Interview Schedules for Coming of Age in Jewish America

I interviewed a total of 218 people who filled different roles and had different backgrounds. The interview questions\footnote{1} accounted for both background and role, which resulted in thirteen different interview schedules. For the survey of all Bay Area congregations, three schedules sufficed for interview schedules generated for rabbi, education director, and administrator/executive director. I call these the survey respondents. The five congregations at which I observed included a broader range of interviewees. In addition to the three schedules above, I generated schedules for parents, Bar and Bat Mitzvah students, religious school teachers, Bar and Bat Mitzvah tutors, lay leadership, and other congregants. I call these the individual respondents. In addition to asking parents, lay leaders, and other congregants about their current congregational experience, I also asked about their childhood experiences. These adults may or may not have been raised as Jews and may or may not have belonged to a congregation (Jewish or otherwise) while growing up. There were four possible childhood categories and thus four variations for these schedules.

Rather than simply listing the different schedules, it is more useful to think about who was asked what questions. Each schedules included both sets of questions asked of all respondents (excepting the Bar and Bat Mitzvah students) and sets of questions specific to each role. For example, rabbis answered the same questions about the congregational context that other adults answered but they were the only group asked about structure and attendance at

\footnote{1}{The discussion of how these interview questions were developed can be found in the Methodological Appendix in the book.}
Shabbat services. I group the sets of questions in that manner: first listing those questions asked of all respondents, then those asked of the survey respondents (rabbis, education directors, and administrators), then those asked of the different groups of individual respondents.

**Questions of congregational context and culture: asked of all adults**

This section addresses congregational demographics, priorities, and methods for decision-making and conflict resolution. I asked all adults these questions, with two different sets of instructions. I asked survey respondents to serve as proxies for the congregation with regard to questions 1 and 2. Because individual respondents were congregants, I asked them to give their personal views.

An additional note: only lay leaders (with few exceptions) responded to questions 3 and 5 regarding decision making and conflict resolution; others declined to answer, saying they simply didn’t know.

1. People remain members of congregations for many reasons. Which of the following reasons for remaining members do you hear a lot, sometimes, or never?

   a. Attachment to the professional staff—rabbι, or cantor, for example.

   b. Religious observance or study

   c. Children’s education

   d. Friends and community

   e. Responsibility to past and future—generation to generation.

   f. Other?
2. Into which one or two of the following areas does your congregation expect to put the most energy in the near future?
   a. Developing an intimate community
   b. Educating children
   c. Continuing Jewish education for adults
   d. Prayer and text study
   e. Engaging in social action and justice
   f. Other?

3. I am going to read a set of problems commonly faced by congregations. For each one, can you tell me how your congregation would go about solving the problem?
   a. The Torah covers are old, but still in good condition. Some congregants want to buy new covers. How does the decision to buy or not get made?
   b. The religious school has too many children for one session. How do you decide what to do?
   c. Membership has decreased over the past three years. How do you decide what to do to increase membership?
   d. Some congregants want a new and different kind of Shabbat service that will change the nature and attendance of Shabbat services in some way (for example, a small group may want to have a more traditional service—or less traditional). Who decides whether this can take place?

4. What one word or phrase would you use to describe your congregation? That is, what makes your congregation distinct?
5. Conflict is a part of congregational life in general. Can you tell me if whether there are any major conflicts or issues in your congregation right now? With that in mind, what approach does your congregation take to either resolve conflict or prevent it from occurring?

6. Is there anything else that you think I should know about your congregation?

**Effect of Bar or Bat Mitzvah on congregation: asked of all adults**

This section asks respondents about congregants’ views of Bar or Bat Mitzvah in the most general formulation. I asked survey respondents to serve as proxies for the congregation with regard to questions 1, while individual respondents answered for themselves.

1. I’m going to read you some common ways that Bar or Bat Mitzvah have been described in the Jewish community and popular media. As I read each, please tell me whether you hear this kind of comment from congregants a lot, sometimes, or hardly ever:

   a. A time to celebrate the child and build his or her self-esteem.
   b. A time for the congregation to welcome a new Jewish adult.
   c. A disruption of regular services either by a private event or by a non-expert leader.
   d. The chance to have a big and exciting party.
   e. A statement on the part of family about continuing Judaism in the next generation.
   f. A ritual that marks transition to Jewish adulthood and taking on observance of the commandments.
   g. Something else entirely?
2. In some congregations, there is concern that Bar or Bat Mitzvah services and celebrations are becoming ostentatious or competitive. Is this a concern at your congregation? If so, what issues or areas are of particular concern?

