SPECIAL EDUCATION
INSTRUCTION IN THE JEWISH ULTRA ORTHODOX AND HASSIDIC
COMMUNITIES IN TORONTO

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to examine the state of special education programs in selected Jewish Ultra Orthodox (Haredi) community schools in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), and the attitudes and perceptions about special education of the Melamdim (rabbis/teachers) teaching in those schools. A Special Education course, modeled on OISE’s additional qualification program available to in-service teachers in the public sector, was administered to 28 Melamdim. Throughout the 12 weeks, course data was collected through observations and dialogues with course participants. The impact of the special education course on classroom practices by those who engaged in the course was also assessed. In addition, a collection of pre-course and post-course data from participants (Melamdim) on attitudes and perceptions in regards to special education through a self-administrated questionnaire, took place. Four additional questionnaires were administered, examining demographic characteristics, general attitudes and behaviors, and well-being. Finally, a pre-selected group of 8 Melamdim was interviewed as representatives of their home school and the denomination of Judaism they belong to. The results showed significant changes in attitudes of Melamdim toward the inclusion of students with Learning Disabilities (LD in regular classrooms. In addition, the positive change in attitudes could be attributed to the special education course in which participants engaged. During in-class observations changes to the Melamdim’s own practice was recorded.
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CHAPTER I

Preamble and Introduction

In the fall of 2010 I was called into the office of the head of my department, when she announced to me that a certain lawyer representing a certain Jewish philanthropist contacted OISE to ask for our help with the creation of some sort of a program to assist the Ultra Orthodox Jewish community of Toronto deal with growing number of students failing to complete their studies at the Yeshivas and Cheders. A meeting with key figures in the Ultra Orthodox Jewish community in the GTA was scheduled to take place in November 2010. The meeting was attended by: Department head, the Dean of OISE, Rabbi David Engel, Mr. Saul Anisfeld, the lawyer and the philanthropist, who wished to remain anonymous. It is important to note that Rabbi Engel was representing both his Litvish community and the Hasidic Bobov community, with the blessing of their leader in Toronto Rav Yehoshua Fuhrer.

By the end of this meeting it was determined the community was facing unaddressed challenges of students who might be experiencing various learning difficulties, that may result in behavioural challenges or other mental health difficulties, and that impact the typical functioning of the classroom. It was determined that in order to start addressing the above issues the first step should be to develop and provide the educators in the Ultra Orthodox Jewish community, who are believed to be the ‘first line of defence’, with a sequence of courses that would (a) enhance the necessary understanding of child development and special education, and (b) introduce evidence based tools and teaching strategies that can
be used with children with different special education related needs and/or behaviour problems. It was agreed that the course should start in January 2011 and be delivered at a ‘neutral space’, where different denominations of ultra orthodoxy can come together. In addition, the first cohort of course participants were selected from the elementary and junior divisions; the rationale behind limiting admission of the first course to those teaching in the elementary and junior levels was that early intervention in addressing the needs of children with learning disabilities (LD) would yield better results. All the materials used in the course were modified to accommodate the specific needs and social and cultural norms of the Ultra Orthodox Jewish community. Furthermore, in order to provide the most up to date and diverse learning environment, the instruction of the course would utilize various technologies, such as the Smart Board system and multiple computer programs designed to assist students with learning difficulties. I was chosen to develop and teach the course since I was both familiar with and sensitive to the needs and inherent cultural norms and traditions of the Ultra Orthodox Jewish community.

I spent the next three months developing the course under the close guidance of Dr. Esther Geva and in consultation with various specialists in both Jewish education and special education in Israel and Canada. The course was designed following OISE’s model of Special Education Additional Qualification Courses (AQ) offered to teachers in the public school systems in Ontario, with an additional component of Jewish context that was added to somewhat bridge the cultural gap – most Ultra Orthodox Jews do not engage with the non-Jewish secular society and academia, beyond commerce (see Chapter II (b)). Rabbi David Engel
served as the liaison between the Ultra Orthodox community in the GTA and myself. I also had the pleasure to meet with Rav Yehoshua Fuhrer, the leader of the Toronto Hasidic Bobov community, who gave his blessing for the course and expressed similar concerns regarding challenges of students with learning disabilities in his own community.

**Statement of the Problem**

Following a meeting in November 2010 with key figures in the Ultra Orthodox Jewish community in the GTA, it was determined that the community is facing unaddressed challenges of students who might be experiencing various learning difficulties, that may result in behavioural challenges or other mental health difficulties, and that impact the typical functioning of the classroom. It was determined that in order to start addressing the above issues the first step should be to develop and to provide educators in the Ultra Orthodox Jewish community, who are believed to be the ‘first line of defence’, with a sequence of courses that will (a) enhance the necessary understanding of child development and special education, and (b) introduce evidence based tools and teaching strategies that can be used with children with different special education related needs and/or behaviour problems.

It was agreed that:

- The courses would be delivered at a ‘neutral space’, where different denominations of ultra orthodoxy can come together.
- The first cohort of course participants would be selected from the elementary and junior divisions; the rationale behind limiting admission of
the first course to those teaching in the elementary and junior levels was that early intervention in addressing the needs of children with learning disabilities will yield better results.

• An experienced instructor who is both familiar and sensitive to the needs and inherent cultural norms and traditions would undertake the development and delivery of the course.

• All the materials used in the course were to be modified to accommodate the specific needs and social and cultural norms of the Ultra Orthodox Jewish community.

In order to provide the most up to date and diverse learning environment, the instruction of the course would utilize various technologies, such as the Smart Board system and multiple computer programs designed to assist students with learning difficulties.
**Background and Need for the Study**

This was the first time in Canada that a secular non-Jewish university was engaged in Teacher Education Programming addressing the Jewish Ultra Orthodox population. The course was designed by the author with considerable consultation with various experts in special education such as Dr. Esther Geva of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto; Dr. Michal Shany of the Faculty of Education at the University of Haifa, Israel; Dr. Julia O’Sullivan, Dean of OISE; and finally Dr. Reuven Feuerstein, the founder and director of the International Center for the Enhancement of Learning Potential (ICELP) in Jerusalem, Israel. In addition to academic advisors, I consulted local Jewish Ultra Orthodox rabbis such as Rabbi David Engel, head of the Toronto Cheder, and Rav Yehoshua Fuhrer shlit"a, the leader of the Toronto Bobov Hasidic community. Both rabbis not only supported the development of course but also consulted the instructor of the course (the author) on matters concerning the special needs of their communities. As indicated above, there was a need for introducing rabbis, known as Melamdim (religious educators), to background knowledge and applied skills that would enable them to deal with special education and behaviour problems of students attending schools serving the Ultra Orthodox Jewish community. The intent was to upgrade relevant skills based on current, evidence-based research of special education related teaching strategies. In the first, introductory courses the participants attended weekly 3-hour sessions, delivered over twelve weeks. It was agreed that by the end of this introductory course, participants should have had a basic understanding and appreciation of:
• Key child development theories and their relevance to the classroom;
• Classroom management strategies that are informed by evidence-based research in special education and differentiated instruction;
• Behaviour management techniques;
• Theory and practice underlying differentiated instruction.

This was a monumental opportunity for all parties involved to gain insight into a unique community that until the present day rarely engaged in endeavours that involved a major secular university anywhere in the world.

**Review of Related Literature**

The following review of related literature will provide the reader with both insight and background into the issues that govern the topic of special education and the Jewish Ultra Orthodox community schools. The chapter on Narrative, Culture and Identity Development, provides the reader with Hammack’s (2011) framework of narrative analysis, and the notion of ‘master narrative’ as a distinct cultural expression of self, which was used in the analysis of the semi-structured interviews. It will be argued that the ‘master narrative’ held by the participants, which is informed by their shared ‘Jewish ultra orthodox’ view of learning disabilities, directly impacted their attitudes and practice vis-a-vis students who might have a need for special education programing. The following chapter, Jewish Orthodox Identity, attempts to provide the reader with more specific background information about this unique sect of the Jewish community, of which all of the participants in the study are members. The chapter on Yiddish and Jewish Identity,
was added to introduce the reader to the distinctive and central relationship the Yiddish language has with both the life and culture of Orthodox Jews, whose everyday language is predominately Yiddish – as opposed to other sects of Judaism where Yiddish had became, especially after the Holocaust, a feature of storytelling rather than conversation. The chapters on Jewish Day Schools in Ontario and The Ultra Orthodox Cheder and Yeshiva System in Toronto, provides a survey of the current Jewish educational systems, both the so-called ‘main stream’ Hebrew day schools system and the one at which the Melamdim (participants of this study) teach, commonly referred to as ‘Frume [traditional] Schools’. The chapter on Jewish Ultra Orthodox Interpretation of Halacha (Jewish Law) in Regards to Individuals with Severe Learning Disabilities (SLD), offers the reader an insight into the rationale of exclusion of children with SLD from the Ultra Orthodox Cheder and Yeshiva System in Toronto where liturgy is used to justify exclusion rather than integration. The section on Inclusive Education surveys the general concept and current practices in the Ultra Orthodox Cheder and Yeshiva System. The section on Teachers Attitudes toward Learning and Behavioral disorders and Inclusion provides the reader with the possible theoretical reasoning for poor attitudes some teachers might harbor in relations to students with LD and behavioral disorders, beyond the Halachic (Jewish interpretation) reasoning reviewed in the previous chapter. The final section on Technology and Ultra Orthodoxy attempts to provide an insight into the somewhat problematic relationship between Jewish Ultra Orthodox communities and technology, especially as it pertains to the use of technology in the classrooms and as aid for children with learning disabilities.
All the above are the facets that inform our present study, allowing the reader to gain somewhat a clearer understanding of the cultural and social complexity of this rarely researched community of Jewish people in Toronto, Canada and shading light on the so-called Quintain. A quintain, according to Robert Stake, is ‘an object or phenomenon or condition to be studied – a target but not bull’s eye’ (Stake, 2006, pg., 6). Our study, which uses multi-case analysis, focuses on the quintain, which is the course itself in which participants engaged, therefore, evaluating the course would in turn ‘expose’ the quintain. The areas reviewed were selected both prior to and post completion of the study, as there was a need to explore and define the epistemology of the main statement of problem – the quintain.

**Narrative, Culture and Identity Development**

The narrative approach to identity focuses on the means by which the processes of ‘psychological synthesis’ and ‘person-culture integration’ occur across the life span (Hammack, 2011). It is through the construction of personal narrative, argues Hammack, that the life course achieves its coherence, its continuity in social, cultural, and historical time. To fully know a person “we must know more than just his or her ‘traits’ or ‘personal concerns’; we must know his or her identity...and we get to know identity only through encountering the life-story narrative that he or she has constructed” (Hammack, 2008, p. 232). Stories are central to ‘meaning making’ in one’s life (McLean, 2005; McLean, Pasupathi, & Pals, 2007; McLean & Pratt, 2006; Pasupathi, Mansour, & Brubaker, 2007). In addition, according to King
and Hicks (2006) the psychological process of story (narrative) construction is related to the development of one’s ego, wellbeing, and intimacy and personality traits. It is through the construction of our life’s narrative, argued Hammack (2008), that we come to understand “the meaning that a life possesses, both for an individual and in his or her relation to some particular social and cultural ecology” (p. 232).

In our study, the individual narratives and the narratives of the distinctive Jewish culture that each Melamed came from seem to come together. Bar-Tal and Salomon (2006), who studied Israeli-Jewish narratives of the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, found similar trends in the “coming together of personal and national narratives” (p. 45). The degree of feeling of ‘affinity’ to one’s community, argues Bar-Tal, will be mediated by the degree of perceived ‘threat’ to a group’s collective identity (such as a Jewish-Israeli one in facing Palestinian uprising), pushing the individual to perceive affiliation with his or her community as the only way to preserve his or her collective and personal identity. In the case of the Melamdim, the ‘threat of modernity’ serves a similar purpose. The fear of losing their ‘ultra orthodox ways’ motivates most of the Melamdim to strongly affiliate with their communities, adopting communal narratives and sensitivities strongly reverberated by their particular social and cultural ecology.

As part of a somewhat solitary community by choice, the Melamdim’s personal narratives follow a fundamental principle offered by Hammack’s model in which identity is “defined as ideology cognized through the individual engagement with discourse, made manifest in a personal narrative constructed and
reconstructed across the life course and scripted in and through social interaction and social practice” (Hammack, 2008, pg. 223). In other words, the ultra orthodox lifestyle provides clear rules for social interactions and practices, directly influencing one’s personal narrative. Looking for ‘life meaning’ outside the strictly defined social and cultural ecology is not an acceptable option. The Jewish Bible and other Jewish writings provide the only points of reference a Melamed may draw on to construct his personal narrative. The history of his community (master narrative) – stories of struggle, suffering, and resilience – guides the discourse of both his own identity (personal narrative) and the one held by his community.

**Jewish Orthodox Identity**

The word Orthodox can be a very perplexing one. While among the various Jewish orthodox communities there is much agreement on basic religious belief and outward observance, no centralized authority governs either. Typically one rabbi will serve each community as both spiritual leader and the ultimate ‘posek’ (Arbiter) on all issues concerning the daily life of community members. Many of those rabbis gain legitimacy from their relation to a preexisting ‘dynasty’. As in any dynasty, the rabbis acquire their position by lineage; better know as ‘yehchos’ (attribution), some dating to seventeenth century European families (Boteach, 1993).

The orthodox community is further subdivided into various streams, ranging from ultra orthodox on one extreme to modern orthodox on the other. Modern Orthodoxy comprises a rather broad gamut of movements, each drawing on several
distinct, though related, philosophies, which in some combination provides the basis for all variations of the movement today (Guterman, 2006). In general, Modern Orthodoxy maintains that Jewish law is normative and binding, while recognizing that interaction with contemporary society is vital for Jewish continuation. In this view, Orthodox Judaism can “be enriched” by its intersection with modernity; further, “modern society creates opportunities to be productive citizens engaged in the Divine work of transforming the world to benefit humanity” (Guterman, 2006, p. 94). At the same time, in order to preserve the integrity of Halakha (Jewish law), any area of significant inconsistency and conflict between Torah and modern culture must be avoided. In stark contrast to ultra orthodoxy, modern orthodoxy generally places a high political and religious significance on the State of Israel, fostering the Zionist ideology in the modern orthodox institutions and individual. Typically, the social scope of the modern orthodox would involve exposure and interaction among non orthodox Jews motivated not exclusively by the efforts of ‘outreach’ for the sake of bringing non-orthodox Jews closer to Judaism (known as ‘Kiruv’).

Haredi Judaism (Ultra Orthodox) advocates total separation from non-Jewish culture, although not from non-Jewish society entirely, for obvious economic reasons. Thus, engaging in the commercial world is a legitimate means to achieving a livelihood, but individuals are expected to participate in modern society as little as possible. The same attitude extends to the role of obtaining university/college degrees necessary to enter one’s intended profession. Although some Haredi tolerate attending secular institutions of higher education, it is viewed as a necessary but inferior activity to Torah studies at Yeshiva. Boys and girls alike
attend school and may proceed to higher Torah study, beginning from between the ages of 13 and 18. However, it is important to note that only men are allowed to study Torah after marriage; females are encouraged to concentrate on domestic duties. A significant proportion of male students remain in Yeshiva until marriage, which is arranged by the parents when the students are around the age of 18. After marriage, many study in a kolleg (Torah study institute for married men) for many years.

Hasidic Judaism has many common characteristics with Haredi Judaism in its engagement with the secular and commercial world and shares a similar stance on social issues. It differs, however, in its origins and in its focus. The movement originated in Eastern Europe (what is now Belarus and Ukraine) in the eighteenth century. Hassidic Judaism was founded by Rabbi Israel Ben Eliezer, known as the Baal Shem Tov (1698–1760), in an age of persecution of the Jewish people, when a rift existed between scholarly and common European Jews (Sarna, 1998). In addition to bridging the class gap, Hasidic teachings sought to reintroduce “joy in the performance of the commandments and in prayer” (Sarna, 1998, p.112) through the popularization of Jewish spirituality through dance and songs. The Ba’al Shem Tov sought to combine rigorous scholarship with more emotional mitzvah observance.

Yiddish and Jewish Identity

Isaac Bashevis Singer, the only author to win a Nobel Prize in literature for stories written in Yiddish, was often asked why he wrote in a dying language. His
Yiddish is a High German language of Ashkenazi Jewish communities, spoken throughout the world. In Max Weinreich’s *History of the Yiddish Language* (2009), the basic assumption of is that Yiddish, as the language of the Jews of Ashkenas, constitutes one language with significant historical and regional variants. The most relevant differentiation, mostly in dialect, occurred as a large number of Ashkenazi Jews migrated eastward, mainly to Poland, between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, and started to integrate semantic, morphological and syntactic characteristics of the surrounding Slavonic languages into their own language (Weinreich, 2009). It is written in the Hebrew alphabet, like the ‘other’ Jewish languages. In common usage, the language is called *mame-loshn*, literally "mother tongue", distinguishing it from Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic, which are collectively termed *loshn-koydesh*, "holy tongue". The term "Yiddish" did not become the most frequently used designation in the literature of the language until the eighteenth century (Weinreich, 2009). For a significant portion of its history, Yiddish was the primary spoken language of the Ashkenazi Jews. Today Yiddish is written and spoken in Orthodox Jewish communities around the world. It is a home language in most Hasidic communities, where it is the first language learned in childhood, used in schools and in many social settings, since they have traditionally believed that Hebrew, the holy tongue, should be reserved for religious purposes. But in the last two decades the language has also been taught in a number of secular and modern Orthodox schools all over Israel and North America (Weinreich, 2009). In the last
decade, Yiddish education, literature and theatre are receiving increased attention in Israeli Universities and society in general, especially by Israelis born to Holocaust survivors (Koppel, 2011). Vered Koppel, supervisor of Yiddish education in Israeli government schools, herself the daughter of Holocaust survivors from Poland, recalls growing up in a bilingual home:

I spoke Hebrew to my parents and they answered in Yiddish...my classmates made fun of the fact that I spoke Yiddish...in the sixties in Israel speaking Yiddish wasn't acceptable...things changed for me when my mother died...in my mind she was associated with the language and--you might say, to honor her memory--I went back to it...first, I took a summer course in Yiddish...afterward I learned more and began teaching the language, initially in a junior high school and then in a high school...finally, when the former supervisor of Yiddish education retired, I took his place... in addition, I'm teaching at Bar-Ilan University. (Koppel, 2011, p. 9)

Koppel's experience was quite typical for that era since Yiddish was highly associated with the ‘old conception’ of Jewish identity. Modern Hebrew saw a revival in the newly created Jewish Zionist state where Yiddish wasn't welcomed, mainly for its strong connection to the Diaspora. Post Holocaust (1940s) Yiddish in Israel experienced a sharp decline, not only in terms of users of the language but also in new works of literature.

The major exception to the decline of spoken Yiddish can be found in Haredi communities all over the world. In some of the more closely knit communities Yiddish is spoken as a home and schooling language, especially in Hasidic, Litvish or Yeshivishe communities such as Brooklyn's Borough Park, Williamsburg and Crown Heights, and in the communities of Monsey, Kiryas Joel and New Square in New York State (Weinreich, 2009). In the state of New Jersey, USA, Yiddish is also widely spoken mostly in Lakewood by the large Hasidic groups, such as the Bobov group.
Yiddish is also widely spoken in Haredi communities such as the ones in London and Manchester (UK), Antwerp (Belgium), Toronto and Montreal (Canada). Hebrew is generally reserved for prayer, while Yiddish is used for religious studies as well as in the home and for business. In Israel, however, Haredim commonly speak Hebrew, with the notable exception of many Hasidic communities. However, some Haredim who use Modern Hebrew also understand Yiddish. There are some who send their children to schools in which the primary language of instruction is Yiddish (Koppel, 2011). Members of movements such as Satmar Hasidim, which view the commonplace use of Hebrew as a form of Zionism, use Yiddish almost exclusively.

Most Ashkenazi yeshivas offer their highest-level lectures in Talmud and Halacha (Jewish Law), as well as ethical talks of _mussar_ (discipline, conduct and also ethical treatment of Jewish law), in Yiddish. Hasidic Rabbis generally use only Yiddish to converse with their followers and to deliver their various Torah talks, classes, and lectures. The linguistic style and vocabulary of Yiddish have influenced the manner in which many Orthodox Jews who attend yeshivas speak English; this usage is distinctive enough that it has been dubbed “Yishivish.”

While Hebrew remains the language of Jewish prayer, the Hasidim have mixed some Yiddish into their Hebrew, and are responsible for secondary religious literature written in Yiddish. Moreover, many Hasidic girls in the Diaspora are not taught Hebrew at all, and therefore do not understand either ancient or modern Hebrew. Those who are taught parts of the Hebrew Bible will still use prayer books with Yiddish translation and commentaries, as their comprehension of Hebrew is lacking (Weinreich, 2009).
Using Yiddish is not only a matter of religious choice where Hebrew is the holy language and English is the Lashon Zara – foreign language, but a deliberate choice designed to segregate community members from both non-Jews and non-observation Jews. The Jewish Ultra Orthodox and Hasidic communities who took part in the following study shared the above need for segregation from the ‘general population’ in an effort to preserve their unique traditions and customs.

**Jewish Day Schools in Ontario**

Although data for this current study was collected in Ontario, Alex Pomson has already observed in *Jewish Day-School Growth in Toronto: Freeing Policy and Research from the Constraints of Conventional Sociological Wisdom* (2002): “In Ontario the development of Jewish Day School education seems to follow the same trends observed in the US” (2002, p. 385). Pomson noted that in 1944 the first two all-day Jewish schools were established. The Associated Hebrew Day School and Eitz Chayim School both grew out of the city’s Talmud Torahs, which were part of the orthodox movement. By 1983, at least one Jewish Day School existed across Canada’s 10 Jewish Centers (Pomson, 2002). During the same time several other day schools unaffiliated with orthodoxy opened in Toronto: Bialik, Leo Beck and USDS.

In 2002 there were 20 elementary level schools and 14 high schools, a small number of which, for the first time, were religiously pluralistic in ethos (Pomson, 2002, p. 386). Pomson also noted that although the growth of the Canadian case of Jewish Day schools followed similar trends as the American one, the Ontario case is somewhat unique due to some ‘external political variables’, such as Premier Mike
Harris’ ‘Common Sense Revolution’, which Pomson notes, spurred an “uninterrupted decline in funding for public education. This political decision lead to a widespread perception that a superior education can be acquired in private schools, Jewish or otherwise” (Pomson, 2002, p. 380).

Tulchinsky’s 1992 survey of the Canadian Jewish community, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish community*, points out that since the beginning of the twentieth century, most Jewish parents in English-speaking Canada (and elsewhere) have sent their children to either religious supplementary schools or all-day parochial schools. While the religious supplementary schools, run by various congregations and Talmud Torahs around the province of Ontario, operated during evenings and weekends after public school hours, the all-day parochial schools offered a dual curriculum of both Jewish and general studies, operating as an ‘independent school’ outside the public system (Tulchinsky, 1992).

The so-called “Continuity Campaign” launched around North America in the early 1990s was focused on increasing Jewish involvement in the community (Pomson & Schnoor, 2008). The campaign was designed to promote two fronts: Jewish Education and the state of Israel. Both focuses required substantial philanthropic support. The United Jewish Appeal (UJA) and local Jewish School Boards around North America took an active part in facilitating the campaign. The campaign was set to promote all forms of Jewish education including supplementary, day-school and summer camping and other informal educational experiences (Birthright, MASA, etc.). Adult Jewish Education was also targeted with two guiding assumptions:
First, if children are to be socialized successfully as active participants in Jewish religious and communal life, their parents must be enlisted as allies in the process, for parents can and ought to be the primary Jewish educators of their children. Certainly, they are the most important influences in shaping the identities of young people. Second, Jewish Education will benefit if it is not seen as a solely pediatric exercise but rather as a lifelong process. (Pomson & Schnoor, 2008, p. VIII)

Those two assumptions are further emphasized by a new body of research (Beck, 2002; Cohen & Kelner, 2007; Pomson, 2007; Pomson & Schnoor, 2008; Shrager, 2002) that suggests there is a high correlation between “multiple and sustained exposures to various types of Jewish education in childhood and adolescence on one hand, and positive engagement with Jewish life in adulthood on the other” (Pomson & Schnoor, 2008, p. viii).

**The Ultra Orthodox Cheder and Yeshiva System in Toronto.**

According to Jewishintoronto.com, in the 2011-2012 school year Toronto has 31 Jewish ultra orthodox affiliated schools, including 12 boys’ schools (both Yeshivas\(^\text{iii}\) and Cheders\(^\text{iv}\)), 14 girls’ schools and 5 preschools. It is important to note that for three millennia Jewish boys received both Talmudic and Torah schooling, initially by their own fathers, and later on in organized Cheders and Yeshivas. Mainly their mothers educated Jewish girls; however, unlike the boys, they were not educated in the Torah or Talmud, but rather in domestic duties, which included the fundamentals of keeping a kosher home and personal purity (niddah\(^\text{v}\)). In 1917, breaking with the traditional exclusion of women from formal Torah education, Sarah Schenirer\(^\text{vi}\) founded the Beis Yaakov ("House of Jacob") network of Orthodox Torah schools for women in Krakow, Poland. On the eve of the Second World War in
1939, Beis Yaakov had close to 300 schools all over Poland (Gilbert, 2001). Today, Beis Yaakov branches exist in most North American cities with large orthodox populations; London and Manchester England; Antwerp Belgium; Moscow Russia; Johannesburg, South Africa and Israel; there are no schools in Poland post WWII (Gilbert, 2001).

All the above schools, with the exception of three Eitz Chaim Schoolsvii, are funded by the parents of the students and private donations solicited by the head rabbi of each school. The United Jewish Appeal Federation of Greater Torontoviii (UJA Federation), which usually provides considerable funds to Jewish schools through the UJA Federation Centre for Jewish Education (CJE), which is UJA Federation’s educational department, does not support the activities of the ultra orthodox schools, once again with the exception of the three Eitz Chaim Schools. According to the 2009/2010 UJA Federation of Greater Toronto Annual report, the federation supported 71 Jewish day schools and supplementary formal education programs at a total contribution of $12,612,048, which also included Tuition Subsidy Programsix. The reasons for non-funding stems mainly from lack of affiliation with the UJA Federation due to a deep ideological divide. In many conversations I had with the different leaders of the Ultra Orthodox community, mainly the rabbis of the Yeshivas featured in this study, I learned that the issue of non-funding is rooted in their refusal to support the Zionist mission championed by the UJA Federation:

The issue of Zionism is a fundamental one that separates us from the rest of the Jewish community in Toronto…and all over the world…we hold the sacred belief that only the Messiah will reestablish the kingdom of Israel and the third temple in Jerusalem Behezrat Ha Shem
[God willing]...therefore, the Zionist attempts to establish it is not acceptable...we love the people of Israel, our brothers and sisters, but we don’t support the Zionist state. (Rabbi C.H.)*

In addition to the above ideological divide, the Ultra Orthodox Jewish Yeshivas and Cheders do not follow the pedagogical guidelines set by the UJA Federation Centre for Jewish Education (CJE), mainly in their refusal to teach ‘General Jewish and Israeli history’, which once again is rooted in the ideological (political) divide. On November 8, 2010 a report named “Proposed Role, Directions and Structure for the New UJA Federation Centre for Jewish Education” by Craig Rimer, Chair of the Transition Committee, made a recommendation to consider making resources available to unaffiliated schools “at minimal or low incremental cost, and, in consultation with such schools, determine if and what such services should be offered for free or for a fee” (p.26); this marks a slight shift from former policies that excluded unaffiliated schools.

The Ultra Orthodox pedagogical practices are as diverse as the group itself. Each Yeshiva and Cheder hold their own pedagogical practices determined by their rabbis leading the specific community. In our study, we looked at the Bobov Hasidic group led in Toronto by the very charismatic Rabbi Yehoshua Fuhrer shlit”a*, who was chosen by the forth Grand Rabbi of Bobov, the late Naftali Tzvi Halberstam Z”L** (1931-2005), to establish the Toronto community in the mid 1990s; and the Litvack Haridi*** group in Toronto led by many charismatic rabbis locally, such as Rabbi David Engel of the Toronto Cheder and Rabbi Uri S. Mayerfeld, Head of the Ner Israel Yeshiva of Toronto, and by the recently departed Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (born 1910-2012), out of the Meah She’arim**** section of Jerusalem, Israel. There
were other Haredi (Orthodox) rabbis who participated in the study and didn't self identify as part of any particular rabbinic tradition. They did, however, note they are non-Hasidic orthodox observing Jews. One common pedagogical approach shared by both Hasidic and Litvack Haridi groups is the use of Yiddish as the language of instruction in their Yeshivas/Cheders. Hebrew is taught not as a spoken language but only as a written one, since according to orthodox doctrine Hebrew is a holy language, which only the Torah uses; therefore it is not to be used for every day conversation (Gilbert, 2001). In addition, both streams of orthodox groups are non-egalitarian, where separation of the genders is closely observed.

**Jewish Ultra Orthodox Interpretation of Halacha (Jewish Law) in Regards to Individuals with Severe Learning Disabilities**

The Halacha (Jewish Law) and Talmud (rabbinical interpretation of halacha) have acknowledged the existence of various disabilities that prevent individuals from fulfilling their religious duties (Marx, 1993). These categories serve to identify certain persons as exempt from social and religious involvement. While exemption denotes exclusion from communal life, a benign rationale exists: emancipation from the otherwise strict religious expectations, which may be unwittingly impiously performed. Three diagnostic conditions that exempt an individual from following religious precepts are: “cheresh” (deaf), “shoteh” (mentally handicapped), and “katan,” (not of age, young). Many of today's diagnosable Learning Disabilities (LD) would best fit the category of “shoteh”, the mentally handicapped, as the disabilities that accompany the LD directly influence the performance of customary rituals
(such as physical gestures and verbal utterances required in prayer) both individually and in the community (Marx, 1993). Recent challenges to the commonly held notion supported by clinicians that various forms of LD impede the development of normative intellectual abilities have heralded the reconsideration within the Orthodox Jewish community of the role of religious observance in the life of people with LD, and the obligations and/or prohibitions of the religious Jewish community in involving people with LD in community life (Goodman, 2001).

The unique cultural religious models of Jewish ultra orthodox society provide these parents with a specific framework for understanding their child (Shaked, 2005). These understandings secure the child a complex place within the community, as one who is disabled and marginalized on the one hand, and as one who fulfils an important religious role within the family and within the community at large, on the other hand.

It’s pivotal to note that the term Learning Disabilities (LD) in the context of this study encompasses any learning disability, exceptionalities or behavioural disorders that might effect a child’s ability to successfully engage in Torah studies. Recent challenges to the commonly held notion, supported by clinicians, that various forms of LD impede the development of normative intellectual abilities have led the Orthodox Jewish community to reconsider the role of religious observance in the life of people with LD, and the obligations and/or prohibitions of the religious Jewish community in involving people with LD in community life (Goodman, 2001).

As was mentioned above, members of this segment of Judaism are first and foremost characterized by their uncompromising adherence to the strictest versions
of Halacha (Jewish religious law). Over the years, the ultra orthodox have become more integrated into Israeli and American societies—but without being assimilated (Cohen, 2006). The ultra orthodox community calls for as little social contact as possible with the general population, and ultra orthodox Jews negate cultural models of modern secular society (Shaked, 2005). Separatism in the cultural and social domains characterizes the entire ultra orthodox society (Cohen, 2006; Goodman, 2001; Shaked, 2005).

The “twin spiritual ideals of ultra orthodoxy comprise the strict fulfillment of all religious precepts and, for men, the study of sacred Jewish texts, especially the Babylonian Talmud, in religious academies” (Shaked, 2005, p. 516). This commitment to and abidance by religious commandments distinguishes the religious Jew from others (including other Jews). The demand for abidance is in itself a sign of respect, as it reflects the highest esteem toward humankind, and a belief in man's ability to meet the challenge posed to him by the divine to become the perfect creation (image) of God (Babylonian Talmud, Bava Metziya, 22). Furthermore, the Talmud and other rabbinical writing (response to halacha), suggest that through fulfillment of commandments, the person is considered to be participating in the act of creation itself, and realizing the highest components of one’s personality. Thus, following the commandments is crucial for social respect, and for one's ability to participate in the central activity and dialogue within the community (Shaked, 2005).

According to the above beliefs, children with severe LD are not equipped with normative intellectual abilities and thus find it difficult to study religious texts
and to memorize and recite them. Many of those children also display a range of behavioral difficulties that limit their ability to perform even the most basic of religious commandments such as clothing and eating habits, which are part of being and living Jewishly. Their ability to attend to, and be involved in, public religious rites is further limited by their behavioral, social, and communication difficulties. In the case of ultra orthodox society, for those who cannot abide by religious commandments an inconsistency emerges whereby exemption from religious rites is an act of compassion on the one hand, but one which inevitably carries with it diminution in personal worth on the other. Thus, the child’s religious education and status is highly significant for his or her inclusion in the community (Shaked, 2005).

In light of all the difficulties, many Jewish ultra orthodox communities have found ways to include children with mild to severe LDs in religious communal life, using the same Halacha that was used to exclude them, by reinterpreting some of the restrictions imposed on children with severe cases of LD; however, in our case those reinterpretations did not benefit our subjects but further alienated them from their community.

While varieties of abilities exist among children with LDs, one common unifying feature of LD disorders, severe dyslexia, persists and imposes limitations on social and communal behaviors. Restrictions in personal affect places limitations on the basic religious commandments such as clothing and eating habits, and the ability to attend to, and be involved in, public religious rites, to say nothing of the study of religious texts which require a certain amount of memorization for spontaneous recitation. A precursor of the communal expectations for Jewish male
involvement in Orthodoxy is "Kavana" (intent). Mechanically performing the rituals and reciting prayers is considered sacrilege, since one must have “Kavana” – intent - when engaging in religious commandments. It is this point that divides many on the debate of religious involvement by individuals with severe LD. Children and adults with severe LDs might have difficulties having “Kavana” (intent), since many of them may lack the needed social and cognitive skills required for the existence of intent.

These considerations are especially difficult for Jewish ultra orthodoxy. A religious custom of strict adherence to Torah Laws (Halacha) and beliefs proposes dual spiritual ideals; one is the rigorous fulfillment of all religious precepts and the other, especially for men, is the study of sacred Jewish texts in religious academies (Yeshiva). Within Orthodoxy, a few subgroups exist which differ in social and political attitudes, and on some issues, interpretation of Halacha. There is though one binding feature, which distinguishes all Orthodox Jews from other Jews — the steadfast commitment to and obedience to religious commandments. The command for religious observance reflects in its fulfillment the highest esteem toward humankind, and a belief in humankind’s ability to meet the challenges imposed by God. Thus, following Halachic commandments for Orthodox Jews is crucial for social respect, and one’s ability to participate in the central activity and dialogue within the community (Marx, 1993). This precept of Judaism promotes a full communal life whereby members are discouraged through certain prohibitions from separating themselves from the ‘Klal’ (the public). In support of this requirement to ensure communal ties, the Talmud (Torah interpretation by rabbis) requires that the
thrice-daily prayer recitals required by Orthodoxy must be performed by a quorum of 10 adult males over the age of 13 (Talmud Bavli, Moadim 11(4)).

These considerations raise an important and controversial matter within the Orthodox community between those who advocate integrating the child/adult, and the social and religious forces that are slower to reconsider previously held notions of individuals with severe LDs and Judaism’s role in facilitating the integration of people with disabilities back into their communities. Convictions held by the orthodox on the nature of severe LDs have served to preserve the sanctity of both the individuals with severe LDs and the piety of ritualism. By excluding/excusing the disabled child/adult from observance obligations, they dually distance them from the center of social activity out of fearing ‘blasphemous’ behavior, and also unilaterally alleviate the individuals with severe LDs from unwitting impiety.

Examining attitudes and historical views that helped shape this model is not an easy task since the ultra orthodox Jewish community is a segregated one, both geographically and socially. In Israel very few studies have been conducted within the community; however, the sacred and contemporary legal texts available give us a rich subtext into the working of the community and its ways of dealing with the issue of integration of children with severe LDs. Formal studies of how Orthodox Jewish communities reconcile the various issues surrounding integration of individuals with severe LDs are limited. There are sources that chronicle the creative integration measures some members of the ultra orthodox Jewish community have strived to take in building an inclusion model that appeases both sides. The integration model should also be evaluated against the on-going struggles
of the entire Orthodox community to integrate into general Israeli society without complete assimilation.

