

Institution: Buckinghamshire New University		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 20 Social Work and Social Policy		
Title of case study: LGBTQI+ faith and identity – pathways to recognition, (re)connection and respect		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: January 2015 – December 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Professor Margaret Greenfields	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Social Policy and Community Engagement	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: November 2004-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-ongoing		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? NO		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The work focuses on the interplay between faith, LGBT+ identity and ritual practice, with an emphasis on enhancing learning, social welfare (including mental health/wellbeing) and developing inclusive and ethical practice in religious contexts. Outputs (research findings, artefacts, dialogue in public engagement forums and policy/practice recommendations) are co-produced with LGBT+ community members/civil society agencies/religious leaders and academic partners. Key impacts are increasing awareness of the complexities, contestations (and at times dangers) experienced by LGBT+ people of faith; public engagement activities (UK and internationally) to enhance awareness and dialogue, and the development of practice recommendations aimed at schools, synagogues and communal life.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research (max 500 words):</p> <p>The primary, underpinning source of the case study (2015-16) consists of a Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) 'connected communities' grant – reference AH/M006085/1 – Ritual Reconstructed: Challenges to Disconnection, Division and Exclusion in the Jewish LGBTQI Community (RR) for which Greenfields was principal investigator (PI) (3.1). This interdisciplinary co-produced project (involving academics, artists, performers, religious leaders and Jewish community members) included innovative theological conceptualisations, wedded to theoretical understanding of the nature and impacts of 'community membership' (and disconnection therefrom) viewed and theorised through innovative arts practices to explore the overlay of LGBT+ key dates (e.g Pride month) and Religious cycles. Findings, outputs which collaboratively explore shifts in perceptions in LGBTQI inclusion and performance of identity over a twenty year period (3.2) and collaboratively produced artefacts have been treated to theological and practice analysis and re-presented as a vehicle for both policy recommendations impacting social welfare (with findings on well-being and mental health impacting LGBT+ people strongly represented), transferable religious practice development to enhance inclusion, and inter-faith dialogue. Importantly (3.2) it has been possible to capture on film, retrospect reflections on the impact of AIDS in the 1980s on performance of Gay male identities, and the relationship to religious and LGBT+ cultural identity in the 2000s. Publications (3.3), conference papers (3.4) and forthcoming collaboratively written (community and academic) practice-focused papers which have emerged from the research activities interrogate the tensions and interplay between culture, identity, social geographies and theological and policy initiatives focused on recognition and inclusion of LGBT+ people of faith. In so doing, in addition to substantive outputs and impacts on a sense of inclusion of participants, the project has developed and enhanced approaches to collaborative methodologies (3.4) which challenge the pre-eminence of academic and professional knowledge on how faith groups engage with LGBT+ congregants. Follow-up activities (consisting of engagement between a number of the same collaborators) include the community led, Lottery funded 'Rainbow Pilgrims' project (2017-18). This project, led by RR Co-Investigator Shaan Knan which includes specialist input from Greenfields (3.5) on methodological</p>		

issues and engaging with Gypsies, Travellers and Roma (GTR) and asylum seeking people of faith, focuses on the migration and faith narratives of refugees, migrants, GTR people who identify as LGBTQI. Rainbow Pilgrims built explicitly upon the lessons learnt from Ritual Reconstructed (RR) in terms of centring faith identity (pre- and post-migration) within a culture-specific context which enables dual and multiple identities to be celebrated whilst expanding the project reach to participants from a wider range of religious and cultural communities, including Muslim and Christian participants.

Additional research (publications under development) is associated with enrichment through collaborative working with an AHRC-funded 'large grant' project – **Empowering Design (ED)**. ED had not previously engaged with Jewish communities, but following the visibility of RR, they approached the team to facilitate Jewish community participation in discussion groups and location specific activities within their practice based research (3.6). Data captured from focus groups to support ED has enhanced understanding of how synagogue based Jewish (and interfaith) community and social action support both refugees and enhances LGBT+ inclusion through inclusive physical space.

