participants have with their staff. (3) While JCCs are institutions that already have some amount of organized power, they are probably not interested in the full organizing cycle including choosing an issue and using that power to find and create solutions for that issue.

As I engaged in the interview process, my second hypothesis was almost unanimously confirmed. My document research pointed to the fact that JCCs are interested in increasing the number of informal conversations between staff and members (Brand-Richardson & Paller, 2013; JCC Association, 2012). One-to-one conversations from community organizing are one potential way to accomplish this, whether JCCs want to have these conversations for the purposes of organizing or use some of the techniques to train their staff on how to be more effective in talking with their members. One staff person from Aaron Family JCC of Dallas, who has had some interactions with organizing, said that he thinks JCCs could really benefit from adapting some parts of organizing. He saw potential in re-envisioning relational conversations based on organizing in a way that could positively impact relationships related to development. Additionally, he thought these methods could combat the ever-looming problem of JCCs operating within silos by using them to improve interdepartmental relationships.

Other conversations I had with JCCs reflected these ideas in relation to my second hypothesis too. For example, the Jewish Community Alliance (JCA) in Jacksonville is currently

in the process of developing an Ambassadors Program in order to enhance lay leadership while simultaneously reaching out to new members. Interested lay leaders are interviewed in order to determine their aptitude for being welcoming before they are allowed to join the Ambassadors Program. The program director said she looks for things like individuals who “reach out to people anyhow...wave to people on a tour....[and] they spontaneously talk about how wonderful JCA Jacksonville is.” In addition to looking for a certain type of person, this program could probably benefit from some of the training used in community organizing for one-to-ones.

I encountered some interesting and unexpected ideas related to my first and third hypotheses. First, it is important to note that I only have a few first- and second-hand accounts of JCCs engaging in elements of organizing; there may be others of which I am not aware. That said there are at least three JCCs that either already do some organizing-related activity or have actively sought out organizing models to adopt in their own centers. These are Westside JCC in Los Angeles, JCC of San Francisco, and JCC of Greater Baltimore. Each one takes a different approach, and they all offer interesting examples.

First, Westside Jewish Community Center (WJCC) in Los Angeles brought in an organizer from the Union for Reform Judaism’s organizing branch called Just Congregations in 2014. The purpose was to train staff in one-to-one organizing techniques to utilize throughout the JCC in order to build relationships between staff and members. Ronnel Conn, the Assistant Executive Director at WJCC, arranged this program in order to improve Benchmarking scores that measure relationships at the JCC. As I learned from conversations with him, he feels that the training was good, but that because there was not an official listening campaign with specific goals and objectives in place, it was difficult for staff to apply the training in measureable ways. This is a great example of how organizing could be brought into JCCs; however, it seems that

clear evaluation is important. Additionally, I believe that adaptations may need to be spelled out more clearly in order to be successful. WJCC did not have a listening campaign because they did not want to complete an entire organizing cycle, but other measureable goals could have been set for staff in order to set them up for better success.

The second interesting finding in my interviews was not an example of actual organizing, rather a desire to engage in organizing-related activities. Two staff members at JCC of San Francisco (JCCSF) expressed the agency's interest in learning how to become indispensable to the City of San Francisco. One particular example they both mentioned is how to be part of the conversation about affordable housing. They feel that this issue is greatly impacting their members who are being forced to move out of their neighborhood as the Bay Area's housing prices are soaring. One of these staff members even expressed that she does "not know what we could do" to be involved. I believe that if JCCSF committed to a full organizing campaign, they could do an assessment of this issue to determine exactly how they could best allocate their resources to change the climate around housing. By developing their power and relationships through the organizing process, they could improve the lives of their members and the greater community.

The third JCC I would like to highlight is JCC of Greater Baltimore; staff here has already developed some of these public and communal relationships. According to interviews with Barak Hermann, the President of JCCs of Greater Baltimore, his organization has relationships with four major players in the city of Baltimore: the hospital system, Stevenson University, Baltimore Police Department, and city officials in Baltimore. He said that two years ago the JCC of Greater Baltimore started a formal collaboration with local hospitals. In the past few years, prevention has become a priority in the healthcare world. The JCC's health and

wellness initiatives align well and have overlapping priorities. Therefore, the JCC and hospitals have partnered using the hospitals' expertise in health and the JCC's membership base and facilities in order to offer health programming. Through this partnership they work together publicly on community health initiatives. Hermann gave one small, internal example that just recently, eighty women came together at the JCC to talk about Jewish values and how they relate to heart disease. By addressing a community issue, with community partners, JCC of Greater Baltimore is building relationships and engaging in activity that is similar to organizing.

The local college, Stevenson University, and the Baltimore Police Department are two other examples of power partners that the JCC of Greater Baltimore is collaborating with in order to make its community better. Through interviews with Hermann I learned that over the past three years the university has become a corporate sponsor of the center through generous donations, paying for memberships for all of its athletes, and utilizing JCC spaces. In return, the JCC serves as a university internship site while also benefitting from the teen education and community work that the university conducts on the JCC campus.

