The Socio-Demography of American Jewry

Guidelines for Moderators and Presenters

The goal of the conference is to engage researchers who conduct studies of the socio-demography of U.S. Jewry with one another, and to provide an opportunity for researchers to engage with journalists, policy makers, and stakeholders who utilize their research. The conference is being held at about the time that preliminary results would have been available from NJPS 2010. NJPS was not conducted, but considerable other data are available, and there is a need to assess what we know, what we need to know, and how our knowledge can be used. The conference is bringing together key researchers who conduct socio-demographic research on American Jewry, along with those who are users of research.

The conference is an academic meeting, and we hope that the highest standards of intellectual rigor will characterize the presentations and discussions. But we would like to create some new norms for our discourse. The traditional academic meeting, which consists of multiple panels of brief lectures – either written papers that are read or PowerPoint decks that are described – has its place, but we would like to alter some of the norms in order to engage more individuals in dialogue and to use our limited time as effectively as possible. Much as the traditional college lecture is being challenged by a new generation of digital students and a host of new ways to transmit/share information, we want to create some new ways for scholars to engage with one another and with the policy/stakeholder consumer of the work.

General Guidelines:

Time: Sessions will start and end as scheduled. Although we don’t want to rush discussion and limit schmoozing, it’s not fair to other participants if the schedule isn’t followed. As well, many are on tight travel schedules. Steinhardt/Cohen Center staff who will serve as hosts will do their best to ensure that folks are in the room as scheduled.

Background materials: The key to fostering dialogue, and limiting the amount of simple information-sharing (given the complexity of the information/data we deal with), is for presenters to provide materials which can be hyper-linked to the presenter’s session in the online program. Along with biographical information, 1-3 papers should be included. What’s appropriate will depend on the presenter (and, in some cases, e.g., non-academics, it may not be necessary).

Mechanics: Each session will have an assigned “techie” and a time-keeper (both will be Brandeis staff). The techie will help presenters who want to use PowerPoint slides and, as well, will facilitate use of biographical slides that will substitute for introductions (we mostly know one another and standard introductions would just fill time). The time-keeper will help to make sure that the session starts/ends on time and will also let the moderator/presenter know when speakers go over time.

Moderator Guidelines:

Role: Moderators should view themselves as facilitators of the discussion. They may want to make a framing comment at the beginning of a session and, later, engage with presenters and the audience in
raising questions, pointing out areas of agreement/disagreement. The role involves managing the discussion and figuring out when/how to engage the audience.

**Preparation:** In advance of the conference, the moderator should arrange a conference call of presenters (Steinhardt/Cohen Center staff will make logistic arrangements and one of the local team will participate). The moderator should review the order of presentation, the general focus of each presentation, and the kind of issues that should be addressed in the discussion. A discussion should be held with respect to time limits. As described below (presenter guidelines), it is suggested that no single presentation comment be longer than 10 minutes, any changes to the time frame should be discussed beforehand.

**Mechanics:** The moderator should provide a bio that can be posted on the conference website and, at his/her discretion, any papers that are directly relevant to the session theme. Re: the session, although the staff will assist in managing the technology and timing, particularly timing, the moderator will have to make sure that no single presenter takes time away from other presenters or those in the audience who wish to make comments.

**Presenter Guidelines:**

**General:** Each presenter should have 15-20 minutes of “air time” during their plenary. Rather than a single 15-20 presentation, it is suggested that presenters make initial remarks of no more than 10 minutes (5 or so Powerpoint slides), with one to three rounds of additional comments of 3-5 minutes each (to react to other presenters/questions). Along with providing detailed information in pre-conference posted materials, presenters can maximize how they use their time by avoiding: (a) discussion of the time limits and its effect on what you can discuss, as well as, how much/little time you have, (b) extensive references (either to your own work or others), and (c) elaborate discussion of data (which can be better presented in written materials).

**Substance:** The initial presentation (10 minutes) should focus on summarizing key ideas and challenges. Later, in response to other presenters and questions from the audience, presenters should focus on how their ideas/conclusions relate to others on the panel and to the overall conference themes. Disagreement is fine, disagreeableness is less so. The focus of each session should be for the presenter to help others at the conference understand better their ideas/perspective and, at the end, for each of us to have learned and understood things that we didn’t before.

**Mechanics:** Along with providing advance bios and materials to be posted (in PDF and/or DOC format), please provide any PowerPoint slides by Wednesday, October 19th. To save time, we want to preload materials and avoid technical pauses. If it’s impossible to provide the slides before you come to Boston, please send us a draft version (to enable us to test your format) by the 19th. A “techie” will be available to assist. In regard to timing, please be respectful of the moderator and other panelists. If you think you need help, check with the time-keeper ahead of time: by request, he/she will be prepared to signal you at regular intervals.