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On The Fringe

A qualitative study of the heavily affiliated and deeply unaffiliated children of intermarriage in the modern Jewish Landscape

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Abstract:

Intermarriage has always been and continues to be one of the most controversial issues within the Jewish community. With nearly half the population of Jews in the U.S. marrying non-Jewish individuals, Jewish institutions, rather than battling the concept of intermarriage, are trying to find ways to cope with the reality on the ground. Some studies show that engagement, rather than parentage, is the most important factor in determining one's Jewish identity. My capstone project focuses on the heavily affiliated and deeply unaffiliated children of intermarriage and their Jewish identity construction. By interviewing young adult Jews who were raised in intermarried households, I have formulate case studies of each participant's formative experiences in regards to Jewish education, home ritual, life cycle events and other relevant factors. Once the data from these face-to-face interviews was collected and analyzed, I compared and contrasted the upbringing of each participant in order to delineate key points of connection that led to particularly weak or strong identification and affiliation with Judaism. Section 4 contains a brief "best practices" guide for Jewish clergy and communal professionals.

On The Fringe

A qualitative study of the heavily affiliated and deeply unaffiliated children of intermarriage in the modern Jewish landscape

Introduction

When I was a child growing up in the small Jewish community of Albuquerque, New Mexico, I did not realize that my sister and I, and thousands of other children like us, were at the center of a controversy raging in the Jewish community. As one of only three Jewish students in my high school of over 1,000 people, my contact with other Jews was limited and I had no real awareness of the key Jewish communal issues of the day. I did not know that a vast majority of the Jewish community around the world was panicked by the rising rate of intermarriage. I was blissfully unaware of *klal Israel's* concern over whether or not these intermarried couples were raising Jewish children, and, more importantly, as one of the many children born to a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother, I had no clue that many Jews around the world would not even consider me Jewish. Instead, I grew up with a strong, if unsupported, Jewish identity, reveling in my "otherness," dedicated to self-study, and loving Judaism even while isolated from other Jews. I often wonder what my life would have been like had I been more connected and cognizant. As a young adult, living and working in the Jewish world, I became painfully aware of the controversy surrounding my family and Jewish status and hid my background like it was some dark, shameful secret. Children who are the products of intermarriage live with a stigma, the stigma of somehow being "less-than." When the organized Jewish world speaks about intermarriage in the Jewish community, it is never presented as positive or even value-neutral. In the most polite language, typically employed by those who support interfaith family outreach,

such families are viewed as a "challenge"; in less welcoming circles, they are seen as a "problem," a "worrisome statistic" or—employing the harshest interpretation of Emil Fackenheim—"Hitler's posthumous victory." But what are the roots of this negative assessment of intermarriage and are they unique to the Jewish community? Werner Cahnman, in his book Intermarriage and Jewish Life, points out that "the existence of preferential marriage groups is not something new. Ethnology and anthropology yield much evidence that this has been customary among almost all peoples about which there is any information. Usually, however, with prolonged culture contact, accompanied by pervasive contact in a society, there is a lessening of endogamy and a weakening of the emotional and intellectual support of preferential marriage groups. This, I think, has occurred much more slowly among Jews in American society than has the participation of that group into all other facets of American life."[1] So what makes the Jewish community different? Why do we hold tightly to our commitment to endogamy when we are happy to assimilate in all other aspects of American life? In 1909, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the organizing rabbinic body for the Reform Movement—currently the largest liberal branch of modern Judaism—declared that intermarriage was "contrary to the tradition of the Jewish religion and should therefore be discouraged by the American rabbinate."[2] Many might argue that the Reform Movement's rejection of the binding nature of halachah was also "contrary to the tradition of the Jewish religion" and yet, endogamy was seen as an integral part of Judaism and Jewish identity and is still the preferred paradigm for even this most progressive denomination. Even for those committed to doing outreach and welcoming interfaith families, the issue of intermarriage is often couched in troublesome

[1] Cahnman, Werner *Intermarriage and Jewish Life: A Symposium* (New York, NY: Herzl Foundation, 1963), 4
[2] Stillpass, Leo J. *The Attitude of Reform Judaism toward Intermarriage: A Study of the Problem of Intermarriage From Biblical times to the Present Day Attitude of the Members of the C.C.A.R.* 1943. 7

language. Some assert that the very term "outreach" is offensive because it implies that the couple has somehow gone astray and needs to be brought back into the fold. Terence Elkes, President of the Jewish Outreach Institute and committed advocate for creating welcoming institutions for interfaith families, writes that intermarriage is a "by-product of America's open society" and "presents a challenge for the community to reach out and embrace those who have found their way into our midst..."[3] If a champion of outreach like Elkes speaks about the phenomenon as if it is highly problematic and a "challenge," one must ask the question: what is it about intermarriage that has the Jewish community so panicked and is that panic legitimate? Is intermarriage in the modern Jewish community a blessing or a curse, and what can and should the Jewish community be doing to respond to this growing trend? Gone are the days when we had the luxury of asking the question "is this good for the Jews?" It is no longer necessary, or even helpful to place a value judgment on intermarriage, positive or negative, because the facts on the ground reveal an undeniable reality—an increasing majority of Jews are intermarrying and no longer feel beholden to seek out Jewish life partners. The purpose of this thesis is not to question the positive or negative effects of this growing trend, but, rather, to analyze the internal dynamics of the modern interfaith family and, more specifically, the adult children who grew up in such homes. Section two of this thesis will describe the methodologies employed in finding, selecting and interviewing these study participants in much greater detail, but the first section of my research is dedicated to an examination and interrogation of our sacred texts which form the foundation of our debate over intermarriage in the Jewish world.