One of the areas in which the conflict between forces of inclusion and exclusion is highlighted is that of attendance in a prayer quorum and the donning of tefillin (phylacteries) in accordance with a verse in the Torah: "And you shall bind them as a sign on your arm, and they shall be as frontlets on your head between your eyes" (Deuteronomy 6:8). Orthodox boys over the age of 13 are required to wrap tefillin for a morning prayer. The tefillin must be worn on a ‘clean’ body; both physical and spiritual cleanness is required. The issue of laying tefillin by children with severe LDs arises due to the conflict found in religious thought between possible filth or impurity of the body (due to the child's inability to maintain a high level of personal hygiene) and contact with holy religious objects (Marx, 1993). This notion that a child’s disability can lead to impurity unfortunately perpetuates the perverse opinion in support of exclusion and the perspective of the disabled child as “impure” and “deviant.”

The concept of impurity (as a trait related to the physical limitations suffered by disabled children in maintaining personal hygiene) further alienates the individuals with severe LDs in religious practices, where synagogue rites would require their presence. As mentioned previously, the custom to pray in a quorum serves to evoke a sense of community. The initiation for the attendance in a prayer quorum is the ‘Bar Mitzvah’ ceremony at the age of thirteen, where a male prepares his first reading from the Torah in front of a congregation. The traditional rite denotes the passage from childhood to adulthood where children are bestowed the
responsibility for Jewish ritual law and ethics and privileged to participate in all aspects of Jewish community. With the limitations of affect and intent for individuals with severe LDs, the struggle to integrate the child in any ritualistic meaningful manner is difficult, as it is rare for individuals with severe LDs in the Orthodox Jewish community to be able to prepare traditionally for a bar mitzvah ceremony. Therefore, complete inclusion in communal performances is usually denied. This has motivated some parents of children with severe LDs to search for other paths by which their child could be re-included in society, mainly by use of religious schemas, making meaning of the child’s illness and reconstructing in religious terms the child’s very existence (Marx, 1993).

Some of these novel approaches to inclusion involve creating opportunities for participation in non-obligatory activities such as: opening and closing the ark before the Torah (Jewish scripture) is read; helping the reader turn page numbers; assisting in preparing and setting up the Kiddush (Sabbath reception); and helping to put away the prayer shawls after services (Goodman, 2001). These tasks may seem trivial (even unspiritual) to the outsider, however, tasks such as the closing and opening the ark before reading the Torah are usually reserved for either a distinguished member of the community or a person in the community who is celebrating a milestone event such as a bar mitzvah or a wedding. Advocates assert the mere act of participation in the religious environment, at any level, empowers not only the individuals with severe LDs but his/her entire family and to a certain extent the entire community.
Individuals with severe LDs are considered to be either of very high spiritual status, or as ordained with an important religious mission. The religious laws described above ascribe individuals with severe LDs a questionable religious status due to their inability to function as ‘complete religious Jews’. Yet, in combination with an exclusionary approach to LDs, certain traditions within orthodox culture enable a reversal in the child’s standing, to that of a being with sublime spiritual status (Marx, 1993). According to this view, the individuals with severe LDs are considered to be either of very high spiritual status, or as ordained with an important religious mission. This view is mainly based on the notion of the transmigration of souls, the Jewish adaption of the doctrine of reincarnation theory derived from Kabalistic mystical writings (Marx, 1993).

The Kabala and some Hasidic sects within orthodoxy promote the notion that children with autism have ‘transcendent souls’ with direct access to the otherworldly, and can be ‘used’ as mediums who could impart hidden knowledge from heaven. In this capacity, the children endorse the basic tenets of Jewish religion and reconcile their ‘own misery’ with the notion of divine providence, presenting it as a final retribution for sins they had committed in previous incarnations (Marx, 1993).

Interestingly, this basic theosophical view, in which children with disabilities are regarded as reincarnations of Jewish souls, is simultaneously credited as the rationale for both proponents of inclusion and exclusion of individuals with severe LDs from sacred participation. Those who promote the inclusion model evoke the memory of Rabbi Akiva; a great rabbi who lived in the second century CE in ancient
Israel, whose reverence toward ‘special children’ is described in legends that tell of the Rabbi standing for their entrance into the room because of his belief in their pure and lofty souls (Shaked, 2006). Those who wish to exclude individuals with severe LDs may use the same argument with the stipulation that ‘we do not really know what kind of a soul it was that reincarnated,’ therefore, we must be cautious when allowing individuals with severe LDs to participate in sacred rites (Shaked, 2006).

**Inclusive Education**

The practice and public endorsement of inclusive education has become a significant part of educational reforms in many ‘first world’ countries over the past decade or so (Banks et al., 2005; Mittler, 2000; Alderson, 1999; Eisner, 1992). Inclusive education has been celebrated as “a force for renewing schools and ‘the way’ to building more inclusive and equitable societies” (Mittler, 2000, p. 27,). The idea of schools being creators of ‘better communities’ where students learn the values, attitudes, and skills to support the inclusion of all citizens in society is not a new one. The inception of public education in Canada during the mid eighteenth century was supported by the above rationale: the creation of better citizens, but also the idea of social justice and equity. Thus, the transformation of education into a more inclusive process in the twenty-first century was motivated by a changing world that is increasingly characterized by global interdependence and greater human diversity (Adlerson, 1999). The promise of inclusive education, strengthened by the forethought of a better future for everyone and the retrospection of past practices that greatly failed to promote full membership of individuals with
disabilities in society, reinforces this relationship between education and the future (Mittler, 2000).

The prominence of inclusive education as ‘an educational agenda’ is widely evident in both practice and rhetoric throughout Canada, the US and Great Britain. A proliferation of information and knowledge can be found on the Internet as well as in journals and books. In addition, many faculties of education updated their teacher training curriculums to embrace the inclusive model (LePage et al., 2010). Most of these updated curricula advocate for and describe inclusive philosophies, concepts, and practices that support the educational needs of each child, whether or not with special needs, within regular classes together with ‘typically developing’ peers. At OISE, being included educationally and socially is at the core of the teacher training program, where the processes and practices to facilitate inclusion, such as assessment, strategies, partnership with parents, the roles of professionals, and school change are part of the curriculum (Broad, 2011).

Modern technology, the Internet in particular, has allowed the sharing of both theory and best practices of inclusive education. As was mentioned above, most of the academic discourse on inclusive education is taking place in the West; however, the Internet enables many educators around the world to tap into the growing knowledge and adapt it to their home nations (LePage et al, 2010). Technology also introduces many products that assist in the inclusion process, grouped under the category of ‘assistive technologies’. As an example, computer programs such as Kurzweil 3000, a text-to-speech literacy program, facilitates the inclusion of students with visual impairment and reading disabilities in mainstream classrooms.
Computers in general not only enhance the learning environment of typically developing children, but also allow the inclusion of children with special needs in the regular classroom, serving as an important tool that bridges the gap in performance due to various disabilities.

Inclusion is about reaching and educating all children while meeting the needs of individuals (LePage, 2010). The achievement of inclusive education is sometimes divided into four main tasks: building an inclusive community school; active student participation through differentiated instruction and group work; peer relationships and friendships; and enjoying learning and growing in the school (LePage, 2010).

Inclusive education in the Jewish ultra orthodox schools is not a matter of policy, but rather of necessity. Since many of the schools serve their own unique sect of Judaism, the option of not including a child with a learning disability in the regular classroom is not feasible, both financially and ethically. Most of the schools surveyed in this study have one cohort of each grade and, due to an endemic lack of funds and physical space, they can’t afford to create dedicated ‘special education classes’. However, it is important to note that none of the schools surveyed in this study, with the exception of the Eitz Chaim Schools, have an ‘official’ inclusive education program. The admission of special needs children into their schools is based on a strict Talmudic requirement to accept all who seek to learn Torah.

The above necessity to integrated children with various levels of LD into the regular classroom in the Ultra Orthodox and Hassidic Jewish communities in Toronto is not necessarily derived from the conventional model of inclusion, where inclusion is for the purpose of providing the student with LD the opportunity to
participate academically with the necessary support and accommodations. In the case of the Ultra Orthodox and Hassidic Jewish communities in Toronto, inclusion is understood as the mere facilitation of participation. Prohibition on participation in religious education is at times considered a form of inclusion, since in order to be part of Klal Israel (the general Jewish community) one must observe the 613 Mitzvoth (commandments); being excluded to prevent one from violating any of those Mitzvoth in itself guarantee one’s inclusion in Klal Israel. As it was suggested in the previous chapter by Marx (1993) and Shaked (2006), the categorization of individuals with LD and behavioral disorders as ‘Shoteh’ (mentally handicapped) by the Talmud, automatically absolves that individual from being responsible for keeping the 613 Mitzvoth; therefore, including that individual in Torah studies isn’t necessary and at times discouraged. Hence, due to the lack of alternative programs and/or schools for children suffering from severe LD and behavioral disorders many of those children are sent to ‘regular’ schools (Yeshivas and Chedders).

In addition, since assistive technology, such as computers, is strictly prohibited in many of the ultra orthodox communities, the idea of inclusive education becomes even harder to implement. Although, the practice of inclusion doesn’t necessarily require assistive technologies to be successful, the use of assistive technology such as the computer makes it more manageable for both teachers and students alike, especially in areas of language and communications.

In the next section I discuss the relationship of Teachers’ attitudes toward inclusion and its negative effects on inclusion of students with learning and behavioral disabilities in general education classrooms.
Teachers Attitudes Toward Inclusion

In order to understand why people do what they do, that is, interpret causes to an event or behavior, Attribution Theory came into prominence in the late 1950’s with the work of Fritz Heider (1896-1988), in his seminal work *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations* (1958). According to Heider, a three-stage process underlies an attribution (1) behavior must be observed/perceived, (2) behavior must be determined to be intentional, and (3) behavior must be attributed to internal or external causes (Heider, 1958). *In Reflections on the History of Attribution Theory and Research: People, Personalities, Publications, Problems, Bernard Weiner* (2008) proposes that individuals have “initial affective responses to the potential consequences of the intrinsic or extrinsic motives of the actor, which in turn influence future behavior” (p. 153). Weiner (2008) argues that a person’s own perceptions or attributions determine the amount of effort he or she will engage in activities in the future. Weiner (2008) also suggests that when attributions lead to positive affect and high possibility of future success, such attributions would result in greater readiness to tackle a similar tasks in the future than those attributions that produce negative affect and low expectation of future success. Weiner (1985), established three categories of achievement attribution: (a) stable theory, which influences individuals’ expectancy about their future, (b) locus of control, internal and external control which is related to individuals’ persistence on mission, and (c) control, where causality influences emotional responses to the outcome of task.
Twenge, et al., (2004) suggests that people in individualist cultures, generally white North American and European societies, value individuals, personal goals, and independence as opposed to people in collectivist cultures who see individuals as members of groups such as families, tribes, work units, and nations, and tend to value conformity and interdependence. The collectivist approach is held in many Asian societies, traditional Native American societies, and some African societies (Twenge, et al., 2004). Culture, either individualist or collectivist, affects how people make attributions (Pal, 2007). It has been demonstrated that people including teachers from individualist cultures are more disposed to make fundamental-attribution error than people from collectivist cultures. Furthermore, individualist cultures tend to attribute a person’s behavior to his internal factors whereas collectivist cultures tend to attribute a person’s behavior to his external factors (Pal, 2007). Research also suggests that individualist cultures engage in self-serving bias more than do collectivist cultures, by attributing success to internal factors and attributing failure to external factors. In contrast, collectivist cultures engage in the opposite of self-serving bias by attributing success to external factors and blaming failure on internal factors - the individual (Pal, 2007).

In our case, the Melamdim from the Jewish Ultra Orthodox and Hassidic communities belong to the collectivist culture, even when living in individualistic culture. The collectivist approach is derived from the fundamental belief that every Jewish person is responsible for his or her entire community; a concept known as Kol Israel Arevim Ze la Ze – All Israel (Jews) are responsible for each other. This collective responsibility for each other’s wellbeing extends beyond day-to-day
actions into the spiritual realm. The emotional and spiritual well-being of every person depends on the actions and attitudes of the others in the group; therefore, the individual is expected to take into consideration how every action he or she does effects the Klal – the collective. Success is attributed to God while failure is always attributed to the individual; therefore, the individual must always monitor his or her behavior, emotions and overall actions to make sure the collective well-being is maintained.

Research has shown that teacher’s attitude is central to the successful implementation of inclusion (Brandes and Crowson 2009; Elik, Wiener, and Corkum, 2010; Scruggs and Mastropieri, 1996). Dickson-Smith, (1995), argues that both general and special education teachers must be prepared to meet the challenges and complexities of inclusion. Cook, (2002) demonstrated that the perception of severity of disability influence teachers’ attitudes toward students with disabilities, which influence the frequency, duration, and quality of teacher-student interactions. Brandes and Crowson (2009) found evidence that traditional ideology and personal discomfort with disability are related to negative attitudes and opposition to inclusion. This finding reverberates in the Jewish Ultra Orthodox and Hassidic communities who participated in this study. As was discussed in the chapter on the Jewish Ultra Orthodox Interpretation of Halacha (Jewish Law) in Regards to Individuals with Severe Learning and Behavioral Disabilities, traditional negative views of disability as perpetuated in the liturgy permeates many of the Melamdim’s own negative attitudes and discomfort with disability, which in turn prevents them
from providing students with learning and behavioral disabilities with the needed support.

Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) found it that for successful inclusion, teachers need to believe they have the necessary classroom materials, supports, and resources. They concluded that ultimately, the overall success of any inclusion program might center on the context within which these supports are made available.

Bishay (1996) states that a number of elements have been evaluated in attempt to determine which elements promote teacher motivation, since improvement in teacher motivation has been shown to be beneficial for students as well as teachers. Bishay found that elements such as increased length of service, greater satisfaction with salary, higher levels of self-esteem, higher levels of respect for the teaching profession, and lower levels of stress lead to greater teacher morale.

In Elik, Wiener, and Corkum (2010), pre-service teachers’ attitudes, readiness to learn, and open-minded thinking dispositions in relation to children with Learning and Behavioral Disabilities (LBD) were examined. It was concluded that pre-service teachers who reported that learning about effective teaching strategies for children with LBD was a high priority, and who had more open-minded thinking dispositions, were more likely to report that they intended to engage in planned behaviors as oppose to punitive reactions. The above study made the recommendation that pre-service teacher programs should “focus on preventing punitive reactions by focusing on strategies for emotion regulation, motivating those teachers who do not view learning about students with LBD to be high
priority, developing open-minded thinking dispositions, and teaching evidence
based strategies for adapting instruction for students with LBD” (Elik, Wiener, and

In the next section I discuss the fundamental reasons why Ultra Orthodox Judaism
is somewhat reluctant when it comes to being engaged with modern technologies in
everyday life.
Technology and Ultra Orthodoxy

The use of modern technologies in everyday life is a major issue of contention amongst members of the Jewish ultra orthodox communities both in Israel and North America. Many rabbis issued prohibitions on owning smart phones and computers that have Internet access. In 2007 a “Kosher internet” was introduced in North America and Israel, a special Internet search portal that allows Orthodox Jews to search the Internet without the fear of being directed to inappropriate websites (www.koshernet.com). Israel's cellular phone companies introduced a “Kosher Cell Phone” developed together with a special committee of rabbis. In May 2011, Israel's second largest mobile provider, Partner, introduced what it hailed as the world's first Yiddish cell phone, manufactured by Alcatel-Lucent (Lubell, 2011). While handsets have become more sophisticated, offering increasingly high-tech features, kosher cell phones have no text messaging capabilities, Internet access or camera and block calls to sex lines. Concerns about erotic phone services and forbidden text messaging between members of the opposite sex prompted leaders of Israel's ultra orthodox community to set up a rabbinical committee on Internet and cell phone use several years ago. The words "kosher" and "approved by the rabbinical committee for telecommunications" appear on the screen when a kosher cell phone is turned on. "There are many problems with today's phones, many temptations," said Rabbi Benjamin, "One can reach very immodest places on the Internet and people will write in a text message lewd things which they would not dare say aloud.” The fear of modernity and technological advancement seemed to occupy most of the rabbis in the course
developed for this project: “on one hand technology brought many wonderful things to this world...however the cost we might pay for Kidma (advancement) could be too high...not to sound paranoid but all those gadgets could be very addictive...I can see how the children are so engaged with all those little video games...only if they were half as attentive to Torah I could have had a much easier time at the classroom.” In the last decade a certain division within the Jewish Orthodox community has occurred along the lines of those who allow their children to engage with technology, mainly having a computer at home, and those who strictly prohibit it. The Hasidic Bobov rabbis in the course, with the exception of Rabbi Halevi, don’t approve of having computers at home; however, they admit that their children might have access to one. During the course we used laptop computers and a Smart-Board; the Bobov rabbis, once again with the exception of Rabbi Halevi, had great difficulty operating the computers, some even refused to touch them. The non-Hasidic rabbis in the course were more open to using the computers, and the majority of them owned their own computer and other technological devices such as an iPhone, iPad, and eReaders.

In *Narrative and the Cultural Psychology of Identity*, Philip Hammack (2008) noted that relevance of identity in contemporary society is highly connected to the way individuals react and interact with the challenges to personal and social meaning activated by the forces of history. These challenges are part of a “transition” from a modern to postmodern era in which technological advancement has altered the nature of human interactions with each other and the community as a whole (Hammack). Although technological innovations such as the personal computer
(linked via the Internet) have increased the interconnectedness of groups, they have also contributed significantly to the corrosion of traditional community life, hence influencing the way those communities reacted to those technological advances, mostly by rejecting their integration into community life. This exclusion of technological advancement allowed some communities, such as the Bobov Hasidim, to somewhat preserve their traditional ways. However, as will be quite evident later on in the study data collected during the individual interviews with the Rabbis, the cracks are starting to show and the community as a whole is finding it hard to cope with those challenges.

On May 20, 2012 close to 40,000 Ultra Orthodox men gathered in the Citi baseball field in Flushing, New York, for a rally to discuss the risks of using the internet. Women were not allowed to attend, keeping with the traditional gender segregation; however, viewing parties had been arranged in Orthodox neighborhoods of Brooklyn and New Jersey so that women could watch, as the rally was streamed live via the Internet. The rally was organized by a group called Ichud Hakehillos Letohar Hamachane, which means 'Union of Communities for the Purity of the Camp', Based in Lakewood, New Jersey, and was endorsed by two prominent rabbis, Israel Portugal, the Skulener rebbe of Borough Park, and Matisyahu Salomon, the spiritual leader of Beth Medrash Govoha, the main yeshiva in Lakewood, N.J.

According to the New York Times article 'Ultra-Orthodox Jews Rally to Discuss Risks of Internet', the rally itself didn’t ask participants to stop using the Internet, but rather limit the use of it to work related matters only. Participants received a booklet outlining which web browsers are allowed and tips on how to
avoid 'dangerous sites', produced by the organization Technology Awareness Group, a nonprofit that provides advice and technical support to people seeking to filter the Internet. (New York Times, May 20, 2012).
Research Questions

Since this is the first time in the history of both the University of Toronto and the various Jewish ultra orthodox communities of Toronto that these communities engaged in such a scholastic exchange, the research questions were derived from the need for assessment of the course offered. In addition, no data exists on the above communities’ engagement with evidence-based Special Education programs and their overall attitudes towards implementation of these programs, therefore, attitudes of the Melamdim were evaluated using pre-and-post questionnaires, one-on-one semi structured interviews and observational notes taken by the instructor throughout the 12 week course.

The first research question was, “Do the Jewish Ultra Orthodox and Hassidic Community schools employ contemporary evidence-based special education programs”? The hypothesis was that in general, they don’t; however, ‘traditional Jewish education’ has many elements of special education instruction inherit in the tradition itself, i.e. the belief that every child learns the Torah differently.

The second research question was, “What are the levels of both awareness and knowledge of evidence-based special education among Jewish educators in the Jewish Ultra Orthodox and Hassidic Community in Toronto”? The hypothesis was that since most educators in the Jewish Ultra Orthodox and Hassidic communities have no secular education, and more specifically no formal teacher training, I would expect the levels of knowledge and awareness to be low to non-existent. However, being an ordained rabbi trained in the art of ‘text analysis and extrapolation’ I would
expect to observe some self discovery and knowledge parallel to the one found in special education theories and practice.

The third research question was a threefold one, “How positive, negative or absent are Jewish Ultra Orthodox and Hassidic educators’ attitudes towards the following issues: a) inclusive education, in particular the inclusive classroom; b) exceptionalities, both disability and giftedness; c) and self as a Jewish educator. The hypothesis was threefold as well: in regards to inclusive education and the inclusive classroom, it was hypothesized that those concepts will be foreign to most of the *Melamdim* since the ultra orthodox schools don’t, in general, stream their students in the elementary levels; in addition, due to the Biblical commandment to teach the Torah to every male, exclusion is out of the question! In regards to exceptionalities, both disability and giftedness, it was hypothesized that the attitudes towards those students will follow the Talmudic principle that three diagnostic entities are exempt from following religious precepts: “cheresh, shoteh, katan,” i.e., the deaf, the mentally handicapped, and the small, placing those with learning disabilities in the *shoteh* (mentally handicapped) category. In terms of positive or negative view of self as *Melamdim*, it was hypothesized that since traditionally the communities pay *Melamdim* very little, in addition to their lack of ‘professional training’, their view of themselves would be somewhat negative.

The fourth research question was actually conceptualized during the creation of the introductory Special Education course, “How could we merge ‘traditional’ Jewish teachings and texts with contemporary evidence based special education theories, producing a balanced approach that could be employed at Jewish Ultra
Orthodox and Hassidic Community schools?” It was assumed that such a merger of ‘old and new’ teachings is not only possible but also necessary in order to establish a common ground that both secular academia and Jewish Orthodoxy could meet.
CHAPTER II

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose the present study was to examine the state of special education programs in selected Jewish Ultra Orthodox (Haredi) community schools in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), and the attitudes and perceptions about special education of the Melamdim (rabbis/teachers) teaching in those schools. A Special Education course, modeled on OISE’s additional qualification program available to in-service teachers in the public sector, was administrated to 28 Melamdim. Throughout the 12 weeks course, data was collected through observations and dialogues with course participants. The impact of the special education course on classroom practices by those who engaged in the course was also assessed. In addition, a collection of pre-course and post-course data from participants (Melamdim) on attitudes and perceptions in regards to special education through a self-administrated questionnaire took place. Four additional questionnaires were administered, examining demographic characteristics, general attitudes and behaviors, and well-being. Finally, a pre-selected group of 8 Melalmdim was interviewed as representatives of their home school and the denomination of Judaism they belong to. This section will outline the methodology used to address the goals of this study.
Research Participants

The participants in this study were 23 males, 6 were Bobov Hasidic Ultra Orthodox Jews and 17 were Litvish Ultra Orthodox Jews. Frequency statistics for the participants in the study are presented in Table 1; descriptive statistics are presented in Table 2. All the participants in the study were male, married, and had a religious affiliation of Jewish or Orthodox Jewish. The average age of the participants was 36. When asked to rate religiosity on a scale of 1 to 10 (not at all religious to very religious), participants reported that they were very religious; the mean score was 9.73 (out of 10). All of the participants had children; the mode number of children is 7, ranging from 1 to 15 children per family. As for the highest level of education, eight of the participants reported high school or some college; fourteen reported having a bachelor’s or master’s degree. Twenty of the participants were born in the USA, two in Canada, and one in Denmark.

Participants in the special education course came from the following Jewish Ultra Orthodox communities/schools: Bobov Hasidic Movement – The Toronto Bobov School, Agudath Israel of Toronto – The Toronto Chader and Ner Israel Haredi Yeshiva and Eitz Chayim School – Orthodox day school.

The Bobov (or Bobover Hasidism) of Toronto is led by Rabbi Yehoshua Fuhrer shlita. Rav Fuhrer was personally selected by the late Bobover Rebbe to start a Bobover kehilah (community) in Toronto. Yeshiva Bnei Tzion of Bobov is located in the Bathurst and Wilson area, which is highly populated by ultra orthodox Jews of various denominations. According to Rabbi Fuhrer, the community consists of about 100 families, which mostly originated from the USA and Montreal, Canada.
The social economic status (SES) of the community is generally low and almost all families depend on the Bobov international network of charities to meet their daily needs. The community is very reclusive, dissimilar to Hasidic movements like Lubavitch; they do not conduct outreach programs in Jewish secular communities, therefore no data exists on the community in local United Jewish Appeal (UJA) Federation statistics. Rabbi Furher and the other rabbis who took the course provided all the information about the specific Bobov community in Toronto.

Agudath Israel of Toronto includes the Toronto Cheder and Ner Israel Haredi Yeshiva. It was founded in Katowice (Upper Silesia, now in the southwestern part of Poland) in 1912, with the purpose of providing an umbrella organization for observant Jews who opposed the Zionist movement. The Toronto chapter is less political and has a better relationship with the state of Israel – however, it does not have any affiliation with UJA or any other pro-Israel group. It is important to point out that members of Agudath Israel are not actively anti-Zionist but simply believe that the state of Israel should be established by order of G-d not man. Rabbi David Engel (not to be confused with David Engel, UJA head) is a leading figure in the community.

The Eitz Chayim schools are Haredi (orthodox) schools, and have served the Toronto Jewish Community for over 90 years. Eitz Chayim is affiliated with UJA and many of its members are Orthodox, not necessarily affiliated with Agudath Israel or any other particular Haredi movement. A minority group of school members is part of the Modern-Orthodox movement. The school is situated away from the ‘Wilson-Bathurst corridor’, which in itself is a testimony for its relative ‘openness’ compared
to the other schools. The majority of its students come from middle class families with an average size of 4 children (UJA Federation 2009/2010 annual report).

All participants were orthodox ordained rabbis working in one of the above schools for 9 years (mode) (1 year being the lowest and 14 the highest).

Data Collection Procedures

To answer to the research questions posed here, a case study was selected for a variety of reasons. The case study, the special education course, was developed as a result of a real needs assessment of the ultra orthodox community schools conducted by the author prior to the creation and administration of the course. The development and teaching of the course by the author/principle investigator allowed for a continuing, first hand account of the collected data. In addition, since attitudes towards special education, the integrated classroom and the special needs student were examined, the changes in attitudes in all of the above areas were not only assessed using self-reporting questionnaires but also observed in the participants’ own home schools, where the fundamental issues and topics of the course were to be implemented. Moreover, the extended interaction with subjects, over 12 weeks of course instruction and an additional 3 weeks of both observations in home schools and one-on-one interviews, allowed the author not only to establish rapport with participants, but also to gain a better understanding of their lives outside of the course setting.
**Questionnaires**

All of the participants completed the following five self-reporting questionnaires: *Demographic Characteristics* (Ferrari, 2008); two parts of the *Attitudes and Behavior: part A* (questions 1 through 15 are taken from the Three Dimensions Wisdom Scale (3D-WS, Ardelt, 2003) and questions 16 through 22 come from Pearlin and Schooler’s (1978) Mastery Scale); *part B* (Questions 1 through 24 are taken from the 3D-WS (Ardelt, 2003) and questions 25 through 27 are three “pure” meaning items from Crumbaugh and Maholick’s (1964) Purpose in Life Test); *General Well-Being* (Questions 1 through 18 are taken from the General Well-Being Schedule (Fazio, 1977); Questions 19 and 21 are adapted from the OARS Multidimensional Functional Assessment Questionnaire, (Center for the Study of Aging and Human Development, 1975); question 20 is adapted from the National Survey of the Aged, (Shanas, 1962, 1982)); *Satisfaction with Life* (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985; Pavot & Diener, 1993); *Teachers’ Perception Towards Inclusive Education* (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000) adapted by the author in consultation with Dr. Ruth Childs (see Appendices 1-7). *Teachers’ Perception Towards Inclusive Education* was administrated twice, once at the beginning of the course (week one) and a second time about a month after the end of the course (June-July 2011). The other questionnaires were not repeated since there was no expectation for any change in demographics or general attitudes, nor were it part of the study’s main investigation.

The questionnaires were distributed in a sealed manila envelope to each participant; a number was assigned to each, replacing their actual names. The set of
questionnaires was completed in confidence alone without the presence of the investigator. The data was also entered using the numbers to identify the participants.

**Observation during class instruction**

Prior to the start of the course in January 2011, the researcher visited the Yeshivas and Cheders of the would-be participants in the course. Furthermore, the researcher attended various community events and lectures given by stakeholders in the Jewish Ultra Orthodox community in order to get a better sense of the interworking of the community. Throughout the twelve-week term, I observed and recorded the participants during class. In addition, during weeks 10 to 12 I visited each of the participants in their home school for the second time, to evaluate their practice. Finally, in order to strength the rapport with the participants and in an effort to understand their way of life, I attended prayer services in each of the participants’ synagogues; during my visits to the synagogues I was able to observe the communal life in which the participants participated.

**One-on-one Semi Structured Interviews**

As part of the interview process the eight selected participants were asked to answer 14 semi-structured questions dealing with the following three domains: Current Self-Definitions, Past Experiences, and Future Autobiography, as conceptualized by Ljiljana Vuletic (2010) in consultation with her PhD advisor, Michel Ferrari. I adapted these questions—originally posed to study identity
formation in adults living with autism—to address what it means to be an Orthodox Jewish Educator.

The first domain includes questions about strengths and weaknesses, current self-evaluation, intentional personal change, being an Orthodox Jew and an educator, psychosocial adjustment, and current life-evaluation. The second includes questions about past self-definitions, significant life-experiences, life decisions, and turning points. And the third domain includes questions about perceived control over the future, projections for the future, and becoming a better person and living in a better world (see Appendix 7 for complete interview questions).

The interviews took place in the participants’ own homes and/or local restaurants on off peak hours to ensure privacy. The interviews were on average an hour and half long and were digitally recorded.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

Data was collected through observations, self-administrated questionnaires and one-on-one semi structured interviews with select participants. During each observation, excluding the ones conducted during the Sabbath at the synagogues, detailed notes were kept. The notes taken at the first and second visit to the home schools of the participants were communicated orally to those observed; they were asked to provide feedback and/or additional information they felt I might have left out. After each three-hour session of instruction, the researcher made notes of participants’ questions, comments and further topics of discussion. In addition, during the span of the twelve-week course the participants produced written work, mainly on chart paper, that was kept by the researcher and used in the data analysis.
The one-on-one interview transcripts were summarized and a bullet-pointed summary was created for each of the participants. Most of the interviews were conducted in English with many Yiddish terms woven throughout (known as *Yeshivish English*); one interview was done in Hebrew. The questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS 18.0. Frequency statistics for the participants in the study are presented in Table 1; descriptive statistics are presented in Table 2. The results regarding the change in attitude by participants from pre- to post-test survey are presented in Table 3.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

The protection of human subjects was achieved by following the University of Toronto Office of Research ethics guidelines. The protection of privacy was paramount for the success of this study. The participants in this study are members of very conservative communities that usually never engage with secular universities in general and with academic study in particular. Many of the participants were reluctant to be recorded; however, with the reassurance that the recording will not be shared with anyone but my direct supervisor, Dr. Michel Ferrari, they agreed to proceed. The reason for their concerns was mainly the mistrustful view of secular society held by many in the Ultra Orthodox Jewish community; therefore, any contact with the secular world is considered highly critical. It is important to note that participation in the course did not mean automatic agreement to participate in the study; a separate consent was obtained for each. In addition, the interviews were mostly held in the rabbis’ own homes or
early in the morning at local coffee shops outside the boundaries of the community. Once again, the concern for the protection of privacy was a guiding principle throughout the study. Each of the participants had a choice to withdrawal from the study at any point. Upon completion of each interview the participants were able to review the transcript and ask to withdraw all of it and/or parts of it; none of the participants asked to withdrawal any of their interview statements.

**Research Setting**

The setting for this study was a special education course created and administered by the author, during a span of twelve weeks, at the Toronto Prosserman Jewish Community Centre (PJCC). The location was selected as a ‘neutral’ location, not associated with any one particular Jewish denomination; however, it is important to note that the PJCC is owned and operated by the UJA Federation of Toronto, an organization most of the participants of the course do not support, nor does UJA support their communities. The course took place every Sunday from January 16 to May 9, 2011 between 6 and 9 p.m. The in-class observations were made in the participants’ home schools: The Toronto Cheder, Yeshiva Bnei Tzion of Bobov and Eitz Chaim Day School, all in and around the GTA, during the month of March 2011. The one-on-one interviews were conducted in local coffee shops, the participants’ homes and their Yeshivas.
Course 1: Introduction to Special Education

“The Course”

In January 2011 the first course (of three) in Special Education opened. Initially, 18 Rabbis (*Melamdim*) registered to participate in the course, however, on the first day 28 Rabbis (*Melamdim*) showed up; enrollment was expanded to accommodate for the additional 10. The course took place over non-consecutive 12 weeks to accommodate for time off during the Jewish holiday of Passover. Each week we met for 3 hours at the Prosserman Jewish Community center at Bathurst Street in north Toronto. The above location was chosen, as a ‘neutral place’ where all denominations could meet and also because it was located geographically in close proximity to neighborhoods the Rabbis were living in. The course was designed by the author, modeled after similar course in special education offered at OISE for in-service teachers in the public school system. In addition, the author and rabbis, from the community involved, reviewed all materials and weekly topics for the course for appropriateness of content and topics. The main concern voiced by all Jewish Ultra Orthodox community leaders involved, was the appropriateness of various psychological and educational theories and practices that could be in direct conflict with the community’s core beliefs. In order to minimize the chance of offending the above participants, the course reading kit, which was especially composed for the course, was reviewed in advance with various rabbis from both the Bobov and the Letvish Jewish Ultra Orthodox communities, for input. Initially two topics were of concern, the first was the Biological model of development in general and Darwin’s theory of evolution in particular, and the second, Freud’s
Psychosexual Development theory. The first was non-negotiable, and Darwin's evolutional theory was dropped from the course kit; the second was included in limited capacity, concentrating on Freud’s proposed stages of development and it's affect on child development. The following are the scheduled weekly topics and detailed theories and elements covered in class. Each week proceeded with appropriate readings to assist the participants to gain basic knowledge of the theory and/or method discussed in class.

**Week 1: Introduction**

Our first class started with the following biblical verse: “Impress them [teaching of the Torah/about G-D] upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deuteronomy, 6, 7; JPS Translation). The above is the biblical verse, from which rabbis extrapolated the commandment/need to teach the Torah to your own children. It is also one of three parts of the Shema prayer, which is recited every morning and evening by orthodox and conservative Jewish men, and dates back to the time of the writing of the Talmud at around 70-200CE (Perkins, 1994). This verse can also pertain to the pedagogy and instructional methods prescribed when teaching the Torah. 'Impressing’ as well as ‘reciting’ is needed to transmit the words of the Torah; in addition, the location and frequency is addressed; where: ‘home’ and ‘away’, when: ‘lie down’ and ‘get up’. The Torah goes into detail not only to make sure the Mitzvah (commandment) is fulfilled but also to make sure the practices and learning styles of those engaged in Torah learning are met. When discussing Special Education in contemporary times, the need to use multiple ways
and methods of teaching in order to assure comprehension and integration of knowledge is by now considered ‘best practice’. The above biblical verse was used in the first class as a springboard to the topic of ‘Special Education’. Using the above verse the participants (Melamdim) who are well versed in the Talmud and Torah were able not only to connect the concept of ‘Special Education’ to the verse itself but also make the deduction that ‘Special Education’ is a Jewish value sanctioned by the Torah. The deduction was crucial to make since teaching the Torah is an obligatory commandment, teaching it in diverse ways is therefore part of the obligation. The second part of class was dedicated to a discussion on the somewhat complex view of Judaism on human exceptionalities (see chapter on Jewish Ultra Orthodox Interpretation of Halacha (Jewish Law) in Regards to Individuals with Severe Learning Disabilities). Once again, it was crucial to arrive at the common understanding that the Halachic treatment of individual with disabilities couldn’t apply to children with Learning Disabilities (LD) since the disability could be mitigated by modification of instruction and curriculum, which in turn will reintroduce the obligatory nature of teaching Torah to ALL Jewish children, at ALL places and times. Gaining conviction of this view among the participants was difficult, as many of the participants felt that more study and inquiry of the topic is needed to deduct the above-suggested interpretations.

**Week 2: Understanding Behavior in Children and Youth**

In the second week I decided not to open the class with a biblical verse but rather ‘jump in’ right into an overview of educational learning theories such as: Jean
Piaget’s developmental stage theory, Lev Vygotsky’s sociocultural development and Albert Bandura social cognitive theories. We also discussed B.F. Skinner’s behaviorism. The participants were able to relate strongly to Jean Piaget’s developmental stage theory, since many of Piaget’s beliefs on stages of development are inline with Jewish understanding of human development. For example, the Talmud uses ‘stage theory’ to describe what is known as the ‘Seven Stages of Human Life’:

He [Rabbi Yehuda ben Taima] used to say: At five [one should begin the study of] Scriptures; at ten, Mishna; at thirteen [one becomes obligated in] the commandments; at fifteen [the study of] Talmud; at eighteen the wedding canopy; at twenty to pursue; at thirty strength; at forty understanding; at fifty counsel; at sixty old age; at seventy fullness of years; at eighty spiritual strength; at ninety bending over; at one hundred it is as if he has died and passed on from the world. (Jerusalem Talmud, Perki Avoth chapter 5, Mishna 25).