3. In some congregations, there are discussions about changing the way the synagogue handles Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Are there such discussions here? If so, what issues are being discussed?

**Specific Information asked of Survey Respondents**

In addition to the sets of questions regarding congregational context and the Bar or Bat Mitzvah, administrator/executive directors, education directors, and rabbis also answered sets of questions regarding their areas of expertise.

**Executive Director or Administrator**

Administrators/executive directors (the title and responsibilities vary by size of congregation) were asked questions of demographics. These interviews lasted from 20-45 minutes.

1. Congregations count members both as households and as individuals. I’d like know the size of your congregation in both ways.
   a. Can you tell me about how many households are members?
   b. About how many individuals would you say belonged to the congregation?

2. About how much of your congregation consists of
   a. young families?
b. Older couples?

c. Young singles?

d. Elderly?

3. In thinking about your congregants, do you think that congregants are fairly similar to one another or fairly different from one another:

   a. Age
   
   b. Income
   
   c. Observance
   
   d. Is there another characteristic for which members of your congregation seem unusually similar or dissimilar to each other?

4. What are the three most common zip codes in which your members live?

5. Intermarriage changes some congregational dynamics, particularly around Bar or Bat Mitzvah, so it is important to know what proportion of your congregation is intermarried. About what proportion of the congregational households would you estimate are intermarried?

   a. Just a few
   
   b. About a quarter
   
   c. About a third
   
   d. Half or more

6. Who may join your congregation? [e.g., intermarried, non-Jewish spouses, non-Jews in general]

7. How does your congregation expect members give support in either time or money?
Education Directors

Education directors’ interviews included two sections specific to their role. The first section addressed the supplementary school program, with the intent of understanding what was taught and how directly Bar and Bat Mitzvah preparation entered into that education. The second section addressed the Bar and Bat Mitzvah program itself. These respondents were also asked the context questions above. These interviews took from 45 minutes-1 ½ hours to complete.

Section I: Questions about the religious school:

1. Could you describe your education program?
   a. How many days/week and hours/session do Hebrew and religious school run?
   b. Does the schedule differ by age of child participating?
   c. What ages/grades does it serve?
   d. What subjects are covered in the curriculum and at what grades?

2. Is there a cost to attend religious school?

3. Does a family have to be a congregant to attend religious school?

4. How many students are enrolled in the religious school from kindergarten through seventh grade?
   a. If there are special programs (family education, chavurot), how many are enrolled here?
5. Intermarriage changes some of congregational dynamics, particularly around the school and Bar or Bat Mitzvah, so I like to know what proportion of the congregational households would you estimate are intermarried. Would you estimate it to be:
   a. Just a few?
   b. About a quarter?
   c. About a third?
   d. Half or more?

6. About what percentage of last year’s Bar or Bat Mitzvah class would you estimate was from an intermarried family?

7. What proportion of the congregation’s children attend a Jewish day school?

8. How many Bar or Bat Mitzvah take place in a typical year? How many took place last year?

9. I’m interested in how different groups in the congregation understand religious school. I understand that is simply your opinion, but that is an informed point of view and so important.
   a. What one element of Jewish life is most important to include in the religious school curriculum?
      i. What is your opinion?
      ii. What do you think the students would say?,
      iii. What do you think their parents would say?
      iv. What do you think a congregant without children in religious school would say?
b. What would is the most important goal of the religious school?
   
i. What is your opinion?

ii. What do you think the students would say?,

iii. What do you think their parents would say?

iv. What do you think a congregant without children in religious school would say?

c. What makes you most proud when you think of your religious school?
   
i. What is your opinion?

ii. What do you think the students would say?,

iii. What do you think their parents would say?

iv. What do you think a congregant without children in religious school would say?

10. Is there anything that you would consider essential for someone to know about your religious school?

11. Some congregations have active family education programs that involve the whole family in Jewish education. Do you do that?