Similarly, the Baltimore Police Department has a positive relationship with the JCC. Hermann described the mutually beneficial relationship as "excellent," with all officers receiving free center memberships and the JCC hosting Police Department staff meetings. Together, both agencies collaborate to improve security and safety at the JCC and in surrounding neighborhoods. In addition to police officials, local council people and the mayor's office congregate at the JCC, offering opportunities for JCC members and staff to interact with and show their support for politicians. In return, city officials maintain positive relationships with the JCC. These three partnerships between JCC of Greater Baltimore and the hospital, university, and police department, along with the public official relationships are not direct examples of

organizing. However, they are examples of how JCCs could incorporate aspects of organizing's relationship building and power cultivation in order to play a positive role in their larger communities. Barak Hermann said that JCC of Greater Baltimore maintains these ties because "it is important not just to take care of our own community, but the larger community in general...it's good for people in general." This mindset could easily be adopted elsewhere.

These conversations show that some JCCs have energy and interest around what organizing could look like at their institutions. My first hypothesis was that JCCs are not currently organizing, however, both WJCC and JCC of Greater Baltimore already have engaged in some organizing-related activity. My third hypothesis was that JCCs are not interested in the full organizing cycle in order to use relationships to build power and make social change. JCC of Greater Baltimore is already doing some of this, and JCC of San Francisco very clearly expressed interest in how to do this work.

While on my quest to determine JCCs' aptitude for organizing, two other important questions were posed to me throughout this process. One is related to Relational Judaism, and the other is related to power and advocacy in Jewish institutions. Earlier in this thesis I quoted Ron Wolfson's book *Relational Judaism*. This is because my research shows that not all JCCs are ready to think about adopting all aspects of organizing, but I still believe organizing techniques have something to offer. The kind of community building that I am describing, in which JCCs use one-to-ones not for the purposes of organizing, is a type of Relational Judaism. At first, I was asked how my vision of organizing in JCCs differs from the Relational Judaism that Ron Wolfson discusses.

My answer is that they are closely related. Relational Judaism is about how organizations should create experiences that "will offer participants a deeper connection to each other, with the

community, and with Judaism itself” (Wolfson, 2). Organizing methods provide one strategy for how to be relational, but they are not all-inclusive of all of the ways that an institution may become relational. All of the building blocks that make up organizing, such as one-to-ones or house meetings, are also part of Relational Judaism, but not everything that makes up Relational Judaism is part of organizing.

It is important to clarify that for JCCs (or other institutions) that do want to take on the entire organizing cycle, they are doing more than just incorporating Relational Judaism into their work. All aspects of organizing are built on relationships, but the goals of Relational Judaism and organizing are different. The ultimate goal for organizing is to bring about positive social change. The means by which organizing does this is through relationships. Relational Judaism aims to build relationships in order to engage Jews in Judaism; this is very different than working towards social justice.

Another area of challenge that was brought to my attention is the fact that the Jewish community already has its own organizational structure and often sits in a place of relative power when compared with other institutions that use organizing. Additionally, it is important to know that the organizing process is a long one. Because of this, one Los Angeles rabbi suggested that going through the organizing cycle is not the best use of time for Jewish institutions and he would prefer to see JCCs act directly with the power they already possess through coalitions, advocacy campaigns, and partnerships with other community organizations. Based on my research I propose a “both/and” approach to this challenge. It is true that Jewish institutions already possess some power in the form of both money and organized people. Therefore, I believe that each JCC should take a little time to evaluate what power it does possess and how it can act immediately while also continuing to grow relationships to build more power. I still

believe that any organization can use some of the methods put forth in the training guide below in order to improve the relationships among their community members.

Ultimately, I stand by the original idea that guided my research: organizing methods offer a variety of tools that can help JCCs be more relational both inside their agency and in the greater community. Therefore, I recommend that JCCs first use one-to-ones, reflection, evaluation, and leadership development in order to become the strongest communities that they may be. The following Ladder of Engagement may help JCCs to communicate and evaluate how they are doing in this process. By undertaking this process, JCCs will be in touch with the hopes, dreams, problems, and obstacles of their members. Once this task is well underway, I believe that JCCs have the potential to be beacons of light in their larger communities by using the full organizing cycle and helping members succeed in addressing issues in their community.

### **A Ladder of Engagement Approach for JCCs**

The words engagement, involvement, and participation are used all too often and interchangeably without clear definition in the Jewish world and the larger community. Hillel International uses engagement benchmarks in order to measure their work across college campuses (2014). Beth Kanter, a nonprofit networker, talks about a ladder of engagement as a way to describe the different stages of support that individuals go through in deepening their involvement in an organization (<http://www.bethkanter.org/nten-webinar/>). She has the least engaged being the highest populated group and the most engaged being the lowest populated. Based partly on this ladder, I propose a ladder of engagement with four steps: customer service, participation, involvement, and engagement. Each category on the ladder is defined based on skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. While I am using the visual metaphor of a ladder for



this tool, it is important to note that even though it has steps in the form of rungs, the whole concept is more fluid, like a spectrum. This spectrum is based not on the support that individuals give to the JCC, but rather on the relationship between the person and the JCC. By making relationships the focus of this ladder of engagement, JCCs can try to foster a relational culture in order to build their communities.