In this Mishnah, Rabbi Yehuda ben Taima\textsuperscript{vii} sums up the Jewish human experience with simple but uncanny accuracy. Many of the earlier stages described deal with the subjects a student must study, while the later ones deal with the spiritual and intellectual milestones he/she reaches. The biblical commentator Rashi explains that at ten, a student should study the Mishna according to its plain meaning alone to become familiar with the basic subject matter. The study of Talmud implies the deeper study and analysis of the Mishna by contrasting different cases, examining basic principles, understanding the source and rationale for each opinion, and deciding practical Jewish law\textsuperscript{vii}. The question of ‘How do the above theories are supported by both Jewish Halacha (law) and customs’ was addressed
by the above Talmudic equivalence. Lev Vygotsky’s, himself of Jewish Orthodox background, sociocultural development was also very relevant to the participants’ practice since many of them strongly believe that their job extends beyond teaching Torah, Talmud and Hebrew but rather being the ‘cultural mediator’ for the child, assuring the perpetuity of Jewish orthodox way of life. Therefore, exposing the child to his/her culture (Yiddishkeit – Jewishness) plays an integral part in the child’s educational goals assuring proper development of oneself as a Jew. Vygotsky’s understanding of child behavior was also in congruence with Jewish Orthodox view:

The history of child behavior is born from the interweaving of these two lines [lower and higher mental functions]. The history of the development of the higher mental functions is impossible without a study of their prehistory, their biological roots, and their organic disposition (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 46).

Similarly, the Melamdim felt that the learning of Torah and Talmud, a pursuit that represents higher mental functions, is co-dependent on one’s typical biological development as well as constant exposure to Yiddishkeit. Exposure to orthodox conceptions of Jewish culture/religion will assure one’s proper cognitive development, however, his/her proper development of lower mental functions will dictate the success of the development of the higher mental functions. The above assertion is used to rationalize the exclusion of individuals with LD’s and other disabilities from the obligation of the study of Torah (see chapter on Jewish Ultra Orthodox Interpretation of Halacha - Jewish Law).
Week 3: Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD/ADD)

The third week of class was dedicated to understanding Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Many of the Melamdim held common myths about ADD & ADHD, most commonly the myth that children with the disorder can chose to stop ‘acting out’ if they really wanted to. In addition, the belief that ‘G-D, the creator, dictates human behavior [Hashgacha E’lyona – divine providence]’ therefore, humans have to accept the derivation [G’zera]. Since all the Melamdim works in all boys’ schools they are disproportionally exposed to ADD/ADHD due to the fact that the disorder is more prevalent in boys (Rapport et al., 2009; Pollack et al., 2009). The discussion around ADD & ADHD concentrated around dispelling many of the myths and preconceived notions many of the participants held in regards to children with the disorder; however, after being provided with the facts on ADD & ADHD and various strategies to help manage the symptoms and subsequent behavior of children with ADD & ADHD, majority of the participants were willing to consider ADD & ADHD as a ‘worldly phenomenon’ rather than divine providence.

The biblical story of Esau in Genesis; chapter 25, provides a glimps at ADHD-like behavior. Esau’s behaviour is described as being impulsive and in need for instant gratification, which fatefuly leads him to lose his ‘firstborn right’ to Jacob. Four verbs are used in the biblical account to emphasis the impulsiveness of Esau’s actions: “He ate and drank and arose and went off” (Genesis 25: 34). Esau, displays several ADHD symptoms in the above account of his ‘selling of his firstborn right for a bowl of lentils’: impulsiveness, craving, and distractibility (Prouser, 2011). In
Midrash Rabbah on the book of Genesis (chapters 63-65), Esau is labeled deviant by Talmudic scholars who described him as being *rasha* [evil doer], idol worshiper and the embodiment of the evils associated with the Roman Empire (Neusner, 1994). Esau was “a man who knew the hunt, a man of the field” as oppose to his brother Jacob who was “content to stay at home among the tents” (Genesis 25:27). As a hunter, Esau possessed the necessary traits to become a successful hunter; however, his hunting abilities are not compared as desirably to his brother Jacob who uses his higher cognitive abilities and negotiate his fate, eventually appearing as a forefather for Judeo-Christian faith. As such, Jacobs’ character traits present as more respectable and are thus more valued by Talmudic scholars, and even more contemporary biblical scholars (Prouser, 2011).

**Week 4: Understanding Learning Disabilities**

As the title of the week’s class suggest the bulk of the class time was used to redefine what are Learning Disabilities (LD)? How do we recognize them? What does the Talmud tells us about LD? The emphasis was on ‘redefining’ the above terms since most of the *Melamdim* had limited knowledge of the various learning disabilities a child might have to struggle with in his/her everyday learning. It was quite evident from the initial discussion that the majority of *Melamdim* held the view that LDs are not ‘real’ and that academia in general and educational psychologists in particular invented many of the LDs to ‘excuse’ children’s poor behavior and lack of discipline when it comes to scholastic requirements. Once again, at the beginning most of the *Melamdim* felt that some of the LDs described in class
might have been a result of 'divine providence'; hence, making it futile to intervene beyond praying for G-D’s help and guidance. The Talmud teaches us that amongst our students we might find diverse learners:

Four characteristics are found among students: Quick to learn and quick to forget, his gain is canceled by his loss. Slow to learn and slow to forget, his loss is canceled by his gain. Quick to learn and slow to forget, his is a happy lot. Slow to learn and quick to forget, his is an unhappy lot (Perki Avot 5:15).

Diverse learners require diverse ways of instruction. The Talmud goes on to emphasis the importance of reaching all of the above-described learners since learning the Torah is not only a mitzvah (blessing) but also a commandment – not fulfilling it is plain heresy according to biblical sources (Deuteronomy 6:7; Talmudic discussions: Tractate Kiddushin 40b, Tractate Berakhot 22a, Tractate Hagigah 5b and Tractate Avodah Zarah 3b).

The second part of class was dedicated to understanding the WISC-IV (Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children- Fourth Edition). Questions such as: how do we use the WISC-IV? Why might a teacher recommend a WISC report? And the key benefits of a WISC assessment and how to make sense of a WISC report were few of the issues discussed in class in regards to the use of psychological-educational assessment. It could be argued that the WISC-IV at its current format would not be a useful tool for assessment of children with LD in the Jewish Ultra Orthodox communities. Many children from the above communities would test poorly when taking the WISC-IV since many of the questions in subtests, especially the subtest on comprehension, which contains questions about social situations, dealing with concepts that are likely foreign to children whose exposure to popular
culture is minimal to non-existent. In addition, since none of the schools included in this study follows the Ontario math, language, or science curriculum which puts their students in great disadvantage when attempting to complete the subtests dealing with the above subjects. Moreover, although most of the children in the community were born in North America, English is not their first language but rather Yiddish, adding an additional obstacle when completing the assessment without the proper supports as English Language Learners (ELL).

**Week 5: Fundamentals of Classroom Management**

In our initial meeting with various Jewish Ultra Orthodox community leaders in November 2010, the issue of ‘classroom management’ was on top of the agenda. All the Melamdim who participated in the course reported having to spend an average 1/3 of the teaching time (1.5 hours out of 4.5 hours of net instruction) on so-called ‘classroom management’. The methods used vary, with great emphasis on physical removal from class for misbehavior. In my frequent visits to the schools I observed 6-10 children at any given time at the office of the principal as a result of being removed from the class due to behavioral transgression. When I questioned the Melalmdim to ask why they keep sending the children who misbehave to the office the answer was unvarying – ‘we are not expected to deal with misbehavior in the classroom’. A heated discussion followed in which the Melamdim showed opposition to the notion of keeping and dealing with misbehaving students in the class rather than opting to send the student to the office. I suggested to the Melamdim that classroom management could only be done in the classroom; therefore, by sending children out of the classroom the teacher can no longer apply
modifications (Grossman, 2004). In our discussion of ‘why children misbehave’ we explored the idea of defining misbehavior by its function as opposed to the description of its disruptive appearance (Barbetta, et al., 2005). Most Melamdim listed calling out, hitting, and getting out of seat as most frequent misbehaviors experienced in their classroom. Barbetta, et al., (2005) argues that defining misbehavior by how it looks only provides us with an incomplete picture of the behavior since it tells us nothing about why the misbehavior occurred and often doesn't help in our efforts to modify this behavior. To determine a behavior's function, I introduced the Melamdim to the information-gathering procedure called a Functional Assessment based on an Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (ABC) chart that can be used as a functional assessment tool. An ABC chart has three columns on which we record the behavior, distinguishing events that occurred prior to and after the misbehaviour (Barbetta, et al., 2005). By assessing the function of misbehavior, the Melamdim were able to discern what exactly caused the student to misbehave. Therefore, a misbehaving student who gets lost in the instructions of a teacher, but sent to a principals’ office, is not going to be any better informed upon return. If the teacher can determine the source of the student’s difficulty, then a more appropriate response can be applied.

Reflection on one’s own teaching practice was a foreign concept to most Melamdim who participated in the course. As was mentioned before none of the participants in the course had formal university pre-service teacher education, when were questioned about ‘how they know how to teach’, all Melamdim testified for a combination of sources, mostly teaching the way they were taught and also
learning on the job. This combination of mimicry and immersion as a method of refining ones’ teaching abilities, is limiting. The immediate professional environment limits self-reflection on ones’ originality and improvement. I challenged the Melalmdim to create a list of characteristics of an effective teacher. The list generated included some of the following generic items to describe an effective teacher: knowledgeable, caring, reliable, and honest.

The discussion that followed concluded that effective teachers do need all of the above characteristics in addition to being highly organized, effective enforcers of classroom rules, have clear expectations that are enforced and reinforced consistently, and finally be flexible – which are all part of reflective teaching practices. The Melamdim started to realize that the way they were approaching misbehavior in the classroom was ineffective at best. They were lacking many of the strategies, which are based on best practices, to deal with misbehavior in general and learning disabilities, the antecedent in many cases, more specifically. Reaching this milestone in their understanding allowed me to confidently venture into encouraging understanding, sharing and implementing proven research and sound theories that provide a foundation for quality classroom management.

**Week 6: Using Reinforcement to Increase Appropriate Behavior**

Week six marked exactly the half way mark through the course. The desire to know more about the so-called ‘best practices in education’ opened the door for discussion on Skinner and Pavlov’s theories. We started the class with the biblical story of Jonah, the reluctant prophet. In the biblical story the prophet Jonah was
asked to deliver some bad news to the people of Nineveh by G-D. At first he attempts
to run away from G-D however he ultimately deliver's G-D threat to the surprisingly
receptive people of Nineveh. Our interest in the story starts with Jonah’s odd
reaction of sadness and disapproval for sparing the Ninevites due to their
exceptional positive and repentant response (Jonah 4:1-4). In response to Jonah’s
unsympathetic position, G-D decides to teach him a lesson, which is rooted in
reinforcement to increase appropriate behavior. G-D provides Jonah with a large
gourd that grows miraculously in the middle of the desert to provide him with much
needed shelter from the intense sun; just as Jonah gets comfortable under the gourd,
G-D removes the gourd at once, leaving Jonah dangerously exposed to the sun. Jonah
mourns the loss of the gourd and even contemplates suicide; G-D than points out to
the gross disproportion of Jonah’s sorrow over a gourd while dismissing the demise
of an entire nation of Nineveh (Jonah 4:6-11). G-D somewhat strong message to
Jonah is used to reinforce G-D’s stance on the supremacy of human lives as opposed
to a plant and in turn increasing appropriate behavior – compassion.

During class when we reviewed Skinner’s positive and negative
reinforcement theory one of the Melamdim made the astute observation that what
G-D was doing in the biblical story of Jonah was both positive and negative
reinforcements. With the people of Nineveh he does both negative reinforcement –
removal of privileges (life) if they don’t reform their ways (Ultra Orthodox Jews see
life as a privilege from G-d the creator of life so dyeing in the hand of G-d is not a
punishment but rather a removal of privilege – expiring in the hands of other
humans will be considered a punishment by G-d)– and positive reinforcement –
following G-D’s laws they will become a righteous nation, which comes with its own great benefits. I suggested the following reading of the text, which is based on the more utilitarian and somewhat ridged understanding: Jonah was a typical learning disabled person who really lacked the understanding needed to fully comprehend G-D’s orders, rather than being stubborn, disobedient, and insensitive.

To support my argument I chose to go back to the beginning of the story where Jonah was approached by G-D to deliver a prophesy to the people of Nineveh that they must reform their behavior otherwise G-D will destroy them (Jonah 1:1-2). Jonah decided to run away from G-D, which could be viewed as a behavior that could only resulted from genuine lack of understanding of G-D’s powers and way in the world. In addition, it seems that Jonah finds it hard to deal with his own reality; for example, while on his ‘escape’ from G-D on the boat, the sea become rough and threatened to sink the ship; the other people and crew on the boat cry out to their G-D asking for help – Jonah goes down to the bottom of the boat and falls fast asleep. This avoidance behavior at times of difficulties/crisis is typical for people who lack the cognitive tools to deal with these complex situations. The accusations of being stubborn, disobedient, and insensitive are often directed toward children who later on receive a diagnosis with LD’s (Smith & Strick, 1997).

The Biblical story of Jonah and his struggles with comprehension of tasks and social conventions provided a useful springboard to the topic of behavior modification. The second part of the lesson concentrated around Errorless Acquiescence Training (EAT)xix, Dr. Joseph Ducharm’s theory and applied strategies for behavior modification. I shared with the Melamdim Dr. Ducharm’s multiple
studies, observations and remarkable results. Although EAT was designed as remediation of severe problem behavior in children, the approach could be adopted to manage less severe behaviors. The approach of EAT is:

Systematic and graduated introduction of conditions associated with problem behavior in a manner that greatly reduces the likelihood of problem responses, thereby rendering punishment and other child constraint procedures, which are common components of treatment packages for child problem behavior, unnecessary to the treatment process. Throughout intervention, the child is provided with praise and other forms of reinforcement for successfully managing increasingly challenging circumstances. By the end of treatment, children can typically tolerate difficult conditions that had formerly triggered aberrant responses without need for problem responses (Ducharme, Folino & DeRosie, 2008, pg. 41).

The introduction of EAT marked a sharp turn in the Melamdim’s own conception of behavior management, since the majority of them held the belief that each transgression should be dealt with the appropriate and proportional punishment, which is derived from the biblical understanding of cause and effect presented in Exodus 21:24 ‘Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot’, and the need for swift discipline presented in Proverbs, 13:24 ‘He who holds back his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him early’. Moving away from the above conceptions of behavior management was the turning point in the course. The Melamdim were ready to look at behavior management and modification methods that championed teaching positive replacement behaviors through reinforcement of desired behavior rather than the isolation of negative behavior and the use of punitive measures.
**Week 7: Teaching Positive Replacement Behaviors**

As mentioned above, week six was a transformative week for the Melamdim in many ways. Week seven would capitalize on this change of tide by introducing new ways of addressing misbehavior and subsequent learning difficulties. The Positive Behavior Support Plan (PBSP) (Henley, 2010) was introduced in class and each Melamed chose one child from his classroom for which he created a comprehensive PBSP. The PBSP created for each child with behavior and/or learning disabilitiesxx included instruction of new replacement behaviors, primarily dealing with means of communication to express function of behavior - dealing with the ‘why a child misbehave’. In addition, the Melamdim created three activities that will promote social skills such as: choice making, impulse control, anger management, confidence, communication, and problem-solving skills. Those activities were to be administrated to the entire student body with emphasis of monitoring and reporting on the progress of the student chosen to have a PBSP created for.

The first activity was designed to teach students about the types of emotions they might encounter throughout the day by dividing the class into five groups; each group got an emoticonxiii that represented a different emotion. The students would colour the emoticon with a colour they deemed best represented the emotion expressed. Furthermore, the students were encouraged to create a story around the emoticon they were given to better explain the emotion represented by it. This activity was geared to the lower grades (SK – 3), however, the Melamdim at the higher grades found the activity useful even in grades 4-7; one Melamed at grade 8
attempted to adopt the activity by eliminating the requirement to colour the emoticons, leaving only the component of the written descriptions of emotions; however, when he collected the work from his students he noticed that every person participating in the exercise coloured the emoticons with the corresponding colours – red for angry, and blue for sad and, green for agitated, purple for calm and yellow for happy.

The second activity was designed to encourage students to speak about their feelings. Each student was given a ‘Feelings Graph’ (see appendix 9) with five emoticons representing five different feelings on the y-axis and time slots on the x-axis to record the times each emotion occurred. Once again, all students were encouraged to participate and were asked to keep the graph private. The next day the Melamdim collected the ‘feeling graph’ from their students and brought them to our course to share, keeping the identity of the student anonymous.xxii The majority of the graphs showed similar patterns of change in emotions with some exceptions. The Melalmdim also reported those who were deemed exceptional as ‘behavioral children’. The exceptions were mainly spikes in negative emotions during times of transitions - between 1st recess at around 10:10AM to the lunch recess at around 11:50AM; between 3rd recess at around 2:10PM to the 4th recess at around 3:50PM – the day end at 4:45PM at most of the schools, while grades 6-8 end the day an hour later at 5:45PM.

The above finding is quite typical in comparison to previous data about change of emotions throughout the day in children with behavioral difficulties in schools (Cumming, 2000; Derrington, & Goddard, 2007; Kauffman, et al, 2002). The
Melamdim were not surprised by the above findings but rather made more aware of the fact that certain times of the day (such as transition between periods) are more difficult than others for some children, which in turn might effect their behavior and subsequently their learning performance.

The third activity was based on setting an example for coping with feelings by modeling proper behavior and introducing acceptable methods of managing feelings. This was accomplished by reviewing many different emotional scenarios in order to offer students suitable ways to handle them. For example, if a student feels that he/she might be getting agitated because he/she might be having difficulties with an assignment the student would be trained to as simply as to appropriately approach the teacher and ask for assistance. The above three activities were practiced in class before it was implemented in their individual classes. The following week we continued to build the knowledge base of each participant to allow them to have variety of tools to deal with challenging behavior.

**Week 8: Reducing Challenging Behavior**

As was mentioned above, week 8 was aptly dedicated to the 8 principles for reducing challenging behavior: Change the setting, Respond calmly; Teach alternate behaviors; Offer choices; Notice the positive; Be consistent; Avoid surprises and finally have fun. The last item was the hardest to achieve since most of the Melamdim were struggling with challenging behavior for so long without real access to help that having fun was the last (if at all) priority. We started our class with a case study dealing with the most extreme behavior by a child named ‘Samson’
diagnosed with severe conduct disorder. Conduct disorder (CD) is a psychological disorder diagnosed in childhood that presents itself through a ‘repetitive and persistent pattern’ of behavior in which the basic rights of others or major age-appropriate norms are violated (Bernstein, 2000). The child in the case study was integrated into a normal classroom and although his condition is treated by medication and talk therapy he continues to display some symptoms of CD such as lack of empathy towards the sufferings of others and some antisocial behavior especially bullying and cruelty to animals. The Melamdim had great difficulty relating to the case study. Comments such as: ‘our children are not that bad’ and ‘this is not a Yiddish (Jewish) problem’ were uttered around the room. This played to my original intent in designing the lesson and I ended the class with the story of the ‘other Samson’ - the biblical one.

In the period of the Judges (approximately 1446BCE - 966BCE) in the ancient land of Israel there was supposedly a man called Samson who served as a Judge (a ruler) on the people of Israel. Samson’s character, mostly the flaws, was the focal point of the biblical account, which appears in the Hebrew Bible book of Judges chapters 13-16. The story predominantly survey’s Samson’s violent conduct in various situations towards humans and animals until his own tragic suicide. In the Jewish folklore, Samson is viewed almost as a demi-god character with extraordinary physical powers endowed to him by G-D, with noticeable resembles to the stories of the Greek/Roman Hercules and Mesopotamian Enkidu, both considered demi-gods and were engaged in violence against animals and humans (Mobley, 2006).
The case study presented to the Melamdim was based on the biblical story of Samson; however, I had to go back to the biblical story and point out the parallels before the Melamdim could have made the connection. One explanation why the Melamdim didn't make the connection initially might be rooted in the numerous Midrashim that present Samson’s strength as divinely derived, therefore making Samson G-D's own presence on earth (Talmud: Tractate Sotah 10a, Bamidbar Rabbah 10, and in Bava Batra 91a). This high regard to Samson in the Talmud is in stark contrast to his boorish and unsophisticated behavior as presented in the biblical account (Perkins, 1994). Another explanation might be the Hasidic reading of the Torah through the so-called PRDS lenses – Pshat, Remez, Drash and Sod: the four levels in which the Torah could be interpreted.

The first level is Pshat: meaning "Simple"-the plain meaning of the text, which could be imaginative but is strongly based on the reading of the biblical text; the second level, Remez: a "Hinted" meaning, looks at another concept(s) that might be concealed within the wording that may be alluded to in a variety of ways; the third is Drash: a homiletic interpretation of the words, from the word "Doresh"-to expound and the fourth is Sod: the "Secret" interpretation of the text found in Kabbalah that involves deep, spiritual meanings of the Torah, derived from the scriptural words using esoteric rules of hermeneutics (Perkins, 1994).

Those four levels of reading/interpretation, at times, would seek to rehabilitate the character of a somewhat problematic biblical character, producing a much more positive and ‘godly’ character.

In the last hour of class time we tackled the rest of the eight principles to
reduce misbehavior. The Melamdim were very receptive to the strategies offered, especially the notion of positive notification – pointing out positive behavior as oppose to negative one. The Melamdim were very quick to make the connection between the above eight principles and both Bandura’s social learning theory and Skinner’s operant conditioning.

**Week 9: Differentiated Instruction – Theory and Practice**

Week nine was supposed to be an expansion on week eight’s lesson, however, since one of the schools the Melemdim were teaching at had introduced Differentiated Instruction (DI), it was decided to share the principles of Differentiated Instruction (DI) with the rest of the Melamdim, while examining the integrated classroom model. Finally we looked at the Talmudic understanding of differentiated instruction. Assuming the Melamdim who taught at the school with DI received the proper training to shift their practice to the DI model I approach them to help me bring the topic alive by providing us with examples from their own practice; my assumption was wrong. None of the Melamdim actually took any training course in DI nor they were practicing DI, as it was intended, helping educators to address the diverse needs of students in the integrated classroom model. I realized I had to start with redefining DI and its function in addressing LDs and behavioral issues in schools.

I posted the following statement/definition of DI on the board:

Differentiated instruction is a process through which teachers enhance learning by matching student characteristics to instruction and assessment. Differentiated instruction allows all students to access the
same classroom curriculum by providing entry points, learning tasks, and outcomes that are tailored to the students' needs (Tomlinson, 1999, pg. 11).

The Melamdim who supposedly practiced DI in their school came to realize that in essence what they were doing was ‘different instruction’ (also known as streaming) as opposed to differentiated instruction. In addition, since the use of technology in the classroom and everyday life is limited (see chapter on ultra orthodoxy and technology), technological tools such as laptop computers and digital projectors, which are used to aid educators in delivery of differentiated curriculums, are not available to most of the Melamdim in the course.

It is important to note that due to severe shortage of funding and physical classroom space in the Jewish Ultra Orthodox community schools in Toronto, integration or rather placement of students with LDs in ‘regular’ classrooms is a common practice. This practice of placing students with LDs in regular classrooms taught by educators lacking even the basic teacher training, could be one of the major contributors to the behavioral trepidations experienced in the classrooms by the Melamdim. The majority of the Melamdim also reported that during their careers as educators, most of the professional development (PD) they engaged in to better their practice was self-financed and/or done on their own personal time (e.g. this course was taken on Sundays and financed by a donor not connected to their home schools).

The schools the Melamdim teach at struggle so much with finances that PD days are very few; I was not able to get an actual number of PD days provided, however, in the year I observed in the participants’ classroom they had two PD
days which took place on a civic holiday. When I inquired about the lack of PD days
the answer I got from one of the principals of the schools was ‘How can I tell a
parent with 8 or 10 children to miss a day of work and stay home with their
children...our realities are different’

Talmudic understanding of differentiated instruction is rooted in the
assertion that no two children learn the Torah in similar ways, as it was
demonstrated in week four Talmudic example from Perki Avot 5:15, dealing with
the four types of learners who come before the Rabbis. In addition, the need for
differentiated instruction could be found in the following verse from the book
Deuteronomy, ‘may my discourse come down as rain’ (32:2) which the Talmud
explains as: just as rain falls on trees and infuses each type with its distinctive
flavor — the grapevine with its flavor, the olive tree with its flavor, and the fig tree
with its flavor — so too words of Torah are all one, but they comprise Scripture
and Mishnah: Midrash, Halakhot (laws), and Haggadot (stories) (Sfere to
Deuteronomy 306). The extrapolation made by the Talmud recognizes the need for
multiple approaches to single text. The Torah is one, however, the teaching of it must
take different forms that assist us, both learners and educators, make sense of its many
intensities. The Melamdim never made the connection between the various ways of
teaching the Torah and differentiation since mastering all forms of study of the Torah
scriptures are required to be considered a ‘learned man’; however, all the Melamdim
reported that very few students actually excel in all methods of learning, while the
majority of students excel in only one or two methods of learning. This realization is
in line with the traditional Jewish belief that those who are considered Illui
(prodigy) – a term and title that is applied to exceptional Talmudic scholars among Ultra orthodox Jews – are the minority rather than the majority (Urbach, 1987); which is inline with western notion of hierarchical models of intelligence (Carroll, 1993).

**Week 10: Reading, Writing and Thinking about Disability Issues**

This week’s class was dedicated for reflecting on different issues in the community related to disability – both emotional and physical. The guiding question was ‘how does our reading, writing and thinking about disability issues influence our overall attitude and behavior towards people who are inflicted with disabilities?’ The *Melamdim* were divided into six groups of four to five people in each group. Each group received a short story written by a fictional child with emotional and/or physical disabilities. The story was a reflection on how this particular child coped with his/her disability and what if any help does he/she receives from peers, teachers and family. Each group had to come up with at least three strategies/suggestions on how to help this child cope better with his/her disability. The strategies/suggestions had to be grounded in the theories and methods introduced in the course.

During the discussion that followed it was quite evident that the *Melamdim* went through a significant transformation in regards to their attitudes towards people with LDs. The survey examining *Teachers’ Perception Towards Inclusive Education* (see appendix 7), administrated pre and post course participation, supports the above significant transformation of attitudes towards people with LDs
in *Melamdim* who participated in the special education course. Above and beyond their ability to infer their strategies/suggestions to the appropriate theories and methods reviewed in the course, the *Melamdim* were able to connect their strategies/suggestions to Talmudic and other biblical sources. Making the connection to one owns traditions and constructs is important since it has being argued that people create meaning of the world through a series of individual constructs, which in turn facilitates higher degree of knowledge assimilation (Demetriou et al., 1992).

The above activity was a planed precursor to the following week’s lesson on Individual Education Plan (IEP). In the course of discussion about the strategies/suggestions on how to help this child coup better with his/her disability, the *Melamdim* made the apt observation that the above strategies/suggestions should be written up for future reference by others involved in the education of the disabled child - the IEP serves the exact purpose and according to the *Melamdim* is not used in a consistent manner throughout the Ultra orthodox school system. One of the main reasons against the IEP in the Jewish Ultra orthodox schools has to do with the notion of stigma attached to LD. In the Jewish Ultra orthodox community the school can provide a ‘good reference’ when it comes to arranged marriages, which are the norm in the community. A diagnosis of LD by itself could be ‘damaging’ for the reputation of the prospective groom; a documented record, an IEP, of the above LD could be even worse, in the eyes of the people in the Ultra Orthodox community. The vocational options of a young ultra orthodox Jewish male is dictated by the quality of education he received in the Yeshiva; LDs might mean his
educational options at Yeshiva would be limited, and disqualifying him continuance at a Kolel\textsuperscript{xxiii}. Overcoming the stigma will not be easily achieved, however, many of the Melamdim who participated in the course seem to reject the above stigma and strongly believe that if helping a child overcome his LD will be aided by the creation of an IEP, the interest of the child would be better served.

**Week 11: The Individual Education Plan**

Creating an IEP for a child in the Ultra Orthodox Jewish community could be a challenging task. To generate an IEP, parental consent must be obtained and as was mentioned before many individuals within the Ultra Orthodox Jewish community's view of disability in general and learning disabilities in particular is not positive (see chapter on ultra orthodoxy and disabilities), making the task even more complicated. In addition, the issues of access to psychometric testing and other psychological services due to financial hardships, makes the creation of an IEP impossible. Some Melamdim shared IEPs created by their schools; none of the IEPs shared had a psychological and/or psychometric report as part of the IEP; in addition, semi-annual review of the IEP was not done, once again due to lack of resources and appropriate structures such as IEP committees. The IEPs shared included some recommendations for practice for the general studies teachers; however, none were made to the Judaic side. The Melamdim reported that no recommendations were made for the Judaic studies teachers since they don’t usually have open channels of communications with the general (English) studies teachers who created the IEPs and since they happen to be all women it's not
possible for them to get together and exchange information due to the prohibition on congregation of men and women who are not married to each other. Although, some Melamdim took the initiative of creating their own separate IEP like information gathering process to address the issues of LDs in the Judaic studies.

Once again, the IEPs created were mostly anecdotal and based on past observations by previous Melamdim and some partial data collected by various individuals who interacted with the child in the past such as personal tutors and shadows assigned.

In order to understand the process of generating an IEP we used a case study, which included: psychometric evaluation (WISC-IV), detailed reports from the fictional student’s past teachers, a transcript of an interview conducted with the parents of the student and additional report from the child’s pediatrician. The Melamdim were asked to take all the information about the student and create the IEP. The task was very hard for them on many levels; however, all of the Melamdim were able to successfully complete the task, producing a useable IEP bringing together all the knowledge accumulated throughout the course.

**Week 12: Working with Parents/ Guardians of Children with LD**

The last class was dedicated to working on establishing healthy partnerships with parents and/or guardians of children with LD. ‘Webs of Communication’ such as the teacher-school-parent-child dyads were discussed. The Melamdim reported that those dyads are not equally balanced due to many factors. The first factor to contribute to the unbalance relationship of teacher-school-parent-child dyads
results from the fact that all the Melamdim are part of the community they teach in – both physically and spiritually. The Melamdim, like all Jewish Ultra Orthodox men attend synagogues three times a day, seven days a week where they’re in constant contact with their own students and their extended family – no real separation of work/home spaces for the Melamdim, which could be problematic in many ways, especially in blurring of boundaries. In addition, since all schools the Melamdim teach at are privately financed by parents and other affluent community members, an unavoidable imbalance occurs.

It's important to note that Ultra Orthodox Jewish Yeshivas and Cheders are not private schools but rather privately financed schools; meaning, private money is used to fund the school since no public funding is provided. Thus, not attending the above schools and opting to go to publically funded ones is not an acceptable option for members of the Jewish Ultra Orthodox communities. The Melamdim reported many incidents when the accepted boundaries between teachers-parents and teachers-students are broken under the pretext of ‘we pay your salary, therefore, you should be directly accountable to us’. This kind of interaction could develop into a very destructive, power driven relationship. Moreover, if the student involved is also experiencing learning difficulties and some subsequent behavior issues the above relationship between teacher-parents could even take a worst tone. The Melamdim reported that in some occasions they had experienced very heated confrontations with parents of children with LDs where the responsibility for their son’s LDs was blamed on the Melamdim – which brought many of them to chose to ignore the problems or let someone else address the issue of the students’ LD.
To deal with some of the issues raised by the Melamdim we discussed the need for open communication between teacher-parents-student dyads. Informing the parent of both progress and issues as they occur rather than wait for teacher-parent conferences and/or report card time would invite communication and avoid surprising and harsh reactions. In addition, the Melamdim are taught to keep detailed records of their classroom observations concerning the student they might suspect is struggling with LDs so when they approach the principal and subsequently the parents of the student they can evidence their suspicions with well documented data. Overall, it was concluded that improving the professional behavior by Melamdim would reduce tension between themselves and parents and would also help establish a more productive rapport.

**Concluding Remarks**

As was noted in the preamble and introduction chapter, the above course was the first of its kind in the world where Jewish Ultra Orthodox rabbis engaged in special education course at a secular university. The course was designed to meet the needs and sensitivities of the community. It is important to note that the academic integrity and the high standards accepted at any other certificate course at OISE/UofT were maintained. The participants in the course displayed high levels of scholarly engagement and real interest in improving their practice. Each of the classes was full of productive debates and some moments of noticeable shifts in attitudes.
**Research Design**

This study used a mixed method combined with a single case study method of inquiry. In Creswell’s (2003) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, a case study is defined as a “thorough investigation of a program, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals” (p. 15), in our case the Special Education course taught by the author during January to May, 2011. This study combined the investigation of a program, administered and observed by the author, and the investigation of individuals, those who participated in the course/program. The investigation of the program and the individuals utilized both qualitative and quantitative tools, hence, using the mixed methods approach. Since a case study involves an analysis of multiple perspectives (Tellis, 1997), I was required to consider the ideas and opinions of all the participants involved. The quantitative data presented in this study represents 23 out of 28 participants of the course; the other 5 participants did not complete the self-administrated questionnaires, therefore the data was unavailable. All the questionnaires (see Appendices 1-6) were given to all 28 participants in week one of the Special Education 1 course they all participated in. The questionnaire measuring the attitude of teachers in regards to integration of special education curriculum and individuals with learning disabilities (LD) was administrated twice, once in week one of the Special Ed 1 course and again at week twelve, at the end of the course. The qualitative portion of the study includes the observations of the course instructor (the author) both during class and in the rabbis’ home Yeshivas/Cheders, feedback received from participants in the course during class, and the one-on-one
interviews (see Appendix 6). These data were recorded in written notes and audio recordings. Based on the questionnaire data, 8 out of 16 rabbis, who agreed to a one-on-one interview, were interviewed by the researcher. Those eight rabbis represented the four schools and two Jewish Ultra Orthodox streams that the other twenty rabbis came from.

According to McAdams (1995), “to fully know a person, we must know more than just his or her ‘traits’ or ‘personal concerns’; we must know his or her identity…. And we come to know identity only through encountering the life-story narrative that he or she has constructed” (Hammack, 2008, p. 232). In this way, identity—understood as a life story—represents the “third level” of personality beyond the traits assessed by quantitative measures (McAdams, 1995, 1996, 2001; McAdams & Pals, 2006). According to Hammack (2008), one conceives his/her identity through the construction of personal narratives via dynamic engagement with a ‘master narrative’ of identity. The ‘master narrative’ is what Cohler (1982, p. 214) described as “the stories of collective experience” (p. 214), which in our case relates to being Ultra Orthodox Jewish and a Melamed.

According to Hammack (2011):

Our individual life stories reflect master narratives of the groups to which we feel a sense of belonging…our ability to make meaning of life experience through a process of storing it—telling others and ourselves a coherent account – represents a fundamental process of human development. (p. 16)

By examining those ‘master narratives’, we should be able to present a coherent account of “what it means to be an Ultra Orthodox Jewish melamed in Toronto.” Hammack (2011) also suggested that our ability to engage in the process of “storing
“it” is intrinsically bound to the constraints imposed on the context of story making we inhabit. Hammack uses the context of conflict as a prime example for “constraining contexts”. Conflict, argues Hammack, perpetuated by interpretations of historical events and collective experiences (the master narrative) directly influences and shapes the personal narrative of an individual by creating a collective identity which one must associate him/herself with in order to belong to any given society (2011). In our study, the master narrative was influenced by constraining contexts such as the conviction felt by members of the Jewish communities around the world to preserve with the ‘old Jewish ways’ after and in light of the Holocaust of European Jews, and more recently the struggle to keep technology (modernity) out of the lives of the community. These attitudes contributed to the need for keeping ‘true’ to the master narrative as it is represented by living life as an ultra orthodox or Hasidic Jew.
CHAPTER III

Findings and Interpretation

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the findings and interpretation of the data, which was collected in the questionnaires, observations and interviews. The chapter will begin with the overall sample profile, which includes all the available data gathered on the 23 participants who completed the questionnaires; this will be followed by a brief profile of each of the participants chosen to be interviewed by the researcher. Using the above quantitative and qualitative data collected, each of the four research questions revealed in Chapter one will be explored.