   Section II: Bar and Bat Mitzvah Preparation

12. In order to formally observe the passage to Bar or Bat Mitzvah, many congregations expect families to abide by some conditions. Can you tell me which of the following might apply to your congregation?

   a. The family must be members of the congregation. If so, for how many years prior to Bar or Bat Mitzvah?
b. The child must attend supplementary religious school. If so, for how many years?

c. The child must attend Shabbat services. If so, how many? Do they have to attend in years preceding Bar or Bat Mitzvah year?

d. Other activities or expectations? [Mitzvah project, family retreat, family chavurah or other program, experimenting with ritual, volunteering with congregation, volunteering with community]

13. Are there exceptions to these conditions?

a. If so, under what circumstances would a family or student be exempted?

b. Are there alternative ways to meet the conditions? [for example, by private tutoring]

14. Can you tell me about the congregation’s Bar or Bat Mitzvah program?

a. When does it begin?

b. What kinds of activities does it include (in addition to the ones above?)

c. How would you describe the philosophy behind the program?

15. Is the Bar or Bat Mitzvah program modified in any way for children who attend day school? If so, how?

16. What would you like students in the Bar or Bat Mitzvah program take away with them?

17. Preparation for Bar or Bat Mitzvah often involves several people helping in different ways. Different people might (or might not) help Bar or Bat Mitzvah learn prayers, trope, and Torah and Haftarah, or develop the content of the speech. What are the specifics of this preparation? (For example: “the rabbi works with the student for x sessions of ½ hour each to develop an understanding of the elements within the
portion/parsha that the student wants to explore; a tutor meets with the student for y sessions over the course of z months, and so on.”)

a. Who helps to prepare Bar or Bat Mitzvah?

b. What does each person do with the child?

c. Over what period of time do they work with the child and for how long a session?

18. Is there a cost associated with the preparation?

19. Do you spend time with each family, either as individuals or as a group? If so, how much time do you spend and what topics or issues do you discuss?

20. What would you most like Bar or Bat Mitzvah to gain from the Bar or Bat Mitzvah experience?

21. How do Bar or Bat Mitzvah participate in Jewish observance, education, or teaching following Bar or Bat Mitzvah?

22. What makes you most proud when you think of your Bar or Bat Mitzvah program?

Rabbis

Rabbis’ interviews included three sections specific to their role. The first section addressed religious services, both on Shabbat and other times to understand normal congregation practice. The second section asked about size of and expectations for the Bar and Bat Mitzvah class, as well as the changes that take place during a Bar or Bat Mitzvah service. The third section asked about preparation for the Bar or Bat Mitzvah service. Finally, in addition to the context questions asked of all adults, I also repeated questions 3, 5, and 6 of the administrator’s questionnaire. These interviews took from 1-1 ½ hours to complete.
Section I: Services

1. I’d like to know a bit about your main Friday night service:
   a. How many attend?
   b. Who leads these services? [Rabbi? Cantor? Lay leaders?]
   c. Some congregations vary the style of Friday night services through the month, or have multiple services that appeal to different groups. Does your congregation do this?
      i. If so, what is the style of each? To whom they might appeal? [for example: “short, lots of music, appeals to young families”]
      ii. If not, how would you describe the atmosphere or mood of a typical Friday night service? [types of possible answers: sedate, joyful, traditional, meditative…]

2. I have similar questions about your main Saturday morning service.
   a. How many attend?
   b. Who leads these services? [Rabbi? Cantor? Lay leaders?]
   c. Do Saturday morning services vary in style or tone or does your congregation have multiple services?
      i. If so, what is the style of each? To whom they might appeal? [for example: “short, lots of music, appeals to young families”]
      ii. If not, how would you describe the atmosphere or mood of a typical Saturday morning service? [types of possible answers: sedate, joyful, traditional, meditative…]
3. It is common for congregations to honor attendees by inviting them to participate in services. How does your congregation make decisions about the following honors or times to participate?
   
a. Lighting candles on Friday night, if this is done at your congregation?
   b. Opening the Ark?
   c. Reading Torah or Haftarah?
   d. Being called for an aliyah
   e. Lifting or dressing the Torah?
   f. Any other opportunities that I’ve missed?
   g. Are there any rules that limit or describe who is allowed to participate? [for example: congregant/non-congregant; Jew/non-Jew]

4. Do you hold other weekly services?
   
a. When are they and who leads them?
      i. How many attend?

