



## **Context**

Learning from members of the community within the scope and focus of the panel is an “other-centered” approach that is focused on really learning about the 22-35 year olds in the greater St. Paul community, their realities, their journeys, and their hopes and experiences around engagement. Rather than approaching the issues from the perspective of asking people to engage within the existing structures, this approach seeks to understand how the Jewish community might help them in their own lives.

In order to learn from Millennials in the greater St. Paul community, Panel 2 members decided to hire a professional interviewer to conduct interviews with ten community members. As described in the notes from meeting 7, the interviewees were selected to represent diversity of age, marital and parenting status, race, observance, and childhood experiences with Judaism.

The one-hour interviews followed a semi-structured format allowing for guided conversation and deep acquisition of participant perspectives related to portions of the interview framework for which they can speak most clearly. The interviewer wrote up a case story for each interviewee, representing their responses in a cohesive 3-7 page narrative. The interview questions are presented in Appendix 1.

The panel members will review the 10 unique stories, connect the dots between the stories, and determine whether there is something that comes across as clear across the stories.

## **Learning from the cases**

The goal of this meeting was to engage panel members in reading and making sense of the interview data. Because the interviewees have not approved interviews yet the report was not circulated electronically in advance of the meeting. Instead two cases were shared electronically in advance of the meeting with the agenda. These cases represented someone who grew up inside the Jewish community and one who converted to Judaism later in life. The full report was shared at the meeting in a hard copy. Panel members agreed to keep the information shared during the meeting confidential and to not share or distribute the draft report.



Next panel members received a hard copy of coding lexicon. This included 18 themes panel members identified through the research, interviews with experts on engaging the next generation, and the interviews of those in the panel's target age range. These themes were identified by reviewing the meeting notes from the previous Panel 2 meetings. The coding lexicon used during this meeting is included as Appendix 2.

### Process:

1. The panel members separated into two groups, each tasked with reading a different case story.
2. Panel members took time to read the interviews silently, documenting where they saw each of the eighteen themes if present and making note of additional themes present in the cases.
3. After people had time to read, the small groups convened to discuss the which themes were present, which themes might need to be added to the coding lexicon, and what they learned from reading the cases.
4. The entire group convened for the last half hour, sharing their key learnings and discussing next steps.

### Key Takeaways

The following points were key takeaways from the two interviews and resulting discussion.

- **“Turfiness”**. Because of this desperation, people sense that there is “turfiness” in the St. Paul Jewish community. This leaves a negative impression and does not inspire respect. To some it feels like it is 7<sup>th</sup> grade again.
- **Purpose and passion**. People want to connect with others who share their purpose or passion. There is a sense that it should be easier for people in the St. Paul Jewish community to find and connect with others who have a shared purpose and/or passion.
- **Lack of diversity**. Interviewees noted that is sometimes a struggle to find someone like them--people with divergent views on Israel, Jews who are LGBTQ, and/or Jews of color.
- **Desperation**. There is a feeling of desperation and scarcity in the Jewish community. When Jewish organizations seem desperate for involvement, it turns potential participants or members away. People have a fear that once you do a few things, you will be expected to do everything. There is a fear of being sucked down the drain” that sometimes prevents people from engaging at all.



- **Social justice vs. Jewish engagement.** If people are interested in social justice issues they will often engage with people across racial, ethnic, and cultural lines. Because of the limitations in time, it may mean people will not be involved Jewishly at all or face a tension between their involvement in social justice issues and the Jewish community.
- **Spirit of individualism.** Young Jews have a spirit of individualism. They want to be seen as an individual, not just as Jewish and want people and organizations to understand and support them in their individual needs. Young Jews want to be engaged and involved in the creation of program.
- **Creating their own path.** Young people do not know how or whether they want to pass on the traditions, rituals, and heritage in the same way as their parents. They don't see themselves living in a culture where their Jewish heritage is at risk in the same way and don't feel like their future relies on maintaining that same connection.
- **Accepted and affirmed.** Young Jews not only want choices and options, but they want to be accepted and affirmed for their choice. It's not just "we open the door and let you in, but that we as an organization are okay and support the path you have chosen".
- **Many competing obligations.** Young people are very busy and have lots of debt. This impacts the manner and ability they have to participate in communal events.

### Next Steps

The panel members identified the next steps:

1. The facilitator and coordinator will update the coding lexicon with the feedback from the group.
2. The facilitator and coordinator will submit a proposal to the Federation to have a young member of the panel support the coding and write-up.
3. The panel members agreed to complete coding over the next four weeks.
4. Each panel member will review the coding of two interviews and share their feedback.
5. A draft report will be written and circulated by next meeting (9/20).
6. The group will be ready to present a report with findings and recommendations by mid-October.

**Additional:** Notes for the previous meeting were not ready for review at this meeting. Nora and David will revise, send to Randi for approval and following will send them out to the panel for approval by email.