Overall Sample Profile

As was mentioned in the chapter on methodology, this study originally had 28 participants enrolled in the Special Education 1 course. All 28 participants received a certificate of completion by the Ontario Institute for the Studies of Education at University of Toronto. However, since participating in the course did not obligate the rabbis to participate in the study, only 23 individuals decided to participate by completing all the questionnaires and giving the researcher their permission to use observational notes and other work produced by them during the twelve-week course. Tables 1 and 2 provide basic qualitative frequency statistics and quantitative descriptive statistics for all 23 participants. All the participants in the study were male, married, and reported a religious affiliation of Jewish or
Orthodox Jewish, although they are all affiliated with ultra orthodoxy. The average age of the participants was 36. When asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 10 (not at all religious to very religious), participants reported that they were very religious; the mean score was 9.73. All of the participants had children; the average number of children was 6. For highest level of education, eight of the participants reported their highest level of education as high school or some college; fourteen reported having a bachelor's or master's degree; however, it is important to note that only 1 of the 23 participants obtained his degree at a secular university (McMaster University), while the rest received their bachelor's or master's degree at religious institutions, mostly in the USA, in Rabbinic Studies. It is important to note that no governmental body such as a ministry of education or any other regulatory body supervises those degrees. In consultations, Mr. Don MacMillan, OISE acting registrar, confirmed that none of the degrees presented would afford its bearer any academic standing at Ontario universities. This is not to negate their validity as a religious education. Twenty of the participants were born the USA, two in Canada, and one in Denmark. In my ongoing conversations with the rabbis I learned that the fact that they were born in the USA is meaningless since they don’t consider themselves citizens of any state but that of the ‘kingdom of God’. Since they still await the arrival of the Messiah to reestablish the kingdom of Judah (Israel), their citizenship is irrelevant! Their loyalty is to God, Torah and family (in the broadest sense), not state.
Those statistical facts give us only a single dimension of insight into a diverse group of Ultra Orthodox rabbis who dedicate their life to educating hundreds of boys a year in the ancient wisdom of Torah and Talmud.

The 28 rabbis were teaching Torah and Talmud in the following Yeshivas and Cheders: 2 rabbis at Ner Israel Yeshiva College, 8 rabbis at The Toronto Cheder, 6 rabbis at the Yeshiva Bnei Tzion of Bobov and 5 rabbis at Eitz Chaim Day School; 2 additional rabbis were administrators at two of the above schools. At a glance one might make the assumption that all 28 men, who defined themselves as ‘Orthodox Jews’, are in agreement on all issues pertaining to Jewish law and philosophy; however, from day one of the course it was very clear that this is not the case. There were significant differences in observation of kosher dietary laws, prayer composition and style, and overall familiarity with the secular world. Every week one or more groups could not enjoy some of the provided snacks due to various restrictions connected to ‘who provided the kosher guarantee’. At the end of each class the rabbis came together to pray the evening prayer of Maariv; however, the group broke into two to accommodate differences in customs and prayer composition and style. It was very clear that the Hasidic rabbis from the Bobov Yeshiva were not as informed about secular culture and literature, while the rabbis from Eitz Chaim were the most informed. Although 22 out of 23 rabbis were born in English speaking countries (USA and Canada), all of them listed Yiddish as their first language. As was mentioned before, most speak a social dialect of English, called Yishivish, spoken by yeshiva students and other Jews with a strong connection to the Orthodox yeshiva world. The course was taught in English; however, the rabbis
conversed with each other mostly in Yiddish and at times Yiddish was used to clarify certain terms and ideas.

In order to gain a better understanding of their teaching environments and in effort to build rapport, I visited all the course participants in their home schools and to hear about their positions in the community. The majority of Melamdim felt that they don’t get the respect they deserve from community members in general and students’ parents in particular. The following statement was frequently repeated (in Yiddish): “if you can’t do, teach”: a statement not exclusive to the Jewish community.

The issue of self-worth and self as an educator has been described throughout this study and in this chapter I will explore it in detail. One of the research questions was about evaluating the rabbis’ attitude toward self as an educator. The questionnaires (Appendices 3-6) examining general attitudes, behaviors and well-being, in combination with personal conversations with the study participants and general statements made during class, were all used to demonstrate, as accurately as possible, this specific group’s low self-worth. Once again, the questionnaires were self-administered, although the participants were asked to be honest and were also guaranteed total anonymity. It has been demonstrated in the past that the student-teacher dyad (our situation) might influence the way the rabbis answered the questionnaires; to mitigate this issue those questionnaires were given on the first day before they could gauge the teacher’s own sensitivities on the issues addressed; in addition, the questionnaires were completed at home and returned the following class in a sealed envelope.

In the analysis of the data from the questionnaires examining general
attitudes, behaviors and well-being, it became quite clear that a cultural bias was present when the participants answered the Self-Reporting Questionnaire (SRQ). Van Hemert, Baerveldt, & Baerveldt (2001) noted that in cross-cultural psychology, item bias refers to every difference in an observed score for which no corresponding difference can be found in the psychological domain to which the scores are generalized (Poortinga & Malpass, 1986; Van de Vijver & Poortinga, 1997). In this study in particular, questions pertaining to general attitudes were always answered in a way which presented the participant as being ‘very agreeable’ or ‘very disagreeable’ with various items at all times. For example, the item \textit{CC.A06}: “I would feel much better if my present circumstances changed”, received a mean score of 4.09 (.97) overall, or ‘highly disagreeable’ with the above statement. These results could be in part tied to orthodox Jewish belief that god charts the course of each of our lives, therefore, wishing it to change would be considered unappreciative at best and blasphemous at worst. In the one-on-one interviews all the participants voiced a similar apprehension towards all the questionnaires, which mainly stemmed from the fact that it is not acceptable to ‘complain’ or ‘express distain’ towards one’s life in general. Rabbi Halevi expressed the following: “HaShem (god) gave us life and the ability to chose from good and evil [free choice], therefore, for me to complain about his creation is not acceptable and downright muktze [blasphemous]”; Rabbi Abraham added, “people like us [meaning orthodox Jews] don’t have the privilege to complain. We are too busy with our lives...not that we don’t we just wouldn’t do it in public...we pray every day to HaShem [god] thanking him for all he gave us and in between we ask for more [he chuckles]”. The Jewish ultra orthodox and Hasidic life
in general is a highly structured one framed by compulsory prayer three times a day. Men spend most of their waking hours in Torah studies while women are responsible for maintaining the households, which are mostly large ones. All the participants admitted during our one-on-one interviews to answering all the questionnaires in a way that will make them come across the best. Similarly, Kortmann (1990) examined the content validity of the answers to the question “Do you feel unhappy?” in a Self-Reporting Questionnaire in Ethiopia; he found that a basic question in the diagnosis of depression in the West was associated for many Ethiopians with feelings of mourning from the loss of someone or someone’s dying. This became evident to Kortmann when he repeated the question and the response was: “No, because no one has died’. “The concept ‘unhappy’ does not appear to exist in the Ethiopian culture unless there is a clear cause for it” (Kortmann, 1990, p. 386). In the Jewish ultra orthodox and Hasidic communities a similar quantification of emotions exists. For example, in the ‘well-being’ questionnaire, 21 out of 22 participants who answered the following item: “Have you felt so sad, discouraged, hopeless, or had so many problems that you wondered if anything was worthwhile? (During the past month)”, answered ‘not at all’; however, in the one-on-one interviews 9 out of 21 participants who answered ‘not at all’ changed their answer to ‘Some - enough to bother me’, after I elucidated what might cause these feelings. Rabbi David explained why he initially answered differently:

When you asked if I felt so sad that I thought if anything was worthwhile I wondered what you were looking for? Yes I sometimes get very sad and discouraged and yes sometimes I do feel like things are difficult, however, I have my faith in HaShem [god], so I might feel like that sometimes but I also know that he [god] will take care of it.
Rabbi Fraylech noted the following,

When you gave us the questionnaires I really didn’t know what to do with them...the questions you asked were very strange...well more like unfamiliar...I was raised to believe that one’s happiness depends on the happiness of all around him! When my wife is happy, I’m happy! When my friends are happy I’m happy! We have a saying is Yiddish which translates to the following ‘every Jew is responsible for the safety of every other Jew’...which in essence means that you can’t be worried about yourself alone and always should be assured that others in the community have your back...it’s not only a reassuring thought but one that keeps the blues away [he smiles].

Rabbi’s Fraylech’s assertion of ‘mutual responsibility’ in Judaism has its sources in the biblical Exodus story and the Midrash Tanchuma\textsuperscript{xxv} (Sarna, 1998). This Midrash speaks of mutual guarantee [Arvut] in terms of acceptance of the Torah that in it commends Jews to “love thy friend as thyself” therefore making sure the needs of everyone in the community are met as well as your own.

\textbf{Selected Detailed Rabbis’ Profiles}

Eight rabbis were selected using the following three criteria: scoring the highest on the Teachers’ Perception Towards Inclusive Education questionnaire; scoring the lowest on the Teachers’ Perception Towards Inclusive Education questionnaire; and finally membership in a particular sect, Bobov Hasidic or Letvish Ultra Orthodox. Two rabbis with the highest scores on the Teachers’ Perception Towards Inclusive Education questionnaire from the Letvish Ultra Orthodox community were chosen: Rabbi “Abraham” and Rabbi “David”; two rabbis with the lowest scores on the Teachers’ Perception Towards Inclusive Education questionnaire from the Letvish Ultra Orthodox community were chosen: Rabbi “Benjamin” and Rabbi “Gabriel”; two rabbis with the highest scores on the Teachers’
Perception Towards Inclusive Education questionnaire from the Bobov Hasidic community were chosen: Rabbi “Chaim” and Rabbi “Halevi”; and finally two rabbis with the lowest scores on the Teachers’ Perception Towards Inclusive Education questionnaire from the Bobov Hasidic community were chosen: Rabbi “Frylech” and Rabbi “Ephraim”.

The profile of each of the eight rabbis chosen was compiled from data collected in the questionnaires; observational notes taken during class and visits to home schools; and finally, the one-on-one semi structured interviews. As part of the interview process all men were asked to answer 14 semi-structured questions dealing with the following three domains: Current Self-Definitions, Past Experiences, and Future Autobiography. Those three domains were conceptualized by Ljiljana Vuletic and Michel Ferrari (2010) addressing identity formation in adults living with Autism and adapted by myself to address Ultra Orthodox Jewish identity and working as a Melamed (Rabbi) within the ultra orthodox system in Toronto, Canada.

The first domain includes questions about strengths and weaknesses, current self-evaluation, intentional personal change, being an Ultra Orthodox Jew and a Melamed, psychosocial adjustment, and current life-evaluation. The second includes questions about past self-definitions, significant life-experiences, life decisions, and turning points. And the third domain includes questions about perceived control over future, projections for the future, and becoming a better person and living in a better world.

Studies have found an association between teachers’ attitudes towards the inclusion of pupils with disabilities and their feelings of efficacy (i.e. a teachers’
belief in her/his ability to help pupils with learning difficulties, invest in and attain satisfactory achievements; Lifshitz & Glaubman, 2002; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Ashton & Webb, 1986). It was also found that a greater positive self-evaluation by teachers of their ability to teach pupils with special needs is associated with more positive attitudes towards inclusion of such pupils (Lifshitz & Glaubman, 2002; Gibson & Dembo 1984; Soodak & Poddel, 1994; Soodak et al. 1998).

The interviews were analyzed using Hammack’s master narrative analysis - the construction of personal narratives via dynamic engagement with a ‘master narrative’ of identity. As was discussed in the methodology section, both Ultra Orthodox and Hasidic Jews view their association with their respective communities as pivotal for conceptualizing their own self-definition and narrative. The following interviews explore the above dynamic engagement between self and community in general and the conflicts presented by history and modernity that many of the melamdim feels govern their own decision to remain committed to orthodoxy. Hammack suggested that the existence of constraining contexts, such as the threats of modernity on traditional life, would inherently move people who share those constraining contexts to form a unified master narrative that might not necessarily reflect the individual narrative or experiences (2008; 2011).

The order in which the profiles were placed in this paper was as follows: the first profile was of Rabbi Abraham from the Letvish community, who scored the highest in the Teachers’ Perception Towards Inclusive Education questionnaire (Table 6). The reason for placing Rabbi Abraham first was to emphasis that even the person with the most positive attitude towards LD and inclusion lacked the
necessary skills and tools to implement pedagogy concerning students with LD and other psycho-educational disabilities. It follows by Rabbi’s Benjamin’s profile that scored the lowest among the Letvish participants. Rabbi Benjamin’s profile was placed after that of Rabbi Abraham to serve as a clear contrast to the various levels of attitudes and engagement with LD and inclusion. Rabbi Chaim from the Bobov Hasidic community who scored the highest was placed next. I decided to introduce Rabbi Chaim next because even though he was one of the two Rabbis from Bobov who scored the highest in the Teachers’ Perception Towards Inclusive Education questionnaire (Table 6), both scored significantly lower than the top Letvish Rabbis. The interview with Rabbi Chaim reveals many of the differences in understanding of LD and inclusion present in his community versus the Letvish community; not to say that one community is more ‘liberal’ than the other in dealing with LD and inclusion but rather one community – the Litvish – had more exposure to the topic while the other – the Bobov Hasidim – had less exposure. As was argued before, exposure to the course led the majority of the Melamdim to reconsider and adjust their attitudes towards people with LDs and their inclusion in regular classrooms. Rabbi’s David, the second Letvish Rabbi who scored high on the Teachers’ Perception Towards Inclusive Education questionnaire (Table 6) was presented next. Again, the reason for following Rabbi Chaim’s profile with that of Rabbi David was to emphasis the difference in levels of exposure to LD and inclusion pedagogy between each sects of Rabbis participating in the course. In Rabbi David’s case, it could be argued that his exposure to secular education (has a Bachelor of Education from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario Canada), might have prepared him for exposure to
inclusion of students with LD. However, it’s important to note that regardless of his exposure to secular education Rabbi David held many ‘traditional Jewish Orthodox pedagogical stands’. The profile of Rabbi Ephraim, the first of two Bobov Hasidic Rabbis who scored the lowest in the Teachers’ Perception Towards Inclusive Education questionnaire (Table 6), was placed next. Rabbi Ephraim, the only participant in the course who was both an administrator and a Melamed (teacher). Rabbi Ephraim’s poor attitudes towards inclusion of students with LDs in regular classrooms might have been precipitated by his intimate knowledge of the harsh financial situation of his school and not necessarily his disagreement with the pedagogy of inclusion. As he reiterates in his interview, the cost of providing special education support makes it an impossible to provide, therefore, even entertaining its effectiveness is a useless pursuit. I included Rabbi Ephraim’s profile following Rabbi David’s one in order to introduce the different realities administrators and Melamdim have to contend with beyond their own personal views and attitudes; Rabbi Ephraim’s attitude was on the opposite spectrum of Rabbi David, however, once again this is not only because of their traditional views and attitudes inherent to their respectful sects but also due to the realities each has to contend with. Following Rabbi Ephraim’s profile I included Rabbi Fraylech’s profile, also a Bobov Hasid who scored the lowest amongst the Bobov participants. I chose Rabbi Fraylech, even though he wasn’t a Melamed at the time of the course (started the following September 2011) because of two reasons; first, his Yichus (lineage), the son of the most prominent Ultra Orthodox Jewish family in North America, and second the fact that he was almost ‘empty canvas’. I gave him the nickname of
Fraylech, which means ‘Happy’ in Yiddish, which describes him accurately. Rabbi Fraylech is young, positive and willing to learn new ideas. The reason he scored low in the Teachers’ Perception Towards Inclusive Education questionnaire (Table 6), might be his lack of experience in the classroom as a Melamed; his only reference for ‘how one should teach’ was modeled to him by his own Melamdim who might have held those poor attitudes towards inclusion of students with LDs in regular classrooms. The next profile was of Rabbi Gabriel, the second Letvish Rabbi who scored low in the Teachers’ Perception Towards Inclusive Education questionnaire (Table 6). Rabbi Gabriel’s low score might have been the result of his own life experience. Rabbi Gabriel became Ultra orthodox later in life (he started as modern orthodox) and was compelled to shift his attitudes from fairly liberal ones to those of more traditional/orthodox views. The final profile was the one of Rabbi Halevi, the second high scoring Bobov Hasidic Melamed. I decided to end with Rabbi Halevi for various reasons. The first being, I learned many things from the Rabbis I had the honor to instruct, one of those lessons were: “start with the good and end with the good”, so following their teaching I’m ending with the ‘Good’. The second, Rabbi Halevi was one of the only Bobov Hasid who was comfortable using technology in the classroom and did it without worries about ‘what will people say’ – he ran the Arrowsmith program in his school. The third reason, Rabbi Halevi’s charisma and leadership skills made him a very interesting subject to profile.
Rabbi “Abraham”

Background, Including Attitudes Towards Self as Jewish Educator

Rabbi Abraham was part of the group of Rabbis categorized as Letvish Ultra Orthodox and scored the highest both in the pre and post ‘Teachers’ Perception Towards Inclusive Education’ questionnaire. Rabbi Abraham was born in Zurich, Switzerland 26 years ago to a Jewish Litvish Ultra Orthodox family, with Hasidic roots. He is the middle child out of 3 children, a very rare occurrence in ultra orthodox families. His parents had him and his two brothers after 14 years of marriage. Due to medical issues prohibiting them from having children, they turned to modern medicine to assist with conception. He called himself and his siblings “Miracle children...my mother was 34 when she had me!” At age 16 he moved to Israel to study at a Yeshiva (name was not given). While at the Yeshiva, a good friend of the family who knew the family of the woman who would be his wife made the ‘siduch’ (match) and by age 21, Rabbi Abraham was married and relocated to Montreal Canada, the home of his wife. In 2009, he followed his father- and mother-in-law to Toronto. Rabbi Abraham has three girls, 4 years old, 3 years old and 1.5 years old (2011).

As part of exploring self-definition, I asked Rabbi A to recall three memories that shaped who he became today. His response was,

leaving home at 16 and going to yeshiva in Israel...second will be the day I meet my future wife for the first time and the third was becoming a father...it [becoming a father] changed me completely! I was no longer a Yeshiva
boy…I’m now [was] responsible for another life and I myself still need some upbringing…[he laughs].

As was indicated in the chapter on ultra orthodoxy, men and women in those communities marry quite early on; women usually at around 18-19 years old, while men might wait until 20-21, with the exception of certain Ultra Orthodox Hasidic communities, where the Talmudic notion of “eighteen to the Chuppa (Jewish wedding canopy)” is strictly observed. Rabbi Abraham never felt that being ultra orthodox was restrictive, saying he was raised to have a choice: “my mother was a very liberal woman…she always told us that we can do and be whatever we want” I challenged him to explain what that means; “what ever we want.”… “We could be as observant as we wish… knowing that the pressure was off… I had my moments during my teenage years when I felt maybe there is something better for me out there…but I never really explored it.” Rabbi Abraham then shifts his conversation from self to other:

I knew at least ten people that I’m in touch with that lost the way [an expression meaning becoming secular]...they’re miserable! None of them left because they don’t believe in G-d or anything like that...they left because they were wondering maybe it’s better out there...the problem in North America is that the alternatives are not that bad...in Europe where I grew up with goyim [non-Jews] being so bad...drinking doing drugs and having no clue about tzniues (modesty)...the alternative was bad...here in America you have all this but it's less out there... goyim [non-Jews] in Canada are much more respectful...in Zurich [Switzerland] goyim will chase us down the street...anti-Semitism is out in the open...in Canada I will have people politely asking why I wear the suit and the hat...it's so much different... but on the other hand could be dangerous for our way of life...if society is so accepting, why keep to yourself?

The dilemma of North America being both a ‘curse and a blessing’ for Judaism is not new; Sarna (1998) aptly noted the traditional Jewish view of America as a “land good for Jews (materially) and bad for Judaism (religiously)” (Sarna, 1998, p. 326),
is at the core of the dilemma. Social psychologist Bethamie Horowitz made the pertinent observation that "older understandings of Jewish identity asked the question 'How Jewish are American Jews?'...Contemporary contemplations of Jewish identity have provocatively modified the question to ask, 'How are American Jews Jewish?' –thus shifting the enquiry from objective to subjective meanings of Jewishness" (Horowitz, 1992, p. 16).

Rabbi Abraham sympathizes with the above notion; however, he believes that Jews in North America must understand that what they give their children in terms of ‘Jewish exposure’ beyond culture will determine their Jewish future. He recalls meeting an older man who came crying to the synagogue wanting to speak with the rabbi:

> The rabbi was out so I offered to help...he told me that his son just announced that he is going to marry his long time non-Jewish girlfriend...he [the older man] proceeded to tell me that he is a 'cultural Jew' not religious like myself...I really didn't understand what was his problem...I told him you never gave your child proper Jewish education...you didn't teach him the Torah and the prohibition of marrying outside of the faith...so he found a nice girl and he is getting married...what is the problem...he [the older man] was getting quite agitated with me...but what did he expect?

The above interaction with the older man and Rabbi Abraham's reaction accurately represents the ultra orthodox view of ‘cultural Jews’. Rabbi Abraham understood the older man's son for following his heart and marring the non-Jewish woman, not to say that he approves, but rather a logical occurrence that keeps him 'loyal' to his way of life.

I asked Rabbi Abraham to tell me about his greatest strength and weakness:

> I am insanely ambitious...I want to raise to the top...it's both a strength and a weakness...sometimes this high ambition causes me problems...I want to do some things and if it doesn't work out I get down on myself so hard...my wife
always tell me that I have to be less intense about things but I feel I need to set high goals for myself.

I asked him if he feels that being orthodox limits his ambition: “it does in some ways...I can’t do certain things...it’s not acceptable in my community to be associated with certain individuals who are not part of the community...I would probably be a good politician but it's not acceptable for us....” I asked him how it makes him feel:

This is when I get down on myself for thinking I can do something I’m obviously can’t do...I really want to do gishour [bridging] work between our community and the outside world...but I’m too young and people will say “who are you for speaking for us?”...It’s one of my biggest weaknesses, I want to do things now...yesterday!

Rabbi Abraham is a very charismatic young man with a constant smile on his face. I asked him to tell me how a person who knows him well would describe him to me,

Well most people think that I’m this happy guy...the other day I was in the boat synagogue, it has prayers every half an hour, and a person there asked me ‘how does it feel to know that when you [himself] come in to a room everybody smiles’...it’s funny but I don’t feel like this...I always smile...it’s not fake or anything...my mother and grandfather are like this, I got it from them, but it has some element of manipulation...what I mean is, I smile when I meet people and they in return will do something I wanted them to do...for example, at the Yeshiva a friend of a friend was getting married and he needed some help paying for it so I went around the neighborhood and asked the rich guys to give money...nothing big, a fifty here one hundred there...I can do that...but in the inside I’m not really the smiling guy...I get down on myself very easily and can get very depressed...not too depressed.”

Although Rabbi Abraham claims to be very comfortable with his own ultra orthodox way of life, it’s hard to ignore his frustrations with the limitations posed on him by the reclusive community he is a member of. Rabbi Abraham’s experiences are shared by many of the ultra orthodox rabbis I met during the time I taught the course. Many of them have very high ambitions that, due to cultural constraints,
they are not able to act on, especially when it came to university education and advancement of their practice as educators. As was noted by Hammack (2011), “our individual stories reflect master narratives of the group in which we feel a sense of belonging” (p. 16), therefore, many of the Melamdim face the difficult task of balancing their own individual wants and needs (ambitions) with the acceptable norms of the to which community they belong. Not being part of the community (K’lal – the term for the collective in Biblical Hebrew), isn’t only undesirable but blasphemous – something that could lead to excommunication from the community. The issue of being Jewish or Ultra Orthodox is generally a non-issue for most of the Melamdim:

We [orthodox Jews] don’t have this complex relationship other people have with their own Jewish self...I believe in HaShem [G-d], I believe in the Torah given to us on Mount Sinai...so HaShem wants me to put tefilins on [phylacteries], I do it...no big deal no big questions...you don’t do it...it’s your business...but as I told you the story with the old man it’s something that you will need to deal with in the future or not!

Being a Jewish educator is a much more loaded issue. One of the research questions I examined in this study was positive, negative or absent Jewish Ultra Orthodox and Hassidic educators’ attitude towards self as a Jewish educators. The quantitative data collected prior to the completion of the course in regard to attitudes towards self, which I will discuss in detail later on (Appendices 3 and 4; Tables 3 and 4) might give us a glimpse into the rabbis’ evaluation of self. However, the qualitative data is powerful, painting a somewhat gloomy picture. Rabbi Abraham chose to become a teacher [Melamed] because he enjoys working with children, especially the ones with learning and social difficulties.
I always had it in me to help the ones who struggled...my wife always tell me I have to stop trying to save the world and concentrate on our tzures [problems]...but I’m this kind of a guy...people will ask me to stay up for four nights to watch their ill mother and I will...in my phone I have the numbers of many young men who are in trouble and are out of the fold [not observing Jewish law]...they don’t see me as another orthodox rabbi who will make them feel bad about their choices but as one who listens.

How do you think people see Jewish educators in your community?

_Melamdim_ are usually those guys who couldn’t stay at _Kollel_ and had to go out there to work...so you become a _Melamed_ or a _Mashgiach_...people like me who chose to leave the _Kollel_ and take on teaching willingly because I believe I can make a change is not that common...so you could figure it out what people would say about us - what do they say? “If you can’t do so teach...I don’t like it but that is the way it has been for the longest time!

Many of the Rabbis I had in the class expressed a similar sentiment about the poor attitudes of community members towards them. In a class exercise we had during the special education course, the 28 rabbis were divided into seven groups (four members each) mixing the Letvish and Bobov Hasidic rabbis; each group was given a chart paper and a large marker; they had ten minutes to come up with a list of descriptors of their Job as _Melamdim_. As was expected, the lists the rabbis produced were technical: “teaching the Torah”, “Keeping the students safe”, “managing classroom behavior.” etc. (see Appendices 2-7). In the discussion that followed the presentation by the rabbis, the consensus was that _Melamdim_ don’t get the respect they deserve and it might be because they are mostly not professionally trained teachers. “We move from the _Kollel_ to the classroom without real training...some of us take a two weeks course in New York City...but really what can you learn in two weeks!” For Rabbi Abraham, it was his first year of teaching and the feeling of being ill prepared was quite stressful for him, “I know the _Mishnaya_ [Talmud portion]...I know the rabbinical writing about it...I don’t know how to teach it...I mean how do I
presented it to the children so they get it?” The other rabbis in the course expressed similar frustrations. In ‘Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching’ Educational psychologist Lee Shulman, (1986) recognized the above problem of having content knowledge but lacking the necessary pedagogy needed to adequately organize, adapt and represent particular subject matter for instruction. To characterize the complex ways in which teachers think about how particular content should be taught, Shulman argued for "pedagogical content knowledge" (PCK) as the content knowledge that deals with the teaching process, including "the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others" (p. 9). If teachers were to be successful they would have to confront both issues (of content and pedagogy) simultaneously, by embodying "the aspects of content most germane to its teachability" (Shulman, 1986, p. 9). At the heart of PCK is the manner in which subject matter is transformed for teaching; this occurs, argues Shulman (1986) when the teacher interprets the subject matter, finding different ways to represent it and make it accessible to learners.

**Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education, Pre/Post Completion of Special Education Course**

Before the start of the course, Rabbi Abraham was quite positive in his views towards inclusive education. His responses in answering items IE1, IE2, IE3, IE6 and IE7 (see Table 3) were supportive of inclusive education, while for items IE4, IE5, IE8 (see Table 3) his responses disagreed that the inclusive classroom is a problematic concept. His ‘liberal’ views on ‘inclusive education’ were not based on
his understanding of the method but rather his own personal world view that every child can achieve the best if only given the opportunity: “It is amazing the transformation I saw in children who were given an opportunity to be part of the kllal (wide society)...if you exclude a child from anything don’t be surprised if he doesn’t do well in it”. I challenged Rabbi Abraham with the somewhat ‘typical’ opposition to inclusive education, which argues that children with special needs need special classrooms; he was very quick to answer,

special children, not so special children? What does it mean? We pray in a Minyan (group of ten men) with some people who are Chachamim Gmorim [‘totally wise’ but also an expression to describe a very learned man] and some who just had their Bar Mitzvah...having the Bar Mitzvah boys makes the Minyan less worthy? I don’t think so! The Bar Mitzvah boys have the Zechot (honor) to learn from Chachamim Gmorim and the other way around.

Rabbi Abraham recognized the need for cross-generational modeling that fosters learning by both the novice and the experienced learners, “if we separate the children with special needs in our school what will it be when they leave the Yeshiva to the real world? Hashem (G-d) blessed each one of us with a certain gift and together we’re a big Orr [light]xxxviii”.

In the post completion of the course Rabbi Abraham’s attitudes changed slightly from ‘agree’ to ‘strongly agree’ in items IE1, IE2, IE3, IE6 and IE7 and from ‘disagree’ to ‘strongly disagree’ in items IE4, IE5, IE8. When I asked him to explain the change, he offered the following rationale,

before the course I was all for the inclusive classroom with few reservations...mostly put in me by colleagues and others...now that we learned about how it’s crucial to be inclusive in order to accommodate all kinds of students...now I have both my ‘old beliefs’ and the new one...how do you guys call it ‘evidence based’ one [he laughs].
Rabbi Abraham feels that having the ‘secular’ evidence based knowledge makes his job as educator easier by allowing him to present his case to both parents and administrators more adequately: “until now I knew it was good [inclusive education]...now I have the information I need to push it forward.” Rabbi Abraham’s attitudes did change slightly but mostly were reinforced and organized by the course.

**Attitudes Towards Strategies Needed to Accomplish Inclusion of Special Needs Students in Mainstream Classrooms, Pre/Post Completion of Special Education Course**

Items S1-S5 (see Table 3) assessed the attitudes towards the necessary strategies to accomplish the inclusion of special needs students in mainstream classrooms. Rabbi Abraham’s responses were consistent with his overall views on inclusive education. However, as he expressed above, most *Melamdim* feel undertrained, unappreciated, and mostly ill prepared to deal with behavioral issues, therefore, the strategies described in items S1-S5 are not reasonable to adapt before the main issue of lack of training (formal education): “in our schools the *Melamed* is on his own, at most times, in the classroom...many *Melamdim* are very careful before they complain about lack of help...in my community you don’t want people to know you struggle in the classroom.” Rabbi Abraham’s principal, Rabbi Ephraim, expressed the following concerns:

I would love to give my *Melamdim* professional development days to upgrade their skills...however, when I approached our board and the parents the general attitude was “why should we pay for the PD day while the children are at home?”...I can understand them...what do you do with nine, ten children? You need to go to work, *Kollel*...but I need to think about my teachers too...we ask a lot from them and the pay is not so great [he smiles, embarrassed].
Funding is a fundamental issue in the ultra orthodox Jewish schools in Toronto; all the schools represented in the course are operating with very large deficits, according to the various administrators I spoke to. As was mentioned before, all the funding for the ultra orthodox Jewish schools, with the exception of the Eitz Chaim schools, comes from donations and school fees, therefore, budgets are not stable and projections are not really possible since one cannot determine how generous people will be when fund raising. This ‘funding formula’ creates many issues for the schools in general but also to the Melamdim; community members feel that since they’re the ones who pay the salaries of the Melamdim, they have the right to determine what (and if) those Melamdim get in terms of their training and support. Although all the schools have an ‘education committee’ that is supposed to advise the school administration on issues such as teacher training and support, the impression I got from speaking with school administrators and the Melamdim is that these committees are more concerned with preserving the ideological framework of the school. One of the administrators shared the following, “our [education] committee was busy last year discussing the adaption of a new sidur [prayer book] that better represented our school ideology…in the mean time we were dealing with many behavioral issues and even bigger staffing problems.”
Attitudes Towards the Need to Collaborate with Special Education Teachers Within Mainstream Classrooms, Pre/Post Completion of Special Education Course

Rabbi Abraham had a very strong view on the role of the special needs teacher (item C4):

some people have egos that are sometimes hard to manage...having two people co-teach can be difficult...who is in charge? This is not only a question asked by the teachers but even more problematic by the students...if you have a good working relationship with someone it makes it easier...what I believe is that teachers in regular classes should have the same knowledge as the so called ‘special needs teacher’...it’s much more economical.

Being trained in Special Education, argues Rabbi Abraham, should be the benchmark, “we discussed in the course that all the teaching techniques used with students with special needs will benefit ‘regular’ students...it only makes sense to be trained in special education regardless if you have any students with special needs.”

In response to item C1, Rabbi Abraham was very agreeable with the notion that special needs teachers and regular teachers need to work together within the inclusive classroom, however, he points out that having a teacher dedicated to special education is a privilege most schools in his community cannot afford. Special education resources are very limited in many of the schools I visited; however, the endless dedication of the Melamdim and their desire to help their students to thrive might mitigate some of the issues faced by special needs students.

Rabbi Abraham is a young enthusiastic Melamed with an exceptionally open mind and desire to learn more about special education. Being a novice Melamed, Rabbi Abraham seemed to be more willing to internalize some of the ‘new’ concepts discussed in the course, while he was quite aware of some of the intrinsic conflicts in combining ‘new’ and ‘old’. However, it is important to note that being a novice or
seasoned Melamed wasn't always a necessary predictor for one's willingness to be open to learn new, evidence based teaching methods; the case of Rabbi Benjamin, a seasoned Melamed, is a great example for this 'exception to the rule'. 
Rabbi “Benjamin”

Background, Including Attitudes Towards Self as Jewish Educator

Rabbi Benjamin was born 39 years ago in Los Angeles California, USA, to a Hasidic Ultra Orthodox family. At age 19 he got married to his Canadian wife and moved to Toronto. Once in Toronto, Rabbi Benjamin and his wife left Hasidic Judaism (asked not to mention which stream) and joined the Agudath Israel of Toronto synagogue, an orthodox congregation in the Wilson and Bathurst Streets corridor (see Appendix 9). Rabbi Benjamin and his wife had 7 children, 5 girls and 2 boys, the youngest being 3 years old and the oldest 19 years old. For the last 5 years Rabbi Benjamin has been teaching at the Toronto Cheder, a Jewish orthodox elementary school. Rabbi Benjamin comes from a family of educators; both his parents were Jewish educators, all his brothers and one sister are educators in Israel, Canada and the USA: “I grew up in a house full of Melamdim...my mother taught Hebrew at a girls school and my father taught Torah and Talmud at a few Yeshivas...it was like I didn’t have a choice but become a teacher myself.” Rabbi Benjamin chose teaching early on in his life: “I was running private Torah lessons in my parents’ basement since I was 14...I was always involved in something to do with teaching...at summer I was a camp counselor and during school time I led Shabbat youth activities in my shul (synagogue).” During the interview Rabbi Benjamin listed his greatest strength being “a good listener and learner”, quoting Psalm 119:99: “From all my teachers have I gained understanding”. He attributed most of his teaching style to his mother: “she was my first teacher...I learned from my father too, but my mother was certainly the one that influenced me the most.”
In regards to his weakness, Rabbi Benjamin listed his inability to say no to people:

my wife thinks it's a weakness...I understand it could be...sometimes I put school before family and the balance can be lost...I missed quite a lot of events in my own children’s lives...but in the end of the day they understand...my 19 years old is seriously considering becoming a teacher herself.

I asked him how it makes him feel: “I always thought she resented the fact that teaching took me away from them, but now that she is seriously considering it as her own occupation...well it makes me feel that maybe I didn’t do such a bad job after all.” Rabbi Benjamin recalled the following three events/memories that shaped him; the first was the passing of his grandfather: “my grandfather was a well known rabbi back in LA...as a child...I was 7 when he passed...you don’t really understand the gdolah (stature) of your elders...I think there were about 2000 people in his funeral...it was overwhelming but I remember being very proud.” The second memory was the day he meet Rabbi Elyashiv xxix while visiting the rabbi's Yeshiva in Jerusalem, Israel:

The rabbi [Elyashiv] came in to the room we were in and you could feel his presence...he blessed the crowd and set down on the side...not in the middle, not in the front...on the side...[he sighs]...it was one of those moments that I cherished for life...I also learned that you don’t have to be up in the front to make an impact...as a teacher I learned to sit on the side and let my students lead the way.

The third memory was the birth of his first born: “Rebecca xxx was born premature...the doctors were very concerned... I remember seeing her for the first time in the incubator...so little and fragile...but I knew she will make it...now 19 years later I thank God for taking care of her”.

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As was mentioned before, Rabbi Benjamin started his life as a Hasidic Jew and currently follows the Lithuanian Orthodox Jewish traditions: “I don’t usually talk about the move from Hasidic life to Litvish one…it had nothing to do with not believing in the Hasidic way…it was just a shift motivated by the community we lived in when we came to Canada.” I asked Rabbi Benjamin to reflect on the first time he realized he was ‘different’ from the people around him, “different? What are you talking about? I grew up in LA everybody was different…foreign…but now seriously…I grew up very sheltered…being different was never an issue in my life.” When I asked about the most difficult aspect of being ultra orthodox, “It is much easier than being secular! Orthodox life is full of rituals and customs…we have a custom for everything…I hear some secular people are ‘looking for themselves’…what does it mean? Look at your family, your friends, your community this is who you are!”