5. If you could change the current arrangement of services, how would you do so?

   Section II: Bar or Bat Mitzvah Services

6. How many children will become Bar or Bat Mitzvah this year? What is a typical number?

7. What are Bar or Bat Mitzvah expected to do during the service?
   
a. What prayers, if any, do they lead?
   b. What is the minimum amount of Torah and Haftarah they learn?
      i. What is the average amount they learn?
ii. Do they chant or read?

c. How much variation is there between children?

d. Are they expected to give a drash and, if so, what do you expect them to cover?

8. While most congregations stress the similarities between Bar and Bat Mitzvah, there may be some differences between Bar and Bat Mitzvah and between boys and girls.

a. Do Bar and Bat Mitzvah take place at the same or different ages?

b. Does the congregation have different expectations for what each will do during the service?

c. Do boys and girls respond differently to the material they are expected to master?

9. Congregations approach Bar or Bat Mitzvah in many different ways. Which of these best describes your congregation’s approach?

a. Shabbat services take place weekly and, while Bar or Bat Mitzvah are part of that service, the service doesn’t change very much.

b. There is a regular Shabbat minyan as well as a Shabbat service which is led, at least in part, by Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

c. Shabbat services only happen to mark the occasion of Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

d. There are weekly Shabbat services, but they are different, either in content or nature of the congregants when Bar or Bat Mitzvah take place.

e. Bar or Bat Mitzvah take place on days and times other than Shabbat morning.

   [which? Friday night, Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon, Monday, Thursday, Rosh Chodesh]

f. Other possibilities?
10. Some congregations have rules about how the families of Bar or Bat Mitzvah may participate in the service. In some congregations, for example, Bar or Bat Mitzvah families assign the honors, in others the congregation does. When Bar or Bat Mitzvah are part of the service, how are decisions made about:

a. Who lights candles on Friday evening, if that is your custom?

b. Who opens the Ark?

c. Who reads Torah and Haftarah? How much?

d. Who is called up for an aliyah?

e. Who is expected to lift or dress the Torah?

f. Is there any other places in the service where people other than the service leaders are allowed or encouraged to participate?

g. Are there any rules that limit or describe who is allowed to participate? [for example: congregant/non-congregant; Jew/non-Jew]

11. Which of these traditions does your congregation include in Bar or Bat Mitzvah services?

a. a special welcome to guests of the family

b. presenting a tallit to the child

c. parent speeches to child

d. parent reciting the blessing that relieves them of responsibility for the child

e. passing the Torah from generation to generation

f. congregation’s presentation of gifts or certificate to the child

g. booklets or programs that explain the service in the context of a particular child’s Bar or Bat Mitzvah
h. Rabbi’s words or blessing for the child. If so, what kind of a blessing?

12. Some congregations have informal customs, such as particular melodies, that everyone in the congregation knows and responds to. If your congregation has such customs, can you tell me whether they change when Bar or Bat Mitzvah occur, and if so, how?

13. Are there any circumstances where you would refuse to allow a Bar or Bat Mitzvah to take place at your congregation?

14. Here are a couple of possible points of discussion around Bar or Bat Mitzvah:
   a. A Bar Mitzvah is scheduled for a Saturday in May. A congregant is getting married the next day and has asked to have the aufruf that morning. What is your response?
   b. The parent of a Bar Mitzvah wants a close relative to participate in the service by singing a song that, while in Hebrew, is not part of the liturgy. What is your response?

15. During services that include Bar or Bat Mitzvah what proportion of the attendees are congregants? How does this change when no Bar or Bat Mitzvah are part of the service?

16. What would you consider a successful Bar or Bat Mitzvah?

   Section III: Bar or Bat Mitzvah Preparation

17. In order to formally observe the passage to Bar or Bat Mitzvah, many congregations expect families to abide by some conditions. Can you tell me which of the following might apply to your congregation?
   a. The family must be members of the congregation. If so, for how many years prior to Bar or Bat Mitzvah?
b. The child must attend supplementary religious school. If so, for how many years?
c. The child must attend Shabbat services. If so, how many? Do they have to attend in years preceding Bar or Bat Mitzvah year?
d. Other activities or expectations? [Mitzvah project, family retreat, family chavurah or other program, experimenting with ritual, volunteering with congregation, volunteering with community]

18. Are there exceptions to these conditions?
   a. If so, under what circumstances would a family or student be exempted?
   b. Are there alternative ways to meet the conditions? [Tutoring, day school]

19. Preparation for Bar or Bat Mitzvah often involves several people helping in different ways. [learning prayers, chanting or not, learning Torah and Haftarah, working on the speech. One part of the answer might be: “the rabbi works with the student for six sessions of ½ hour each to develop an understanding of the elements within the portion/parsha that the student wants to explore.”]
   a. Who helps to prepare Bar or Bat Mitzvah?
   b. What does each person do with the child?
   c. Over what period of time do they work with the child and for how long a session?
   d. Is there a cost associated with the preparation?