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[3] Kerry M. Olitzky and Joan Peterson Littman, *Making a Successful Jewish Interfaith Marriage: The Jewish Outreach Institute Guide to Opportunities, Challenges, and Resources* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 2003), 10

Section 1: Textual Tensions

Positive Biblical Examples of Exogamy

When one considers modern attitudes among even more progressive Jewish institutions, it appears as if intermarriage is never viewed positively, but this has not always been the case, according to Karen Strand Winslow who writes in her article *Ethnicity, Exogamy, and Zipporah,* "Some Torah narratives imply that to marry within certain defined groups is to preserve the community's religious vitality and ethnic identity—defined as mutually informing. Other texts, in contrast, demonstrate that sentiments and prohibitions against 'foreigners' must be set aside because the new Israel is a religious community. These texts affirm that outsiders contributed to the establishment of Israel." [4] Winslow goes on to cite several biblical examples of exogamous marriages that helped to build and strengthen the Jewish people. For instance, according to the book of Genesis, Abraham was both endogamous and exogamous. His first wife, Sarah, shares a close kinship with Abraham, but her handmaid, Hagar, who later becomes Abraham's second wife, is an Egyptian slave. Hagar bears Abraham a son, Ishmael, but when Sarah gives birth in her old age, the birthright and covenant pass to her son Isaac, rather than his older brother, Ishmael. While this early biblical episode sets the stage for both endogamous and exogamous marriage, the scene is not value neutral. With the supersession of what we have come to think of as the natural laws of inheritance (i.e. the eldest son is first in line to receive the birthright), we can clearly see the authors preference for the seed of endogamous unions rather than exogamous

[4] Karen Strand Winslow, "Ethnicity, Exogamy, and Zipporah," *Women in Judaism* 4, no. 1 (2006), 3

ones. Later in our narrative, while Isaac and Jacob were obliged by their parents to marry within their clan, there is no mention in Genesis of Jacob attempting to make endogamous matches for his sons; several of them later marry or produce children with foreign women. Additionally, Jacob's sons, Levi and Simeon, take Hivite women as plunder from Shechem after avenging their sister's rape. Both Joseph and Judah took non-Israelite wives; Joseph married Asenath, the daughter of an Egyptian priest, and their union produced Ephraim and Manasseh, who, although born to an Egyptian during Joseph's exile, were fully embraced and adopted by Jacob on his death bed, who said;

> *"Now, your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, shall be mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine no less than Reuben and Simeon. But progeny born to you after them shall be yours; they shall be recorded instead of their brothers in their inheritance." (Gen. 48:5-6).*

Judah, similarly, married the daughter of Shua, a Canaanite, and then again in Genesis 38, Judah came to impregnate Tamar, the widow of his sons, Er and Onan. The biblical narrative makes it clear that Tamar is no relation to Judah and, therefore, is most likely a Canaanite like his wife Shua. It is Tamar's son, Perez, who is said to have carried on Judah's line. In the book of Exodus, we are introduced to Moses and Zipporah, perhaps the most central inter-married biblical couple in the Tanakh, although the Torah only hints at Zipporah's potential "outsider" status when Aaron and Miriam complain about Moses' marriage to the "Cushite woman." Some rabbinic and modern biblical scholars have asserted that the "Cushite woman" was someone other than Zipporah, but, as the daughter of a Midianite priest rather than a Hebrew slave in Egypt, Winslow asserts that Zipporah would have been viewed as somehow "other" even if she was not the "Cushite woman" that Miriam and Aaron complained so bitterly against. Much later, in the book of Ruth, we see a courageous Moabite woman follow her mother-in-law, Naomi,

back to her late husband's ancestral homeland and take another Israelite husband, Boaz, at Naomi's prompting. Although the midrashic rabbis create a narrative around the character of Ruth that entails a halachic conversion process, there is no textual evidence in the Torah to substantiate their claim. Recall, the Moabites, along with the Ammonites, were considered unacceptable converts according to Deuteronomy 23:3, "*An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the assembly of Adonai; even to the tenth generation shall none of them enter into the assembly of Adonai forever.*" In spite of this prohibition, Boaz is amenable to marrying Ruth and, through their offspring, she becomes the great grandmother of King David. Winslow points out that "These cases of exogamy and exogamous progeny are not marginal, since the later tribes and kingdoms of Judah and Israel are both at stake."[5] What would the biblical world have looked like without these exogamous pairings? What would the Jewish people have been without women like Tamar and Ruth?

Proscriptions of Intermarriage in the Tanakh and Rabbinic Literature

Although we have numerous positive affirmations of exogamy in the Tanakh, the negative proscriptions against intermarriage carry more weight throughout rabbinic literature and the Jewish legal codes. Almost every piece of halachah forbidding intermarriage derives its ruling from the following biblical verse:

> *"You shall not intermarry with them: do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons. For they will turn your children away from Me to worship other gods, and the Eternal's anger will blaze forth against you, promptly wiping you out."*
>
> *Deuteronomy 7:3-4*

[5] Strand Winslow, Karen. "Ethnicity, Exogamy, and Zipporah." *Women in Judaism* 4, no. 1 (2006).