As was mentioned before, Rabbi Benjamin chose teaching, however, he feels that in the last decade the status of the Melamed dropped significantly, “in today's world we have to compete with so many distractions...so many of my students today suffer from attention disorders...I’m not sure if it is the children with the problem or maybe our world is running too fast for them...it’s sure too fast for me at times.” Many of the rabbis in the course shared this sentiment, especially the frustration of feeling as if they are competing with so many distractions.

Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education, Pre/Post Completion of Special Education Course

Before the course, Rabbi Benjamin’s attitudes towards inclusive education
were unfavorable, mostly because he didn’t really understand what it meant. He largely disagreed with items IE1, IE2, IE3, IE6 and IE7 (see Table 3), while his responses to items IE4, IE5, IE8 were answered mostly with agreement or neutrality. In our one-on-one interview after the course, I asked Rabbi Benjamin to explain the reason for his initial unfavorable responses:

Before the course I had no idea what does ‘inclusive classroom’ really means...I always thought that I have an inclusive classroom...now after the course I obviously know better...when I filled in the questionnaires you gave us in the beginning of the course I didn’t even think that inclusive education is possible...I come from a generation that if you can’t cut it in school you go to work...now, thank God, we are able to really understand that some of our children need more help to make it in this world...I would go as far as saying that inclusive education is a Jewish value...we’re commended to teach our children...all our children.

So, as mentioned by Rabbi Benjamin, his post course responses were a full turnaround in his attitude towards inclusive education; going as far to declare ‘inclusive education’ as a Jewish value; however, as seen in the chapter on the treatment of people with Learning Difficulties (LD) in Judaism, it is clear that Jewish Halacha (Jewish Law) has a complex relationship in regards to its treatment of human exceptionalities.

**Attitudes Towards Strategies Needed to Accomplish Inclusion Of Special Needs Students in Mainstream Classrooms, Pre/Post Completion of Special Education Course**

Rabbi Benjamin’s pre-course response to items S1 to S5 (see Table 3), which assessed the attitudes towards the necessary strategies to accomplish the inclusion of special needs students in mainstream classrooms, he again disagreed. The disagreement was, according to Rabbi Benjamin, a result of a realistic assessment of the situation at the school he is teaching at:
Strategies are great if there is anything to accomplish...in our situation funding is so limited...the inclusive classroom is out of our reach...a luxury we all want but realistically can’t afford it...you asked about extra help for special needs students...it is important and integral for a well-functioning classroom, however, today in my classroom I have to ‘contain’ the special needs child...not much extra help is available.

The issue of lack of funding does present a real obstacle in the creation of the inclusive classroom, since it involves the additional personnel necessary to support the regular teachers and their upgraded education. Rabbi Benjamin has 28 students in his Grade 3 class, all boys. He has no educational assistant and the physical room is about 15'x10', with a row of windows in the north wall – the building was originally an office building converted to a school. Those conditions add to the difficult reality Rabbi Benjamin was talking about in regards to coming up with the strategies to accomplish inclusive education.

In the post-course responses to items S1-S5, Rabbi Benjamin’s attitude softened a bit; however, since his teaching reality had not changed at all it was expected that his attitude would not change as much since the difficulties to implement change persisted. In the interview he shared the following thought, “I don’t need a fancy classroom with all the bells and whistles...all I need is a room big enough to contain us all comfortably with desks and chairs...at the moment we are bursting at the seams...but we manage...what is the alternative?” Rabbi Benjamin believes that inclusive education is the way to go, however, the harsh financial reality seems to be too burdensome to accomplish: “I'm not against it...I just feel that we need to use the limited resources we have to make sure that at least 95 percent of our students get a decent Torah education...the other 5 percent...I pray to HaShem (G-d) to help me do the best for them”.
Attitudes Towards the Need to Collaborate with Special Education Teachers Within Mainstream Classrooms, Pre/Post Completion of Special Education Course

Collaboration between educators in the Jewish Ultra Orthodox schools is very common. *Melamdim* are a very integral part of their communities. They pray together three times a day, they live together in a very limited geographical area of the city (see Appendix 9) and finally, many community members are related by marriage due to the fact that they [orthodox Jews] marry only within their own denomination. This very close-knit community necessitates high levels of collaboration. However, as was mentioned before, due to harsh financial difficulties, Rabbi Benjamin’s school cannot afford to hire extra help nor they can hire special education teachers. In both the pre and post-course responses, Rabbi Benjamin answered items C1-C5 hypothetically since he had never experienced working with a special education teacher in the classroom:

I never had a special education teacher in my classroom or in our school...we have some *Melamdim* who have more knowledge than others but none are officially certified in special education...taking the special education one with you was the first time I was exposed to it [special education] in a professional way...now that the course is over I feel that I know more but I also have this feeling that I might not know enough.

This sentiment of needing to know more was echoed in many of the interviews and conversations I had with the rest of the *Melamdim*. However, the tension between the need to know more about a secular topic that is quite foreign to you and the need to segregate oneself from modernity made some of the *Melamdim* very apprehensive. The following interview with Rabbi Chaim is an excellent example of such apprehension that eventually was conquered.
Rabbi “Chaim”

Background, Including Attitudes Towards Self as Jewish Educator

Rabbi Chaim was born 35 years ago in New York, USA to a Bobov Hasidic family. At age 18 he got married and in 2004 he moved to Toronto with his wife and 6 children, 4 boys ages 9, 11,12 and 14, and 2 girls ages 15 and 16. Apart from teaching at the Bobov Yeshiva, Rabbi Chaim writes extensively on Halacha (Jewish Law), especially on issues of Tahara (purity) from the Hasidic Bobov point of view. During the course Rabbi Chaim and myself had many ‘back-and-forth’ discussions about modernity and the role of Hasidism in Jewish life.

Rabbi Chaim could be characterized as holding very ‘fundamental’ views of Judaism. At the first meeting I had with the rabbis before the course began in November 2010, Rabbi Chaim was very apprehensive about the curriculum and the use of laptops and other technology. He approached me after that meeting expressing his concerns; his main point was that teaching Torah and Talmud doesn’t require the use of technology; therefore, he could not understand why we need to be introduced to it. During the first two classes Rabbi Chaim refused to use the laptops provided; however, as the course progressed Rabbi Chaim showed some interest in using the laptop computers. One of the assignments in the course was to create a lesson using a power point presentation; Rabbi Chaim was very anxious at first but with the help of the rest of the rabbis in the course he completed the assignment:

It was the first time in my life that I used a computer…I know for you it sounds unbelievable that a 35 years old man never used a computer…but you have to understand that our community for hundreds of years kept its traditional life by keeping to itself...now modernity is all around us...the other day I went to renew stickers for my license plate, I had my 14 years old
boy with me...the line was so long and I had to be back at the Yeshiva...the clerk suggested we use the computerized kiosk in the mall...you could imagine what I was thinking...first I don't go to malls, second computerized kiosk...it was just too overwhelming for me...my wife came back the next day to do it.

As our world becomes more computerized and basic services are moving online the ultra orthodox communities have no choice but to adapt (see chapter on technology and ultra orthodoxy). In our one-on-one interview Rabbi Chaim was very fascinated by my digital recorder: “no cassette...so where does the voice go?” When I explained to him the process of digital recording and the potential it has in the classroom he was very fascinated, “I can record hours of Talmud and Torah lessons and store it all in one little device...wow!” Using technology to enhance Torah studies is not a new concept; following the invention of the printing press in the fourteenth century many European Jewish communities took advantage of the new technology to produce prayer books for the masses, which were until then hand written and available to very few who could afford them (Sarna, 1968).

I asked Rabbi Chaim if he could share with me his strengths and weaknesses, and, as a good Talmudic scholar, Rabbi Chaim needed more specifics before he could answer my questions:

Well do you mean strengths and weaknesses as a human being in general, as a Melamed, as a father as a husband...in each of those domains I have both strengths and weaknesses...well as a human being HaShem [god] created perfect and with be'chira chofshis [free will]...therefore we all embody the best in humanity and what we chose could be cha ve shalom [G-d forbid] the worst we could offer...so back to your question...my strengths I believe are in the parts of me that HaShem [G-d] created and my weakness are the one I chose poorly on!

Rabbi Chaim’s attitudes and perspectives on the human condition is based on the Hasidic/Kabalistic view of Daas Eliyon [Higher Knowledge] and Daas Tachton
[Lower Knowledge], which are considered the two alternative levels of perception of reality (Elior, 1992). In the Hasidic understanding of ‘free will’, the paradox of human choice versus Divine foreknowledge relates to two alternative levels within the Divine knowledge of Creation. In the lower perspective, after the Tzimtzum (apparent concealment of God), God knows events "as an observer". In the higher perspective before the tzimtzum, God knows Creation from its source within Himself (Elior, 1992).

I asked Rabbi Chaim to recall three memories/events that shaped his life. Once again my question needed more clarification, “what do you mean by memories that shaped my life?” I clarify, “anything you might consider meaningful enough for you to preserve as a memory that you might go back to and say: that was life changing!” Rabbi Chaim answered the following:

Well I was blessed with many of those memories...but I think to choose three I must choose the ones that are still part of my day to day reality! So the first must be the day I met my wife for the first time [and] realizing she is the one I will grow old with...the second one would be the passing of my father and the realization that as his eldest son I'm now in the position of being the head of our family...something I wasn’t planning on at age 29!... and the third one was my meeting with my father’s two cousins, we all thought perished in the Holocaust, last year [2010] in Israel...HaShem [G-d] works in mysterious way...those two eighty plus years old men lived all their lives thinking they were the only survivors of their entire extended family...you never know what HaShem [G-d] has planned for you.

The two lost cousins of Rabbi Chaim are secular Jewish men living in a kibbutz in the north of Israel. Rabbi Chaim seemed to be very understanding of their choice not to lead an orthodox way of life, “you can never judge those who survived the Holocaust...I wish they were part of my community, however, I'm very thankful to HaShem [G-d] for their survival!”
Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education, Pre/Post Completion of Special Education Course

Rabbi Chaim’s pre-course attitudes towards inclusive education were, to my surprise, very agreeable. In items IE1, IE2, IE3, IE6 and IE7 (see Table 3) Rabbi Chaim’s responses were mostly ‘strongly agree’; when I asked him to elaborate he offered the following rationale,

Hazal [the sages] teach us to open our classrooms and hearts to those with difficulties...teaching Torah is an obligation I take very seriously and at times HaShem [G-d] sends me a challenging student to remind me what it [teaching] is all about...when life is easy you tend to forget the meaning of it...students with special needs remind me why I became a Melamed!

I asked Rabbi Chaim how he opens his classroom to students with special needs: “I’m not sure if I do anything ‘special’...I just know to spend more time with that student...maybe I need to make sure he understand what I teach...the regular students will let me know at the test...him [the special needs student] I need to find out before”. Rabbi Chaim was describing many of the characteristics of differentiated instruction (DI), which he was employing instinctively. During the course, Rabbi Chaim found that many of the techniques he was using to manage his class behavior and transmit the curriculum were found in the evidence-based practices discussed. However, Rabbi Chaim had a difficulty accepting the ‘secular evidence-based practices’ discussed in the course, sighting various rabbinical prohibitions in engaging in secular contemplations. Thus, it was important to find the ‘bridge’ between rabbinical teachings and secular theory and practice, which I discuss at length in the course description.
Rabbi Chaim’s responses to IE4, IE5, IE8 were mostly neutral [Neither agree or disagree]. In the interview he clarified:

I don’t believe in ‘one solution fits all’... sometimes including a child with learning disabilities in regular classroom can be a disaster for all involved...sometimes having a gifted child in a regular classroom could be an isolating experience, sometimes it could be great...in my career I saw it all...the chochma [the wisdom] is to know how to change with the circumstances.

**Attitudes Towards Strategies Needed to Accomplish Inclusion of Special Needs Students in Mainstream Classrooms, Pre/Post Completion of Special Education Course**

Rabbi Chaim’s responses to items S1 to S5 pre-course (see Table 3), were mostly positive in support of the formation of clear strategies to accomplish inclusion of special needs students: “teaching is a team effort...at Bobov we meet every day at the yeshiva and discuss our classes...yes some people kvetch (complain) but most of the Melamdim use the time to share ideas.” In our interview Rabbi Chaim expressed his frustration with some parents in his community:

Sometimes it is quite obvious the child is not OK...you know not bright...I mean delayed...and the parents refuse to take him to see a professional...I understand their concerns...it’s all about the reputation of the child...in our community the shiduch [match] can be compromised if the other family finds out the groom to be has a diagnosis of any kind...it’s ridiculous but it will take time before the community will understand it has nothing to do with the quality of the person.

This concern might sound irrelevant, especially when dealing with 5 or 6 year olds; however, it is important to note that in the Ultra Orthodox Jewish community in general and especially the Hasidic community of Bobov, they tend to only marry within the community itself; therefore, parents must pre-screen their children’s future mates to avoid various diseases that are believed to be genetic. Furthermore,
many members of the community marry before the age of 20 and most of the information gathered on their character and ‘pedigree’ [known in Yiddish as Yichos] is done at the Yeshivas and Cheders they study at. For this reason, parents are apprehensive about sharing any information that might ‘damage’ their child’s reputation. Rabbi Chaim admits that one element can mitigate any ‘problem’ with a child; “Yichos [pedigree]...not just any Yichos but one like first or second relationship to an important rabbi”.

Many parents in the above community, according to Rabbi Chaim, reject the idea of ‘inclusive education’: “parents of children with no problems have a problem with having children with problems in the same classroom...they [parents] worry the Melamed will be so busy with the children with the problems in his class...” The concern of lack of attention by educators is not unique to Ultra Orthodox Jewish parents. No one person in the community that I interviewed would openly admit that maybe parents do not want to have children with learning disabilities (LD) integrated into regular classrooms because they hold actual prejudice against those children, not as originally claimed above.

Attitudes Towards the Need to Collaborate with Special Education Teachers Within Mainstream Classrooms, Pre/Post Completion of Special Education Course

As was mentioned above, Rabbi Chaim believes in collaboration; however, in the Bobov School they don’t have a special education specialist, except for Rabbi Halevi who leads the Arrowsmith program at the school. He is not a certified special education specialist but rather self-taught: “I would love to collaborate with special education teachers if we had any! We have some ladies who teach at the morning
English classes with special education background but because of our traditional ways [adult men and women don't interact unless married] it's impossible to collaborate with them.”

According to Rabbi Chaim, he answered the questions in this section at both the pre and post-course stage hypothetically since he had never collaborated with a special education teacher. However, his hypothetical answers reveal quite a receptive attitude towards collaborating with special education specialists. In the interview Rabbi Chaim confirmed his positive attitudes towards working with special educators:

I learn new things about teaching every day...if I had the opportunity to have someone on staff to collaborate on special education I will do so for sure...I know many people think we are set in our ways...which we are at times...but if you could learn new things that could be incorporated into our ‘old’ ways I’m all for it!

Rabbi Chaim’s transformation was significant and encouraging to others in the course, since Rabbi Chaim’s standing within his own community is very influential. In my last observations of Rabbi Chaim’s class I noticed Rabbi Chaim using a ‘talking stick’ (a concept of behavior management technic we learned) using the traditional pointer used to read the Torah. The students were previously taught that once a person reads in the Torah the rest must be silent in reverence to the occasion before G-d; Rabbi Chaim used both a traditional tool (the pointer) and accepted practice (keeping silent while reading the Torah) to reinforce positive behavior. In addition, Rabbi Chaim changed the sitting arrainment from rows of tables and chairs to six clusters of 3-4 tables in order to foster group learning, usually used in the upper yeshiva schools known as ‘hevrotha (friendship/group)
learning’, in his elementary classroom. Rabbi Chaim understood that even children as young as 6 years old are able to collaborate in learning with the help of ‘facilitating teacher’ – Rabbi Chaim, for the first time in his teaching career, moved away from the front of the class and into and between students desks. The transition from ‘frontal teaching’ to ‘facilitator’ wasn’t an easy one for Rabbi Chaim, however, as soon as he tried it and saw the positive results – less behavioral issues and more active participation of all members of the class – he continued his transformation. In the following weeks and months after the end of the course, I worked with Rabbi Chaim to create new lesson plans that would allow him to become a better facilitator. The lesson plans included various activities that shifted the teaching of content from exclusively oral presentations to group and individual assignments designed to expose children to different content. For example, one of the activities was designed to teach the proper blessing for each food groups. Rabbi Chaim gave the students various cutout pictures of various foods and 3 boxes, each labeled with different prayers (both in Yiddish and English). The students were required to sort the cutout pictures into the appropriate box. This method of teaching was absolutely foreign to Rabbi Chaim pre-course. Originally he would review the blessings by reading it out from the Talmud and asked the students to repeat it after him. He noted that in the past most of the children could learn using this method, few others always needed more help after class; this time it seemed that everyone in the class participated in the activity and were able to sort out the cutouts correctly, hence, learning the proper prayer for each food group. In addition, Rabbi Chaim noted that most students were able to explain why certain foods received certain blessing by
comparing the commonality of the foods in each box – all food made from grains ended up in one box, foods produced from trees ended up in one box and all foods produced from living animals ended up in one box and etc. Rabbi Chaim was able to take content from 3000 years ago and transmit it using modern day pedagogical techniques.

The next case of Rabbi David was the exact opposite of Rabbi Chaim in many ways. Rabbi David, a Letvish rabbi with both rabbinical and secular education, came to disagree with Rabbi Chaim quite often during the course. While the men were very respectful, the divisions were quite deep and visible.
Rabbi “David”

Background, Including Attitudes Towards Self as Jewish Educator

Rabbi David was born 50 years ago in Long Beach, New York, USA to an Orthodox Jewish family. At age 24 he married his Canadian wife and together they had 4 boys, ages 17, 21, 23, and 25. Although Rabbi David was one of the ‘oldest’ members of the course, he was the only rabbi with a secular Bachelor of Education (from McMaster University). In addition, Rabbi David had a laptop computer, which he used in his classroom. For the last 12 years he worked as an elementary teacher in the Eitz Chaim day schools, and ten years before at the Hamilton Hebrew Academy in Hamilton, Ontario. He attributes his ‘love affair’ with technology to his own children:

My boys exposed me to computers...my 25 years old boy works with computers...he works for a company in Israel that provides services for our community...like Internet service and web design...kosher ones [he smiles]...it is an uphill battle, but the way I see it you better be ready for the battle to come rather than face it without knowing what’s to come...what I mean is, technology will be part of our lives going forward, you can’t ignore it...it’s here to stay and if used correctly it can be very good for us [the orthodox community].

As I mentioned before, Rabbi David uses computers in his classroom. Eitz Chaim schools in general encourage their teachers to engage in new and innovative ways of teaching. During my visits to Rabbi David’s classroom, one could not tell the difference between his classroom and the ones in secular schools apart from the fact that all the children in his class were orthodox Jewish boys and the curriculum was an orthodox Jewish one. Rabbi David testified about himself as being “very open minded and willing to listen and evaluate every advice I get regardless of its source”. In regards to his strengths and weaknesses, he listed being open minded as an
obvious strength and as his weakness he spoke of his what he called his "very thin skin when it comes to children". Rabbi David is known at Eitz Chaim School as the unofficial special education expert and many of the children in the school with learning disabilities were or are part of his classroom. He recounted the following incident to emphasis his weakness:

I get very frustrated with people who show lack of understanding when it comes to learning disabilities and children…I remember talking in the staff room with a supply teacher who just came out of teaching a class…his comments were just ignorant...he called the children animals and even used the R word to describe some of them...I totally lost it! I left the staff room and marched right into Rabbi Pliner's office [Eitz Chaim's dean] to report this man...he was never called back to supply in our school!...however, in retrospect, I regret doing that because I think I had a great opportunity to change this guy's attitude and maybe help him see that his attitudes influences his practice...he is still out there teaching.

Throughout the course Rabbi David was very vocal about his beliefs about educational matters, however, the fact that he was educated in a secular institution actually made some of the Melamdim uncomfortable at first. I asked Rabbi David to describe to me the circumstances that led him to make the decision to enroll at a secular university:

“At the time we were living in Hamilton [Ontario, Canada] just across the street from McMaster University…I was teaching at Hamilton Hebrew Academy and a member of the Adas Israel synagogue...one day Rabbi Green, the dean of the school and the rabbi of the synagogue at the time, asked me if I'm interested in taking courses at McMaster University to further my practice…I was very apprehensive about it…I was more than ten years out of high school and besides the issue of Adarat Nasim [Exclusion of women]...how could I be learning with other women...in the end I made the decision that passing on this opportunity will be a shame and went ahead…it was hard, especially for the women in the courses I took, they didn’t understand why I would not look at them when I spoke or simple as shake their hands...however, in the second year things got better and people knew who I was and the limitations of engagement with me.
Rabbi David listed the above experience as part of the three events/memories that shaped his life. The other two events were the move to Canada with his wife and the death of his mother in 2008. After the marriage to his Canadian wife he moved to her hometown of Hamilton, Ontario:

I moved from New York...the center of the Jewish universe [he smiles] to Hamilton where the Jewish community was smaller than the number of Jewish tenants in my co-op building in Brooklyn!...suddenly the other [the non Jew] was all around you...to be honest I was a bit frightened...however, the Jewish community in Hamilton was so welcoming and loving that the rest became irrelevant.

The second memory was the passing of his mother in 2008:

My father passed when I was a teen and our mother was left alone to raise us...3 boys and 2 girls...it was very hard on her but you could never tell...she was an expert in putting herself last [his voice cracks]...in her last years she lived with us...she had Alzheimer's disease...it's a cruel disease...you don't only lose your physical faculties but your cognitive ones...you lose yourself...towards the end she had no idea who we were anymore and was like a frightened little child...so losing her wasn't contained to the day of her passing...but spread out over two years...every day we lost another part of her...it was hard on all of us and I can't even imagine how hard it was on her!...it changed me profoundly...I now keep records of everything...I got this little video camera I carry with me...I record everything I believe I might forget or just because I feel my children and grandchildren might find it interesting to know.

Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education, Pre/Post Completion of Special Education Course

As was expected, Rabbi David’s responses to items IE1, IE2, IE3, IE6 and IE7 (see Table 3) were mostly ‘strongly agree’; and responses to items IE5 and IE8 were ‘strongly disagree’. Rabbi David, who received his Bachelor of Education degree from McMaster University in the mid 1990s, held the most ‘liberal’ views on human exceptionalities in the course:

I believe my time at McMaster helped to open my views on disabilities...I was
raised to believe that any disability is HaShem’s will [God’s will], and we, mere human, must accept it with love and understanding...not love to the actual person with the disabilities but to HaShem [god] who created him this way...I believe in divine intervention...and I believe that HaShem [god] works in mysterious ways...but I refuse to believe that HaShem [god] created anyone to suffer...it’s a difficult one.

Rabbi David’s dilemma is not uncommon in the Ultra Orthodox Jewish community.

In Rabbi Soloveitchik’s essay on suffering, “The Voice of My Beloved Knocketh,” Rabbi Soloveitchik reflects on the above dilemma:

When the man of destiny suffers, he says to himself: “Evil exists, and I will neither deny it nor camouflage it with vain intellectual gymnastics.” I am concerned about evil from a halakhic standpoint, like a person who wishes to know the deed which he shall do; I ask one simple question: What must the sufferer do that he may live through his suffering? . . . We do not inquire about the hidden ways of the Almighty but, rather, about the path wherein man shall walk when suffering strikes (Soloveitchik, 1956, pp. 55-56).

Although the analysis in “Kol Dodi Dofek” specifically refers to the Holocaust, religious Zionism, and the State of Israel, it is meant as well to offer broad theological insights into individual and national affliction (Millen, 2004). Rabbi Soloveitchik was part of the Modern Orthodox movement; however, many orthodox Jews without strong affiliation to any rabbinical court [such as the Litvish one] like Rabbi David consider Rabbi Soloveutchik a Mekubal [accepted authority]. Rabbi David shares the above philosophy and from it derives his beliefs about special education, “as the Rabbi [Soloveitchik] said we need to find the ‘path wherein man shall walk when suffering strikes’...as an educator I feel I need to guide the disabled student down the right path for self actualization.” Rabbi David’s commitment to his students was very apparent in both of my visits to his Grade 4 class at Eitz Chaim. Rabbi David’s classroom was very welcoming and ‘student centered’; the walls were covered by his students’ work and upon my entrance to the classroom he made sure
to show me all the wonderful work his students produced. Rabbi David uses a laptop
computer and a digital projector to display his lessons, which are a combination of
power point slides, short movie clips and games. The use of multiple media to
transmit his lessons is carefully planned and is age appropriate, allowing the variety
of learners to participate in the lesson:

I make sure to try to reach all my students...I have few students in the class I
need to be specially aware of...I modify the curriculum for them but I do it in
a way the rest of the students don’t really know it...I believe it’s key to keep it
between me and the given student...it’s not about shame it’s about
reality...children can be brutal at times.

As was mentioned before, Eitz Chaim, the school Rabbi David teaches at, is going
through a process of implementation of a Differentiated Instruction (DI) program.
Rabbi David is very well versed in the program and his practice is well informed.

Attitudes Towards Strategies Needed to Take To Accomplished Inclusion of
Special Needs Students in Mainstream Classrooms, Pre/Post Completion of
Special Education Course

Rabbi David’s responses to items S1 to S3 pre and post-course (see Table 3),
were diverse. For item S1, Rabbi David responded that mainstream teachers don’t
have enough training in special education: “I’m mostly referring to many of my
colleagues who didn’t have the chance to receive the education I did...but even
during my own studies at McMaster, special education was not part of the
curriculum for teachers, unless you were interested in it”. For item S2, Rabbi David
strongly agreed with the statement that special needs students need extra help and
attention, while to item S3 Rabbi David remain neutral: “I’m not sure about it...the
disciplinary issues being higher with special needs students...I believe it’s all
depends on the teacher...some teachers just can’t deal with special needs students and every minor issue in the classroom becomes a disciplinary event.” For items S4 and S5 Rabbi David has expressed strong disagreement:

People like to list what doesn’t work and why you should not do it...for me the challenge is greater dealing with the opposition to inclusive education than the actual application of the programs...yes funds are limited, more training is needed...but what I’m more concerned about is lack of will, rather than funds.

Rabbi David’s principled views are not just the result of an ‘optimistic view of education’ but rather his own realization that as an educator he is in charge of his own destiny, “I don’t like to feel helpless...so I don’t...when Rabbi Pliner [Dean of Eitz Chaim] decided to introduce DI at Eitz Chaim I was the first to ‘jump on it’...I was open and willing to try new ways to reach my students.”

**Attitudes Towards the Need to Collaborate with Special Education Teachers Within Mainstream Classrooms, Pre/Post Completion of Special Education Course**

Rabbi David believes in full cooperation between special education teachers and mainstream teachers; however, he also believe that the ‘mainstream’ teacher should be as versed in special education methods and practice as the special education teacher:

I believe it is easier to foster collaboration if everyone involved is on the same page...being on the same page includes sharing similar levels of information...not to say that every teacher has to be a specialist in special education...but from my experience the gap in knowledge between mainstream teachers and special education teachers is so vast that at times it’s hard to have the simplest conversation without one party, usually the mainstream teacher, feeling talked down to...egos are a very fragile thing!

The majority of participants in the course shared a similar sentiment, especially when dealing with ‘professionals’ such as special education consultants and
psychologists brought in to the school to assist them to better their practice. “It is hard enough for us [melamdim] to deal with the stigma of being unprofessional, as compared with the general studies teachers...add to it the issues presented by special needs students...the gap is growing both in knowledge and perception of self as ‘professional educators’”. Rabbi David’s observation could not be more precise and representative of the general mood in many of the schools I visited for this study. The Melamdim are responsible to teach their students the Holy Scriptures that are at the core of the making of Jewish identity, which many in the ultra orthodox community will consider superior to any secular endeavor; however, in actuality, their status as Melamdim is generally lower than that of ‘professionally trained teachers’. "Many Melamdim leave Kollel and go straight to teaching...they know the materials but have no clue in teaching methods...some had very good modeling [of teaching] at their own Yeshiva or Kollel; however, not enough to form a congruent teaching style", said Rabbi David. Rabbi David and many of the rabbis at the course relished the opportunity to participate in the course since many of them never attended any formal teacher’s college or any other professional school for teaching.

Similar to Rabbi David, the next participant Rabbi Ephraim is very technologically savvy and shares the view that exposure to technology should not be feared; on the contrary, children should be taught how to deal with technology, especially how to avoid the dangers of online browsing.
Rabbi "Ephraim"

Background, Including Attitudes Towards Self as Jewish Educator

Rabbi Ephraim was born 34 years ago in New Jersey, USA to a Bobov Hasidic family. At age 20 he got married and in 2004 he moved to Toronto at the invitation of Rabbi Furher, Toronto’s chief Bobov Rabbi. Rabbi Ephraim has 5 children, 2 girls ages 12 and 8 and 3 boys ages 13, 11, and 6. Rabbi Ephraim is an administrator in the Yeshiva Bnei Tzion of Bobov in Toronto. Prior to being a vice-principal, he was a teacher at a Bobov school in his native New Jersey. The move to Toronto was one of the three memories Rabbi Ephraim chose as self-defining ones:

I moved to Toronto in the summer of 2004…I have been up here before for a wedding and knew many of the community members so moving here wasn’t traumatic or anything like that…nevertheless, it was monumental for us, I was asked to assist in running a school that was struggling to keep its doors open…you know the usual money issues…it was a great challenge but, thank G-d, we emerged from that crisis.

The Hasidic Bobov community in Toronto is not an affluent one. Many of its members rely on financial aid from the different charity organizations run by the community. According to Rabbi Ephraim, the community subsidizes 95 percent of the students’ tuition at Yeshiva Bnei Tzion of Bobov:

We don’t get any help from the government of Ontario or UJA...so the burden of educating our children is shouldered by us alone...Rabbi Furher works around the clock to insure the school could go on...thank G-d we have few members of our community who are blessed enough to help the rest...but even for them the burden can be very high.

I asked Rabbi Ephraim why the UJA doesn’t support them, “well it's a long story...but the short version is the fact that we are not Zionist and we can’t have people outside of our community influencing our curriculum.” In terms of the government of
Ontario, no faith-based schools, other than the Catholic one, are supported by public funds. In the last two provincial elections the issue of funding for faith-based schools was in the forefront, bringing the Muslim, Christian and Jewish religious communities together to form a coalition that lobbied the government. The UJA will not support the ultra orthodox schools for what Rabbi Ephraim has alluded to as ideological differences; however, there is one exception to the ‘no funding rule’, the Eitz Chaim Schools. The Eitz Chaim Schools are not Zionist nor do they allow much intervention by the UJA in their curriculum; however, since they embrace many modern educational theories, the UJA finds it ‘easier’ to fund them. According to Rabbi Pliner, the Dean of Eitz Chaim schools in Canada, it is the first Orthodox school in North America to adopt Differentiated Instruction (DI) in both secular and religious studies. The Yeshiva Bnei Tzion of Bobov, with the leadership of Rabbi Ephraim and Rabbi Halevi as the instructor, is an Arrowsmith school. According to the Arrowsmith program website, instruction is based on the philosophy that it is possible to treat learning disabilities by identifying and strengthening cognitive capacities by intensive and graduated cognitive exercises, designed to strengthen the underlying weak cognitive capacities that are the source of the learning disabilities. Bringing in the Arrowsmith program was an uphill battle:

Some parents were very opposed to it and rumors were started that we let the children access the Internet with the computers we got for the program...however, after the first year when we could show them the positive results with the students the opposition was dropped...well not completely...I know that some parents will not allow their children to play with children who are part of the program...it’s very sad but as an administrator you must keep this very delicate balance...and Go-d willing they will come around.
It is important to note that there is a lack of research on the effectiveness of the Arrowsmith program. As of September 2011, the Yeshiva Bnei Tzion of Bobov is no longer participating in the Arrowsmith program due to unsatisfactory progress by participants.

The second memory/event recounted by Rabbi Ephraim was the World Trade Center bombing of 2001 (known as “9/11”):

I was in middle of teaching my Grade 8 Talmud class...the principal rushed in the room and whispered what happened in my hear...we went into lockout mode until the police came and said it was safe to leave. The students were sent home and we all [teachers] got together at the beit Midrash [sanctuary] the principal gave us all the details he knew...it was just unbelievable...how could such things happen in America! As a Melamed my students asked me so many questions and I had to keep strong and comforting...it was one of the biggest challenges I had in my teaching career.

The third memory/event was the death of the fourth Grand Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Halberstam Z"L (his blessed memory) of the Bobov Hasidic movement. Rabbi Ephraim is directly related to the Grand Rabbi through his mother’s side:

It was like losing my own father...for all of us [meaning community members], the Rebbe was more than a spiritual leader...he was very instrumental in the daily function of our communities around the world...I had the privilege of knowing him personally...we’re related through my mother's family...but really everyone in the community felt the loss.

The Rebbe in the Hassidic tradition is very central to the functioning of the particular court he is leading. Since the death of the fourth Bobover Rebbe a dispute has arose as to who should succeed him, both his son-in-law Rabbi Mordechai Dovid Unger and the Rebbe’s younger brother Ben Zion Aryeh Leibish Halberstam claimed to be his rightful successors. As of May 2005 the matter has been dealt with in the Jewish beit Din [rabbinical court] and up until the writing of this thesis (January
2012) no decision has been reached.

I asked Rabbi Ephraim to think about his strengths and weaknesses. His answer was quite different from the others interviewed:

I’m not sure I could testify about my own strengths or weaknesses...I find it to be a bit unfair...things I feel as my own strength could be viewed by other as a weakness or vice versa...for example, being ambitious...it could be construed as both weakness or strength...I stay away from those terms.

It’s important to note that Rabbi Ephraim’s answer is in line with his very unpresumptuous character.

**Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education, Pre/Post Completion of Special Education Course**

All Rabbi Ephraim’s pre-course response to items IE1, IE2, IE3, IE6 and IE7 (see Table 3) were neutral (neither agree nor disagree). In my first visit to his school I asked him about it: “Well...I don’t believe in one solution for all...what I meant when I answered all ‘neither agree nor disagree’ was that some children benefit from inclusive education some don’t...so in that case I could not agree or disagree”.

In the post-course response to the above items, Rabbi Ephraim shifted a bit to the ‘agree’ column but in our interview he clarified as follows:

Now that I know more about special education I’m able to see how children with special needs could be integrated into the regular classroom...but once again I still hold the position that at times keeping a student in a special class might be a better fit...but overall, with enough money and training for my Melamdim the inclusive classroom is quite possible.

As an administrator, Rabbi Ephraim has to deal with some strong negative attitudes towards inclusive education coming from the parents:

My job is to help in the running of the school...but most of the time my job is
to manage parents...[he smiles]...in our community every action I take is examined with a magnifying glass...‘does he keep with halacha?’ ‘Is it muktze [prohibited by Jewish law]?’ My authority is always questioned and I have the responsibility to keep up with the scrutiny...I’m not complaining...it’s part of the job!

All the administrators I spoke to would agree with Rabbi Ephraim’s statement, off the record; but, nevertheless, they all must maneuver between dealing with special needs students and poor attitudes of the community towards those students.

**Attitudes Towards Strategies Needed to Accomplish Inclusion of Special Needs Students in Mainstream Classrooms, Pre/Post Completion of Special Education Course**

Rabbi Ephraim’s responses to items S1-S3 pre and post-course (see Table 3), were varied and didn’t change significantly post-completion of the course:

As a vice principal I strategize all day!...answering the questions [in the questionnaire] I realized that my standing on some of the issues changed...for example I used to believe that students with special needs committed more disciplinary problems compared to the regular students [item S3], today I realized that it all has to do with our own personal prejudice towards those students...we expect students with issues to be disruptive...it’s a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Many educators, both religious and secular, share Rabbi Ephraim’s observation. In various studies (Coates, 1989; LeRoy & Simpson, 1996; Semmel et al., 1991; Vaughn, S., Schumm, J. S., & Sinagub, J., 1996) researchers discuss the effects of prejudicial attitudes towards students with learning disabilities on educators’ overall attitudes toward behavior and the feasibility of inclusive education (Avramidis et al., 2000).

Rabbi Ephraim’s response to items S4-S5 was negative:

As an administrator I’m asked to make hard decisions where the funds go...in our case the funds are with many strings attached...so...how can I justify to my parents body that I need to spend extra money on special education training and support when 95 percent of parents send their ‘normal’ kids to
school, who require no such help...I try to appeal to the Yiddish mench [expression, good Jewish manners] when it comes to taking care of the needy.

Once again, the struggle, shared by all the Melamdim in the course is the overall poor attitude towards inclusive education, “out in public everybody supports helping students with disabilities...but when the committees and parent associations convene the first to lose funds are those programs [special education]”.