*Step 1: Customer Service*

JCC literature and the interviews with JCC professionals for this project include much discussion of customer service. Customer service is the frontline effort that JCC staff use to interact with members, participants, and guests at a JCC. The Jewish value of welcoming guests, *hachnasat orchim*, should guide this step. The goal for JCC staff should be to ensure that people feel welcomed to the JCC and anticipate their needs as best as possible. In 2010, the DiJulius Group helped Starbucks develop their current customer service vision statement: “We create inspired moments in each customer’s day.” They do so guided by the following action items: anticipate, connect, personalize, and own (<https://www.thedijuliusgroup.com/blog/2014/creating-inspired-moments-in-each-customers-day/733/>). JCCs (and many other Jewish service agencies and nonprofit organizations in general) could learn so much from this customer service vision. Trying to anticipate the needs of someone who walks into a JCC, connect with them about their need, personalize their experience, and take ownership over that experience should be the goal of every JCC employee in every JCC. In doing so, the first level on the ladder of engagement may be achieved. That said, even this deep level of customer service is still a transactional relationship in which a person needs something from the JCC and the JCC gets something from the person in return. It is, however, the foundation for a relationship.

### *Step 2: Participation*

Participation means showing up to an event. A participant knows enough information about the event and/or the organization running the event and/or someone involved in the event. He or she may have some knowledge about the event, organization, or an involved person, but not necessarily (for example: think of the person who just shows up “because my friend invited me”). Most likely, a participant has neutral or positive associations with the person, event or organization that inspired them to participate and, as such, acts in a neutral or positive manner by being polite at the event, but not necessarily jumping into the middle of activity.

Every JCC program requires participants. Therefore, while EVERY single person that interacts with a JCC should be met with customer service, participation should have the next highest volume of individuals. Individuals in this level of relationship with the JCC are likely on the mailing list or have friends that are connected to the JCC. It is a peripheral or secondary relationship, the way one may interact with an acquaintance or new friend, but not a close friend. The best way to encourage participation is through personal touches before, during, and after events. Through personal invitations, collecting information at events, and following up after, JCCs can build on the foundation established through customer service and grow the relationship.

### *Step 3: Involvement*

Involvement means volunteering or helping out. An involved person knows enough about the event and organization in advance to offer their assistance, and/or when they just show up to something they feel comfortable enough jumping in, either because they have been to events before, support the agency, or have some other reason to be inspired to act. They are able to see

what is needed and pitch in to fill that gap. These are event chairs, volunteers, preschool or camp parents, etc.

Customer service and participation require the JCC to take most of the initiative.

Involvement is the first step in which individuals really start to take a more active role in their relationship with the JCC. There are lots of ways that one may get involved, and roles vary by JCC, but examples include volunteering time and effort or offering financial or other types of support to enhance the work done at the JCC. This does not, however, mean that a JCC can sit back and let their volunteers do all the work. Volunteers require and deserve attention in order for the volunteer experience to be positive and for them to want to continue to be involved. Things like clear directions in advance and lots of appreciation go a long way in every stage of a relationship, but especially in the involvement step.

#### *Step 4: Engagement*

Engagement means being invested in the goals and mission of the larger event, agency, community, etc. Engaged individuals are involved for the long haul. They know about the organization pretty well and from an insider's perspective. They have an ongoing relationship with the organization and its members and staff. Engaged individuals are the leaders of the organization: The board members, committee members, etc. They are actively part of the regular happenings at the JCC and they care deeply about the mission and community for which they work. There are the fewest number of people on this rung, but they yield the most productive help. Most nonprofit professionals know that working with lay leaders to organize and plan anything almost always requires more time and effort than just doing it as a staff, however, the value in this lay leadership role is priceless and crucial to the mission of the JCC.

It is important to note that just like the organizing cycle that does not just happen step-by-step and in order, some of these levels can be overlapping; that is one of the reasons this is really a spectrum rather than a ladder. For example, there should always be good customer service, regardless of which part of the spectrum a person has reached in their relationship with the JCC. Additionally, it is also intentional that membership is not mentioned in any of these steps. This is because different JCCs have different models of membership and, for the most part, membership is a transactional relationship that may happen at any of the steps on the ladder of engagement.

### **A Training Guide for JCCs**

Attached to this thesis is a training guide called *Let's Get Organized about Building Community*. This training guide is for JCC staff and lay leaders to learn about one-to-one meetings, evaluation, reflection, and mentorship from organizing models and be able to implement in JCCs in order to build community. It was written based on the research conducted for the purposes of this thesis. Through interviews and other research, I found that the most relevant aspects of organizing for JCCs are one-to-one meetings, reflection, evaluation, and mentorship. Each of these topics is covered (although not exhaustively) in the training. The goals of the training are outlined in the guide, and it is my hope that JCCs find ways to incorporate this training into their regular training of staff and lay leaders.

