

**11:30 - 12:30** Research Agenda  
Introduction by Dr. Wendy Rosov

Prior to the Conference, the members of this Working Group brainstormed a list of research topics they thought essential to helping to build the field of Continuing Rabbinic Education. Once we have a better understanding of who are our rabbis are and what are the key circumstances in their professional and personal lives, then we will be better equipped to design appropriate Continuing Rabbinic Education opportunities for them. The Working Group decided to categorize the topics in four overarching themes, present them to the Conference participants and solicit their feedback and further suggestions for a research agenda.

## Research Agenda for Continuing Rabbinic Education - Introduction



- The Research Working Group identified four overarching themes that might be worthy of research:
  - 1) Increasing numbers (likely 50% or slightly more) or rabbis who are serving in NON-PULPIT settings;
  - 2) Increasing numbers of rabbis working part-time by design (rather than by default);
  - 3) The shift in gender at the seminaries and by extension in much of the field to predominantly female rabbis;
  - 4) The need for ongoing cultivation of a personal spiritual life and as well as *Torah lishma*.

## Research Agenda for Continuing Rabbinic Education - Questions



- 1) Are these the most pressing items for a research agenda?
- 2) What is missing?
- 3) Prioritize your list.
- 4) How do these issues impact on how continuing rabbinic education should be delivered?
- 5) Does the age of the rabbi, or, the number of years out of the seminary impact on the type of continuing rabbinic education that would be most helpful?
- 6) Are there areas where it might be helpful for rabbis and cantors to study together?

### 1) What are the most pressing items for a research agenda?

- Agree with those overarching themes.
- The connection between research & advocacy. Rather than long-term research, would like research about what is working right now. "Inspirational models" will help us get stakeholder buy-in for the vision and need for CRE. In the short term it will also help us in program design and adaptation.
- **Who drives the agenda of CRE?** Rabbis who are self-reflective? Congregants? Non-congregants? Voice of non-rabbis - especially when you add the question of funding?
- How many rabbis do we really need given the size of our community?
- **Investigate the capacities and skills varied communities need from rabbis**
- Survey rabbis about what they perceive themselves as needing/wanting
- The degree to which different markets align and differ
- What can best be taught after seminary instead of during seminary?

- Do different parts of rabbinic service need different kinds of continuing ed?
- CRE for non congregational rabbis
- What is the role of the rabbi, given the evolution of the community?
- Better document lack of passion and burnout. What contributes to the loss of idealism in the rabbinate
- How to make it possible for talented people to switch tracks (skills sets)?
- What do lay people want?
- Why are 50% of rabbis not working in congregations?
- Are there dysfunctions in congregational life that impact on rabbis
- Balance of life for rabbis.
- What are the rabbis looking for?
- What impact is CRE having on the overall health of rabbis?
- What makes a sustainable rabbinate? What is success? (from different points of view)
- What are models of rabbinic leadership?
- “Best Practices” in how to deal with the tension caused with so many professionals acting as volunteers in congregations.
- The Issues of job satisfaction—why do people become rabbis, what sustains them, etc.
- What do we need to know about what is going on in order to develop CRE?
- What is the impact of working in multiple settings on rabbis?
- **Is American Jewry getting what it needs from its rabbis? Is there a consensus of standards or benchmarks from them?**
- Survey unaffiliated Jews about what they would look for in a rabbi.
- What is the impact of working such long hours without time off on rabbis?
- Compare what rabbis feel they need versus what the CRE programs provide.
- Comparative research with other careers?
- Culture change in world - and impact on expectations on rabbi. (like from Christian world)
- How does a rabbinic career impact a rabbi’s personal family life?
- What are the current economic trends in the rabbinate?
- What are the social, economic impacts of life on synagogues, congregants, rabbis?
- Demographic and movement of families - i.e. Divorce, multi-family
- Are there denominational differences that impact the rabbinate?
- Are communities willing to invest in prescribed CRE? - How can community understand this as a value?
- How is success in CRE evaluated?
- What does success look like from participation on CRE? In the field altogether?
- Who sets the benchmarks for funding?
- What are the needs of rabbis in non-pulpit settings?

- Where does rabbinic education end and continuing education begin?
- Does learning need to happen with lay leaders? With other roles (cantors, educators)?
- Does standardization limit?
- How is text used in the pulpit?
- Common thread in 4 themes: non-traditional approach to being rabbi creates a new paradigm. What are the roles rabbis are taking on?
- The definition of success from rabbinic and lay points of view
- What are people looking for nationally + locally from “successful” rabbis?
- Different communities have different expectations
  - Do they divide along denominational lines or vary literally from one community to the other?
- **Who directs directions of CE?**
- What causes burn out? **What causes people to leave?**
- An examination of emerging communities that function without rabbis