Attitudes Towards the Need to Collaborate with Special Education Teachers Within Mainstream Classrooms, Pre/Post Completion of Special Education Course

Rabbi Ephraim’s response to all the items in this section (C1-C5) were similar pre and post-course, mainly very supportive of the notion of collaboration:

Collaboration is a Jewish value...in Yeshiva and Kollel we study in hevruta [a group of 3 or more students]...if you can't collaborate with your peers you risk losing a lot...but once again egos might be in the way...something Judaism doesn’t encourage...me’kol melamdi eskalti [I learned from all my teachers] our sages encourage us to listen to all...but one must be selective with what he learns too.

So collaboration is necessary, even mandated; however, at times says Rabbi Ephraim someone needs to take leadership: “Everyone knows the cliché of three Jews and four opinions...this could be detrimental to the establishment of a fruitful collaborative process...therefore, one must rise and take charge and lead.”

In addition, as an administrator, Rabbi Ephraim believes that he is obligated to create a ‘collaborative environment’, “you don’t want anybody feeling left out...yes that ego thing again...I try to include all my Melamdim in the decision...make them understand we’re all in it together...tzures of many the nechama of one [expression, the problems of many the conciliation of an individual].”
The next case is of one of Rabbi Ephraim's new *Melamed* at the Yeshiva and the youngest member of the course. Rabbi Fraylech ["happy" in Yiddish] is indeed a very positive individual in his first year as a *Melamed*.

**Rabbi “Fraylech”**

**Background, Including Attitudes Towards Self as Jewish Educator**

I included the case of Rabbi Fraylech since he was a ‘teacher in training’ and a member of one of the most important families in Hasidic Jewish world; having him in the course served many interests, especially the legitimation (‘koshering’) of the course in the eyes of various community members who might be opposed to such interaction between secular university and their community.

Rabbi Fraylech was born 23 years ago in Brooklyn, New York to one of North America’s most prominent ultra orthodox families. At age 20 he got married to his Canadian wife and together they have 2 boys, 2 years old and 7 months old (June 2011). Rabbi Fraylech’s extended family members from the past and present include some prominent secular Jewish thinkers, doctors and even a soviet revolutionary thinker. Rabbi Fraylech is aware of those relatives and is very comfortable talking about them:

Every *chelloni* (secular) that I meet, a Jew or non-Jew, hears my last name and the next question is “are you related to so and so?” usually the communist one [referring to the soviet revolutionary thinker]...when I answer ‘yes’ it is always with great disbelief on their behalf...but you’re Hasidic and they are...I quickly interject and say ‘Jews’...they are Jews like myself.
However, it is important to note that Rabbi Fraylech doesn’t volunteer the family relations unless asked; in addition, he has no connection to any of those non-Hasidic family members. Rabbi Fraylech works as a tutor at The Yeshiva Bnei Tzion of Bobov in the senior division. In the 2011-2012 school year he will be teaching Grade 12 Talmud part time while continuing his studies at the Kollel. When I asked Rabbi Fraylech to describe the three most impactful events in his life, he shared with me that when he was 15 he had a ‘falling with orthodoxy’ and according to him, for a brief moment considered a secular life:

I usually don’t talk about it but it’s part of my history and I assume it helped shape who I’m today...I was going through a very difficult time...my grandfather, which I was extremely close to passed away suddenly...he wasn’t a sick man or anything...it was a massive heart attack and nothing doctors could do to save him...I was in the room with him when it happened...he just fell on the floor and [chokes up]...well you get the idea...he was a tzadic [a righteous man, a saint] I had a great difficulty accepting the g’zera [edict] and after the Shivah [seven days of mourning] I started to rebel...I needed answers...I was angry...my grandfather raised me...my parents were very busy taking care of the community...people will call me his shadow...I adored him and wasn’t prepared to have him gone so quickly...after about a year of doing things I don’t regret but will, G-d willing, never repeat again.

So how did you resolve your grief? I asked. “I don’t think I ever did! I miss him every day...in my prayers...all the times...my eldest is named after him...and I can already see his [grandfather] Neshama [soul] shines through...I’m not sure if it’s my own wishful thinking but it makes things easier.” Rabbi Fraylech’s ‘flirt’ with secularism obviously didn’t last and he went back to the Hasidic ways, “at the time, I was miserable being Hasidic and I was still miserable not being Hasidic...so I realized that being Hasidic wasn’t the ‘problem’ and I love this way of life so I went back”. The other two life shaping events were his wedding day and the birth of his
children: “My wife and I knew each other since we were children...her father and my father are close friends...it was almost a given we get married.” As he mentioned before, he named his first born after his beloved deceased grandfather, a very common practice among Ashkenazi Jews: “After the bris [circumcision] when the mohel [the rabbi who performs the circumcision] asked for his name and declared it I got very emotional...it was like ‘here is my grandfather reborn’...it’s a very powerful thing.”

I asked Rabbi Fraylech to think about his strengths and weaknesses; he started to laugh, “give me a break...I just celebrated my 23rd birthday...I’m far away from thinking about those things... and besides if you ask my parents about my strengths and weaknesses you might change your mind about including me in your course and study...[he laughs very loudly]”. Although Rabbi Fraylech doesn’t believe he is ‘old enough’ to reiterate his own strengths and weaknesses it is important to note that compared with his contemporaries in the secular North American society, Rabbi Fraylech, on average, acts much more maturely. Since Rabbi Fraylech is relatively new to education he was reluctant to express his views about the somewhat unfavorable status of Melamdim in his community, as was expressed by his peers. However, being new to any vocation allows one to be more optimistic; Rabbi Fraylech would shake his head when he heard his peers ‘complain’ about the poor status of Melamdim in the community. In one of those occasions I asked him during break time why did he shake his head when his colleagues expressed their dissatisfaction with their status in the community, his answer was quite surprising (paraphrased): ‘what you put in is what you get...if you want people to respect what
you do, you don’t ask them to respect it...you show respect to what you do and people will do the same...’ Rabbi Fraylech is very confident young man with distinguished pedigree behind him, therefore, being a *Melamed* was quite a surprising choice of vocation for him (by his own admission), however, he strongly believes that his generation of *Melamdim* would change people’s poor perceptions in regards to Jewish educators.

**Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education, Pre/Post Completion of Special Education Course**

Rabbi Freylech’s agreed with items IE1, IE2, IE3, IE6 and IE7 (see Table 3) in support of inclusive education, while for items IE4, IE5, IE8 (see Table 3) and disagreed with those that propose that the inclusive classroom is a problematic concept. I didn’t have a chance to observe Rabbi Freylech in the classroom, since he was not teaching one prior to the completion of the course; however, I visited him at the *Kollel* where he studied. At the *Kollel*, Rabbi Freylech studied with three other rabbis all around his own age. He admitted to me that he answered the questionnaires in a ‘hypothetical way’; however, he based his answers on how he believes he would act in the classroom:

The questions about attitudes are tricky ones...attitudes change as you and your environment changes...today at the *Kollel* I feel one way about inclusive education but maybe after teaching for a while my attitudes will change...many of the *Melamdim* I know told me that at the beginning they were optimistic like me but with time you change...I hope not to change.

I asked his why he thinks *Melamdim’s* positive attitudes towards inclusive education change;

Well, the Torah teaches us to have positive attitudes towards our
students...why does it change...I could only guess but I think it has to do with harsh realities...during the course I heard the Melamdim talk about the lack of support and funds their school has...sometimes it's hard to be the only one asking for change while the rest are covering their ears...I have a lot of Chutzpa... something I got from my grandfather....so I will probably yell a bit louder if not listened too! [Laughs loudly].

Personal attitudes are generally influenced by institutional ones; many new educators ‘fresh out of university’ possess many optimistic views about education and teaching in general; however, with the passing of time and the exposure to the realities of the education system many lose that initial optimism and tend to adopt a more ‘practical’ view of both the system and their role in it.

**Attitudes Towards Strategies Needed to Accomplish Inclusion of Special Needs Students in Mainstream Classrooms, Pre/Post Completion of Special Education Course**

Since Rabbi Freylech had never really taught at a school he had difficulty answering items S1-S5; he answered mostly ‘neither agree or disagree’: “I really lack the experience to really offer a genuine answer...however, now after the course is over I certainly think that developing a clear strategy to tackle inclusion of students with special needs is highly important...you're always better off with having a plan...a strategy.” Rabbi Freylech will be teaching Grade 12 Talmud, in the 2011-2012 school year, at the Yeshiva Bnei Tzion of Bobov in Toronto. He will be shadowing a senior rabbi for the first month before taking over the class on his own.

**Attitudes Towards the Need to Collaborate with Special Education Teachers within Mainstream Classrooms, Pre/Post Completion of Special Education Course**

Rabbi Freylech hopes that he will be able to collaborate with different Melamdim in his school: “We don’t really have special education teachers in the
Talmud Torah section…but we have many excellent Melamdim with a lot of experience in both teaching and behavior management to help me out…also the course we just completed puts me ahead too!” As was mentioned before, the Yeshiva Bnei Tzion of Bobov in Toronto has special education specialists in the English section. However, since all of the teachers are females and Hasidic Bobov Jews don’t interact, let alone collaborate with women who are not their wives, due to Halachic restriction, the women’s special education specialty is reserved for English studies only, which creates an even bigger gap in achievement between the sections. The gap in achievement also contributes to the poor attitude toward Melamdim, mainly as being unprofessional teachers.

The next participant to be interviewed wasn’t a novice Melamed like Rabbi Fraylech nor was he part of the Bobov Hasidic community; however, like Rabbi Fraylech, Rabbi Gabriel also has a very bubbly character and during the course the two men seemed to get along very well.
Rabbi “Gabriel”

Background, Including Attitudes Towards Self as Jewish Educator

Rabbi Gabriel was born 33 years ago in New York, USA to a traditional Jewish family. After his marriage to his Canadian wife, they both turned ultra orthodox; together they have 5 boys, ages 12, 10, 5, 3, 2 and 1 girl age 8. Rabbi Gabriel works as a Grade 7 Talmud Melamed at the Toronto Cheder. In our one-on-one interview Rabbi Gabriel listed becoming ultra orthodox as the most significant event in his life:

After we got married, it was decided that we move to Canada to start a family...we moved to the Bathurst and Lawrence area...my wife is originally from Montreal so didn't have a clue it's a religious neighborhood...well you know mostly populated by ultra orthodox Jews...we both came from traditional families, we kept the Shabbat and Kosher but not more than that...after the birth of our first boy we started the process of itchazkot [becoming more religious]...it wasn't a matter of getting up one morning deciding to become more observant...it was like a long journey...which we are still on...many of our friends understood the 'transformation'- some feared it and decided to cut ties...we understood but kept going...today we couldn't be happier.

I asked Rabbi Gabriel if he misses anything from his previous life: “I can't say I miss much...maybe baseball...I still follow baseball but it's not acceptable to go see games...I don't have a television at home and most of the updates about my team, the New York Mets, I get from my brother.” Rabbi Gabriel listed getting his smicha [Orthodox Rabbinical Ordination] as the second most significant event in his life: “I was almost 30 when I got my smicha...most of my colleagues got theirs at around age 20...it was an amazing experience...not getting the title of rabbi but rather the acknowledgment you attained the necessary knowledge to be trusted to teach others our Torah...wow!” This enthusiasm is very typical of Rabbi Gabriel’s overall attitude and approach to teaching. During the course and the two times I observed
him at his own classroom I saw this kind of enthusiastic approach. Rabbi Gabriel enjoyed engaging in ‘heated’ but civilized arguments with his fellow course mates, always offering a positive views: “I’m the ultimate optimist...I believe that if you put your heart and soul in anything the results will be positive!” Rabbi Gabriel is very animated and loves to tell stories to his students. In my second observation Rabbi Gabriel was teaching a class about the ten plagues waged on Egypt by the Hebrew God as part of the exodus story in the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy. The students were literally sitting on the edge of their seats, fascinated by the performance of Rabbi Gabriel, who was explaining how horrible the plagues were and how it’s something God didn’t like to do. “I love to make the students think beyond the text...the ten plagues were not something we should look at as our victory over the Pharaoh...the ten plagues are about the consequences of being hard headed!”

In regards to his strengths and weaknesses, Rabbi Gabriel lists his relentless optimism as both his strength and weakness: “Optimism is key for me...I always look at the half full glass...but sometimes the glass is empty and I end up feeling silly...well not silly but more like ‘how did I miss it?’...So yes...my endless optimism sometimes gets me!” Rabbi Gabriel also feels that people might take advantage of him because they confuse his optimism with being ‘naïve’: “I'm not naïve...I know when people try to pull a fast one on me...I do cut people a lot of slack but not because I’m naïve, I just believe if you give people the opportunity to do good they will...that goes for students...especially for students.”
Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education, Pre/Post Completion of Special Education Course

Rabbi Gabriel’s responses to items IE1, IE2, IE3, IE6 and IE7 (see Table 3) were mostly ‘strongly agree’; and responses to items IE5 and IE8 were ‘strongly disagree’ both in the pre and post course questionnaire. Rabbi Gabriel strongly believes in the inclusive classroom:

Being my optimist self I always try to find ways to include all my students in the lesson...some students just need the opportunity to be listen to and honored...I had many teachers growing up in public school that didn't listen or honor us...we were not important as the material they were trying to 'cover'...for me giving everybody a fair chance to participate speaks volumes.

I challenged Rabbi Gabriel with the following question, 'but what happens when a student with behavior issues keeps disturbing the class and actually doesn’t listen or honor you and his peers? What do you do then? “I usually don’t have this problem because they [students] know that at my class everyone is respected and honored...if you start from a positive place it’s hard for the misbehaving child to shift into the negative place.” But what about the ADHD child who can't really control his behavior:

Well maybe it is my over the top optimism but I always was able to manage with the most difficult behaviors in class...two years ago I had a student who kept hitting other students for no real reason...we had a talk and we decided that he will be my assistant and as such he must behave...the transformation was incredible...he had few issues at the beginning but a month into our new arrangement he was a changed person...so much more attentive and responsible...and yes no more hitting.
Attitudes Towards Strategies Needed to Accomplished Inclusion of Special Needs Students in Mainstream Classrooms, Pre/Post Completion of Special Education Course

Rabbi Gabriel’s optimism didn’t fully extend to this section. He had very strong opinions on the necessary strategies needed to accomplish inclusive education in the ultra orthodox schools:

After taking the course with you I realized how much I don't know about special education...we receive zero training when it comes to issues of behavior...the policy is clear, if you have a problem with a child’s behavior you send him to the office to be dealt with...in your questionnaire you asked if students with special needs need extra help...the answer is obvious to me but I'm not sure it’s that obvious to many people I know in the community.

I asked him to comment on why he answered, “strongly agree”, to item S3, which explored the issue of higher disciplinary problems among students with special needs compared to regular students:

Well in my own practice I see it very clearly...don't get me wrong it’s not the students’ fault...the higher incidence has to do with the fact that teachers really don’t know how to teach children with disabilities...the child gets frustrated...the teacher gets frustrated...and here we go you got yourself a disciplinary problem...it’s like saying people who work with sharp knifes have a higher chance of getting cut...obviously they do!

Rabbi Gabriel doesn’t believe that having the attitude that those students with special needs present more disciplinary problems will create prejudice in the teacher against them, but rather make him aware that this particular group of children needs extra attention and care.
Attitudes Towards the Need to Collaborate with Special Education Teachers Within Mainstream Classrooms, Pre/Post Completion of Special Education Course

Rabbi Gabriel responded with ‘agree’ to items C1 and C3 and ‘disagree’ to items C2, C4, and C5. In our interview he commented on his responses as follows,

we don’t have the privilege of special education teachers at the Jewish studies...there are some in the English studies but we don’t have much to do with them...sometimes they will leave me a note on a particular child... and sometimes the principal will provide us with some information gathered by the special education teacher...so to say we collaborate will be a gross exaggeration.

Rabbi Gabriel believes that inclusive education is not only possible, but also necessary.

In our schools where money is always an issue the inclusive classroom is an economical way of dealing with children with disabilities...we don't have the money to create a special class...let alone a separate program...besides, no one parent I knew would agree that their child will be singled out and be pulled for special education classes...so the inclusive model is perfect for our community...the problem is the training...most of us have no formal teaching education and the course we took with you was the first for many of us...we need more training and exposure to new techniques.

Almost all the rabbis in the course commonly shared the feeling of being under-trained: “Before the course I knew my knowledge of special education was limited...now after the course is over I realized how bad it was [the knowledge] and now I'm hungrier for more.”
Rabbi “Halevi”

Background, Including Attitudes Towards Self as Jewish Educator

Rabbi Halevi was born 25 years ago in Brooklyn, New York to a prominent Bobov Hasidic family. After his marriage at age 20 he moved to Toronto, following his uncle who was invited by Rabbi Furher, chief Bobov Rabbi of Toronto. Rabbi Halevi has a boy, age 3, and in the winter of 2012 he and his wife had a second boy. Rabbi Halevi is the director of the Arrowsmith program at the Yeshiva Bnei Tzion of Bobov in Toronto. The Arrowsmith program uses computer programs to administrate intensive and graduated cognitive exercises, which are suppose to strengthen the underlying weak cognitive capacities that are believed by the program creators to be the source of learning disabilities. The program faced strong opposition from many community members, not because the benefits of the program were not clearly substantiated but for the simple fact that its administration involves computers. As was discussed before, The Bobov Hasidic community is a very conservative one and doesn’t believe in the use of any modern technologies, especially computers.

Many parents were concerned that the children will use the computers to access the internet...we don’t have a wireless internet system in the school and only the main office has internet access...the fear wasn’t rational but for some reason it influenced many parents who kept their children away from the program in the first year...well after the first year they saw the results...and now the group of objectors is almost gone, well for now!

Rabbi Halevi is very comfortable using various technologies. During the course he used a laptop to take notes and was very comfortable with the Smart
Board programs. I asked Rabbi Halevi how he gained all this knowledge about computers:

I always had a great interest in technology...I have no formal education, except for the course I did for the Arrowsmith program...but even before that I was playing around with technology...it started with sound systems we had at the yeshiva and with time I started learning about other technologies...I used to go into my father’s office...he had a computer...he thought I was playing solitaire or whatever...being my father’s son I was given some breaks.

As was mentioned, Rabbi Halevi is part of a very prominent Bobov family, which afforded him less scrutiny. However, it is important to note that many in the Bobov community in Toronto see Rabbi Halevi as a bit of a ‘rebel’:

Many in the community see me as an odd one...I believe technology and especially computers can be great for us...we need to find a way to make it work...I know some of my students access the internet on their own without their parent’s knowledge...is this better? I try to explain to them the good things they can do with computers, but I’m not innocent I know the dangers...but if we teach them to avoid the danger I strongly believe they [students] will be better off for it.

I asked Rabbi Halevi to recall three memories/events that shaped his life. He offered two, the first was his first visit to Jerusalem and the second the birth of his son.

When I was ten years old my second cousin got married in Jerusalem and it was a big deal...I traveled with my parents and many other family members to attend the wedding...we arrived very early in the morning and I was very disoriented but then on our way to Jerusalem I remember the city emerges from around the bend as the car approached...I was in awe...here it was the city of David, the walls, the temple mount...it was overwhelming for a ten years old that until this moment didn’t go out of the tri-state area! We stayed with family at Meha Shearim [ultra orthodox neighborhood in Jerusalem]...the history of our people is all around you.

It is very odd for a Bobov Hasidic person to consider a trip to Jerusalem, Israel as a meaningful event since the community is not Zionist and does not believe
in the creation of the state of Israel before the coming of the Messiah. I asked Rabbi Halevi to expand on that issue:

It is a complex issue...I have being to Israel many times since and each time something in me moves...I’m not sure what it is...I speak with a lot of Israelis...secular people...they are shocked that I talk to them, but I was always interested in how they view us...it’s not good, I tell you! It’s like the technology issue we spoke about before...people fear the unknown and base their opinion on bad information.

Once again it is extremely important to emphasis the point that Ultra Orthodox Jews both in Israel and North America do not engage in ‘casual conversations’ with non-community members; Rabbi Halevi’s behavior is not common and many in his community don’t like it: “People will come up to me and say ‘why are you talking to so and so...what business do you have with them?’ again they [orthodox Jews] don’t trust people outside of the community...for good reasons at times, but mostly it’s just [out of] blind fear.”

The second event Rabbi Halevi listed as life changing was the birth of his son,

It was one of those days I will never forget...my wife was not due for at least three weeks so we decided to drive down to see my parents in New York before we had the child...we arrived at my parents’ house at around five in the evening...my father and my younger brothers went to daven [pray] as we were walking to shul [synagogue] my cell phone rang...it was my mother...at first I couldn’t understand what she was saying but apparently my wife had the baby right there in the living room...we ran back home and here he was...the amazing part was that I was born in this house, my father was born in this house and my grandfather who bought the house died in it.

In terms of strengths and weakness, Rabbi Halevi listed his openness to new ideas as being his greatest strength and lack of formal education as a weakness:

I wish I was able to go to university to learn computer engineering...I know it sounds crazy but I know it will make me happy and I will be good at it...the problem is...well the main one is the community...it will not go well...the other problem is the lack of secular education...I did some research, they [universities and colleges] want Grade 12 math and English...I don’t have it...I
can take it at night school but once again the community will be up in arms about it.

I asked Rabbi Halevi to explain why the opinion of the community is so important to him:

The community is all we have! We are different than the people around us...we have the responsibility to preserve our traditions and customs...I know it sound weird coming from me...but I have nothing against customs and traditions...I just think we need to find a way to combine ‘old with new’. I asked Rabbi Halevi to describe to me the first time he felt he was different:

Well probably from the day I was born [laughs]...no...probably at around the age of 6 or 7 when I actually noticed people pointing at us...it’s not such a great feeling in the world...especially growing up...I remember my mother telling me that yes we are different but different doesn’t mean bad.

**Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education, Pre/Post Completion of Special Education Course**

Rabbi Halevi’s pre and post-course responses to items IE1, IE2, IE3, IE6 and IE7 (see Table 3) were ‘strongly agree’, and responses to items IE5 and IE8 were ‘disagree’. He is obviously a great believer in inclusive education: “I always believed in inclusive education...now after the course I’m not only a believer and think it’s the only way, especially in our cash strapped school.” As was mentioned before, Rabbi Halevi is the director/instructor of the Arrowsmith program at his school. When I came to visit his classroom I was surprised to learn that contrary to the tenets of inclusive education, students in Rabbi Halevi’s class are pulled out of their regular classroom to participate in the program. I confronted Rabbi Halevi with this issue:

I know...it’s not inclusive to isolate children in a small side room...however, as I mentioned to you before we had so much opposition in the beginning because of the use of computers the only way we could do it was to put it in a separate room with limited access to those in the program only...personally I think every student should have a chance to do the program...but it’s a battle
we need to win first with the parents.

In a discussion I had with Rabbi Halevi’s principal, he was open to having the computers in every classroom to be used not only for the Arrowsmith program, but also for other subjects, but once again the parents—who are very involved in the school—have voiced strong opposition to the above idea. Rabbi Halevi made many efforts to reach out to those parents, trying to explain his position; some were convinced, while others still held their previous convictions against the incorporation of technology into the classrooms.

**Attitudes Towards Strategies Needed to Accomplish Inclusion of Special Needs Students on Mainstream Classrooms, Pre/Post Completion of Special Education Course**

The issue of training and resources for inclusive education, which is at the heart of the strategies needed to accomplish inclusion of special needs students, is one of Rabbi Halevi’s main struggles:

I spend countless hours advocating for more resources and training for fellow Melameds...not that the resources are plentiful but if we could have more money to buy more computers...the one we have were donated two years ago...and more training for all of us...the course we took with you made us hungry for more...it’s a new world and as Melamdim we need to fast forward and find new ways to make Torah studies better for our students...The Torah is full of amazing lessons and we’re blessed to have received it...know it’s our [Melamdim] job to make sure the next generation gets its full glory and wisdom...using computers will not change it...it will just make it more applicable to the new generation.

It is important to note that although Melamdim do not receive formal teaching education, they are exposed to many teaching and learning techniques throughout their studies at the Yeshiva and Kollel, such as problem based learning and group learning. Talmud scholarship is mainly done in groups, called Hevrutas, Aramaic for
fellowship/brotherhood. Those fellowships/brotherhoods are usually comprised of two to three Talmud students who get together to study a passage dealing with a problem in need of clarification. The method of studying in groups comes from the Talmudic understanding that learning in pairs or groups allows learners to bounce ideas off each other and finally come to the right conclusions (Perki Avot 1, 6).

Rabbi Halevi is a self-educated individual, “most of my training I did on my own online...I taught myself to use computers and different programs...I’m sure I have a lot of gaps in my education...but the alternatives are not available for me...yet.” Of the 23 Melamdim in the course, 21 testified that they are self-educated in a sense, since most of them transitioned from the Kollel to become Melamdim without much preparation.

**Attitudes Towards the Need to Collaborate with Special Education Teachers Within Mainstream Classrooms, Pre/Post Completion of Special Education Course**

As the only ‘special education’ person in the school, Rabbi Halevi feels that collaboration with mainstream classrooms is crucial:

Many of the other Melamdim have no clue what I do at the Arrowsmith program...and frankly I don’t think they even care! I try my best to include the other in what I do...but the objection heard by some parents exists in some of the Melamdim...with them [the Melamdim] it’s mostly to do with the fact that they feel the time the students spend with me could be used with them...they don’t really understand that my program eventually will make their job easier...also some of the other teacher feel like I’m interfering with their classroom teaching when I suggest to them to try new ways of teaching the Talmud portion...a lot of issues with egos.

With the completion of the course, Rabbi Halevi feels more professional and is better able to ‘face’ the other Melamdim and make the recommendations;:
I take the binder we got [in the course] with all my notes to every meeting I have with another Melamed...it’s like my security blanket these days [he smiles]...however, I’m quite aware of the fact that I need more knowledge to be able to face the other Melamdim and be taken seriously as an expert.

**Reflections on the interviews**

The above eight Melamdim vary in ages, level of experience as educators, attitudes towards special education, practice of Judaism and overall level of education; however, they all shared one very strong bond – the burning desire to teach Torah and Talmud and do it well! It was unprecedented for many of them to share so much private information about themselves with a secular individual in general and for the purpose of academic inquiry in particular. The above interviews, and taking the special education course, were two of many measures those Melamdim took to improve their practice. During the interview process many of them felt the questions I asked them were, as one melamed said: “not Jewish enough”, especially the section about the ‘Future Autobiography’. None of the Melamdim answered any of the questions in that section, since all of them believe that one shouldn’t contemplate the future. Rabbi David said the following:

It has nothing to do with superstitions…like the one: men make plans and HaShem laughs…it has to do with the very strong belief that one must live in the present, take care of his family now, learn the Torah for now not only for the Olam Abah (next world)...when men spend too much time contemplating the future they usually neglect their present obligations...the future is up to us...our sages tell us that everything we do in this life give us zechot ve chuvah (right and duty) in the next world, however we are the only one who could affect what is ours to claim.

The other twelve questions of the semi-structured interview were interwoven in each of the detailed profiles above. Some Melamdim expressed to me that it was the first time in their life someone has asked them questions about themselves: “I’m not used to speak
about myself or my life…it’s not really acceptable in our community to speak about one’s self with strangers…it’s not about privacy the way the secular world views it but rather what we call tznius (modesty)”. The issue of modesty was revisited throughout the course and during the interviews, and as it was pointed out, privacy wasn’t the issue. Modesty in the Jewish Ultra Orthodox world has to do with encoded rules of engagement with various members of different groups; for example, married men don’t engage in any conversations with unmarried women who are not their daughters. The rule of engagement for me as a secular Jew is strict and usually non-existent; however, with time more access was allowed to me. Being versed in Talmudic literature myself mitigated some of the barriers presented by the so-called ‘rules of engagement’; however, once again, the fact that I was an academic studying psychology raised some of those barriers right back up. It was very clear that in order to lift those barriers the merging of traditional Jewish wisdom with contemporary conceptions and understanding of educational psychology is necessary to establish common grounds where engagement with the Jewish Ultra Orthodox community members could be made easier. As was described in the detailed course outline, various Talmudic and biblical teachings and sources were brought as ‘equivalents’ to contemporary teaching methods, creating the necessary connections between traditional Jewish wisdom and contemporary conceptions and understanding of educational methods.

The cases discussed highlight the dire situation of special education in the schools where the Melamdim worked. Lack of formal teacher training, established general or Judaic studies curriculums, and poor attitudes toward individuals with
disabilities within the community made the goal of inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms an almost impossible goal. The participants were willing to engage in contemporary, evidence based special education practices, as long as the rational for using these ‘new’ teaching tools could be anchored in Talmudic reasoning. In general, it could be said that the Melamdim who participated in the above course were groundbreakers by willing to take the supposed risk involved in being engaged in non-Torah studies. Their courage and willingness to participate in the course will open the door to future exploration and maybe bigger changes to come.

**Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The study was limited to 28 rabbis teaching at local ultra orthodox community schools (Yeshivas and Cheders) of the Greater Toronto area, especially the Hasidic Bobov community and the Litvish Haredi community. Each of those communities comprise many members who immigrated to Toronto, mainly from US cities such as Brooklyn (New York) and Lakewood (New Jersey) (see demographic data); therefore, it is hard to characterize this group as a ‘Canadian’ representative of each stream of Judaism. Those who were born in Canada, mainly in Toronto and Montreal, spent a large portion of their lives moving between their communities’ centers around North America.

Another major limitation/issue was the lack of previous literature on the interworking of each community. There is good documentation of their history of rabbinical dynasties, and various customs; however, no concrete statistical data is neither available nor any in-depth study into the inner-workings of each community.
Most of the information on each of the communities was gathered through lengthy interviews with local rabbis and decision makers of each respective community; therefore, a certain bias might exist in the process of self-reporting. In addition, personal notes were gathered by the author during the teaching of the course to try to shed some light on the interworking of each community, but once again, it is important to note that as in all sole observational notes, the author’s bias could not be accounted for, since no other individual outside of their community was allowed to observe the course.

All the pre-course questionnaires (see Appendices 2-5) were self-administered. The subjects took them home in sealed envelopes marked ‘confidential’ and returned them a week later. Only 22 rabbis (out of 28) returned a completed set of questionnaires. The author administrated the post-course questionnaire (see Appendix 5) during the personal interview with each educator.
CHAPTER IV
Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary and Discussion of Findings

*Evidence-based special education programs.* The above study attempts to answer four research questions using both qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry. The first question was: “Do the Jewish Ultra Orthodox and Hassidic Community schools employ contemporary evidence-based special education programs?” The initial hypothesis suggested that the Jewish Ultra Orthodox and Hassidic Community schools would not employ any contemporary evidence based special education programs. The data presented here partially challenges the above hypothesis. In general, it could be argued that those schools don't employ contemporary evidence-based special education programs, with one notable exception, the Eitz Chaim Schools. However, from my own observations and interviews with the *Melamdim* working at the Eitz Chaim School, the Patricia campus, I found that contemporary evidence-based special education programs are partially employed at the classroom level. According to the school dean, Rabbi Pliner, Differentiated Instruction (DI) methods to promote inclusive education are being applied in the classroom; nevertheless, during the course it was very clear that DI at Eitz Chaim is at its ‘early stages’ of implementation. While in general the Eitz Chaim *Melamdim* had more secular education, most of them didn’t have a Bachelor of Education or any other certification in ‘secular education’, which could present some obstacles in implementing DI. The general view gathered via the interviews in
regards to the implementation of DI at their school could be summed up by the
following comment made by one of the Melamdim at Eitz Chaim:

DI seems to be a wonderful program but I can speak for many Rabbeim
[rabbis] by saying it has been very hard to adjust...mostly because many of us
have no background in what you call 'educational theories' and DI has a lot of
parts to it we are not familiar with...we got some training but hardly enough
to make DI second nature.

The challenge of implementing contemporary evidence-based special education
programs in many of the Ultra Orthodox and Hasidic schools comes down to the lack
of educational training of the Melamdim. It was also hypothesized that ‘traditional
Jewish education’ has many elements of special education instruction inherit in the
tradition itself, i.e. the belief that every child internalizes and learns the Torah in
different ways; therefore, it might mitigate the lack of contemporary evidence-based
special education programs. The study suggested that many of the Melamdim have
the traditional rabbinic training that shares some of the tenets of ‘inclusive
education’; however, almost all of the Melamdim did not recognize their practice as
such before taking the course. The course attempted to create such connections
between Jewish Wisdom Texts and contemporary evidence-based special education
theories. Most of the Melamdim were able to use their Talmudic knowledge as a
‘springboard’ to understanding the foundations of the inclusive classroom.
Furthermore, the use of contemporary theories to augment their practice became
much more evident post-course.

Another major issue that most Melamdim reported was the lack of formal
curriculum in the Judaic studies: “We know what we need to teach...well quantity
wise...we know how many mishnayas [Talmud portions] we need to cover...however,
we are not told how to teach it...how to evaluate the students...well we don't have a set curriculum like the general studies teachers do.” All the rabbis who took the course shared this sentiment, expressed by a rabbi at the Toronto Bobov Yeshiva. In order to implement an effective and comprehensive special education program it is necessary to have a curriculum that adequately addresses both content and assessment needs. Modifying a curriculum to meet the needs of all students is challenging enough; not having a comprehensive curriculum for the Judaic studies portion makes the implementation of contemporary evidence-based special education programs in many of the Ultra Orthodox and Hasidic schools even a bigger challenge. It is important to note that each school represented in this study uses a certain version of Talmud acceptable to its community members; those Talmud versions are based on the general beliefs of the members and in general sets the ‘standard’ which Melamdim need to teach by; however, once again, it falls short of being, or standing for, a formal curriculum.

In the questionnaire investigating Teachers’ Perceptions Toward Inclusive Education, items C1 to C5 attempted to assess the Melamdim’s general attitude towards collaboration with special education teachers. The Melamdim disagreed/strongly disagreed that the implementation of special education was ineffective due to objections from the mainstream classrooms (C2), that the presence of a special education teacher in regular classrooms could raise difficulties in determining who really is responsible for the special needs (C4), and that special education teachers only helped the students with special needs (C5). However, in the one-on-one interviews all the Melamdim made it very clear that the way they
answered the questionnaire was hypothetical, meaning, they would collaborate with a special education teacher if one existed in their school. None of the Melamdim in the course has ever worked together with a special education teacher:

We have a special education teachers in the general studies but not the Judaic one...besides they’re women and for Halachic [Jewish law] reasons we’re not able to work together...rarely that we get a note about a certain student from those teachers [special education] but mostly we [Melamdim] are kept out of the loop...it goes back to the issue of not really being a professional teachers like the general studies ones.

The above statement was expressed in class during our discussion about the importance of collaboration between mainstream teachers [both Judaic and General studies] and special education teachers for the success of implementing contemporary evidence-based special education programs. The issue of gender segregation in the Jewish Ultra orthodox and Hasidic communities is based on the rabbinical prohibition of socializing and even being in the same room alone with members of the opposite sex who are not related to you [wife, husband, brother, sister, etc.]. In general, most of the teachers in the general studies in the elementary Jewish ultra orthodox and Hasidic schools are women and all the teachers in the Judaic studies are men. This fact makes it very difficult to collaborate on any issue, let alone the special needs of students.

**Awareness and knowledge of evidence-based special education.**

The second research question inquired about the levels of both awareness and knowledge of evidence-based special education among Jewish educators in the Jewish Ultra Orthodox and Hassidic Community in Toronto. The initial hypothesis was that since most educators in the Jewish Ultra Orthodox and Hassidic communities have no secular education, and more specifically no formal teacher
training, it would be expected that the levels of knowledge and awareness are low to non-existent. However, being an ordained rabbi trained in the art of ‘text analysis and extrapolation’ I expected to observe some self-discovery and knowledge parallel to the one found in special education theories and practice. The results of the study were mixed, again dependent on the stream of Judaism the Melamdim came from and levels of exposure to secular life, especially academia. It could be generally stated that Melamdim from the Agudath Israel Ultra Orthodox stream of Judaism had relatively higher levels of both awareness and knowledge of evidence-based special education theories. However, it is vital to note that the vast majority of Melamdim acquired both their knowledge and awareness via independent inquiry, meaning that the Melamdim are self-educated through independent learning, mainly through online resources and written materials they gathered themselves; “I started using the internet at work to look for any resources that could make my teaching better...it’s hard to find anything that could be applicable to our community’s needs...I get some general ideas but mostly it’s not usable information...usable in terms of compatible with our traditions.” The issue of cultural sensitivity was a major one during the instruction of the course. Although my personal knowledge of the customs and traditions of the Ultra Orthodox and Hasidic Jewish communities was fairly good, I found myself saying the ‘wrong things’ at the ‘wrong times’, or what the Melamdim will call Muktze, which literally means ‘allocated’ but refers to the notion of ‘prohibited by Jewish law’. For example, discussing models of child development as proposed by Charles Darwin, James Baldwin and John Dewey was Muktze; Sigmund Freud’s psychosexual theory of human development was Muktze;
therefore, a large body of knowledge, which could be considered the basis of many contemporary educational theories, had to be modified by removing references to evolution theory and in the case of Freud, totally eliminated. The issue of censorship vs. sensitivity was a delicate one and a middle ground needed to be found to be able to adequately and professionally teach the special education course. Eventually the theories were explored with the stipulation that we agreed to disagree about their validity and use in the classroom. Following the above disclaimer I proceeded to ‘cover’ the controversial topics by a power point presentation/lecture, a method I tried to stay away from, however, to advance the lesson it was important not to let the class ‘spill’ into chaos by endless arguments – which were welcomed in other times when the topic wasn’t as controversial. The Melamdim found it very difficult not to react to some of the ideas presented, especially the notion of evolution, however, as was agreed in advance, the topics will be treated as ‘not agreeable’ in the eyes of the community but necessary in the overall understanding of how those theories effected educational psychology.