## **Appendix 1: Life Story Interview Script**

The life story model of adult identity is one of a number of new approaches in psychology and the social sciences that emphasize narrative and the storied nature of human conduct. This interview protocol is based in a tool developed by the Foley Center at Northwestern University.

### **Introduction**

As a part of the Community Planning Process we are collect people's life stories in order to understand the different ways in which people in the greater St. Paul Jewish community live their lives and the different ways in which they understand who they are.

This is an interview about the story of your life. I am interested in hearing your story, including parts of the past as you remember them and the future as you imagine it. The story is selective; it does not include everything that has ever happened to you. Instead, I will ask you to focus on a few key things in your life – a few key scenes, characters, and ideas. There are no right or wrong answers to my questions. Instead, your task is simply to tell me about some of the most important things that have happened in your life and how you imagine your life developing in the future. I will guide you through the interview so that we finish it all in ninety minutes or less.

Please know that my purpose in doing this interview is not to figure out what is wrong with you or to do some kind of deep clinical analysis! The interview is for research purposes only, and its main goal is simply to hear your story.

Everything you say is voluntary, anonymous, and confidential. We will write up your story based on what you share today. You will have the opportunity to review and approve your story before we share it publicly.

I think you will enjoy the interview. Do you have any questions?

### **A. Life Chapters**

Please begin by thinking about your life as if it were a book or novel. Imagine that the book has a table of contents containing the titles of the main chapters in the story. To begin here, please describe very briefly what the main chapters in the book might be. Please give each chapter a title, tell me just a little bit about what each chapter is about, and say a word or two about how we get from one chapter to the next. As a storyteller here, what you want to do is to give me an overall plot summary of your story, going chapter by chapter. You may have as many chapters as you want, but I would suggest having between about two and seven of them. We will want to spend no more than about 20 minutes on this first section of the interview,



so please keep your descriptions of the chapters relatively brief.

*[Note to interviewer: The interviewer should feel free to ask questions of clarification and elaboration throughout the interview, but especially in this first part. This first section of the interview should run between 15 and 30 minutes.]*

## **B. Key Scenes in the Life Story**

Now that you have described the overall plot outline for your life, I would like you to focus in on a few key scenes that stand out in the story. A key scene would be an event or specific incident that took place at a particular time and place. Consider a key scene to be a moment in your life story that stands out for a particular reason – perhaps because it was especially good or bad, particularly vivid, important, or memorable. For each of the **seven** key events we will consider, I ask that you describe in detail what happened, when and where it happened, who was involved, and what you were thinking and feeling in the event. In addition, I ask that you tell me why you think this particular scene is important or significant in your life. What does the scene say about you as a person? Please be specific.

### **1. High Point**

Please describe a scene, episode, or moment in your life that stands out as an especially positive experience. This might be the high point scene of your entire life, or else an especially happy, joyous, exciting, or wonderful moment in the story. Please describe this high point scene in detail. What happened, when and where, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling? Also, please say a word or two about why you think this particular moment was so good and what the scene may say about who you are as a person.

### **2. Low Point**

The second scene is the opposite of the first. Thinking back over your entire life, please identify a scene that stands out as a low point, if not the low point in your life story. Even though this event is unpleasant, I would appreciate your providing as much detail as you can about it. What happened in the event, where and when, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling? Also, please say a word or two about why you think this particular moment was so bad and what the scene may say about you or your life.

*[Interviewer note: If the participants balks at doing this, tell him or her that the event does not really have to be the lowest point in the story but merely a very bad experience of some kind.]*

### **3. Turning Point**

In looking back over your life, it may be possible to identify certain key moments that stand out as turning points -- episodes that marked an important change in you or your life story. Please identify a particular episode in your life story that you now



see as a turning point in your life. If you cannot identify a key turning point that stands out clearly, please describe some event in your life wherein you went through an important change of some kind. Again, for this event please describe what happened, where and when, who was involved, and what you were thinking and feeling. Also, please say a word or two about what you think this event says about you as a person or about your life.

#### **4. Wisdom Event**

Please describe an event in your life in which you displayed wisdom. The episode might be one in which you acted or interacted in an especially wise way or provided wise counsel or advice, made a wise decision, or otherwise behaved in a particularly wise manner. What happened, where and when, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling? Also, what does this memory say about you and your life?

#### **5. Jewish Identify**

Consider for a moment the religious or spiritual aspects of your life. Please describe in a nutshell your religious beliefs and values, if indeed these are important to you. Whether you are religious or not, please describe your overall ethical or moral approach to life.

#### **6. Jewish Experience**

Thinking back on your entire life, please identify an episode or moment in your Jewish identity was important to you. What happened, where and when, who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling? Also, what does this memory say about you or your life?

Now, we're going to talk about the future.

### **C. Future Script**

#### **1. The Next Chapter**

Your life story includes key chapters and scenes from your past, as you have described them, and it also includes how you see or imagine your future. What is going to come next in your life story?