### **Other Topics to Explore**

In the process of this research many topics came up, but not all of them could be addressed in this one thesis and the attached training guide. In particular, there are a few topics that are central to the ideas of organizing that may be relevant and interesting to some JCCs, especially to those that want to dive deeper into the organizing process. Ideally, they would be

further explored and included in expanded versions of the training guide. First, I would recommend that there be a section on self-interest that allows participants to further explore and understand their own self-interests and how they may interact with the self-interests of others around them. Second, I think it is very important for JCCs to know how to conduct a power analysis of their institution in order to understand what power it already possesses, how to best access and use that power, and how to most effectively and efficiently grow that power. Third, the topics of privilege and oppression are key to organizing. I think that JCCs may have unique relationships and attitudes towards these concepts; this relates to the point I mentioned earlier about JCCs often having significant power compared to other nonprofits and groups that typically engage in organizing. Privilege, oppression, and power are all interconnected, so in order to be effective partners with other communities it will be important for both individuals within a JCC and the agency as a whole to understand these ideas and how they relate to them.

Finally, mentorship and leadership are valuable topics for JCCs to explore. Every IAF organizer I spoke with about training mentioned the importance of mentorship in the process. Organizing trainings are very much about a short explanation, a small example and then just “trying it out.” Organizing is very much about trial and error. Therefore, reflection with a mentor or leader is the way to improve skills and become a good organizer. In my research I do not feel like I collected enough information to completely understand how organizing uses mentorship or to develop a model for JCCs. However, I do believe that there is more to offer in this topic from which JCCs could learn. It could mean that all JCC employees have assigned mentors or that there is a more formal structure for growing leadership. Either way, I hope that future exploration looks at mentorship and leadership more closely.

## **Conclusion**

The title of this thesis is “What can JCCs learn from community and institution-based organizing models?” The short answer to this question is: as little or as much as they want. What I have learned over the course of my research is that JCCs, without the influence of organizing, have developed all sorts of creative ways to engage their members and build relationships. For example, the Jewish Community Alliance (JCA) in Jacksonville’s Ambassadors Program that is mentioned above. At the same time, organizing has a lot to offer JCCs that are looking for new models.

The best part about considering organizing from the lens of JCC work is that there are so many options. JCCs could choose to adopt one or more small pieces of organizing: such as the way organizing develops mentors or enhances leadership development plans. One-to-ones are a great example of a building block of organizing that a JCC could adapt to its own needs. Additionally, I believe there is a lot to gain for a JCC that is ready to commit to the entire organizing cycle and build relationships, choose an issue, and then act in the greater community. The biggest message I hope to make clear through this thesis is that any of these options is great! JCCs that are creative and open-minded enough to learn from other community models like organizing are going to find ways to strengthen communities both within the walls of their own buildings and by thinking beyond their own bricks and mortar.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **JCC Question Guide**

- What is the mission of your JCC?
- What role does community engagement play in that mission?
- What does community engagement look like on the ground?
- If you could bring about one change to community engagement, what would it be?
- Do you have a membership director? Do you have an engagement director or another person related to engagement?
- There has been a national trend of JCCs hiring Engagement Directors rather than Membership Directors. How do you feel about this trend?
- How is your community already involved in social justice?
- Do you know about community organizing? If yes, does your JCC currently engage in any community organizing? Have you ever considered it?

### **Organizing Question Guide**

- How do you define community organizing?
- Can you please describe your experience with community organizing?
- Have you ever been trained in community organizing techniques? If so, why?
- What kind of training did you receive? Who organized it? Can you describe it?
- Have you ever led any trainings? If so, what were they like?
- Can you tell me about a successful one-to-one meeting and a not so successful one-to-one meeting?
- What role does relationship building play in community organizing?
- What do you believe is the relationship between community organizing and social justice?
- What do you wish you knew when you were starting to organize?
- Do you know much about JCCs? If so, have you ever thought of JCCs as a potential place for community organizing?

## **Appendix 2: Training Guide**

### **Let's Get Organized about Building Community:**

A training guide for JCC staff and lay leaders to build community in JCCs through organizing principles, including one-to-one meetings, evaluation, reflection, and mentorship

Written by Erin Goldstrom

Submitted as part of the requirements for a thesis at the Zelikow School of Jewish Nonprofit Management at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

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## **Introduction**

My name is Erin Goldstrom and I am a dual degree graduate student earning a Master in Social Work (MSW) from University of Southern California (USC) and a Master of Arts in Jewish Nonprofit Management (MAJNM) from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in Los Angeles, California. For the fulfillment of my degree from HUC-JIR I have undertaken a research thesis with the following guiding question: “What can JCCs learn from organizing models?” Through qualitative research with JCC professionals and organizers (this research can be further explored in my thesis: What Can JCCs Learn from Community and Institution-Based Organizing Models?) I realized that the easiest and most beneficial way to share my findings is through teaching the techniques that seem most effective for JCCs. This training is the format I have chosen to teach these tools.