As was mentioned before, the Bobov group of Melamdim, who hold very conservative views on the use and access of both technology and secular ideas, showed less awareness of Inclusion models and practices in pre-course assessment (see Table 6). In post-course assessment, the levels of both awareness and knowledge of evidence-based special education among Jewish educators in the Jewish Ultra Orthodox and Hassidic Community increased significantly, as evidenced by their responses to the questionnaire ‘Teachers’ Perception Towards
Inclusive Education’ (see Appendix 6), and overall feedback during and after the completion of the course by the Melamdim themselves.

Before taking this course I had no knowledge of any of the theories we learned about...most of them [theories] are intuitive and I could really see it in our own teachings by Hazal (the sages) maybe written in different words but similar in the general ideas...one that really jumped off the page was Piaget’s stages of development...the sages talk about those same stages...once again in different ways but very similar...it made it easy for me to relate to it [Piaget theory] when you made those connections for us! (Rabbi Abraham)

The ‘Teachers’ Perception Towards Inclusive Education’ questionnaire The ‘Teachers’ Perception Towards Inclusive Education’ questionnaire (see Appendix 6) was administered twice, once before the course began and a second time a month after the course ended, attempting to find out whether Jewish Ultra Orthodox and Hassidic educators’ attitude towards the practice of inclusive education were positive, negative or absent, in particular the inclusive classroom and exceptionalities, both disability and giftedness. Hence, the third research question, with the exception of the Melamdim’s own perception of self, as Jewish educators will be addressed later on.

A study by Coates (1989) reported that general education teachers in Iowa did not have a negative view of pullout programs, nor were they supportive of full inclusion. Similar findings were reported by Semmel et al. (1991), who surveyed 381 elementary educators (both general and special), and concluded that those educators were not dissatisfied with a special education system that operated pullout special educational programs. Another study by Vaughn et al. (1996) examined mainstream and special teachers’ perceptions of inclusion through the use of focus group interviews. The majority of these teachers who were not
currently participating in inclusive programs had strong negative feelings about inclusion and felt that decision-makers were out of touch with classroom realities.

The teachers identified several factors that would affect the success of inclusion, including class size, inadequate resources, the extent to which all students would benefit from inclusion and lack of adequate teacher preparation. However, in studies where teachers had active experience of inclusion, contradictory findings were reported. A study by Villa et al. (1996) yielded results which favored the inclusion of children with special education needs (SEN) in the ordinary school. The researchers noted that teacher commitment often emerges at the end of the implementation cycle, after the teachers have gained mastery of the professional expertise needed to implement inclusive programs. Similar findings were reported by LeRoy and Simpson (1996), who studied the impact of inclusion over a three year period in the state of Michigan. Their study showed that as teachers’ experience with children with SEN increased, their confidence to teach these children also increased. The evidence seems to indicate that teachers’ negative or neutral attitudes at the beginning of an innovation such as inclusive education may change over time as a function of experience and the expertise that develops through the process of implementation.

Attitudes of teachers from Jewish Ultra Orthodox in North America towards inclusion of students with LD from Jewish Ultra Orthodox was never conducted; however, Glaubman R., & Lifshitz, H. (2001) conducted a study investigating the attitudes of boys’ teachers (N = 68), and girls’ teachers (N = 68), in the Israeli independent educational system of the Jewish ultra-orthodox community, which is
fully funded by the ministry of education, towards inclusion of students with special needs in regular classrooms. Results show that willingness to include students with special needs in their class of teachers in the cities is significantly more positive than their counterparts in the small town. In addition, within those cities the willingness to include, the boys’ teachers are more positive towards inclusion of mildly disabled children, while the willingness to include of girls’ teachers is more positive towards inclusion of severely disabled students. Findings indicate also that the Jewish Ultra Orthodox teachers, males and females alike, have a different perception of disability as compared to the common spread of the professional perception of this term; however, no explanation was given for the difference in perception, although it might be easily explained by the fact that most of the male teachers had no or minimal pre-service pedagogical education that would expose them to modern models of inclusion and special education. In our study our sample didn’t include any female teachers nor did we have any variety in geographical locations from which our teachers came from. In addition, perception of inclusion wasn’t categorized in terms of the willingness to include students with mild LD and/or psychical disabilities over those with severe disabilities. Our study was concerned with the level of practical awareness/knowledge of special education and modern inclusion models, which in turn informs teachers’ levels of efficacy. It is the assumption that lack of knowledge of ‘how to include students with disabilities in regular classrooms’ leads to poor attitudes towards inclusion, above and beyond some of the inherit prejudice that exists in Talmudic sources. In the Glaubman R., & Lifshitz, H. (2001) study the highest score in the self-efficacy scale was in ‘sense of
responsibility’, which was part of the General Efficacy as Educators. Their self-efficacy in regards to being able to teach students with special needs and their educational background to be able to do so wasn’t discussed. Having sense of responsibility towards children with disability is crucial for fostering a positive attitude toward those individuals (Coates, 1989); however, it doesn’t attest for the actual ability of the above educators to successfully integrate students with mild to severe disabilities into regular classrooms. In the present study we started with an assessment of attitudes toward the practice of special education and inclusion of students with LD (Table 6) before the course was administrated to assess general attitudes but also the general familiarity with the topic of inclusion. During the progression of the course it became clear that the vast majority of the participants (24 out of 28 participants) had no previous pedagogic training in special education nor were they exposed to working alongside special education teachers. The lack of experience is due to two main factors: the schools that employ them can’t afford hiring a specialist in LD; and/or those with those specialties in the school they work are female, and due to traditional restrictions on engagement between men and women they are not able to interact with those specialists.

**Change in attitude from pre- to post-test survey**

Results for the change in attitude from pre- to post-test survey are presented in Table 3. There were a total of 18 statements on the survey, which participants responded to prior and following participation in a special education course. Three categories of statements were presented on the survey, statements related to: inclusive education (IE), collaboration (C), and strategies (S). Participants had a
choice of five responses to each statement: (a) 1 = strongly agree, (b) 2 = agree, (c) 3 = neither agree nor disagree, (d) 4 = disagree, and (e) 5 = strongly disagree.

There were several noteworthy results regarding the change in attitude by participants from pre- to post-test survey. Significant change was observed in all statements but four. Statements where change was not observed were: IE5, IE8, C1, S2. Participants did not respond significantly differently when presented with these statements from pre- to post-test. In sum, both prior to and following participation in the course, participants disagreed that the academically talented students would be isolated in the inclusive classrooms (IE5). Participants neither agreed nor disagreed that students with special needs would not be labeled as ‘stupid’, ‘weird’, or ‘hopeless’ when placed in regular classrooms (IE8). They agreed/strongly agreed that special needs teachers and regular teachers needed to work together in order to teach students with special needs in inclusive classrooms (C1). Finally, they also agreed/strongly agreed that special needs students needed extra help and attention (S2).

For the remaining fourteen statements, significant change in attitude was observed. In all cases, change represented a positive change in attitude; that is, participants became more sensitive or informed about the needs of special needs students and teachers with regard to inclusive education, collaboration, and strategies, following the special education course. In six of these statements, the most radical changes in attitude were observed (i.e., a change of 1 or more points): IE1, IE7, C2, C4, C5, and S5. To recapitulate, following completion of the special education course, participants strongly agreed that students with special needs
were academically better in inclusive classrooms (IE1), and that students with special needs had the right to receive an education in mainstream classrooms (IE7). With regard to statements related to collaboration, participants disagreed/strongly disagreed that the implementation of special education was ineffective due to objections from the mainstream classrooms (C2), that the presence of a special education teacher in regular classrooms could raise difficulties in determining who really is responsible for the special needs (C4), and that special education teachers only helped the students with special needs (C5). Finally, while agreeing with this statement prior to participation in the course, following participation in the course participants neither agreed nor disagreed that the resources for the students with special needs in a mainstream classroom were limited (S5). Multiple attempts were made to cluster items involving attitudes towards Inclusive education as a general concept, collaboration between special education teachers and regular teachers, and the various strategies used to facilitate inclusion. First step we looked at the internal consistency of all 8 questions pre-post to examine if creating a total score could be feasible. However, due to the small group sample (<25), statistical reliability was too low when the above items were clustered together to produce total scores; While the Cronbach Alpha for pre was sufficiently high (.78) at post it was only .44. Examination of individual responses showed that at posttest there was too little variability: almost every participant strongly agreed with every statement. This property of data prevented us from running inferential analysis to compare pre-post because nonparametric paired test (Wilcoxon) wouldn’t even run and for parametric paired t-test the assumption of normality was not statistically normal, which is
crucial given the small sample size. Therefore, only item-by-item descriptive statistical analysis was performed.

In one of the interviews with a Bobov Melamed, the turnaround was evident:

Before the course I answered the questionnaires mostly guessing...I had no idea what you meant by ‘inclusive education’ or any of those terms you used...now I was able to answer it [the questionnaire] actually considering my opinion about those things using what we learned...it’s night and day for me.

Beyond the variety of knowledge the Melamdim were exposed to every week (see course outline, Appendix 1), for the first time for almost all of them, they had the chance to participate in secular education within a secular university. This fact alone, engaging with a secular university on a secular topic, is a testimony to the change those Melamdim accepted and were willing to accept.

**Self as a Jewish Educator.**

The issue of ‘Self as a Jewish Educator’ was a major and at times a very emotionally charged topic throughout the course. In our second meeting we discussed the various educational behavioral theories that could inform our practice and help us, educators, to understand our students’ behavior better, allowing us to better deal with behavioral issues in the classroom. During the discussion many of the Melamdim noted that most of the issues of behavior amongst their students is exclusive to their lessons, and not to the general studies classes taught earlier on the day by mostly female teachers. In general, many voiced the concern that too few parents have respect for Melamdim, rooted in the view that ‘if one can't make it at Kollel one usually ends up teaching at Cheder’, similar to ‘those who can't do, teach’
found in secular cultures. According to the *Melamdim*, this negative attitude toward their occupation held by parents permeates down to the children they teach. One example of many similar complaints I heard during the course was voiced by a rabbi at Eitz Chaim School, “The levels of disrespect I sometimes experience from my own students...Grade 3 only...could only come from the home...it is my belief that eight year old boys are generally respectful of adults...unless another adult tells them, directly or indirectly, that it’s OK to be disrespectful”.

In the fourth class, during our discussion about understanding different kinds of learning disabilities (LD), the issue of disrespect came up again. “How do we know if a student is just being disrespectful or legitimately has LDs?” one rabbi from Toronto Cheder asked me. The answer is not simple and obviously will depend on each specific case; however, it seems that many of the *Melamdim* felt that regardless of any legitimate LDs, students should give them the utmost respect. The genesis of the above attitude became very clear when in one of the group work assignments, they were asked to place each of the stake-holders in the classroom: teachers, principals, students and parents, on a scale, 1 being not important for the proper functioning of the classroom and 10 being very important for the proper functioning of the classroom. Almost all put themselves and the principals towards the top of the scale (about 8), while placing students at the middle (about 5) and parents at the lowest number (0-1). After the above activity, we didn’t discuss their input on purpose and I proceeded to give an hour lecture on various LDs and the effect on all stakeholders in the classroom. The discussion that followed the lecture marked the first ‘slight turn around’. I asked the *Melamdim* to go back to the scale
they filled in before and see if they would like to amend any of the placements; unanimously all the Melamdim amended their scales bringing all stakeholders to the top of the scale, meaning all were equal in importance for the proper functioning of the classroom and also integral for the success of any program implemented, such as the inclusive classroom. The Melamdim understood that educators who successfully collaborate with all stakeholders in their classroom usually reported having better rapport with students, parents and even with their own principals, which resulted in a more cohesive and constructive classroom (Broad, 2011; LePage et al., 2010). In the same discussion the Melamdim were able to make the connection between their own poor perception of self and their practice:

Many of us got into teaching because we felt we can make a difference in the life of children...teaching the Torah to children is one of the Mitzvahs HaShem [G-d] blessed us with...we take part of Hagshamat Ha’Mitzvah [fulfillment of G-dly commandments]...this alone should make us feel important...well you know...significant...now with the education we received from OISE we can stand taller and say ‘we’re professional’...well becoming ones. (rabbi from the Bobov School).

You could still hear the self-doubt, however, in many of the interviews I conducted with the Melamdim. After the completion of the course the resounding sense of pride could be heard: “since the course was over I find myself reading more about education methods and actually understanding what I’m reading”, said one rabbi from the Toronto Cheder school; “I’m very excited to try what we learned in class...I find myself referring to the binder [course binder] almost on a daily basis...it’s my professional guide”, said a rabbi from the Bobov school; “after the graduation when we received the certificate from the university I finally felt ‘professional’...I’m still looking forward to course 2 and 3...I got other ‘certificates’
from courses I did in some rabbinical institutes...this one is different...not to say the others are not good but just different”, said another rabbi from the Bobov school.

*Merging ‘traditional’ Jewish teachings and texts with contemporary evidence based special education theories.* The fourth research question dealt with the concept of merging ‘traditional’ Jewish teachings and texts with contemporary evidence based special education theories, producing a balanced approach that could be employed at Jewish Ultra Orthodox and Hassidic Community schools. In the section on ‘Merging Traditional Jewish Wisdom with contemporary evidence based special education theories’ I examined the many parallels found between Talmudic teaching and some contemporary educational theories. The Talmudic examples brought into the above section were incorporated into the course curriculum at the creation of the course; however, during the course the rabbis whose knowledge of the Talmud was greater than mine, offered many other examples where both ‘traditions’ (Talmudic and academic) come together. In our discussion on the various developmental stages experienced by children as was proposed by Piaget and Ericson for example, many of the rabbis [Melamdim] were able to point out the similarity in the above theorists’ understanding of development, occurring in stages, to that of the sages.

Before taking this course I had no knowledge of any of the theories we learned about...most of them [theories] are intuitive and I could really see it in our own teachings by Hazal (the sages) maybe written in different words but similar in the general ideas...one that really jumped off the page was Piaget stages of development...the sages talk about those same stages...once again in different ways but very similar...it made it easy for me to relate to it [Piaget theory] when you made those connections for us! (Rabbi Abraham)
The participation and successful completion of the course by rabbis from one of the most reclusive sect of Judaism (Bobov Hasidim), by itself, could testify for the success of merging ‘traditional’ Jewish teachings and texts with contemporary evidence based special education theories. In our initial meeting before the start of the course many of the Melamdim were very concerned the material covered in the course would be Muktza, meaning prohibited by Jewish law. To reassure those Melamdim that participation in the course will not result in ‘breaking the Jewish law’, I meet with key figures in the Ultra Orthodox and Hasidic communities to obtain their support and Hechsher [kosher seal of approval]. During my meeting with Rabbi Yehoshua Fuhrer, the charismatic head of the Bobov Hasidic community in Toronto, he shared with me the remarkable story how Rabbi Shlomo Halberstam Z”Lxxxi, the Third Grand rabbi of Bobov, re-established the Bobov Hasidic dynasty in the United States after World War II:

Out of the ashes of the Holocaust the Rebbexxxiii found the way to rebuild our community...so much was lost...but his face was to the future...Le’Havdil [with great exception] we are also facing the future, and the future is our children...so I gave my blessing for the course so we [can] make sure our Rabbeim [Rabbis] are able to deal with the new challenges.”

Rabbi Fuhrer’s support of the course was crucial and opened the door for the other Rabbis to ‘come on board’.

Implications of Findings

As was mentioned before, this study is first of its kind in North America involving a secular university and the Ultra Orthodox and Hasidic Jewish communities. The implications of the findings point to one direction - formal special
education with emphasis on Jewish values and texts is crucial not only to improve practice among *Melamdim* in Ultra Orthodox and Hasidic day schools but also to contribute to a positive shift in attitudes towards inclusive education as a whole. In addition, combining contemporary evidence based special education theories with traditional methods and texts allows the Jewish Hasidic and Ultra Orthodox *Melamdim* to comfortably engage in so-called ‘secular knowledge’.

**Future Directions**

The need for contemporary solutions to contemporary problems is crucial for the success of any intervention program, such as the course taught in this study; however, one must appreciate the need for ‘cross-pollination’ in the creation of any educational intervention, which addresses diverse ethnic communities, to truly engage in effective and socially just programs that really address the needs of these communities.

The current model of ‘top-down’ teaching – experts’ structured instruction based on ‘universally accepted standards and findings’ supported by evidence-based practice (but rarely generated from within underserved ethnically diverse communities) – has proven to be not only offensive to many isolated communities who see this model as condescending, but extremely ineffective!

The data in this study clearly points to the ‘bi-directional’ teaching model, where both sides are participating in the exchange of ideas and theories informed by local traditions, beliefs, and customs and contemporary evidence based theory.
and practice. Indeed, the data collected, both qualitative and quantitative, could be used in creation of further courses and curriculum ‘custom designed’ for the Ultra Orthodox and Hasidic Jewish communities. The insight into the above communities, which are usually very reluctant to engage with the ‘general society’, could teach us not only how this community functions but also the general sensitivity needed in creating any curricula, intervention or other educational programs to communities at risk with limited to no contact and/or access to resources or to evidence-based practice and research.

Modern special education methods, highly cognizant of the importance of traditional views of education, must be employed to provide the desperately needed holistic solution to the current unaddressed special education needs within the above institutions. The training of all others involved in the students’ academic life – principals, support staff and all other stakeholders, should follow the training of the Melalmdim. So far (as of June 2012) 67 Melamdim from the above Yeshivas and Cheders participated in the course described above and additional two other courses not discussed in this paper. In the summer of 2012, the first group of 12 principals from all the major Yeshivas and Cheders in the GTA will engage in a special education course designed to address similar issues discussed in the course taken by the Melamdim (described in this paper) with special emphasis on the issues unique to them, such as becoming the leading facilitator in the creation, implementation, and the annual maintenance of the IEP.

Parents are important partners in their own children’s education (Epstein, 2011). As was discussed before, many parents in the Ultra Orthodox Jewish fear the
prospect of their child being ‘labeled’ special needs, let alone being fully assessed, diagnosed and treated or receiving accommodations for theirs difficulties, since such event might jeopardize their child’s chances for a ‘good match’. Epstein (2011), argued that without full cooperation between and within the school-student-parent dyad is crucial for the success of any intervention programs; therefore, having the parents on board might be a challenge at this point, however, a series of community education sessions are planned for August 2012 to address special education and the need for parents/community involvement. This attempt to build bridges between schools and parents will hopefully aid in dispelling myths around special education in general and learning disabilities (challenges) specifically.

Poor and ill-informed attitudes towards LD must change community wide for all encompassing impact to take place. The above study attempted to demonstrate that attitudes, once shifted from poor to fair, had a significant impact on the practice of the Melamdim as observed by the author post course. The full impact of this program and subsequent interventions will be evaluated in future studies. From the various testimonies brought in this paper and the subsequent participation in additional two courses offered by the University and administrated by the author, it could be argued that the willingness to change and integrate modern special education theories and practice becomes more acceptable as the positive impact becomes more apparent. Principals and decision makers within the Ultra Orthodox Jewish communities of Toronto have collectively endorsed the course and the need for participation by all Melamdim in the city.
Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The above study did not evaluate the impact of the newly acquired contemporary evidence based special education theories and practice on the students taught by the Melamdim since no permission from parents was obtained to interview the students. In the post course visit to the classroom it was quite evident the Melamdim were using the new educational methods they learned in the course, such as clear implementation of the behavioral management skills taught and the use of various technologies such as laptop computers (borrowed from OISE). Also in use were digital projectors during instruction to which the students responded well, the new practices by the Melamdim peeked the students’ curiosity and attention as the new methods and technologies introduced by their Melamdim were novel. However, aside from observation, it was not possible to measure the ‘real’ impact on the students. A study to evaluate the impact on students as a result of their Melamdim taking special education course would be beneficial in evaluating the ‘trickle down effect’.

Although the above study attempts to evaluate the effects the course might have on the perception of self as Jewish educator on the participants, a longitudinal study evaluating those educators’ perception of self as Jewish educators could over time provide a more in-depth analysis of the long-term effects both on their practice and on the students they teach.

Finally, due to Jewish Orthodox religious restrictions on the interaction of the genders, no women were admitted to the course; therefore, no data were collected on women who teach at those schools. A similar special education course should be
taught in the future for women who teach in the Jewish Ultra Orthodox and Hasidic community schools. It is important to note that women who teach in elementary boys schools (cheder or junior Yeshiva) teach general studies subjects only – no Talmudic or Torah studies - therefore, it might be especially important to introduce these women to contemporary and the so-called evidence based special education instruction since the majority of female teachers in the above Ultra Orthodox Jewish schools also lack the necessary pedagogical teachers’ training to deal with issues of special needs and integration of students with LD into regular classrooms.

**Concluding remarks**

The above study was a unique and rare opportunity to observe the mostly hidden world of Jewish Hasidic and Ultra Orthodoxy. In the year I spent getting to know these communities involved in this study I gained a great insight into the way these communities operate and the many challenges they face dealing with the secular world and modernity in particular. Despite the community's efforts to keep technology such as computers and televisions out of its schools and homes, gadgets like smart phones and other mobile devices such as portable tablets make it almost impossible, especially since many coffee shops and other public spaces offering free access to the Internet. In the Jewish Hasidic and Ultra Orthodox schools the absence of technology in the classrooms is definite. Although a few of the Melamdim use some technology in their classrooms, mainly laptop computers and digital projectors, most of the Melamdim are reluctant to integrate any technology into their lessons. The modification of technological devices and introduction of ‘Haredi [Jewish Ultra Orthodox] Friendly’ computer programs and applications could be
helping in mitigating some of the reluctance on the part of the *Melamdim* to integrate it into school curricula. In addition, it is necessary to proactively create new materials such as instructional videos, which would be culturally sensitive and *Halachically* (according to Jewish Talmudic Law) acceptable, to aid the *Melamdim* in keeping up to date with various pedagogies. Moreover, the Ultra Orthodox Jewish communities have to arrive at the so-called ‘point of engagement’, allowing their members to safely engage with technologies available without the fear of being ostracized (*Niduy*). An open and honest discussion of the risks and benefits of the use of assistive technology, most move from ‘blanketed objection’ to the use of technology to a carefully, case-by-case considerations of the use of each device or program. As one of the Rabbis in the course noted in our first lesson using the Smart board in class (it came late and we used it only from week three on): ‘the world is changing and we’re standing still...before we know it our stillness will turn into stagnation [*Kipaon*, frozenness]...show me one person who doesn’t want to move forward?’ This was in reaction to the technological advancement displayed during class using the smartboard. Rabbi X voiced a somewhat common sentiment among the *Melamdim*; a sentiment of being stuck in one place, almost frozen like, while the world around is moving in incredible speeds forward. Using new technologies has its benefits and drawbacks, however, the issue the *Melamdim* and members of their Ultra Orthodox Jewish communities is not confined to the notion of ‘to use or not to use’ technology, but rather to how could we use technology, move forward, but still maintain our traditional life style – an issue found in many traditional societies, such as the Mennonite community in North America.
As was pointed out throughout the study, the course participants came from two main streams – Bobov Hasidic and Letvish orthodox; each with its unique customs, traditions and above all different attitudes, negative and positive, towards special education and inclusion of children with exceptionalities in regular schools. The Bobov Hasidic Melamdim were significantly less informed about contemporary evidence-based special education methods as compared with the Melamdim from the Letvish Ultra Orthodox community. The main reason for the discrepancy in knowledge between the two groups, as was revealed in this study and others (Shaked, 2005; Shaked & Bilu, 2006), was the Bobov and Letvish relative exposure to the secular societies they lived in and their general attitudes towards special and inclusive education. In general, positive attitudes towards special and inclusive education awareness and knowledge of evidence-based special education methods increased. However, awareness and knowledge of evidence-based special education methods did not always correlate with positive attitudes towards special and inclusive education. The lack of correlation might have had to do with the ‘quality of knowledge’ rather than mere awareness.

As was mentioned before, most of the Letvish Melamdim who reported having more knowledge and awareness of evidence-based special education methods, acquired their knowledge through self-education, especially internet resources and ‘word-of-mouth’ knowledge - none of the Letvish Melamdim, except for one, attended a secular university or teacher’s college program – therefore, if they accessed information that was in favor of inclusive education, their views were in accord with this information, and vice versa.
This study uses the narrative perspective on identity in an attempt to establish how different people construct their personal narrative, which in turn informs their own beliefs, attitudes and overall perception of learning disabilities. As suggested by Hammack (2008), “the stories of a culture – stories of national identity, struggles, suffering, and resilience – become the stories of an individual as he or she contracts his or her personal narrative, fusing elements of daily experience with the experience of a collective to which he or she perceives some affinity” (p. 233). In the case of the Ultra Orthodox, the degree of affinity is very high since members of this community feel that their collective identity is threatened, therefore, the need to affiliate with their group at all costs is needed for the survival of self and the community as a whole. The notion of ‘Kol Israel Harevim Ze la Ze’ – every Jew is entrusted with the security of his/her fellow Jew – is key for community interaction. This notion also contributes to the need to affiliate at all costs, which leaves the individual no choice but conform to a communal conception of personal identity.

Research has shown that teacher’s attitude is central to the successful implementation of inclusion (Brandes and Crowson 2009; Elik, Wiener, and Corkum, 2010; Scruggs and Mastropieri, 1996). Dickson-Smith, (1995), argues that both general and special education teachers must be prepared to meet the challenges and complexities of inclusion. Cook, (2002) demonstrated that the perception of severity of disability influence teachers’ attitudes toward students with disabilities, which influence the frequency, duration, and quality of teacher-student interactions. Brandes and Crowson (2009) found evidence that traditional ideology and personal
discomfort with disability are related to negative attitudes and opposition to inclusion. This finding reverberates in the Jewish Ultra Orthodox and Hassidic communities who participated in this study. As was discussed in the chapter on the Jewish Ultra Orthodox Interpretation of Halacha (Jewish Law) in Regards to Individuals with Severe Learning and Behavioral Disabilities, traditional negative views of disability as perpetuated in the liturgy permeates many of the Melamdim’s own negative attitudes and discomfort with disability, which in turn prevents them from providing students with learning and behavioral disabilities with the needed support.

The Melamdim in our study are Rabbis who took on themselves the important task of becoming a teacher of the Torah. They’re mostly underpaid, if paid at all – 16/28 Rabbis who participated in the course are owed 6-8 months of pay due to severe financial difficulties faced by the Yeshivas and Chedders they teach at. In addition, all except one of the Melamdim experienced pre-service teacher education program; the rest transitioned from being a student in a Kolel (a Yeshiva for married men) to a teacher in Yeshivas and Chedders without any specific teacher-training program.

Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) found it that for successful inclusion, teachers need to believe they have the necessary classroom materials, supports, and resources. They concluded that ultimately, the overall success of any inclusion program might center on the context within which these supports are made available. In our case all the Melamdim who participated in the study, with the exception of 4 who teach at the Eitz Chaim Schools, reported not having any of the
necessary classroom materials, supports, and resources related to special education and/or behavioral management.

Both the literature, interviews with the Melamdim and general comments throughout the course suggest that many general education teachers didn’t become teachers to teach children with LD. Many feel that students with LD might take away valuable teaching time from typically developed students; furthermore, teaching students with LD requires specialized training that the general education teacher simply doesn’t have (Jordan, Schwartz & McGhie-Richmond, 2009). Weiner (2003) states there are a number of items which impact classroom and school culture: (a) Teacher belief about students, (b) classroom practices, and (c) personal feelings about the meaning and rewards of teaching. The Melamdim in this study held various negatives beliefs about students with learning and behavioral disabilities mainly resulting from lack of awareness of the source of the LD or behavioral disorder – attributing it mostly to divine intervention.

Bishay (1996) states that a number of elements have been evaluated in attempt to determine which elements promote teacher motivation, since improvement in teacher motivation has been shown to be beneficial for students as well as teachers. Bishay found that elements such as increased length of service, greater satisfaction with salary, higher levels of self-esteem, higher levels of respect for the teaching profession, and lower levels of stress lead to greater teacher morale. As was mentioned before, the Melamdim continuously reported not feeling both students and parents are respecting them. In addition, the vast majority of Melamdim in the study reported not being satisfied with the salary, when they
actually get it, which in turn causes increased levels of stress and overall low morale.

Beyond the challenges presented by modernity, the Jewish Hasidic and Ultra Orthodox communities are dealing with the emblematic learning disabilities experienced by many others in Canada; however, the Jewish Hasidic and Ultra Orthodox communities lack the tools and access needed to deal with those issues. The Special Education course these Melamdim participated in was, for many of them, the first time learning about the topic of learning disabilities. The lack of basic knowledge about learning disabilities and human development theories pre-course, especially among the Hasidic members, made it very difficult for many Melamdim not only to understand their students’ behavior but also to be effective educators. Post course, many of the Melamdim gained some of the necessary knowledge many secular university trained educators possess and, most importantly, many had changed their somewhat negative attitude towards inclusive education; however, the gap in knowledge cannot be bridged by taking only one course. Additional courses and on the job training is necessary to bring the Melamdim's knowledge base up to date. Future offerings are currently under development by Dr. Esther Geva and myself at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.
Table 1: *Qualitative Frequency Statistics for Participants*

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Table 2: Quantitative Descriptive Statistics for Participants

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<tr>
<td>Years of schooling (including university)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16.15 (6.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.65 (3.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree to which participant is religious (0 = not at all, 10 = very)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.73 (.55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (in years)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>36.32 (7.75)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: Questionnaire: Attitudes and Behaviors (Part I)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. In this complicated world of ours the only way we can know what's going on is to rely on leaders or experts who can be trusted.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3.05 (1.43)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I am annoyed by unhappy people who just feel sorry for themselves.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2.95 (.99 )</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Life is basically the same most of the time.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.91 (1.13)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. People make too much of the feelings and sensitivity of animals.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.30 (.93 )</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. You can classify almost all people as either honest or crooked.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.57 (.84 )</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I would feel much better if my present circumstances changed.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.09 (.97 )</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. There is only one right way to do anything.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.13 (1.06)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. There are some people I know I would never like.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.48 (.99 )</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. It is better not to know too much about things that cannot be changed.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.57 (.90 )</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Things often go wrong for me by no fault of my own.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3.41 (.96 )</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Ignorance is bliss.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.52 (.81 )</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I can be comfortable with all kinds of people</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.17 (1.27)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. A person either knows the answer to a question or he/she doesn't.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.26 (1.10)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. It's not really my problem if others are in trouble and need help.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.65 (.57 )</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. People are either good or bad.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.14 (.85 )</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I have little control over the things that happen to me.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.48 (1.31)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. There is really no way I can solve some of the problems I have.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.35 (1.30)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. There is little I can do to change many of the important things in my life.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.13 (1.06)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I often feel helpless in dealing with the problems of life.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.91 (1.08)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Sometimes I feel that I'm being pushed around in life.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.74 (1.14)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. What happens to me in the future mostly depends on me.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2.45 (1.30)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I can do just about anything I really set my mind to do.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2.09 (.61 )</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Participants had a choice of one of five responses for each statement: 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neutral, 4 = disagree, or 5 = strongly disagree.
Table 4: Questionnaire: Attitudes and Behaviors (Part II)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I try to look at everybody’s side of a disagreement before I make a decision.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.04 (.98)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. If I see people in need, I try to help them one way or another.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1.78 (.74)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. When I’m upset at someone, I usually try to “put myself in his or her shoes” for a while.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.57 (.90)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. There are certain people whom I dislike so much that I am inwardly pleased when they are caught and punished for something they have done.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.17 (.65)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I always try to look at all sides of a problem.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.17 (1.07)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sometimes I feel a real compassion for everyone.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.86 (.94)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I try to anticipate and avoid situations where there is a likely chance I will have to think in depth about something.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.00 (1.20)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. When I look back on what has happened to me, I can’t help feeling resentful.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.30 (.93)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I often have not comforted another when he or she needed it.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.13 (.63)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. A problem has little attraction for me if I don’t think it has a solution.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.75 (.79)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I either get very angry or depressed if things go wrong.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.26 (.75)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Sometimes I don’t feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.22 (.67)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I often do not understand people’s behavior.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.59 (.80)</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Sometimes I get so charged up emotionally that I am unable to consider many ways of dealing with my problems.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.83 (1.03)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Sometimes when people are talking to me, I find myself wishing that they would leave.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.39 (.78)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I prefer just to let things happen rather than try to understand why they turned out that way.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.61 (1.03)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. When I am confused by a problem, one of the first things I do is survey the situation and considers all the relevant pieces of information.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.22 (.95)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I don’t like to get involved in listening to another person’s troubles.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.17 (.65)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I am hesitant about making important decisions after thinking about them.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.52 (1.16)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2.41 (.85)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I’m easily irritated by people who argue with me.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.70 (.77)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. When I look back on what’s happened to me, I feel cheated.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.14 (1.13)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Simply knowing the answer rather than understanding the reasons for the answer to a problem is fine with me.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.78 (.90)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from another person’s point of view.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.57 (.95)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. My personal existence often seems meaningless and without purpose.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.74 (.54)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. I have discovered satisfying goals and a clear purpose in life.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.55 (.67)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. If I should die today, I would feel that my life has been worthwhile.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1.74 (1.20)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Participants had a choice of one of five responses for each statement: 1 = definitely true of myself, 2 = mostly true of myself, 3 = about halfway true, 4 = rarely true of myself, or 5 = not true of myself.
### Table 5: Questionnaire: General Well-Being

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How have you been feeling in general? (During the past month)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In excellent spirits.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In very good spirits.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In good spirits mostly.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My spirits have been up and down a lot.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In low spirits mostly.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In very low spirits.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Have you been bothered by nervousness or your “nerves”? (During the past month)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely so -- to the point where I could not work or take care of things.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very much so.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite a bit.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some -- enough to bother me.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Have you been in firm control of your behavior, thoughts, emotions OR feelings? (During the past month)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, definitely so.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, for the most part.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally so.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not too well.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, and I am somewhat disturbed.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, and I am very disturbed.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Have you felt so sad, discouraged, hopeless, or had so many problems that you wondered if anything was worthwhile? (During the past month)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely so -- to the point that I have just about given up.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very much so.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite a bit.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some -- enough to bother me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little bit.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Have you been under or felt you were under any strain, stress, or pressure? (During the past month)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes -- almost more than I could bear or stand.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes -- quite a bit of pressure.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes -- some - more than usual.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes -- some - but about usual.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes -- a little.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How happy, satisfied, or pleased have you been with your personal life? (During the past month)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely happy - could not have been more satisfied or pleased.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very happy.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly happy.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat dissatisfied.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very dissatisfied.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Have you had any reason to wonder if you were losing your mind, or losing control over the way you act, talk, think, or feel? (During the past month)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Have you been anxious, worried or upset? (During the past month)
   - Extremely so -- to the point of being sick or almost sick. 0
   - Very much so. 0
   - Quite a bit. 0
   - Some -- enough to bother me. 3
   - A little bit. 10
   - Not at all. 8

9. Have you been waking up fresh and rested?
   - Every day. 1
   - Most every day. 8
   - Fairly often. 3
   - Less than half the time. 7
   - Rarely. 3
   - None of the time. 0

10. Have you been bothered by any illness, bodily disorder, pains, or fears about
    your health? (During the past month)
    - All the time. 0
    - Most of the time. 0
    - A good bit of the time. 0
    - Some of the time. 1
    - A little of the time. 4
    - None of the time. 17

11. Has your daily life been full of things that were interesting to you? (During the past month)
    - All the time. 8
    - Most of the time. 8
    - A good bit of the time. 5
    - Some of the time. 1
    - A little of the time. 0
    - None of the time. 0

12. Have you felt downhearted and blue? (During the past month)
    - All the time. 0
    - Most of the time. 0
    - A good bit of the time. 0
    - Some of the time. 1
    - A little of the time. 7
    - None of the time. 14