20. When you work with or teach Bar or Bat Mitzvah students, what would you most like that child to learn from you?

21. Do you spend time with each family? If so, how much time do you spend and what topics or issues do you discuss?
Specific Information asked of Individual Respondents

As with the survey respondents, parents and children, tutors and teachers, lay leaders and other congregants were each asked about areas for which they had specific knowledge. With the exception of the Bar and Bat Mitzvah students, these respondents also answered the questions on congregational context and Bar or Bat Mitzvah listed above. In addition, to understand each individual’s current Jewish context, I asked all adults about their congregational engagement, personal and family engagement in Judaism, and engagement in non-congregational Jewish activities. That section follows:

Current Experience of Congregational Life

1) When and why did you join the congregation?

2) People remain members of congregations for many reasons. With which of the following reasons do you most identify?
   a) Attachment to the professional staff—rabbi, or cantor, for example.
   b) Religious observance or study
   c) Children’s education
   d) Friends and community
   e) Social action
   f) Other?

3) Into which one or two of the following areas would you like to see your congregation put the most energy in the near future? Into which of these areas would you put the most effort?
a) Developing an intimate community
b) Educating children
c) Continuing Jewish education for adults
d) Prayer and text study
e) Engaging in social action and justice
f) Other?

4) What one word or phrase would you use to describe your congregation? That is, what makes your congregation distinct?

5) Conflict is a part of congregational life in general. How does your congregation go about resolving conflicts?

6) What activities do you participate in at synagogue?

7) How comfortable do you feel at each of these activities? (very, somewhat, not really)
   a) With the activity?
   b) With the other people participating?
   c) With the leaders of the activity?

8) What Jewish community activities do you participate in that are not related to the congregation? (film festival, baseball games, etc.)

9) How comfortable do you feel at each of these activities? (very, somewhat, not)
   a) With the activity?
   b) With the other people participating?
   c) With the leaders?

10) What Jewish holidays do you observe?

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a) Where do you observe them?

b) How comfortable do you feel observing these holidays? (very, somewhat, not)

11) What kinds of Jewish activities does your family do at home?

12) What percentage of your friends are Jewish?

13) Have you been to Israel? If so, how many times and for how long?

14) What non-Jewish holidays do you observe?

15) What do you think is the most important thing about being Jewish?

16) What do you like most and least about being Jewish?

Families: Parents and Students

I met with families, most often in their homes, at their convenience and taking into account the student’s comfort level with being interviewed. Parents typically chose to be interviewed together about the Bar or Bat Mitzvah event and their current engagement with the congregation. They were typically interviewed separately about their childhood (and in some cases, this section was omitted due to time constraints). About half the Bar or Bat Mitzvah students chose to be interviewed alone, the other half with parents present. Parent interviews about the present lasted from 30-1 ½ hours; the parent interview lasted from 15-45 minutes; and students’ interviews lasted from 30 minutes to one hour.

Bar or Bat Mitzvah Student

I asked the students questions about their lived experience of Judaism, their preparation for Bar or Bat Mitzvah, their experience of the event itself, and their expectations for the future.
Section I: Experience of Judaism at home and in the congregation

1) What do you do at home that makes you feel Jewish?
   a) For holidays?
   b) For Shabbat?
   c) Other times?

2) What do you think is the most important thing about being Jewish?

3) What do you like best about being Jewish?

4) What do you like least about being Jewish?

5) How often do you come to synagogue?
   a) What kinds of things do you do there? (e.g., services, youth group, programs, classes)
   b) What do you expect to do at the synagogue after becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah?
   c) Do you feel like you are an important part of the congregation? (Very strongly, somewhat, a little, not much.)
      i) Why?

6) What is do you like best about belonging to this congregation?

7) What do you like least about belonging to this congregation?