Despite the copious positive examples of intermarriage throughout the Tanakh, the wording of this single verse makes the intent of the biblical writer crystal clear: intermarriage is strictly forbidden because it will lead future generations of Israelites away from God. Although the Torah is multi-faceted, one of its main goals is to act as a polemic against paganism. So fearful were the biblical authors of graven images or idol cult worship that they banned any and all practices that were even loosely related to paganism. For instance, anthropologists believe that the biblical prohibition of cooking a kid in its mother's milk was actually a proscription against a pagan practice where herdsman would literally boil the meat of a baby goat in the milk of its mother because they believed the ritual would ensure a strong and healthy flock.

> *"Since God makes it clear in the Torah that we are to avoid the practices of the idolatrous peoples and maintain ourselves as a distinct nation, many assume that the Chukim, and particularly the laws of Kashrut, exist to counteract certain idolatrous rituals. Apparently it was a common pagan sacrificial practice to offer a fetal or new born goat boiled in the milk of its mother, and this was considered an abomination for the Israelites...Obviously the practice existed, or the Torah would have no reason to prohibit it."*[6]

Strong associations with pagan practices or pagans themselves were prohibited in the Torah, and, therefore intermarriage was banned because it was seen as a gateway to paganism. But the rabbis of the Talmud, who understood the realities of living in a diaspora, scrutinized this verse further and, rather than seeing it as an outright ban on intermarriage, used a literal translation of the verse to establish matrilineal descent. Tractate Kiddushin 68b states:

> *"How do we know that the issue (child) takes her (the mother's) status? — Because Torah says, 'the wife and her children shall be her master's.'(Ex. 21:4) How do we know [it of a freeborn] Gentile woman? — Torah says, 'neither shall you make marriages with them.'(Deut. 7:3) How do we know that her issue bears her status? — R. Johanan said on the authority of R. Simeon b.*

[6] http://www.kolel.org/pages/5762/reeh.html

Yohai, because Torah says, 'for he will turn away your son from following me,' your son by an Israelite woman is called 'your son,' but your son by a heathen is not called 'your son.'

As is often the case when the rabbis are arguing over the finer points of halachah, matrilineal descent appears to boil down to a semantic argument. In order to understand the full context, one must read the preceding verses in Exodus, chapter 21:

"Should you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall work for six years, and in the seventh year, he shall go out to freedom without charge. If he comes in alone, he shall go out alone; if he is a married man, his wife shall go out with him. If his master gives him a wife, and she bears him sons or daughters, the woman and her children shall belong to her master, and he shall go out alone." (Ex. 21:2-4)

Rashi points out that the verse from Exodus 21:4 refers specifically to a Canaanite maidservant being given to a Hebrew slave and not a Hebrew maidservant being given to a Hebrew slave. He elaborates by asking the following question:

"From here we deduce that his master has the option to give him [the slave] a Canaanite maidservant [in order] to beget slaves from her. Or, perhaps this means only an Israelite woman? Therefore, Scripture says: 'The woman and her children shall belong to her master.' Thus, He is speaking only about a Canaanite woman, for a Hebrew woman she, too, goes free after six [years], and even before six [years], when she develops signs [of puberty], she goes free, as it is said: 'your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman [that one shall serve you for six years]' (Deut. 15:12). [This] teaches [us] that a Hebrew [maidservant] also goes free after six [years]. (Mechilta, Kid. 14b)

Because the Torah refers to the children as "her children," the rabbis deduce that the children of a mixed marriage take the status of their mother, in this case the status of a Canaanite slave, rather than that of their father, the Israelite slave who must be released after six years. If the maidservant was Israelite, rather than Canaanite, she would be released with her children after six years, just like her husband, but since the verse says that she is returned to the master who purchased her after her husband is set free, we must assume that she cannot be an Israelite. Since

the children are "her" children, they are also considered Canaanite. Although an unlikely scenario, if a Hebrew maidservant was given a husband by her master and they had children, the master would be obliged to free the maidservant along with her children after the seven years, but not her husband. In either case, the rabbis contend that mother and child are of the same status and, therefore, share the same fate.

The case of the "blasphemer" in Leviticus is one of the only instances in the Torah where we learn about the negative actions of an adult child of mixed ancestry. In Leviticus 24:10-11, we read:

> *"There came out among the Israelites a man whose mother was Israelite and whose father was Egyptian. And a fight broke out between the half-Israelite and a certain Israelite man. The son of the Israelite woman pronounced the Name in blasphemy, and he was brought to Moses—now his mother's name was Shelomith daughter of Dibri of the tribe of Dan."*

On a surface reading of the first verse, clearly the lineage of the man is unusual, otherwise there would be no reason to make a point of highlighting it in the text. Also, there is a clear delineation between him and the rest of the "children of Israel." Although he is "among" them, he is clearly not considered fully "one of them." Rashi, questioning the nature of the quarrel mentioned in the same verse, cites a baraita that highlights this tension:

> *"He had come to pitch his tent within the encampment of the tribe of Dan. So [this tribe] said to him, "What right do you have to be here?" Said he, "I am of the descendants of Dan," [claiming lineage through his mother, who was from the tribe of Dan]. They said to him, "[But Scripture states] (Num. 2:2): 'The children of Israel shall [encamp] each man by his grouping according to the insignias of his father's household,'" [thereby refuting his maternal claim]. He entered Moses' tribunal [where his case was tried], and came out guilty. Then, he arose and blasphemed. (Vayikra Rabbah 32:3).*

The troubling tension between the Baraita and the rabbinic discussion of Deut. 7:3-4 is that the "blasphemer" is subject to the laws of Israel because of his maternal claim, but none of the tribal privileges because his father is Egyptian. He is not allowed to live alongside his mother's kin and, likely, is not accepted as an Egyptian either; he is an outcast through no fault of his own, but by the accident of his birth. This tension is highlighted by the remainder of the Sugya in Kiddushin 68b: *"Shall we say that Rabina holds that if a heathen or a [non-Jewish] slave cohabits with a Jewess the issue is mamzer (a bastard)? — [No.] Granted that he is not [regarded as] fit, he is not mamzer either, but merely stigmatized as unfit."* Although the child of a Jewish mother and a non-Jewish father is considered Jewish and not a mamzer, that child is still considered somehow unfit among the congregation of Israel. Here, the son of Shelomith is not only considered somehow "unfit," but barred from living with his mother and her tribesmen. Later, when the man in question blasphemes, there seems to be some deliberation as to whether or not he is subject to the laws of Israel. His status comes into question when the community has to decide how he should be punished. On this issue, Rashi cites Ramban regarding the portion of the verse that says that the son of Shelomith "went out among the children of Israel": *"[This] teaches [us] that he converted. Although he was halachically a Jew, since he was born to a Jewish mother, "he converted" here means that he immersed and was circumcised at Mount Sinai 'among the children of Israel,' [i.e., together with all the children of Israel.]" (Ramban; Torath Kohanim 24:23).* Although Ramban makes note of the fact that the man is halachicly Jewish, there seems to be a pressing need for him to deduce that the "blasphemer" underwent some kind of conversion in order to be "among the children of Israel." One might deduce that the rabbis were either uncomfortable with the idea of someone of mixed parentage living among the Israelites and therefore assumed that the man in question must have converted, or, felt the need

to justify the harsh decree of stoning against a man who could not truly live as an Israelite but, nonetheless, was sentenced to die as one. Rashi goes on to question the identity of the "blasphemer's" mother, asking why her name is explicitly mentioned when no one else is referred to by name in the narrative. Rashi asks: *"Why is her name mentioned? The Torah publicizes this one, effectively telling us that she alone [among all the women of Israel] was [involved in an] illicit [relation] (Vayikra Rabbah 32:5), albeit unwitting on her part."* The term "unwitting" likely infers that the Israelite woman was not a voluntary participant in conceiving her son and may have even been the victim of rape. The implication that no daughter of Israel would ever wittingly participate in "illicit relations" with a non-Israelite speaks volumes about the rabbinic attitude towards exogamy. Adding insult to injury, the rabbis are not willing to simply dismiss Shelomith as the unwitting victim of rape. Similar to Jacob's daughter Dinah who was raped by Shechem, Shelomith's virtue is called into question in the midrash. The Rabbis contend that *"[Her name denotes that] she was a chatterbox, [always going about saying] "Peace (שָׁלוֹם) be with you! Peace be with you! Peace be with you [men]!" (Vayikra Rabbah 32:5).* Rashi advances this point by taking note of the fact that her surname, Dibri, derived from the Hebrew root דבר, meaning "speak," which *"[denotes that] she was very talkative, talking (מְדַבֶּרֶת) with every person. That is why she fell into sin."* Clearly, whether witting or unwitting, the rabbis take a very harsh view of exogamous couplings. Likewise, Jewish men do not escape the harsh decree of the rabbis. While the rabbis are not as quick to question the sexual mores of Jewish men who take up with non-Jewish women, they do label their offspring as "goyim" and not to be counted among the nation of Israel unless they undergo a halachic conversion.

In the post-exilic period referred to in the Book of Ezra, the prohibition of exogamy reaches new heights. In Israel, the restriction on intermarriage is limited to Canaanites, but in the

Babylonian captivity, the people come to understand that they are to be "a holy people unto Adonai their God" and, thus, this prohibition was extended to mixed-marriages with any gentile. We see the basis of the initiation of this rabbinic prohibition when the leadership in Babylonia come to Ezra and complain that:

> *"The people of Israel and the priests and Levites have not separated themselves from the people of the land whose abhorrent practices are like those of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and Amorites. They have taken of their daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons so that the holy seed has become intermingled with the people of the land; and it is the officers and prefects who have taken the lead in this trespass." (Ezra 9:1-2)*

Ezra, convinced that God had shown favor to the children of Israel by saving a token remnant of the community and granting them exile in Babylonia rather than execution in the land of Israel, is overwhelmingly distraught by this news and rends his garment and pulls out his hair and beseeches God, saying:

> *"Now, what can we say in the face of this, our God, for we have forsaken Your commandments, which You gave us through Your servants the prophets when You said, 'The land that you are about to possess is a land unclean through the uncleanness of the people of the land, through their abhorrent practices with which they, in their impurity, have filled it from one end to the other. Now then, do not give your daughters in marriage to their sons or let their daughters marry your sons; do nothing for their well-being or advantage, then you will be strong and enjoy the bounty of the land and bequeath it to your children forever'...**shall we once again violate** Your commandments by intermarrying with these people who follow such abhorrent practices? Will You not rage against us till we are destroyed without remnant or survivor?" (Ezra 9:10-15)*