## **How to use this training guide**

This guide is designed to be used by one or more people familiar with community organizing practices in order to lead a training session within a JCC to prepare staff and/or lay leaders. The purpose of the training is to help JCC professionals and lay leaders learn some tools from community organizing, such as self-interest and self-reflection, one-to-one meetings, evaluation and mentorship. After the training, individuals should feel equipped and empowered to help build community within their JCC using these tools. It is important to note that organizing is a process and that each of the pieces taught in this training is a smaller piece of this larger process. Additionally, there are other pieces of organizing that are not included in this training as they serve different goals than building community through relationships.

**Goals**

- Participants will have a basic concept of what organizing is.
- Participants will know why JCCs may want to consider organizing tools.
- Participants will feel empowered to use one-to-one meetings, reflection, evaluation and mentorship to help build community in their JCC.

**Outcomes**

- Participants will be able to identify elements of a one-to-one conversation.
- Participants will have a definition of organizing and know a little bit about its history.
- Participants will practice having a one-to-one conversation.
- Participants will speak with three people they do not know (or do not know well) during this training.
- Participants will have a few ideas about how to implement aspects of organizing at their JCC.
- Participants will have met the trainers and group leaders who already know how to do some of this work.
- Participants will leave with some resources about the building blocks of community organizing and how to implement them at their JCC.

## Resources

### **Bend the Arc**

<http://www.bendthearc.us/>

### **University of Denver's Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning**

Community Organizing Handbook

[http://www.du.edu/ccesl/media/documents/ccesl\\_community\\_organizing\\_handbook\\_third\\_edition.pdf](http://www.du.edu/ccesl/media/documents/ccesl_community_organizing_handbook_third_edition.pdf)

<http://www.du.edu/ccesl/>

### **Going Public**

by Michael Gecan

### **Industrial Areas Foundation**

<http://www.industrialareasfoundation.org/>

### **Join for Justice**

<http://www.joinforjustice.org/>

*What Can JCCs Learn from Community and Institution-Based Organizing Models?*

By Erin Goldstrom, ZSJNM Graduate Thesis, available online at BJPA

### **Pico National Network**

<http://www.piconetwork.org/>

### **Relational Judaism**

by Ron Wolfson

### **Rules for Radicals**

by Saul Alinsky

## Materials Needed

- PowerPoint with organizers, community examples, and stick figure sample: Appendix A
- Participants need paper and writing implements
- SmartBoard, whiteboard, or giant post its for the trainer to write on
- Copies of the resource page for participants to take home and reference

## Training Timeline Overview

Introduction: 00-05 minutes

Opening Conversation: 05-15 minutes

Overview of Community Organizing: 15-30 minutes

Self Reflection: 30-50 minutes

Introdyction/Example: 30-35 minutes

Personal Stick Figure: 35-40 minutes

Partner Stick Figure: 40-46 minutes

Wrap Up Questions: 46-50 minutes

One-to-ones: 50-130 minutes

Example: 50-55 minutes

What is a one-to-one: 55-75 minutes

Break into groups: 75-120 minutes

Review: 120-130 minutes

Reflection & Evaluation: 130-140 minutes

Implementation at your JCC: 140-150 minutes

Wrap Up & Questions: 150-160 minutes



## **Training Content Delivery**

*Introduction:* The trainer will welcome participants and introduce him/herself and any other trainers in the room.

*Opening Conversation:* Ask the participants to turn to someone next to them (preferably someone they do not know well) and have a two-minute conversation that they think will help them build a relationship with the other person.

After a minute, the trainer will ask for a show of hands based on the following questions:

- Who feels like they know their partner better?
- Who feels like they could share one thing about their partner?
- Who feels they could share one thing that is important or motivates their partner?
- Who is confident their partner could do the same for them?

Next, the trainer will ask for some answers for the following questions, recognizing that the conversation was time limited:

- What kind of questions were asked in the conversation?
- What kind of information did each of you share?
- What was easy about this conversation?
- What was hard about this conversation?
- Did it feel like a safe space?
- Did it feel like it got below the surface?

Trainer will explain that participants just had what JCCA calls an “informal conversation.” These conversations have been on JCCA’s radar since the beginning of benchmarking. For ten years benchmarking has shown that the number of informal conversations a person has at the JCC is directly correlated with their Net Promoter Score. In other words, members and staff who take

the time to talk to other members and participants at the JCC increase the likelihood that the member will renew their membership, feel connected at the JCC, and donate to the JCC.

Trainer will continue by saying that for some people, it is easy to have informal conversations, but for other people it is not. At the same time, the JCC has not put any parameters whatsoever on what constitutes a good and effective informal conversation. However, there are other organizations and groups that use conversation as a vehicle for building their community and promoting a cause. We are going to spend the next three hours exploring what tools JCCs can learn from one particular model and how to implement it at your JCC.

*Overview of Community Organizing:* Community organizing aims to build relationships in order to harness power and create positive social change. Broad-based organizing or institution-based organizing is the same practice done within an institution that already has a pre-existing structure, such as a JCC. Some examples of organizing from history that you may be familiar with include the following (*a PowerPoint, such as that in Appendix A, with photos of these people for visuals should be used*):

- Saul Alinsky is considered the founder of organizing and did so through his work with labor unions. He wrote the book *Rules for Radicals* and started the organization Industrial Areas Foundation, which is a large, national organizing entity that still exists today.
- Martin Luther King Jr. was an organizer with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and in this capacity served as a leader for the American Civil Rights Movement.
- Cesar Chavez was a farm worker and labor leader who founded the National Farm Workers Association.