As a response to Covid-impacted postponed activities (tour of RR artefacts, films and presentations through Spring/Summer 2020) to be shown in synagogues, community centres and universities, aimed at increasing reach to a more diverse audience and capturing additional data, a three-day online event (Ritual Reconstructed Revisited) occurred in December 2020 (5.1). This was developed to respond to LGBTQI+ people of faith's recognition of changing visibility and amplify the voice of differing sections of the community not previously well represented in RR, as well as to explore the impact of the pandemic on well-being. Newly gathered data captures emergent new interfaith (and intra-faith) connections which are providing opportunities for the collaborative development of innovative ritual and dialogue which will form the basis of future outputs and publications. e.g. a focus on developing (metaphorical and practical) space for intersex people to engage with traditional gendered ritual practices such as Mikveh (ritual immersion). Findings will be analysed and collaboratively produced outputs prepared during 2021.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

3.1 Ritual Reconstructed project website– incorporating **films, underpinning texts**, artefacts, conference presentations, blogs, news articles etc. e.g. <https://ritualreconstructed.com/the-project/> <https://ritualreconstructed.com/category/the-ritual-year/> and <https://ritualreconstructed.com/end-of-project-showcase/>

3.2 Purim Spiel Film and Group Talk (videos) and supporting narrative

<https://bucks.repository.guildhe.ac.uk/id/eprint/17516/> and

https://bucks.repository.guildhe.ac.uk/id/eprint/17516/1/17516_Greenfields_M.pdf

3.3 Kochberg, S & Greenfields M (forthcoming book chapter) delayed from publication date in 2020) 'LGBT+ London Jewish Identities: co-creativity and the consolidation of the suburban metropolis into narratives of experience and place' in *Queer lives across Britain: Histories, Cultures, Communities* London: Bloomsbury Books eds. Oram, A; Cook, M & Bengry, J.

3.4 Greenfields, M. Kochberg, EJ Milne and S. Knan (unpublished conference paper 2016) *Reconstructing Rituals: Using bricolage to (re)negotiate faith based rituals with the Jewish LGBT+ community* International Sociological Association Conference, Vienna 16th July 2016 <https://bucks.repository.guildhe.ac.uk/id/eprint/18189/>.

3.5 Rainbow Pilgrims website <https://www.rainbowpilgrims.com/our-partners/>;

Buckinghamshire New University hosted community day/conference:

<https://www.rainbowpilgrims.com/event/rainbow-pilgrims-symposium-community-action-day/>;

<https://bucks.ac.uk/about-us/news-and-press-office/2018/march/lgbtqi-conference-at-bucks>

3.6 Empowering Design Call for Participants

http://empoweringdesignpractices.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/8/5/12856329/edp_rr_synagogue_workshops.pdf and Blog summarising comparative research findings/themes

<https://www.empoweringdesign.net/blog/archives/08-2017>

4. Details of the impact: (indicative maximum 750 words)

Increased knowledge exchange between and within communities.

Capture of metrics (5.1; 5.2,) indicates around 800–900 individuals (including approximately 300 students and academics) in the UK, Israel, Italy, USA, Austria and the Netherlands (as well as international delegates from Australia, Spain, Portugal etc) have accessed presentations, attended

workshops, viewed exhibitions – including the 2019 Brighton Pride exhibit of artefacts – heard Ritual Reconstructed (RR) team members give conference presentations on project findings and/or viewed outputs prepared for the RR project website (5.1) between 2015–2020. Twitter metrics (5.3) show between 1968 unique reads/hits regarding the events and 1266 unique reads/hits for individual Tweets posted in relation to the conference panels during the 2020 online RR event (5.1) whilst Facebook reached 1124 people over the same period. The 2020 event evidenced newly generated interest and debate around the ritual and liturgical inclusion of Trans, Non-Binary and Intersex people as well as engaged a new, younger demographic and enhanced levels of interfaith activity including with BAME Christian communities; Muslim LGBT+ activists and Buddhist theologians when compared to the original 2015 demographics (5.1, 5.3).