The book of Ezra employs, perhaps, the strongest language against the institution of intermarriage. Unlike other parts of the Tanakh, it is impossible to find any kind of positivity towards the practice of exogamy. Ultimately, it was the adoption of "abhorrent" pagan practices

that the prophets believed led to the destruction of the temple and exile from the land of Israel and intermarriage was seen as the vehicle driving that wayward behavior. In short, intermarriage was seen as the path to sin and inevitable divine annihilation. Returning to the initial question asked by Werner Cahnman about Judaism's unusually sluggish move towards exogamy, we may find our answer, as the people of the book, in the pages of our sacred texts.

Although exogamy seems to be prevalent and often positive in the Torah, the proscriptions against the practice are resolute. Jewish tradition, for the past two thousand years, has embraced the rabbinic view mandating endogamy. In modern times, the more liberal/progressive institutions in the Jewish community have worried less about the biblical prohibition and more about the threat that intermarriage poses to Jewish continuity. With the loss of six million Jews in the Holocaust, anything that threatens to decrees our numbers is, understandably, cause for alarm. But like the non-Jewish spouses in the Torah who allowed our patriarchs and matriarchs to carry on their genetic lines and sacred traditions, many non-Jewish spouses in our day and age have committed themselves to raising Jewish children and creating a Jewish home for their families. Perhaps, rather than stigmatizing these non-Jewish spouses and their children and viewing them as a "challenge" to be overcome, we can see them as a blessing, a welcome addition to our small, but global Jewish family; people who, like Ruth, Zipporah, Asenath, Ephraim, Menasseh and Perez, have so much devotion and passion to share with *klal Israel.*

Section 2: Background and Methodology

Communal responses to intermarriage in contemporary American Society

Although the debate over intermarriage has both biblical and rabbinic roots and is not a new issue for the Jewish community, there has been heightened concern over continuity in the past several decades and an increased awareness of intermarriage and how it may affect the Jewish future. According to Bruce Phillips,

> A single statistic has dominated discussion of the extremely rich and comprehensive portrait of American Jewry emanating from the National Jewish Population Study of 1990: 52% of American Jews who married between 1985 and 1990 chose unconverted gentile partners. Though this finding evoked wide and profound concern, it was not at first explored in depth, nor were its implications for communal policy examined carefully. Responses took a polarized form. On the one hand, some argued that 'the battle against intermarriage is over,' suggesting that a skyrocketing level of intermarriage was inevitable in the open society, and that the only appropriate Jewish communal response was outreach to intermarried couples. Others argued that an exclusive focus on outreach based on an assumption of the inevitability of accelerating was a serious mistake, and that this outreach itself had the effect of validating intermarriage from a Jewish communal perspective.[7]

Although there are clearly deep historical roots to these "wide and profound concerns," many were based on understandable yet untested assumptions about what intermarriage meant for the Jewish future. Kerry Olitzky, opting for increased outreach efforts argued that:

> Where we have failed is in our inability to see interfaith marriage as an opportunity rather than a problem. The United States has absorb thousands of new immigrants from various countries each year, particularly those from the former Soviet Union, but we have not figured out a way to absorb

[7] Bruce A. Phillips, *Re-examining Intermarriage: Trends, Textures and Strategies*(Susan and David Wilstein Institute of Jewish Policy Studies and The American Jewish Committee), vii.

> the thousands of non-Jews who marry into Jewish families each year--the new immigrants in our community. Instead, we often ostracize those individuals and condemn their families to live on the outside. We shun strangers and forbid them access to our communal institutions, forcing them to the periphery and then wondering why they do not enter of their own accord, claiming that they were lost in the first place. By our actions, we punish them for their actions. Even our vocabulary and our descriptions of such family situations characterize them as "other."[8]

Olitzky does not view intermarriage as the root cause of growing apathy in the Jewish community, but, rather, the Jewish institutions and the people who traditionally support them.

> For many years I listened to teachers and colleagues debate the future of the Jewish community, condemning interfaith marriage as the root cause of the slow erosion of Jewish continuity. They blamed the growing irrelevance of synagogues on the phenomenon of intermarriage, distancing themselves from any responsibility...This "ain't it awful" approach has to stop. It may be slowing as intermarriage gains more acceptance by families who realize that religion, philosophy, theology, and practice are not nearly as sweet as the hug of a grandchild. And it may be slowing as religious leaders try to renew their institutions and build new ones, recognizing that the ones that now cover the landscape of the American Jewish community are failing to offer the spiritual sustenance that so many seek. It is finally time for those of us at the center of the Jewish community to speak out and tell the truth, while guiding those who seek direction for their daily lives.[9]

Olitzky's call for re-examination and reform was seen as long overdue by some and decried as the death of Jewish continuity by others. Although many called into question the results and methodology of both the 1990 and 2000-2001 NJPS, claiming that the way in which the data was collected and recorded led to a higher reported rate of intermarriage, the survey was, at most, off by only ten or eleven percentage points. In their article "The Coming Majority; Suggested