8) Tell me about what you do in religious school and Hebrew school.
   a) What is the program like?
   b) What are the teachers like?
   c) What are the other students like?
   d) What do you like about it?
   e) What would you change about it?
Section II: Preparation for Bar or Bat Mitzvah

9) How did you prepare for your Bar or Bat Mitzvah?
   a) Who did you have lessons with?
   b) How did you study between lessons?
   c) What did you like about it?
   d) What would you change about it?

10) What have your parents told you about becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah?

11) What have your teachers and rabbi told you about becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah?

12) What do you think becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah means?

13) What, if anything, worried you most about your Bar or Bat Mitzvah service before the day?

14) What, if anything, excited you about becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah?

15) Can you tell me what the week before your Bar or Bat Mitzvah was like?
   a) How did you prepare?
   b) Who did you meet with?
   c) How did you feel?
   d) What other preparations were happening?

16) Who did you invite to your Bar or Bat Mitzvah? Why?

Section III: The day itself and beyond

17) Describe the day of your Bar or Bat Mitzvah.
   a) What did you do?
   b) How did you feel as the day went along?

18) What was the best part of the day?
19) What was the worst part of the day?

20) What do you think makes a Bar or Bat Mitzvah a success?
   a) Can you give an example of a Bar or Bat Mitzvah that went really well?
   b) How about one that didn’t go well?

21) Do you think becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah changed you? If so, how? If not, why not?

22) How will what you do as a Jew, either at home or in your congregation, change now that you have become a Bar or Bat Mitzvah?
Bar or Bat Mitzvah Parent

In addition to the sections common to adult interviews above (congregational context and current engagement in Judaism), I asked parents about their experience of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah preparation and event, then asked each individual about childhood experience of either Judaism or other religion. My goal was to understand the religious context (or lack thereof) that informs—to a greater or lesser degree—their adult approach to Judaism and Bar or Bat Mitzvah. I have included only the “grew up Jewish; family belonged to a congregation.” The other forms use similar questions modified for non-Jews and/or those who did not belong to a congregation.

Experience of Child’s Bar or Bat Mitzvah

1) What reasons did you have for your child becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah? Did those reasons change as your child went through the training and service?

2) What kinds of questions, concerns, or issues (positive or negative) came up as you have prepared for Bar or Bat Mitzvah?

3) What did you most want to communicate to your child about becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah?

   Do you feel you were able to do so?

4) Who did you invite to the Bar or Bat Mitzvah service and why?

5) What role did congregants, other than the Bar or Bat Mitzvah class and parents, play in the service?

6) As your child prepared for becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah, did you expect the process to change your child?

   a) If so, how?

   b) Do you think you were correct? If not, what was different than you expected?
7) Do you think your child’s becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah will change your family?
   a) If so, how?

8) Do you think your child’s becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah will change your family’s relationship to your congregation?
   a) If so, how?

9) What do you feel constitutes a “successful” Bar or Bat Mitzvah?

10) Can you give an example of a Bar or Bat Mitzvah that went really well?

11) How about one that didn’t go well?

12) Can you describe the week before the Bar or Bat Mitzvah?
   a) What kinds of preparations took place?
   b) Who was responsible for them?
   c) What kinds of thoughts and emotions did you have?

13) Describe the day of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah.
   a) What did you do?
   b) What did your child do?
   c) How did you feel as the day went along?
   d) What was the best part of the day?
   e) What was the worst part of the day?

14) Is there anything else you think I should know?

   Childhood Experience (asked of each individual parent)

15) Growing up, what did your family do at home that made you feel Jewish?
   a) For holidays?
b) For Shabbat?

c) Other times?

16) What kind of congregation did your family attend when you were a child?
   a) Denomination
   b) Size
   c) In what region of the US was it located? (or if not in US, where?)
   d) Were there other congregations—of any denomination—nearby?

17) As a child, how often did you go to synagogue, either for services or programs?

18) In what kind of activities did you participate? (E.g., services, youth group, programs, education)

19) Did you feel like you were important to the congregation life? Very strongly, somewhat, a little, not much. What made you feel this way?

20) What did you like best about belonging to your childhood congregation?

21) What did you like least about belonging to that congregation?

22) Did you attend religious school as a child?
   a) If so, can you tell me about the program.
   b) What was the curriculum like?
   c) Who taught the classes?
   d) How did the students get along with each other?
   e) What did you like about it?
   f) What would you have changed about it?