Enhanced cultural understanding of issues and phenomena shaping or informing public attitudes and values. The Rabbi of Kingston Liberal Synagogue and Professors from the Universities of Portsmouth and Plymouth each comment (5.4) on positive impacts of sharing outputs from RR with diverse communities including enhancing inter-cultural understanding. Their statements refer to the exhibition, films/workshops (2020 activities postponed as a result of the pandemic) as “essential to ensure social cohesion and mutual understanding within the various communities that constitute our country”; offering significant scope to “broaden discussion” through bringing into dialogue the specific and universal themes of “inclusion, identities, and the reintegration of 'outsider' status”; or having a “positive impact on our local and regional communities, who would be keen to attend a film and exhibition, as well as a talk if possible”. It was further noted that feedback received from university community members who had engaged in earlier elements of the project evidenced that the “exploration of faith, sexual orientation, identity and creative collaboration, produced benefits for both students and staff who took part in activities. In particular, the development of challenging concepts and discussions and enhanced inclusive practice in the RR project fed through into ongoing developments around Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity within the university as well as broader discussions around breaking down stereotypes pertaining to religious practice”. Rabbi Solomon (leading theologian and senior academic lead on Rabbinic at Leo Baeck College) referred in a tweet (5.2) to the creative and visionary nature of the RR 2020 event. ‘Happy to be part of #RitualReHanukah with so many other wonderful creative people and the visionary @MGreenfields’

- **Enhancing inclusion of marginalised groups (LGBT+ /People of Faith including asylum seekers)**
- **Contributing to a wider public understanding of basic standards of wellbeing and human rights conceptions**

Greenfield’s research and RR have shown clear evidence of inter-faith, inter-community and student participation through interviewing and filming opportunities (see section 2 and 5.5). Supporting evidence on the dangers to LGBT+ people of faith in a particular country with strict anti-Gay legislation was submitted by Greenfields, Kochberg and Knan to assist in asylum claims; whilst student-film makers involved in RR and RP created a documentary short to raise awareness of exclusion and risk of violence faced by LGBT+ refugees. RR/Rainbow Pilgrim team members/students also collaboratively supported an (ultimately successful) asylum claim from a gay student, (5.5) and Knan reports that he attended at asylum hearings and provided evidence in two further asylum cases which supported successful asylum claims by participants in Rainbow Pilgrims who had a well-grounded fear of persecution in their countries of origin as a result of their sexual orientation.

Project activities, which have emerged from Ritual Reconstructed of which Greenfields was PI (5.1) have led to innovative reflections on the linkage between family history, identity and the sense of dislocation which LGBT+ people of faith can feel as a result of tensions between their cultural-religious identities and gender or sexual orientation. *‘When we started to focus more on the buildings themselves, a larger variation of perspectives started to emerge. Some spoke of the importance of a building that had been created for the purpose of their specific faith rituals and that had features designed to physically represent and support those rituals. People also spoke of buildings and their symbolic features holding not only theological meaning, but also memories and family milestones that sometimes spanned generations’* (5.6; 3.3) as well as generating an enhanced focus on often ‘unheard’ sectors of the LGBT+ faith communities which is linked to an increased engagement (2020

activities) by Trans, Non-Binary and Intersex people focused on areas of liturgical and ritual behaviours (5.7). For example 30.8% of feedback respondents to the 2020 workshop identified as Queer and one individual as 'asexual' (an increase from 0% in 2016), whilst for the first time workshop sessions and debates explicitly engaged with themes of mental health impacts on lack of consent to genital surgery on intersex children and heteronormativity/marriage expectations amongst formerly Strictly Orthodox religious communities (5.1). Recent panel events have also engaged a new, younger demographic when compared to 2015 events (5.3); as was noted in a synagogue online conversation by Lior Locher and Rabbi Dr Pferzel (5.7), which explored the impact of the project over a 40 minute broadcast highlighting the value of the project to enhanced interfaith activity and opportunities for 'Jews by Choice' who identify as LGBT+ to find a 'welcoming home'.