13. Have you been feeling emotionally stable and sure of yourself? (During the past month)
    - All the time. 15
    - Most of the time. 5
    - A good bit of the time. 0
    - Some of the time. 1
    - A little of the time. 0
    - None of the time. 1

14. Have you felt tired, worn out, used-up, or exhausted? (During the past month)
    - All the time. 2
Most of the time.  2
A good bit of the time.  5
Some of the time.  9
A little of the time.  3
None of the time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. On a scale from 0 to 10, how concerned or worried about your HEALTH have you been? (During the past month)</td>
<td>1.81 (2.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. On a scale from 0 to 10, how RELAXED (= 0) or TENSE (= 10) have you been? (During the past month)</td>
<td>2.95 (1.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. On a scale from 0 to 10, how much ENERGY, PEP, VITALITY have you felt? (During the past month)</td>
<td>7.39 (1.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. On a scale from 0 to 10, how DEPRESSED (= 0) or CHEERFUL (= 10) have you been? (During the past month)</td>
<td>8.85 (2.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. How would you rate your overall health at the present time?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very bad</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. How would you rate your overall health as compared to other people your age – better, about the same, or worse?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About the same</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Is your health now better, about the same, or worse than it was one year ago?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About the same</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6: Results for the Change in Attitude from Pre- to Post- Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>Difference in Means</th>
<th>t Statistic</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
<th>Summary of Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IE1. Students with special needs are academically better in inclusive classrooms.</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.95 (1.02)</td>
<td>1.19 (.40)</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>9.08* **</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>pre&gt;post :. more agreeable with statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IE2. Students with special needs must be integrated into the regular community.</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.90 (.63)</td>
<td>1.14 (.36)</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>5.59* **</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>pre&gt;post :. more agreeable with statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IE3. In order to achieve the highest level of inclusion, it is necessary for students with special needs to be placed in regular classes with back-up support.</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.14 (1.01)</td>
<td>1.38 (.50)</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>3.20*</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>pre&gt;post :. more agreeable with statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IE4. The placement of students with special needs in regular classes negatively affects the academic performance of mainstream students.</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.55 (1.10)</td>
<td>4.40 (.68)</td>
<td>-.85</td>
<td>-2.67*</td>
<td>-0.93</td>
<td>pre&lt;post :. less agreeable with statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IE5. The academically talented students will be isolated in the inclusive classrooms.</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.80 (.77)</td>
<td>4.20 (.70)</td>
<td>-.40</td>
<td>-2.03</td>
<td>-0.54</td>
<td>change not significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IE6. Students with special needs will benefit from the inclusive program in regular classrooms.</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.14 (1.91)</td>
<td>1.19 (.40)</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>4.48* **</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>pre&gt;post :. more agreeable with statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IE7. Students with special needs have the right to receive an education in mainstream classes.</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.33 (.86)</td>
<td>1.05 (.22)</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>6.97* **</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>pre&gt;post :. more agreeable with statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IE8. Students with special needs will not be labeled as ‘stupid’, ‘weird’, or ‘hopeless’ when placed in regular classrooms.</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.71 (1.15)</td>
<td>3.14 (.85)</td>
<td>-.43</td>
<td>-1.44</td>
<td>-0.43</td>
<td>change not significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C1. Special needs teachers and regular teachers need to work together in order to teach students with special needs in inclusive classrooms.</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.62 (.59)</td>
<td>1.24 (.70)</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>change not significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C2. Although inclusive education is a good concept, its implementation is ineffective due to objections from the mainstream classroom teachers.</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.95 (.87)</td>
<td>4.00 (.78)</td>
<td>-1.05</td>
<td>3.99* **</td>
<td>-1.27</td>
<td>pre&lt;post :. less agreeable with statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Statement</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Pre-Test Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Post-Test Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Diff. in Means</td>
<td>t Statistic</td>
<td>Cohe n's d</td>
<td>Summary of Result</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3. Mainstream classroom teachers have a main responsibility towards the students with special needs placed in their classrooms.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.24 (1.22)</td>
<td>4.00 (0.84)</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>-2.26*</td>
<td>-0.73</td>
<td>pre&lt;post ∴ less agreeable with statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4. The presence of a special education teacher in regular classrooms could raise difficulties in determining who really is responsible for the special needs.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.29 (0.96)</td>
<td>4.33 (0.66)</td>
<td>-1.05</td>
<td>-4.48* **</td>
<td>-1.26</td>
<td>pre&lt;post ∴ less agreeable with statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5. The special education teacher only helps the students with special needs.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.76 (1.04)</td>
<td>4.62 (1.59)</td>
<td>-1.86</td>
<td>-7.38* **</td>
<td>-2.20</td>
<td>pre&lt;post ∴ less agreeable with statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1. Mainstream classroom teachers have the training and skills to teach special needs students.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.81 (0.98)</td>
<td>4.33 (0.58)</td>
<td>-0.52</td>
<td>-2.23* **</td>
<td>-0.65</td>
<td>pre&lt;post ∴ less agreeable with statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2. Special needs students need extra help and attention.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.48 (.51)</td>
<td>1.71 (.78)</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>-1.31</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
<td>change not significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3. Students with special needs commit more disciplinary problems when compared to the regular students.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.43 (1.03)</td>
<td>3.29 (0.96)</td>
<td>-0.86</td>
<td>-2.57* **</td>
<td>-0.86</td>
<td>pre&lt;post ∴ less agreeable with statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4. Mainstream classroom teachers received little help from the special needs teachers.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.35 (.67)</td>
<td>3.80 (.52)</td>
<td>-0.45</td>
<td>-2.44*</td>
<td>-0.75</td>
<td>pre&lt;post ∴ less agreeable with statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5. Although inclusive education is important, the resources for the students with special needs in a mainstream classroom are limited.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.05 (.83)</td>
<td>3.05 (1.15)</td>
<td>-1.00</td>
<td>-2.94* *</td>
<td>-1.90</td>
<td>pre&lt;post ∴ less agreeable with statement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Babylonian Talmud, Rav Cook Version, 1980, Israel (Hebrew).


Gardner, Howard (2011). *Truth, beauty, and goodness reframed: Educating for the*


Semmel et al., 1991 – missing reference – need all authors in first citation, around old p. 123.


Appendix 1: Demographic Characteristics

This is the second part of our study. I am going to read a number of statements to you together with the potential answers. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Simply indicate the answer that describes YOU best. Although some of the statements and questions will appear similar, we would like to ask you to answer all of the questions. Again, remember that all your answers will remain confidential.

Demographic Characteristics

First, we would like to ask some questions about you as a person.

1. Gender:
   [Interviewer, please mark the right box.]
   GENDER
   1 [ ] Female
   2 [ ] Male

2. Are you a member of any ethnic group or people that you identify with?
   [Interviewer, if the answer is “no,” ask:]
   Would you consider yourself [name of majority group that is coded as “1”]
   [Interviewer, please mark the right box.]
   ETHNIC
   1 [ ] White/European
   2 [ ] Black/African-American
   3 [ ] Hispanic/Latino
   4 [ ] Asian or Pacific Islander
   5 [ ] American Indian or Alaskan Native
   6 [ ] Other: __________________________

3. What is your highest level of education?
   EDUCDEG
   0 [ ] No high school
   2 [ ] High school degree or equivalent
   3 [ ] Some college
   4 [ ] Bachelor’s Degree or equivalent
   5 [ ] Masters Degree or equivalent
   6 [ ] Doctoral Degree or equivalent

4. How many years of schooling (including university education) do you have? ________ years of schooling
   EDUCYEAR

5. What kind of work have you done most of your life? Please be specific: OCCUP

_________________________________________________________________________
6. What kind of hobbies or skills (such as cooking, writing, sports) do you have that you are proud of? ________________

7. What is your current marital status? 

   1 [ ] Never married
   2 [ ] Married
   3 [ ] Widowed
   4 [ ] Divorced
   5 [ ] Separated

8. Do you have children?:
   yes 1 [ ] How many?: _____
   no 0 [ ]

9. What is your religious affiliation:
_______________

10. On a scale from 0 to 10, how religious would you say you are?

    0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

    Not at all religious. Very religious.

11. Where were you born?
    Country of birth
    _________________
    Place of birth
    _________________

12. Where did you live most of your life?
    _________________

13. May I ask what is your age:
    _________________
Appendix 2: Attitudes and Behavior

This section asks you about your opinions and feelings about a number of things.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Please look at Answer Scale A and tell me the number that best describes you.

[Interviewer, please give respondent Answer Scale A: from “1 = strongly agree” to “5 = strongly disagree”; circle the appropriate number]

*CC= Cross-cultural wisdom study; A=Section A; 01=Question number (Questions 1 through 15 are taken from the 3D-WS (Ardelt, 2003) and questions 16 through 22 come from Pearlin and Schooler’s (1978) Mastery Scale.)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>In this complicated world of ours the only way we can know what’s going on is to rely on leaders or experts who can be trusted.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>CC_A01</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I am annoyed by unhappy people who just feel sorry for themselves.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>CC_A02</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Life is basically the same most of the time.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>CC_A03</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>People make too much of the feelings and sensitivity of animals.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>CC_A04</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>You can classify almost all people as either honest or crooked.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC_A05</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I would feel much better if my present circumstances changed.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC_A06</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>There is only one right way to do anything.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC_A07</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>There are some people I know I would never like.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC_A08</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>It is better not to know too much about things that cannot be changed.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC_A09</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Things often go wrong for me by no fault of my own.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC_A10</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Ignorance is bliss.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC_A11</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I can be comfortable with all kinds of people</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC_A12</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>A person either knows the answer to a question or he/she doesn’t.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC_A13</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>It’s not really my problem if others are in trouble and need</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>----------------</td>
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<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. People are either good or bad.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I have little control over the things that happen to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. There is really no way I can solve some of the problems I have.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. There is little I can do to change many of the important things in my life.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I often feel helpless in dealing with the problems of life.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Sometimes I feel that I’m being pushed around in life.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. What happens to me in the future mostly depends on me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I can do just about anything I really set my mind to do.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: Attitudes and Behaviors (part II)
How much are the following statements true of yourself?
Please look at Answer Scale B and tell me the number that best describes you.
[Interviewer, please give respondent Answer Scale B: from “1 = definitely true of myself”
to “5 = not true of myself”; circle the appropriate number]

*(Questions 1 through 24 are taken from the 3D-WS (Ardelt, 2003) and
questions 25 through 27 are three “pure” meaning items from Crumbaugh and
Maholick’s (1964)
Purpose in Life Test).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Definitely true of myself 1</th>
<th>Mostly true of myself 2</th>
<th>About half-way true 3</th>
<th>Rarely true of myself 4</th>
<th>Not true of Myself 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>CC_B01</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. If I see people in need, I try to help them one way or another.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>CC_B02</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to “put myself in his or her shoes” for a while.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>CC_B03</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. There are certain people whom I dislike so much that I am inwardly pleased when they are</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Definitely true of myself 1</td>
<td>Mostly true of myself 2</td>
<td>About halfway true 3</td>
<td>Rarely true of myself 4</td>
<td>Not true of Myself 5</td>
</tr>
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<td>---</td>
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<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I always try to look at all sides of a problem.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Sometimes I feel a real compassion for everyone.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I try to anticipate and avoid situations where there is a likely chance I will have to think in depth about something.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>When I look back on what has happened to me, I can’t help feeling resentful.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I often have not comforted another when he or she needed it.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>A problem has</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*CC_B04*

caught and punished for something they have done.

*CC_B05*

*CC_B06*

*CC_B07*

*CC_B08*

*CC_B09*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Definitely true of myself 1</th>
<th>Mostly true of myself 2</th>
<th>About halfway true 3</th>
<th>Rarely true of myself 4</th>
<th>Not true of Myself 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Little attraction for me if I don’t think it has a solution. <em>CC_B10</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I either get very angry or depressed if things go wrong. <em>CC_B11</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Sometimes I don’t feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems. <em>CC_B12</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>I often do not understand people’s behavior. <em>CC_B13</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes I get so charged up emotionally that I am unable to consider many ways of dealing with my problems. <em>CC_B14</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Definitely true of myself</td>
<td>Mostly true of myself</td>
<td>About halfway true</td>
<td>Rarely true of myself</td>
<td>Not true of myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Sometimes when people are talking to me, I find myself wishing that they would leave. <em>CC_B15</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I prefer just to let things happen rather than try to understand why they turned out that way. <em>CC_B16</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. When I am confused by a problem, one of the first things I do is survey the situation and consider all the relevant pieces of information. <em>CC_B17</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I don’t like to get involved in listening to another person’s troubles. <em>CC_B18</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I am hesitant about making important decisions after</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Definitely true of myself 1</td>
<td>Mostly true of myself 2</td>
<td>About halfway true 3</td>
<td>Rarely true of myself 4</td>
<td>Not true of Myself 5</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>thinking about them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC_B19</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC_B20</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I’m easily irritated by people who argue with me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC_B21</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. When I look back on what’s happened to me, I feel cheated.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC_B22</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Simply knowing the answer rather than understanding the reasons for the answer to a problem is fine with me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC_B23</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Definitely true of myself 1</td>
<td>Mostly true of myself 2</td>
<td>About halfway true 3</td>
<td>Rarely true of myself 4</td>
<td>Not true of Myself 5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from another person's point of view. <em>CC_B24</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. My personal existence often seems meaningless and without purpose. <em>CC_B25</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. I have discovered satisfying goals and a clear purpose in life. <em>CC_B26</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. If I should die today, I would feel that my life has been worthwhile. <em>CC_B27</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4: General Well-Being

This section contains mostly questions about how you feel and how things have been going with you DURING THE PAST MONTH. For each question, please indicate the one answer which best applies to you. *(Questions 1 through 18 are taken from the General Well-Being Schedule (Fazio, 1977). Questions 19 and 21 are adapted from the OARS Multidimensional Functional Assessment Questionnaire (Center for the Study of Aging and Human Development, 1975), question 20 is adapted from the National Survey of the Aged (Shanas, 1962, 1982).*

| 1. How have you been feeling in general? (DURING THE PAST MONTH) | 1 [] In excellent spirits. |
| - | 2 [] In very good spirits. |
| - | 3 [] In good spirits mostly. |
| - | 4 [] My spirits have been up and down a lot. |
| - | 5 [] In low spirits mostly. |
| - | 6 [] In very low spirits. |

| 2. Have you been bothered by nervousness or your "nerves"? (DURING THE PAST MONTH) | 1 [] Extremely so -- to the point where I could not work or take care of things. |
| - | 2 [] Very much so. |
| - | 3 [] Quite a bit. |
| - | 4 [] Some -- enough to bother me. |
| - | 5 [] A little. |
| - | 6 [] Not at all. |

| 3. Have you been in firm control of your behavior, thoughts, emotions OR feelings? (DURING THE PAST MONTH) | 1 [] Yes, definitely so. |
| - | 2 [] Yes, for the most part. |
| - | 3 [] Generally so. |
| - | 4 [] Not too well. |
| - | 5 [] No, and I am somewhat disturbed. |
| - | 6 [] No, and I am very disturbed. |

| 4. Have you felt so sad, discouraged, hopeless, or had so many problems that you wondered if anything was worthwhile? (DURING THE PAST MONTH) | 1 [] Extremely so -- to the point that I have just about given up. |
| - | 2 [] Very much so. |
| - | 3 [] Quite a bit. |
| - | 4 [] Some -- enough to bother me. |
| - | 5 [] A little bit. |
| - | 6 [] Not at all. |

<p>| 5. Have you been under or felt you were under any strain, stress, or pressure? (DURING THE PAST MONTH) | 1 [] Yes -- almost more than I could bear or stand. |
| - | 2 [] Yes -- quite a bit of pressure. |
| - | 3 [] Yes -- some - more than usual. |
| - | 4 [] Yes -- some - but about usual. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| CC_C05 | 5 [] Yes -- a little.  
6 [] Not at all. |
| 6. How happy, satisfied, or pleased have you been with your personal life? (DURING THE PAST MONTH) | 1 [] Extremely happy - could not have been more satisfied or pleased.  
2 [] Very happy.  
3 [] Fairly happy.  
4 [] Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.  
5 [] Somewhat dissatisfied.  
6 [] Very dissatisfied. |
| CC_C06 | 1 [] Not at all.  
2 [] Only a little.  
3 [] Some -- but not enough to be concerned or worried about.  
4 [] Some and I have been a little concerned.  
5 [] Some and I am quite concerned.  
6 [ ] Yes, very much so and I am very concerned. |
| 7. Have you had any reason to wonder if you were losing your mind, or losing control over the way you act, talk, think, or feel? (DURING THE PAST MONTH) | 1 [] Not at all.  
2 [] Only a little.  
3 [] Some -- but not enough to be concerned or worried about.  
4 [] Some and I have been a little concerned.  
5 [] Some and I am quite concerned.  
6 [ ] Yes, very much so and I am very concerned. |
| CC_C07 | 1 [] Extremely so -- to the point of being sick or almost sick.  
2 [] Very much so.  
3 [] Quite a bit.  
4 [] Some -- enough to bother me.  
5 [] A little bit.  
6 [] Not at all. |
| 8. Have you been anxious, worried or upset? (DURING THE PAST MONTH) | 1 [] Every day.  
2 [] Most every day.  
3 [] Fairly often.  
4 [] Less than half the time.  
5 [] Rarely.  
6 [] None of the time. |
| CC_C08 | 1 [] Every day.  
2 [] Most every day.  
3 [] Fairly often.  
4 [] Less than half the time.  
5 [] Rarely.  
6 [] None of the time. |
| 9. Have you been waking up fresh and rested? (DURING THE PAST MONTH) | 1 [] All the time.  
2 [] Most of the time.  
3 [] A good bit of the time.  
4 [] Some of the time.  
5 [] A little of the time.  
6 [] None of the time. |
| CC_C09 | 1 [] All the time.  
2 [] Most of the time.  
3 [] A good bit of the time.  
4 [] Some of the time.  
5 [] A little of the time.  
6 [] None of the time. |
| 10. Have you been bothered by any illness, bodily disorder, pains, or fears about your health? (DURING THE PAST MONTH) | 1 [] All the time.  
2 [] Most of the time.  
3 [] A good bit of the time.  
4 [] Some of the time.  
5 [] A little of the time.  
6 [] None of the time. |
| CC_C10 | 1 [] All the time.  
2 [] Most of the time.  
3 [] A good bit of the time.  
4 [] Some of the time.  
5 [] A little of the time.  
6 [] None of the time. |
| 11. Has your daily life been full of things that were interesting to you? (DURING THE PAST MONTH) | 1 [] All the time.  
2 [] Most of the time.  
3 [] A good bit of the time.  
4 [] Some of the time.  
5 [] A little of the time.  
6 [] None of the time. |
| CC_C11 | 1 [] All the time.  
2 [] Most of the time.  
3 [] A good bit of the time.  
4 [] Some of the time.  
5 [] A little of the time.  
6 [] None of the time. |

222
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>12. Have you felt downhearted and blue? (DURING THE PAST MONTH)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC_C12</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 [ ] All the time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 [ ] Most of the time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 [ ] A good bit of the time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 [ ] Some of the time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 [ ] A little of the time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 [ ] None of the time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**13. Have you been feeling emotionally stable and sure of yourself?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(DURING THE PAST MONTH)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC_C13</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 [ ] All the time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 [ ] Most of the time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 [ ] A good bit of the time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 [ ] Some of the time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 [ ] A little of the time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 [ ] None of the time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**14. Have you felt tired, worn out, used-up, or exhausted? (DURING</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THE PAST MONTH)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC_C14</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 [ ] All the time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 [ ] Most of the time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 [ ] A good bit of the time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 [ ] Some of the time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 [ ] A little of the time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 [ ] None of the time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**15. On a scale from 0 to 10, how concerned or worried about your</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HEALTH have you been? (DURING THE PAST MONTH)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC_C15</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not concerned at all</td>
<td>concerned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**16. On a scale from 0 to 10, how RELAXED (= 0) or TENSE (= 10) have</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>you been? (DURING THE PAST MONTH)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC_C16</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very relaxed</td>
<td>Very tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**17. On a scale from 0 to 10, how much ENERGY, PEP, and VITALITY have</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>you felt? (DURING THE PAST MONTH)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC_C17</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No energy</td>
<td>Very</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENERGETIC, AT ALL, listless.</td>
<td>dynamic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**18. On a scale from 0 to 10, how DEPRESSED (= 0) or CHERFUL (= 10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>have you been? (DURING THE PAST MONTH)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CC_C18</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very depressed.</td>
<td>Very cheerful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. How would you rate your overall health at the present time?</td>
<td>1 [ ] Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 [ ] Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 [ ] Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 [ ] Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 [ ] Very bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. How would you rate your overall health as compared to other people your age – better, about the same, or worse?</td>
<td>1 [ ] Better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 [ ] About the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 [ ] Worse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Is your health now better, about the same, or worse than it was one year ago?</td>
<td>1 [ ] Better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 [ ] About the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 [ ] Worse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5: Teachers’ Perception Towards Inclusive Education

Adapted from Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden (2000). A Survey into Mainstream Teachers’ Attitudes Towards the Inclusion of Children with Special Educational Needs in the Ordinary School in one Local Education Authority.

This section asks you about your opinions and feelings about a number of things.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Inclusive education

- Students with special needs are academically better in inclusive classrooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- Students with special needs must be integrated into the regular community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- In order to achieve the highest level of inclusion, it is necessary for students with special needs to be placed in regular classes with back up support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- The placement of students with special needs in regular classes negatively affects the academic performance of mainstream students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
• The academically-talented students will be isolated in the inclusive classrooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

• Students with special needs will benefit from the inclusive program in regular classrooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

• Students with special needs have the right to receive an education in mainstream classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

• Students with special needs will not be labeled as ‘stupid’, ‘weird’ or ‘hopeless’ when placed in regular classrooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Collaboration

1. Special needs teachers and regular teachers need to work together in order to teach students with special needs in inclusive classrooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
2. Although the inclusive education in a good concept, its implementation is ineffective due to objections from the mainstream classroom teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3. Mainstream classrooms teachers have a main responsibility towards the students with special needs placed in their classrooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. The presence of a special education teacher in the regular classrooms could raise difficulties in determining who really is responsible for the special students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

5. The special education teacher only helps the students with special needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Strategies**

1. Mainstream classroom teachers have the training and skills to teach special needs students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
2. Special needs students need extra help and attention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3. Students with special needs committed more disciplinary problems compared to the regular students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. Mainstream classroom teachers received little help from the special needs teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

5. Although inclusive education is important, the resources for the students with special needs in a mainstream classroom are limited

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Appendix 6: Interview questions

1. Current Self-Definitions

What can you tell me about the **kind of person** you are? *(Probes: I want to know what you are like, what is most important to say about you.)* *(If more than 3 characteristics)*

Out of all these characteristics, which three do you consider the most important for you? *(Is the order in which you told me your characteristics also the order of their importance for you?)* *(If less than 3 characteristics)*

What else is important about you? *(Can you think of one more way to describe yourself? What else can you say about yourself?)* *(Probes about 3 characteristics)*

What does it mean that you are ___? *(What does it say about you? Why is that important to say about you?)*

How did you come to the conclusion that you are ___ person? Have you always been ___? *(If NOT)* When did you become ___? How did you become ___? *(If not clear)*

What has contributed the most to you becoming ___ person? Did somebody help you become ___? Who?

Now think about yourself one more time and see whether there is **something else** that would be more important to say about yourself than the three things you already told me?

*(Probes as above)*

How do you think a **person who knows you well might describe you?** Who? Do you know of anybody who would describe you differently? Who?

2. Strengths and Weaknesses

What do you consider as your greatest **strength**? *It could be one of the things you already told me about, or it could be something new. Why do you consider ___ your strength?* Can you give me an example of a situation where you exhibited this strength? Can you give me an example of how you have used this strength?

What are some of your other strengths? *(Probes as above)*

What do you consider your **greatest weakness**? *(Probes as above)*

3. Current Self-Evaluation

What do you **like the most** about yourself? Why?

What do you **like least** about yourself? Why?

Would you say that **most of the time** you like or dislike yourself?[Marker]
On the scale of 1 to 5, how much do you like yourself?

What have you considered when you said ___?

(If not 5) What should you be like to deserve the rating of 5?

4. Intentional Personal Change

Have you ever thought of changing something about yourself that you do not like?

(If YES) What? Have you ever tried to change it? (If YES) How? What happened? What was most helpful? Have you tried to change any other things about yourself? (If NOT) Why not? Do you think ___ can be changed? Do you think people can change? Do you think you could change yourself?

5. Being Ultra Orthodox Jewish

When was the first time that you realized you were ‘different’ from others?

How did you come to that realization? How did you feel then? How did you deal with it? What was most useful in dealing with this realization? Is there any particular person that you can remember that helped you deal with it? How do you feel about it now? What do you think about it now?

What is the most difficult aspect of being Ultra Orthodox is hard to deal with? How do/did you deal with that? What was most helpful in dealing with ___? Who, if anybody, was most helpful in dealing with ___?

6. Being Jewish

Which (if any) Jewish denomination did you grew up in? is it the same denomination you associate yourself with today? (If not the same) what changed?( If yes)

What does being Jewish means to you? (if nothing) how would you define your religious identity, if any? From 1-5 (1 being not important at all, and 5 being very important), being Jewish is__?

Do you observe any of the Jewish holidays? (if yes) do you attend synagogue? (If not) what is the reason you don’t observe them?

7. Being a Jewish Educator

How did you become a Jewish Educator? How many years have you been teaching? Are
you a ‘full-time’ teacher? Do you have another work?

Who is your role model for teaching? Do you teach in any way similarly to the way you were taught? (If yes) In what way? (If not) what are the main differences? Do you consciously choose to teach differently?

How would you describe your teaching style? (Probe) would you say you’re ‘hands-on’ kind of a teacher?

What are the main challenges you face on a daily basis in relation to your teaching? How do you cope with those challenges?

If you had a choice, would you change your occupation? (If not) What keeps you in teaching? (If yes) Why _____(occupation)? What are the main rationale for choosing this occupation over teaching?

Past Experiences

8. Past Self-Definitions

You’ve been telling me about the kind of person you are now—were you the same kind of person 5 years ago? (If the same) How about 10 years ago? What were you like ten years ago? Were you ever a different kind of person? (If YES) When was it? What were you like then? How come you are not ___ anymore? (If different) What were you like then? How did it happen that you are not ___ anymore? What were you like as a child?

10. Significant Life-Experiences

Now, let’s talk about how you got to be the way you are now. You can try to imagine that somebody wants to write a nonfiction book or make a documentary film about you and this person needs to find out what events and experiences from your life—and from your perspective—are the most important to include in this book or movie—what experiences you consider to be most important in you becoming the person you are now. These should be the events that help you understand who you are as an individual and might be memories you would tell someone if you wanted that person to understand what kind of person you are. They should be events from your past that are still very important to you and help you define who you are. To help you reconstruct your life, it might be helpful to look at this imaginary life line and mark approximately the time when some important
events happened and put a short label for these events, so you know what the marks are for—like one would put the titles for the chapters of the book about you. When you finish marking and labeling your life line, I will then ask you to tell me a little bit more about some of those events, but for now, just list the main experiences, or memories from your life on this life line.

Out of all these experiences, which three would you consider to be the most important for becoming the kind of person you are now? (Probes) Can you tell me a little bit about [each of the three experiences]? (If not answered) What happened? How old were you then? How did you feel when this happened? How do you feel about it now? What did it mean to you? (What did you think about this event when this happened?) What does it mean to you now? What do you think about it now? Why is this event important for your life and for the kind of person you are now? How did it influence your life? If what you just told me had never happened, how would your life be different? What have you learned from this experience, if anything? Have you ever talked with other people about this event? (If YES) Who? Why? How did you feel when you talked about it? (Was talking about it a positive or a negative experience for you?) Would you say that talking to other people about ___ was in any way helpful to you? (If YES) How was it helpful? (If NOT) Why not? Did you ever want to talk to somebody about it? (If YES) Why didn’t you? So am I than the first person to which you told about this? (If YES) And how do you feel now that you told me about this event?

(If not mentioned) When were you the most disappointed in your life? (Probes as above)

(If not mentioned) How about the time when you were most unhappy; what made you most unhappy? (Probes as above) (If not mentioned) What is your happiest experience? (Probes as above)

From which of these experiences you told me so far did you learn the most?

Can you think of any (other) experience from which you learned an important life lesson? What did you learn? (Probes as above)

What people do you consider to be the most important in your life? (Probes) Why is this person important? How would your life have been different without this person? Are there any other people that were important to your becoming the kind of person you are now?

11. Life Decisions

What is the most important decision you have made in your life? (Probes) How old were you when you made this decision? How did this decision influence your life? If you didn’t choose to ____, how would your life have been different? How do you feel now
about making this decision? In retrospect, knowing what you know now, would you make the same decision or a different one?

What were your other important life choices? (Probes as above)

Now, looking back over your whole life, if you had the opportunity to live it again, are there any (other) choices that you would make differently? Why would you like to make this choice instead of one you made then? (Probes as above)

12. Turning Points

Now, when you think about your life, do you find that there were any/any OTHER events, or experiences, THAN THOSE YOU TOLD ME ABOUT after which your life changed so dramatically that it felt like a different life from that point on? (If YES) Can you tell me a little bit about this event? What happened? (Probes as above)

Can you remember any other events that influenced your life in a dramatic way? (Probes as above)

Future Autobiography

13. Future Autobiography

Until now you have been telling me about your life so far. Have you ever thought about yourself in the future? (If YES) Have you ever talked with other people about your future life? (If YES) Who? What did you talk about? (If NOT) Can you try to think about it now?

Going back to that book or movie about you, can you tell me some ways this book or movie about you might continue from this point on, and how it might end? (If obvious) That seems like a good/bad ending. Is that the best/worst ending? (If not obvious) Would you consider this a good or a bad ending? (If not mentioned) Where will you live? Who will be living with you? Who will your friends be? Will you have new or old friends? Why? What will you do together? What would you do for a living?

Can you tell me one more way that the book/movie about you could end? (Probes as above)

(Repeat the questions for the opposite type of ending.)

How confident are you that you will gain the best possible life you have just described?

How confident are you that you will avoid the worst possible life you have described?
14. Perceived Control over Future

On who or what does your future depend on?

How much will it depend on you? *How so? Please elaborate.*

How much will it depend on external circumstances? (*Probes as above*)

How much will it depend on other people? (*Probes as above*)

15. Projections for the Future

What goals do you have over the next five years? (*Probes for the first 3 goals*) *How important is for you to --____? Do you have any ideas about how you can achieve this? What would you need to do for this to happen? What resources would you need in order to achieve this? What will be your first steps toward achieving this? When do you plan to start ____? What are some potential obstacles to the realization of this goal? How can you deal with ____?*

16. Becoming a better person and living in a better world

If you could have three wishes, what would they be?

If you could choose to be any kind of person, what kind of person would you want to be?

Can you ever really become like that? *How so? Why? Can you say more?*

What could never change about you?

If you could choose to live another **life**, what would that life look like? (*Probes as above*)

What could never change about your life?

If you could choose to life in another world, what world would you choose?

How would that world be different from the one you live in now? (*Probes as above*)

If somebody asked you how **this** world, the world in which you live now, could be improved to make it a better world for autistic people, what would you recommend?

Now I am going to ask you to think one last time about everything you have said today. Is there **anything you would want to change or add** before we finish this interview.
Rabbi Engel is the head of the Toronto Cheder, Jewish Ultra Orthodox primary
Mr. Saul Anisfeld is a local builder and at the time of this publication was on the
board of Eitz Chaim schools, Ultra Orthodox Jewish a day school in Toronto.
A Jewish educational institution that focuses on the study of traditional religious
texts, primarily the Talmud and Torah study; a yeshiva gedola ("senior/great
yeshiva") is a post-secondary institution, whereas a yeshiva ketana ("junior/small
yeshiva") is an elementary school or high school.
In Orthodox Judaism, Cheder is a term used to mean a private primary day school
where the emphasis is placed on religious study and a secondary emphasis is placed
on secular knowledge, which is also taught in limited forms.
In accordance with Jewish Law, Orthodox Jewish women refrain from contact with
their husbands while they are menstruating, and for a period of 7 clean days after
menstruating, and after the birth of a child.
Sarah Schenirer (1885-1935) established a network of Jewish day schools for girls
in order to combat the rampant assimilation of Jews in the nineteenth to early
twentieth century Poland.
Eitz Chaim schools are the only Ultra Orthodox Jewish school to receive funding
from UJA Toronto; therefore, the burden for paying tuition is shared with subsidies
provided by the above funding.
“UJA Federation's Mission is to preserve and strengthen the quality of Jewish life
in Greater Toronto, Canada, Israel and around the world through philanthropic,
voluteer and professional leadership” (www.jewishtoronto.com UJA mission
statement).
Tuition Subsidy Programs provides financial support to parents who wish to send
their children to one of UJA federation supported schools.
The full name is held in confidence to comply with University of Toronto Ethics of
Research guidelines.
shlit”a - is an acronym for "Sheyikhye Lirot Yamim Tovim Arukim/Amen," “May
he live a good long life” or “May he live a good life, Amen,” given to a revered rabbi.
Z”L – is an acronym for Zechrono Levracha, “His Blessed Memory”.
Covers all Orthodox Jews who follow a "Lithuanian" (Ashkenazi and non-Hasidic)
style of life and learning, whatever their ethnic background.
Meha She’arim, "hundredfold" or "hundred gates", is one of the oldest Jewish
neighborhoods in Jerusalem, Israel. It is populated mainly by Ultra Orthodox Jews
and was built by the original settlers of the ‘old settlements’ – those prior to the
Zionist migration of the 1800’s.
See the Chapter on the Yiddish Language
Yeshivish refers to a social dialect of English spoken by yeshiva students and
other Jews with a strong connection to the Orthodox yeshiva world; Yeshivish can
also be found in some contemporary Jewish literature.
xvii Rabbi Yehuda ben Taima was a Talmudic scholar believed to be active in the second century (CE).

xvii “This mishna was written before the Talmud of today existed; therefore, ”Talmud study” meant the advanced and in-depth study of the Mishna -– performed orally for generations and only later recorded in the Talmud.

xix Errorless acquiescence training (EAT) was developed as a graduated, success focused, and short-term intervention for building social skills. The approach focuses on building the skill of acquiescence (i.e., teaching children to be flexible with the needs and will of peers).

xx No formal diagnosis was given to any of the children the Melamdim brought forward as candidates for PBSP since such diagnosis involves considerable amounts of funds not available to the majority of the student body served by the Melamdim.

xxi An emoticon is a pictorial representation of a facial expression using punctuation marks and letters, usually written to express a person’s mood.

xxii Since no official consent was given by the parents to participate in this particular activity, no data was collected or analyzed; all comments made were strictly anecdotal.

xxiii Kolel in Hebrew means a "gathering" or "collection" (of scholars) is an institute for full-time, advanced study of the Talmud and Rabbinic literature. Like a Yeshiva, a kolel features lectures and learning sedarim (learning sessions); unlike a yeshiva, the student body of a kolel is all married men. Kollels generally pay a regular monthly stipend to their members.

xxiv Maariv is one of three prayers recited by Jews every day; it is recited just after sunset. It is derived from the Hebrew word erev, which translates to evening.

xxv Midrash Tanchuma is the name given to three different collections of Pentateuch haggadot

xxvi A post Yeshiva institute for married men, see chapter on Ultra Orthodoxy for more information

xxvii Usually an ordained rabbi who supervises the kosher handling of food at restaurants and banquet halls

xxviii The notion of being the light comes from the prophet Isaiah’s notion of ‘Orr La Goyim’ (light to the gentiles) in the Hebrew Bible (verses 42:6, 49:6, 60:3), which could be interpreted in many ways. For our purpose I will use the RaDaK’s (Rabbi David Kimchi, 1160–1235) understanding of this notion. For RaDak the ‘Light’ is the Torah and when Jews keep the Mitzvoth of the Torah they will keep the ‘light going bright’ so that even the ‘goyim’ (non-Jewish) will benefit from the Torah’s light.

xxix Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv was born in 1910 in Siauliai (Shavel), Lithuania; is a world-renowned scholar and halachic authority of the Lithuanian Orthodox community both in Israel and elsewhere.

xxx Pseudonym

xxxi Although the Jewish Orthodox community as a whole refrains from using computers, watching television and reading secular books and newspapers, many of the young members gain access to the outside world by using smart phones, such as
iPhone and Blackberry. All the rabbis in the course, with the exception of one, had smart phones and all had email addresses; 6 rabbis had a personal computer and 5 had laptop computers at home; all the rabbis said they have access to a computer at work.

xxxii Z”L – Zichrono Le’Veracha His Blessed Memory
xxxiii Yiddish for Rabbi