- President Barack Obama started his career on the south side of Chicago as an organizer that helped start a job training program and a college preparatory tutoring program.

These are just a few of the more famous examples of organizers. At first glance, organizing may be viewed as exclusively political work. But that is not true for some of the following examples *(include photos of logos and action of each example on PowerPoint)*:

- Peninsula Interfaith Action in East Palo Alto got a sidewalk put in their neighborhood to protect children walking to school and to prevent accidents.
- Dallas Area Interfaith started Durable Medical Equipment Exchange of Dallas, a used medical supply store that provides low cost health care equipment to its community.
- Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development (AKA BUILD) helped establish Child First PlaySmart Sports, a sports program for children.

These examples show just how much can be accomplished, both locally and large scale when a community or institution uses organizing techniques in order to build relationships and harness their own power for a collective purpose. How exactly do these groups do this work?

According to the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning, the community organizing process contains the following phases:

- Relationship Building: to determine self-interest, agitate, and build power
- Issue Selection determines which part of a societal problem the community will address
- Issue Research means collecting information: facts, experiences and relationships about the root causes of the issue and what power can be accessed to address them
- Taking Action publicly to hold individuals, groups, and organizations accountable to addressing the issue

- Reflection and Evaluation means critically reviewing and assessing the process used and how it can be improved in the future

It is important to note that the organizing process is fluid and that groups and communities are constantly moving in and out of these phases, and may be in multiple phases at once. In these phases, here are some of the tools used to organize:

- One-to-one meetings involve two individuals meeting to learn about the other's self-interests and how those interests interact with each other in order to be in relationship with one another.
- House meetings are ways to bring groups of constituents together beyond individual meetings for building trust, relationships, and community while also identifying issues and brainstorming potential solutions.
- Research meetings include getting to know local implementation leaders and decision-makers while learning about problems in the community.
- Public actions and accountability sessions are large gatherings with all stakeholders in which leaders and officials agree to address specific social issues.

Today, we will be looking specifically at one-to-one meetings as a tool. We will learn the elements of them, how to do them, and have a chance to practice. While we are only explicitly practicing this one skill, it is important to remember the others and the context they all play in the larger organizing process.

Trainer explains that before we dive into one-to-ones, we will first take a look inward in order to prepare for meeting with others.

*Self Reflection:* Trainer will explain that relationship building starts with self-reflection and personal identity. First, it is important to understand the difference between self-interest, selfishness, and selflessness.

- Selflessness: denial of self
- Selfishness: greedy, stingy conceit

According to the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning, self-interest is the intersection between one's own core values and the general values of society such as justice, equality, and freedom. It is important to know your own self-interest in order to know what motivates you. Once you know your self-interest you can start to learn the self-interests of others and discover what motivates you to be in relationship and work together.

Trainer will demonstrate one tool of organizing, called the stick figure. It is a way to write down the profile of a person to show his or her self-interests. After demonstrating (example in slide show in Appendix A), the trainer will invite participants to take 5 minutes to draw stick figures of themselves, making sure to think about their own core values, note the different ways in which aspects of their identities intersect, and write down what their self-interests are.

After 5 minutes, the trainer will bring the group back together and ask for a few reactions to the process and to address any questions. Then the trainer will invite participants to pair up and take 6 minutes (3 minutes per partner) to draw stick figures of one another in order to represent aspects of one another's identity and self-interests. Tell the group that normally a stick figure of someone else is something you have after a much longer conversation, but for the purposes of today, it is better to practice. Then the trainer will wrap up the self-interest section of the training with the following questions to the group:

- What is one thing you learned about your own self-interests?
- Were you surprised by anything your partner shared?

- Where did your self-interests overlap?
- Do you feel tempted to find/force similarities where they may not exist?

*One-to-one meetings:* Trainer will invite pre-selected participant to the front/center of room and engage him/her in a one-to-one meeting for 5 minutes.

Trainer will ask participants for observations about the conversation and what they noticed as being different from a typical conversation. Trainer will then say that a one-to-one is a meeting without any set agenda except to build a relationship and learn the other person's self-interest. As a result, here are the things that a one-to-one meeting is and is not:

#### Is NOT

- Chit chat
- An interview
- A soapbox
- Prying
- Selling
- Private
- About assumptions

#### IS

- Building a relationship
- About questions that probe
- Story driven
- An exchange
- About curiosity
- Listening
- Public and personal

A positive outcome of a one-to-one is learning each other's self-interest and where they overlap. There may be an ask at the end of the meeting: Either to meet again to continue the conversation, who else to speak with, or a call for help with a cause depending on where in the process each person is.

The trainer should be very clear that doing one-to-ones well is an art, not a science and that we will spend the next half hour practicing this art.