The unique nature of RR in giving voice to LGBTQI+ practicing Jews who were at an intersection of faith and sexual/gender diversity, and the international reach of the Project is highlighted by the attention paid to the original (2015) project which featured in the Israeli press and broadcast media (5.8) as well attracting invitations for academic and community participants to present at a number of international conferences on their experiences of involvement, co-production and impacts of visibility of recognition of diversity within the communities (5.2). Feedback from the final 2015 Showcase event (recording of sessions available via 3.1) included the following anonymised comments (5.7) *"The concept that looking at Orthodox perspectives of LGBTQI issues could.. be seen as non-normative"* *"It allowed me to revisit thinking. I did for a long time think that then wasn't a real place for me in the Jewish community or religious practice"*. *"Feeling of live debate around issues [was] very hopeful, not often talked about"*.

Several participants in the 2020 online sessions (5.7) as well as a 2019 seminar for stakeholders from Strictly Orthodox Jewish communities held at Hebrew University Israel (5.2) on mental health and the impacts of being 'excluded/closeted' on religious Jews' wellbeing; have come from communities which based on theological interpretations are strictly opposed to same-sex relationships or non-binary gender identification. RR has therefore not only raised awareness of themes of inclusive religious practice but also enhanced cross and intra-community dialogue (5.2; 5.7) through the development of increased knowledge of resources and emergent theological thinking across denominations, and in inter-faith contexts. Anonymised feedback from the 2020 seminar emphasised the *"the whole event appears to me a fantastic initiative"*; the *"community aspect, meeting other Jews/people of faith who support similar causes."* that *"speakers included TQI [Trans, Queer and Intersex] voices very well"* and noting the value of *"Inclusive service ideas"* and that attendees strongly welcomed the opportunity for *"Sharing learning and information about project"*.

For participants who reported a sense of isolation from their peers as a result of location or rejection by their faith community, the availability of resources via the project websites and ability to contact Knan [community lead] as well as opportunities to engage appropriate faith specific support and advice hubs has enabled the spread and dissemination of information (including on immigration rights for parties to the Rainbow Pilgrims study) as well as reducing isolation (5.2; 5.7, 5.9.1). *"I am now mentoring a lesbian that I met in a breakout room in her journey into Jewish identity."* (Feedback from 2020 workshops). Anonymised feedback from the 2020 seminar (3 word statements requested) included: *"Interesting; fun; welcoming"*; *"Community, Connection, Information"*, *"Enlightening, Interesting, New ideas"*. *"Innovative, inclusive, ambitious."* Highlights for participants included the scope for new networks and support: *"Connecting with likeminded people working in a similar field"*.

Impacts on social welfare (mental health and wellbeing).

Participants have repeatedly emphasised (in feedback (5.5) and published outputs (5.9) the impact on their sense of mental health and wellbeing of being part of a discussion or project which allows them to creatively and theologically authentically engage with multiple elements of their identities. Tess Joseph (5.9.1) stated that *"I felt like I had come home, that I finally had a solid base for creativity that engages with these questions. Previous artistic isolation was combatted through a new community being formed."* Lior Locher spoke (2020 podcast, 5.5) of the way in which close rabbinic attention to inclusive ritual *"honours tradition.. really really impressive how everyone works together and takes it seriously ..it felt a lot like ..a family gathering of people who are all different but with common themes"*. Psychotherapist Korn in a 2020 text on mental health and wellbeing indicated the importance of the RR project for Jewish non-binary and trans people's sense of inclusion and wellbeing (5.9.2). Rubin's posthumously published chapter (5.9.3) focused on the personal value of

the project which “*encouraged [us] to do: to locate, interpret, reinterpret and then even perform the different parts of ourselves – including the labels from the inside and outside e.g. Jewish-Queer-Trans in shared rituals and sometimes all of this in front of live audiences.*”(2019:108).