23) Did you become Bar or Bat Mitzvah?

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24) Who did you invite to your Bar or Bat Mitzvah? Why?

25) What did you worry about most before your Bar or Bat Mitzvah service?
   a) What were you most excited about?

26) As a child, what did becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah mean to you?
   a) How about now?

27) As a child, how would you have defined a successful Bar or Bat Mitzvah?
   a) How about now?

28) Did your attendance and participation in congregational life change after you became Bar or Bat Mitzvah? If so, how?

29) If not, you did not have/become a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, what, if anything, did the lack of the event mean to you? How do you feel about it now?

Other individuals: Lay Leaders, Tutors and teachers, other congregants

These individuals answered many of the same questions as those above. Lay leaders and other congregants responded to the sections on Bar or Bat Mitzvah’s effect on the congregation, on congregational context, and on their personal engagement with congregational life. In addition, lay leaders were asked about their leadership roles and responsibilities (see below),
while other congregants were asked about their childhood experiences of Judaism. Teachers and tutors responded to the sections on the effect of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah services on the congregation, on congregational context, and then answered a set of questions related to their role in the congregation.

Questions for Lay Leaders

1) When and why did you join the congregation?
2) What is your current leadership position and what was the path you took to get there?
3) What are your responsibilities in that role?
4) What are your goals for your term of office?
5) What do you like or dislike about this role?

Questions for Tutor or Cantor on Bar or Bat Mitzvah Preparation

1. Could you tell me what classes, if any, you teach?
2. What is your role, if any, in regular religious services?
3. How do you work with or prepare Bar or Bat Mitzvah candidates for Bar or Bat Mitzvah?
   Specifically:
   a. What areas or subjects do you cover (for example: prayers, trope, translation, interpretation, rehearsals)?
   b. How do you organize and communicate that material?
4. Are there variations or exceptions in what you teach or how you approach the material or students?
5. Which area or subject do you consider most important to teach (or for the kids to learn) and why?
   a. What do you think parents would respond?
   b. What do you think the kids themselves would answer?

6. What is your overall goal for each individual student?
   a. What do you think parents would respond?
   b. What do you think the students themselves would answer?

7. In thinking about your students, do you notice any differences in their engagement or understanding of the material related to whether they are:
   a. boys or girls?
   b. the children of intermarried or inmarried parents?
   c. the children of parents who are engaged in Judaism or not engaged?
   d. some other area of difference entirely?

8. When do you consider working with the student to be successful? (Or…what is a successful Bar or Bat Mitzvah?)
   a. When would you consider the process to have been less than successful?
   b. How do you think students would answer this?
   c. How about parents?

9. Are you satisfied with the preparation process? If so, what do you think are the reasons it works? If not, what would you change?

Questions for teachers

Patricia Munro
Interview Schedules for Coming of Age in Jewish America
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1. Can you describe your class:
   a. Which grades and subjects do you teach and with what schedule?
   b. How many students are in your class(es)?

2. What do you do with you students? Specifically:
   a. What areas or subjects do you cover?
   b. How do you organize and communicate that material?

3. Are there exceptions in what you teach or how you approach the material or students?

4. Which area or subject do you consider most important to teach (or for the students to learn) and why?
   a. What do you think parents would respond?
   b. What do you think the students themselves would answer?

5. What is your overall goal for the class as a whole and for each individual student?
   a. What do you think parents would respond?
   b. What do you think the students themselves would answer?

6. Specific material (for example, particular prayers) may be taught so that a Bar or Bat Mitzvah will know them. However, they may also be taught because they are part of basic Jewish knowledge. In thinking about your curriculum, how is it shaped by knowledge required for B’nai Mitzvah? In other words, how would it differ if Bar or Bat Mitzvah was not a factor in Jewish education?

7. In thinking about your students, do you notice any differences in their engagement or understanding of the material related to whether they are:
   a. boys or girls?
b. the children of intermarried or inmarried parents?

c. the children of parents who are engaged in Judaism or not engaged?

d. some other area of difference entirely?

8. When do you consider working with the student to be successful? (Or…what is a successful process?)

   a. When would you consider the process to have been less than successful?
   b. How do you think students would answer this?
   c. How about parents?

9. Are you satisfied with your class process? If so, what do you think are the reasons it works? If not, what would you change?