Trainer will then explain that participants will be assigned a group and a group leader. In the groups, everyone will have a chance to participate in a fishbowl one-to-one and a feedback round in order to practice and learn how to do this. Trainer will then divide the group so that there are group leaders with 6-8 individuals in each group. Groups will separate into different spaces to conduct their group time.

In group time, group leaders will pair off participants so that they are ideally with people they do not know well. If there are an odd number of participants, the group leader can be in a pair. In each group, pairs will have a 10-minute one-to-one conversation in front of the group and then the group leader will stop them and the pair will receive feedback from the group. Questions for one-to-one participants to ask each other include:

- What worked for you?
- What didn't work for you?
- Did you feel uncomfortable? In a good, productive way or in a bad way?
- What stories did you share? Why?
- How was the sharing? Even? Uneven?
- Do you feel like you know your partner's self-interest or what motivates them? If so, what is it?

Questions for the leader to ask participants that watched the one-to-one include (They can also help one-to-one participants with their questions if necessary):

- How did that look like it went?
- What did you like?
- What would you like to have been different?

After each pair in the group has had a chance to do a one-to-one in front of the group, the larger training session will meet back together. The trainer will take 10 minutes to wrap up this section of the training. First, he/she should address any questions that came up during group time. Then, he/she will conclude by reminding everyone that learning how to do one-to-ones well is a process and it takes practice. For that reason, the next piece of the training will be about Reflection & Evaluation in order to get better at this work. Before that, pass out the list below of some helper questions from the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning to think about when going into one-to-one meetings. These are not interviews, however; therefore

this list cannot and should not be used word for word. The most important part of one-to-ones is listening and self-disclosing appropriately so that you know what the right questions to ask are.

- What is important to you and why? What motivates you?
- What would you call a life well lived?
- When have you felt most weak?
- Who are your heroes and heroines?
- What is your greatest strength/weakness?
- What do you like most about the community you live in?
- How would you improve your community?
- What makes you angry?
- What are you passionate about? Curious about?
- Have you volunteered in the past? If so, for whom?
- What is your definition of success?
- What makes you get out of bed in the morning?

Lastly, the trainer should invite participants to write down the names of three people that they would like to have one-to-one meetings with in their own JCC setting.

*Reflection, Evaluation, and Mentorship:* Chapter 1 of Pirkei Avot (Ethics of our Fathers) says

*Acquire yourself a teacher and make yourself a friend.*

עשה לך רב וקנה לך חבר

Earlier we talked about organizing being an art, and not a science. This holds true for relationship building and much of the work we do at JCCs. Art requires practice and can be helped along by mentorship and constant reflection and evaluation. Just as we started the session by being self-reflective and trying to understand our own identities, values, and self-interests, as you engage in this work, you should regularly stop and ask the questions: How did that one-to-one meeting go? or What could I have done better? It helps even more to engage others in this reflective task. Therefore, I invite you to listen to the Ethics of our Fathers and seek out others for help. Whether they are organizers with experience from your community, somebody here that you enjoyed meeting and want to continue learning with, or someone at your JCC or in your life



that you admire and think could help you with this task. Right now, I will ask you to think of someone you may want to be your teacher moving forward and who you may want to be your friend, someone who will learn with you. (Give the participants time to think and write names).

Reflection, evaluation, and mentorship are not exclusive concepts to community organizing. If you have not yet considered who you may want as mentors on your own “personal board of directors” I recommend thinking about that. Whether or not you and your JCC decide to implement these tools of organizing, having a designated practice for reflection, evaluation, and mentorship is essential. For example, a synagogue in California does a whole staff review of many events in which they list the positives, the negatives, and the deltas (things to change for the future) after each event. Take a few minutes, either by yourself or with someone sitting next to you to come up with 1-3 ideas of how to bring about a culture of reflection, evaluation, and mentorship in your life and/or JCC.

After 5 minutes, the trainer will bring the group back together and take a few examples and questions.

*What does this look like at a JCC?* Trainer will explain that using organizing techniques can look different in different settings and should be adapted appropriately to each individual context. Here are three examples of what the organizing techniques we discussed today could look like in a JCC context (*these examples should have visuals on the PowerPoint and/or be on a handout for participants*):

### **Organizing for Relationships**

Imagine a JCC where, when a person contacts the JCC with interest about its program, attends an event for the first time, or joins the J, they are connected with a staff or volunteer

coordinator that wants to meet them for coffee or ice cream. At this one-to-one meeting they get to know each other and as a result the JCC person has an idea of this new person's interests. He invites the new person to meet with another person on a team of 30 at the JCC that have all been trained in organizing techniques. The lead volunteer chooses from someone on this team based on common self-interests of the new person and the person assigned: Either they both have children the same age, care about the arts, want a workout buddy, etc. This person on the team of 30 checks in with the new person for another meeting, introduces her to other members and participants, and invites her to events happening at the J. The new person sees this volunteer as a new friend and somewhat of a sponsor of her new participation, membership and community at the JCC. As a result of this new member relationship-building programming, this JCC's Net Promoter Score has increased 10% and cross promotion has increased 5% because the new person is invited to many more events across many more departments than new members used to be.