The overall value of this project in adding to an evidence base of good practice examples which support community wellbeing, engagement and collaborative research practice is evidenced too, by RR’s inclusion (as one of a small number of featured projects) in the AHRC end of funding stream Connected Communities documentary film which highlighted the work supported of the programme (5.10).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

5.1 Web-page and programme for Ritual Reconstructed Revisited online panel event (December 2020) (PDF of programme) <https://bucks.ac.uk/events/ritual-reconstructed-revisited-continuity-and-signalling-the-future>

5.2 Examples of international conference presentation/reach – and screen-shots of ResearchFish returns 2015-2020 which detail international and UK presentations, workshop activities and participation in network

5.3 Metrics on Web engagement/Examples of Twitter capture

5.4 Statements from hosts re Covid-impacted and postponed ‘touring’ events and the value of the RR work (emails/letter) from Professor Deborah Shaw; University of Portsmouth; Rabbi Rene Prefzel, Rabbi of Kingston Liberal Synagogue and Dr Zoe, James, Assistant Professor, University of Plymouth

5.5 Redacted emails and statement re impact of networks and supporting statements made by RR team to assist with **student asylum case** + correspondence on filming of short documentary used in support of his claim made by student colleagues at his university to support his case and campaign on asylum rights for LGBT+ people.

5.6 Evidence of interlinkage between Ritual Reconstructed and engagement with other projects exploring faith, identity and inclusion of LGBT+ people (see also above under ‘underpinning research’)

5.7 Feedback received/statement of impact from participants who participated in the 2015 RR project and 2020 online panel activities and link to FaceBook streamed discussion at Kingston Liberal Synagogue (externally hosted) reflecting on the experience of participation and growth of identities, interfaith working etc..

<https://www.facebook.com/373346719468246/videos/2794710264108846>

5.8 Newspaper and Radio Broadcast references to Ritual Reconstructed (international)

5.8.1 Jewish News Ritual Reconstructed: Exploring LGBTQI Jewish identity 25th February, 2015

<http://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/ritual-reconstructed-exploring-lgbtqi-faith-rituals/>

5.8.2 Audio Recording/Online discussion TLV1’s English-language internet radio station broadcasting from Tel Aviv, July 2015, (Greenfields as invited speaker discussing the project) audio-recording no longer available but transcription available at: https://connected-communities.org/index.php/project_resources/radio-how-recognizing-lgbt-jewish-identities-and-ritual-practice-enriches-the-entire-jewish-community/

5.9 References in books/articles by participants in initial project (personal impact)

5.9.1. News Article “Using Rituals to Tell Our Stories” by Tess Joseph 7/8/2015 (nb: typo in article refers to project commencing October 2004 rather than 2014)

<https://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/opinion-using-rituals-to-tell-our-stories/>

5.9.2 Chapter 6: “The Chicken Soup of Identity” by Chai-Yoel Komer (2020) in *Non-Binary Lives: An Anthology of Intersecting Identities*. Edited by Jos Twist, Ben Vincent, Meg-John Barker and Kat Gupta. Jessica Kingsley Publishers pp 133 and 137.

5.9.3 Rubin, E. (2019) *Ritual Reconstructed: a personal reflection* in “*All My Life – I have wanted to be a New York Jew – poems and prose*” Milton Keynes: Lightning Source Publishing pp 108-111

5.10 Evidence of esteem Ritual Reconstructed featured as a showcased Connected Communities funded programme in the AHRC end of funding stream film <https://connected-communities.org/?fbclid=IwAR1tJivYizvaCw85HK6XDVGiUec5otBVcepkqLlFQjrhosroLRsGTC50Mi4> (launched 18th June 2020) – interviews with Cls Kochberg (filmmaker) and Knan (community partner).