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[8] Olitzky and Peterson. xviii

[9] Kerry M. Olitzky and Joan Peterson. Littman, *Making a Successful Jewish Interfaith Marriage: The Jewish Outreach Institute Guide to Opportunities, Challenges, and Resources* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 2003), xvii

Action on Intermarried Households for the Organized Jewish Community," Assistant Executive Director, Paul Golin, presents the irrefutable reality:

> The exact rate [of intermarriage] makes very little difference because even a highly conservative 40% rate of intermarriage still means that we are fast approaching a time where there will be more intermarried than in-married Jewish households. How is that possible? Imagine that there are only 10 Jews. If four of them intermarry (that's a 40% intermarriage rate) they create four intermarried households. The other six who in-marry--since they are marrying each other--create only three in-marriages! So even a 40% intermarriage rate means that there are still more Jewish intermarriages occurring than in-marriages, a ratio of 4:3...in fact, anything above a 33% rate of intermarriage means there are more intermarriages taking place than in-marriages (according to the National Jewish Population Studies, the rate of intermarriage among Jews hasn't been below 33% since the late 1960's!).[10]

Though this simple and straightforward math looks terribly negative on the surface, Golin cites another statistic that points to an incredibly positive trend that should be encouraged:

> Among young families with children, the intermarried population has already been the majority for the past decade. More children under the age of 12 have been born into intermarried households than to in-married households. These numbers become even more important when taken together with another finding of the 2001 NJPS: for the first time in United States history, the total number of Jews has declined. Most communal professionals have "surrendered" to this demographic, accepting the decline as an inevitable and continuing trend. Yet studies show that if the rate of intermarried families raising Jewish children rises above 50%, the Jewish community can actually experience population growth rather than decline. How likely is this to happen? In 1990, the NJPS found that nearly 30% of intermarried families were raising exclusively Jewish children. Increasing the percent of intermarried families raising Jewish children from 30% to above 50% is an attainable goal, and should be a primary mission for the Jewish community.[11]

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[10] Golin, Paul. "The Coming Majority: Suggested Action on Intermarried Households for the Organized Jewish Community." *Jewish Outreach Institute*, April 2003. http://www.joi.org. 1-2

[11] Paul Golin. 3

Framed in less optimistic language, Egon Mayer warned that "those who ignore the potential for Jewish continuity amongst the descendants of the intermarried, given the magnitude of their numbers, are also condemning hope in the American Jewish future." Olitzky writes,

> In the past ten years, over half of the marriages involving Jews have been to partners not born Jewish. At least one third of the three million Jewish families who identify as such in the United States have a head-of-household (this includes men and women) who was not born Jewish. About one third of the families who are members of Reform congregations are interfaith families. And over 50 percent of the children born into Jewish families in the last decade have one set of grandparents who is not Jewish. There is no reason to believe that these percentages are going to become smaller in the years ahead.[12]

According the 2000-2001 NJPS report on Jewish College Students, "approximately 366,000 people between the ages of 18-29 grew up with one Jewish and one non-Jewish parent." Now, more than ten years later, many of these young adults are spouses and parents in their own right and making important decisions about what kind of home and family they want to build, what values and morals they want to give their children, and what traditions they want to pass down to the next generation. This cohort of individuals is key to understanding the effects of intermarriage and its impact on long-term continuity. The Jewish Outreach Institute, eager to conduct a survey of this key cohort, commissioned a study of young adults raised in interfaith households. The study, both qualitative and quantitative, conducted 90 in-person interviews with young adults, ages 22-30, in three major cities, Boston, Chicago and San Francisco. The study attempted to answer the following questions:

- To what extent do the offspring of intermarried couples identify as "Jewish"?
- What feelings, attitudes and/or activities connect this population to their Jewish roots?

[12] Olitzky and Peterson. 2

- What factors and developmental experiences are related to some of the offspring having a Jewish identity while others do not?
- What was it like growing up in a home with parents who came from two different religious traditions?
- What can be done to strengthen and promote attachment to Jewish life among the children of the intermarried? [13]

The study recognized that Jewish identity in 21st century America is radically different from what it was several decades ago. The researchers asserted that

> Modern Jewish identity has become voluntary, internal and personal, rather than religious and communal...The movement away from more private, internalized forms of Jewish identity has compelled Jewish social researchers, including the designers of large-scale studies such as the NJPS, to develop more sensitive tools to measure identity among the overall Jewish population.

In other words, "measuring Jewishness" has become much more of an art rather than a science. According to the study, we can no longer look at synagogue affiliation or ritual observance as the only true indicator of Jewish identity, especially among young adults. Steve Cohen writes in his book *The Jew Within: Self, Family and Community in America*,

> American Jews, at century's end, we believe, have come to view their Jewishness in a very different way than either their parents or they themselves did only two or three decades ago. Today's Jews, like their peers in other religious traditions have turned in-ward in the search for meaning. They have moved away from the organizations, institutions and causes that used to anchor identity and shape behavior. As a result, scholars too must revise their thinking.[14]

For this reason, studies like the one conducted by JOI, are now asking questions to young adults that are much less focused on outward affiliation and much more focused on inward

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[13] Beck, Pearl, Ph.D. "A Flame Still Burns: The Dimensions and Determinants of Jewish Identity Among Young Adults Children of the Intermarried." *Jewish Outreach Institute*, June 2005. 6