### **Organizing for Leadership and Mentorship**

At this JCC every staff person is paired with either another staff or lay leader as a mentor. These pairs meet at least monthly to check in about how things are going for that staff person at the JCC. All mentors have received some sort of organizing or mentorship training to help their mentees learn how to reflect and evaluate their work at the JCC. When a new employee starts at the J, they start with a one-to-one meeting with their new mentor. This meeting is the start of a public relationship that bonds the mentor to the JCC and also helps the staff person feel as if the J is invested in them. As a result of this leadership and mentor program, staff satisfaction has increased 20% and staff turnover has decreased 10%. Within the team of mentors, especially for those who are lay leaders, their Net Promoter scores have increased and their investment in the J,

both time wise and financially has gone up too. While data has not yet been collected on any of these things through benchmarking, there is also a sense from management that productivity has increased and there is more innovation and collaboration amongst staff than ever before. People want to work for this J, and members can tell.

### **Organizing for a Cause**

Imagine a JCC with a team of individuals (staff and lay leaders) that care deeply about the community at their J and also the wellbeing of their greater metropolitan community. This team has spent years building up this group through listening to what their members really care about and what issues impact their community. When they started this work, they kept hearing about problems in their older adult population with depression, under-involvement, poverty, health, and isolation, in spite of the fact that the J has a robust senior program that was decently attended, but had much more capacity to fill. Through developing relationships with one another and throughout the community, they learned that the public transportation in their area was very limiting and seniors did not have the money or other means to get to programming designed for them, like the program at the J. As a result, they systematically developed relationships with their mayor's office, with the local department of transportation, and with the older adult homes in the area in order to start a new senior transportation program. Now, seniors in the community are happier, the JCC has positive relationships with these bodies of power in their community, their senior programming has expanded and is full, and the community feels empowered and proud of the impact they have had. Now that this group of leaders has some of the relationships and infrastructure in place for addressing community wide issues they are starting to talk with members again about what issue to tackle next. In this JCC members feel proud and well connected, and in the greater community the JCC is seen as a leader.

After reading through these examples, the trainer tells participants that none of these examples is mutually exclusive and that a JCC could technically do all of them at once. The trainer invites participants to choose one example and a partner to think about the first steps involved in implementing one of these plans at their own JCC.

The trainer brings the group back together for some examples, feedback and questions.

*Wrap Up & Questions:* This last 10 minutes is for the trainer to review what participants have learned over the past couple of hours and to tie up any loose ends. The trainer should start by showing participants the agenda:

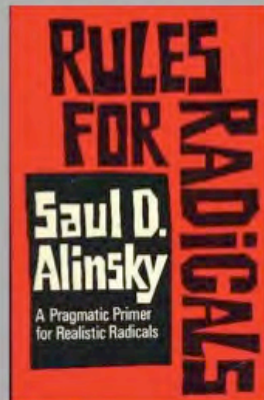
- Overview of Community Organizing
- Self Reflection, including how to make stick figures
- One-to-ones, including what is and what is NOT in a one-to-one meeting, and how to continually practice and get better at them
- Reflection & Evaluation
- Implementation at your JCC
- Wrap Up & Questions

After going over each item, ask participants if there are any more questions. The trainer should offer to stay around for individual questions. Lastly, each training session should end with some sort of evaluation, either on paper, or ideally, a text/digital evaluation. Since each training will be done in a different context, it is important to tailor the evaluation to the more specific goals of the individual training. If your organization wants help with this evaluation, feel free to contact the writer of this training program for more information.

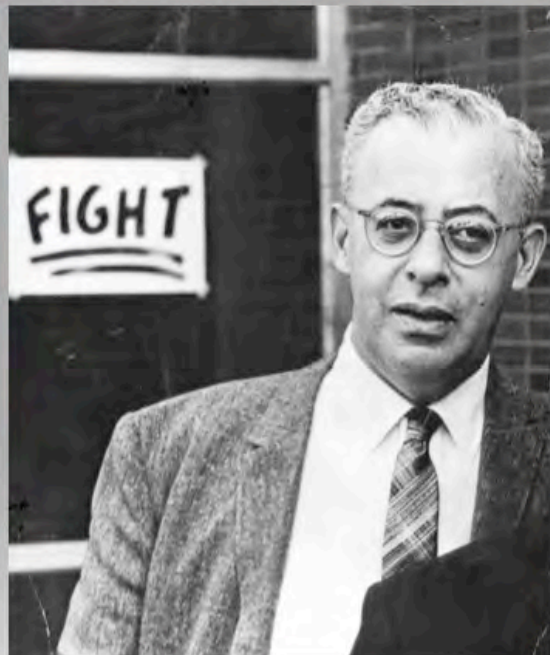
## Appendix A: Slide Show

# Let's Get Organized About Building Community

By Erin Goldstrom



**Saul Alinsky  
of Industrial  
Areas  
Foundation**





**Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. of Southern Christian Leadership Council**



**Cesar Chavez of the California Farm Workers Movements**