#### **2. Dreams, Hopes, and Plans for the Future**

Please describe your plans, dreams, or hopes for the future. What do you hope to accomplish in the future in your life story?

#### **3. Your Jewish Relationships**

How do you see your Jewishness playing out in your future? How are you involved and why? What meaning does this give your life? If you aren't involved, why not?



## **D. Challenges**

This next section considers the various challenges, struggles, and problems you have encountered in your life. I will begin with a general challenge, and then I will focus in on three particular areas or issues where many people experience challenges, problems, or crises.

### **1. Life Challenge**

Looking back over your entire life, please identify and describe what you now consider to be the greatest single challenge you have faced in your life. What is or was the challenge or problem? How did the challenge or problem develop? How did you address or deal with this challenge or problem? What is the significance of this challenge or problem in your own life story?

### **2. Failure, Regret**

Everybody experiences failure and regrets in life, even for the happiest and luckiest lives. Looking back over your entire life, please identify and describe the greatest failure or regret you have experienced. The failure or regret can occur in any area of your life – work, family, friendships, or any other area. Please describe the failure or regret and the way in which the failure or regret came to be. How have you coped with this failure or regret? What effect has this failure or regret had on you and your life story?

### **3. Other**

What else can you tell me that would help me understand your most fundamental beliefs and values about life and the world? What else can you tell me that would help me understand your overall philosophy of life?

## **F. Life Theme**

Looking back over your entire life story with all its chapters, scenes, and challenges, and extending back into the past and ahead into the future, do you discern a central theme, message, or idea that runs throughout the story? What is the major theme in your life story? Please explain.

## **G. Reflection**

Thank you for this interview. I have just one more question for you. Many of the stories you have told me are about experiences that stand out from the day-to-day. For example, we talked about a high point, a turning point, a scene about your health, etc. Given that most people don't share their life stories in this way on a regular basis, I'm wondering if you might reflect for one last moment about what this interview, here today, has been like for you. What were your thoughts and feelings during the interview? How do you think this interview has affected you? Do you have any other comments about the interview process?



## **Appendix 2: Coding Lexicon, First Draft**

Some of the key discoveries about NextGen Jews (Rose Foundation, 2014) are that they:

1. Belong to and managing diverse social networks
2. Have sense of alienation from and dissatisfaction with Jewish organizations
3. Are committed to creating their own Jewish experiences
4. Have broad social awareness

### Themes from our expert interviews

5. **Engagement should be relationship-focused.** Engaging young people is a relationship-focused activity, not a program or organizational focused activity.
6. **Young Jews want choices and options.** The next generation wants choices and options in the activities and programs they engage with
7. **Programming has shifted from institutions to community.** Several interviewees have found success bringing programs out of the institution and into people's homes or other more comfortable settings.

### Universalistic themes from our discussions

8. **Belonging.** The Jewish world provides us with a sense of belonging. The sense of belonging is important to people's well-being and the vitality of the Jewish community.
9. **Community.** There was also an extensive discussion about how the Jewish world provides us with a sense of community.
10. **Non-judgmental/Allowing for Differences.** Each person engages in Judaism in an individual way and we should be sensitive to and non-judgmental about those differences in beliefs and practices. Judaism should be adaptive allowing people to have multiple touch points for engagement within the community.
11. **Values.** Engagement happens on many levels. For some it's a way to live out their values. To some extent the discussion was about how Jewish values line up with good, solid, humanistic values. (See below for discussion of particularly Jewish values.)
12. **Social Justice.** The Jewish community helps us accomplish important things in the social justice arena. The desire to work towards social justice is both Jewish--acting on the Jewish value of tikkun olam—and universal.
13. **Global Interest.** There was discussion about younger people's interest in global issues such as global warming or public health.

### Particularistic themes from our discussions

14. **Education about Jewish Texts, History, & Wisdom.** The group thought it was important for the next generation to have a strong education rooted in Jewish wisdom, history, and texts. They should have the opportunity to draw on that wisdom as they face life's difficulties and opportunities.
15. **Experience of Jewish Ritual.** The group thought it was important for the next generation to have personal experience with Jewish ritual, and to see how they might derive



meaning from that ritual. These experiences might include, for example, grieving, learning, Shabbat, other celebrations, and rites of passage.

**16. Deep and Broad Particularly Jewish Experience.** The group thought the next generation should have broad and deep exposure to particularly Jewish approaches to life. This will allow them to understand the potential richness of Jewish life, and make their own choices.

**17. The Jewish Community's Relationship with Israel.** When engaging the next generation it is important to understand and engage their connection to Israel and their feelings about Israel.

**18. Wrestling with Tradition and Beliefs.** There was a sense that younger generations want to choose for themselves and that it is helpful to assure them that there is the ability within Judaism to question and wrestle with the process.