[14] Cohen, Steven Martin., and Arnold M. Eisen. *The Jew Within: Self, Family, and Community in America*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000

identification. These questions, while more introspective, are also very subjective and, therefore, difficult to quantify. One of the most interesting findings of the JOI study, the finding on which my research is based, reports that "feelings about the importance of being Jewish also varied considerably by type of upbringing; Nearly 90% of those who were raised either Jewish or "half and half" indicated that being Jewish was "somewhat" or "very" important to them compared to 43% of those raised with no religion and only 33% of those raised in another religion. Overall, nearly 70% of those interviewed said that being Jewish was either "somewhat" or "very" important to them. If 70% of the studies respondents felt their Jewish identity was "somewhat" or "very" important to their own personal identity, it raises some interesting questions about the outliers in the survey; those respondents who said that Judaism was either completely unimportant or extremely important to their personal identification. Who are these outliers? Are there any commonalities in their individual formative experiences that set them apart from the vast majority of those in their cohort, leading them to become either heavily affiliated or completely unaffiliated? What can we learn from them and their families in order to formulate a set of "best practices" for Jewish communal institutions desperate to understand and reach out to this "coming majority?"

Survey Methodology

My initial interest in studying this topic began during the second year of my rabbinical studies at Hebrew Union College in New York, when, during our first Practical Rabbinics class, the students were given an opportunity to introduce themselves to our professors and speak briefly about their personal backgrounds and decisions to enter the rabbinate. When ten out of the twelve students disclosed that they were raised in an interfaith family, our professors, both respected rabbis in the field, looked shocked, but also pleasantly surprised. For the past several

decades, communal wisdom has asserted that high rates of intermarriage would spell the death of the Jewish community and yet, in that classroom, there we sat; incontrovertible proof that the children of intermarried families can be just as connected, if not more so, than children from in-married families. I came to realize that, while still rare, I was not necessarily the exception that proved the rule. Having always thought of myself as a minority within the Jewish community, I entered rabbinical school with the certain knowledge that I would be one of the few, perhaps even the only student at the College-Institute with an interfaith background. I could never have anticipated the reality: over 80% of my classmates were from intermarried households, a number that far exceeded even the most generous intermarriage rate percentages. This discovery led me to wonder whether or not there were any other shared commonalities between me and my fellow students; commonalities that are unique to children of interfaith families and, perhaps even responsible for cementing our bonds and deepening our connections to Judaism and the Jewish community. By all accounts, children of intermarried families are far less likely to be involved in organized Jewish life in any substantive way, so what would lead so many of us to choose a career in the rabbinate? What was so special about our families that we decided to buck fate and fully embrace our Jewish roots despite the challenges of growing up in an interfaith household? In order to analyze this phenomenon, I developed a quantitative survey based on questions from the recent JOI study "A Flame Still Burns; The Dimensions and Determinants of Jewish Identity Among Young Adult Children of Intermarriage," along with questions developed by my thesis advisor, Dr. Bruce Phillips and myself. The final survey questions, which evolved during the interview process, can be found in Appendix A. For the purpose of my study, I selected twelve "outlier" participants, young adults of interfaith families who are at the extreme ends of the affiliation spectrum defined by the JOI study; six of whom are heavily affiliated with the Jewish

community and highly committed to Jewish communal life, and six of whom have very little or no attachment to Judaism or their Jewish identity, either religiously or culturally, and are completely unengaged with the Jewish community. I conducted 12 face-to-face interviews, using a qualitative survey of 53 questions regarding three main categories: 1.) personal background, 2.) religious/cultural/ethnic identity, and 3.) future plans for marriage and children. Unlike the JOI survey, where participants were self-selected, I personally identified each of the 12 participants, all between the ages of 20 and 35, who grew up as the children of an intermarriage (henceforth referred to as CI's). In selecting participants I strove to achieve both gender balance and geographic diversity. There was a 50-50 split between male and female participants in the overall study, but within the respective outlier groups, there were more women participants in the heavily affiliated group than there were in the unaffiliated cohort. Although this is consistent with overall trends in religious affiliation among men and women, I do not think it was particularly consequential in my study because of the relatively small sample size. The highly affiliated group had four women and two men and the unaffiliated group had four men and two women.

Selecting interview participants presented the greatest challenge in my research. Although we know from prior research that there is a far greater number of unaffiliated children of intermarrieds (referred to henceforth as UCI's), this population is difficult to locate and target. Many UCI's have no connection to organized Jewish life and, in most cases, would not outwardly identify or feel the need to regularly disclose information about their Jewish parent. Conversely, finding heavily affiliated children of intermarrieds (referred to henceforth as ACI's), was a fairly easy task, because they are well-connected to the organized Jewish community and, with the stigma of intermarriage weakening, many ACI's feel comfortable and even eager to

share their personal stories. The difficulty/ease of finding UCI's and ACI's, respectively, should not, in any way, be considered indicative of their overall numbers. In order to find UCI participants, I looked to the following three pools: 1.) friends and acquaintances who, at some point, had disclosed that they had one Jewish parent but were not currently affiliated with the Jewish community or did not self-identify as Jewish, 2.) UCI's who participated in the Birthright Israel program purely on the basis that it was an opportunity for free travel, and 3.) UCI's whose parents are heavily affiliated. When attempting to identify an appropriate UCI candidate, I asked the following questions:

- When people ask you about your religious, cultural or ethnic identity, how do you usually respond? (*If their immediate response was "Jewish" then they were disqualified as an appropriate UCI candidate*)
- On a scale of 1-10 (1 being completely unimportant and 10 being extremely important), how important is your Jewish identity to your daily life? (*If they responded with a number greater than 2, they were disqualified as an appropriate UCI candidate*)

Almost all ACI participants were either friends or acquaintances of study participants who expressed the desire to be included in the study. All of the ACI participants are either rabbis, cantors, or Jewish educators and, therefore, were not vetted with the same questions posed to the UCI candidates. Similar to the JOI study, all interview participants were in their 20's and early 30's. According to JOI, this age cohort is significant because

> This period in life is developmentally crucial yet largely understudied. Most people in this population have completed college but are still in the early stages of settling down to a career and to a committed relationship. We thought that studying people in their 20's would provide an interesting opportunity to look both backwards and forwards; this population can reflect on the impact of previous life events (e.g., childhood, adolescence and college) and also discuss their

thoughts and feelings about what they are currently experiencing as well as their plans for the future.

I discovered during the interview process that the older participants were able to reflect on their childhood experiences in a more substantive way. In most cases, I think that many of the older participants are in, or have been in, serious long term relationships or marriages and, therefore, were forced to think about their parents' relationships from the standpoint of replicating or rejecting the models that they were exposed to as youth. Understandably, those with young children or considering starting a family in the very near future had given more thought to their own upbringing for that same purpose. In all cases, I had to take into account the fact that memories are collected and filtered through a variety of different lenses and simply because a participant recalls a certain event in a specific way does not mean that it actually happened as described. Overall, I do believe that the participants felt comfortable telling me details accurately and honestly, to the best of their abilities.

Section 3: Findings

Background Demographics and Early Identity Formation

Of the twelve participants, 50% were female and 50% were male, but, as previously stated, there was not an even ratio of male to female representation between the UCI and ACI cohort. All participants were between the ages of 20-35, with a majority of participants in their late twenties. Most participants grew up in medium to large cities, but many of these cities are not considered major hubs of Jewish life. The participants were a geographically diverse group and were born and raised in cities all over the United States.

In line with what many previous studies have reported about intermarried families, most of the participants grew up in neighborhoods where there were very few or no other Jewish families. Many of these areas were middle to lower-middle income neighborhoods. JOI's Assistant Executive Director, Paul Golin, suggests that one of the major stumbling blocks to reaching out to the unaffiliated and intermarried is that they don't live in or near Jewish institutions.

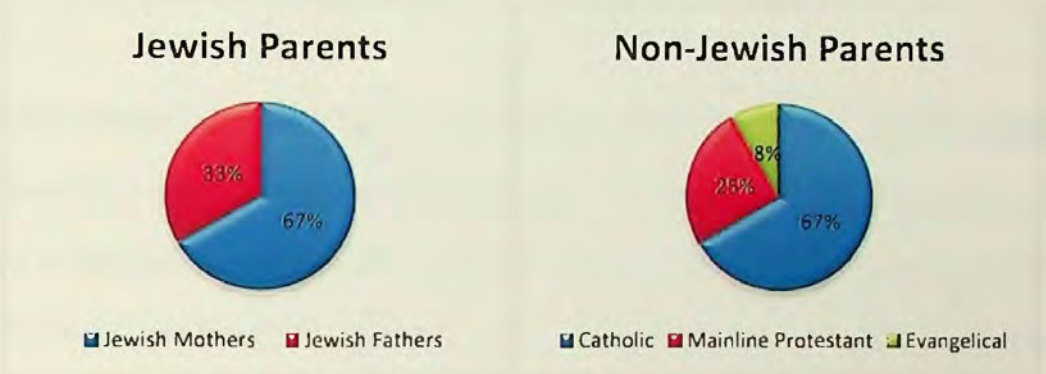
> Demographic trends in almost every community show people spreading out from the center to areas along the periphery. Most times, those who move beyond the city core are young families...Too frequently, populations farther away from the Jewish core do not have their Jewish educational, social, and spiritual needs served.[15]

Only three of the participants reported living in an affluent area with a large percentage of Jewish neighbors. According to findings from the 2000 NJPS, intermarried couples who live in large cities, like Los Angeles, make a "rational choice" in selecting less expensive homes in non-Jewish areas, whereas in-married couples showed a willingness to pay more to live near other Jews and Jewish institutions. The data seems to indicate that intermarried families who affiliate at lower rates with Jewish institutions are unlikely to make housing choices based on where the local synagogue or JCC is located. This initial choice can have far reaching consequences when it comes to raising Jewish children. By picking neighborhoods that have a smaller Jewish population, the child of an intermarried family has fewer Jewish friends to associate with, less access to Jewish youth activities, and fewer Jewish dating opportunities when he/she reaches high school; all three factors are said to lead to lower affiliation rates of CI's as adults.

Regarding parentage, 8 of the 12 participants had Jewish fathers; 4 participants had Jewish mothers. 8 of the 12 non-Jewish parents were Catholic, 3 were mainline Protestants and 1 self-identified as Evangelical. A majority of these non-Jewish parents were described as either "lapsed Catholics" or "secular Christians." Only 3 of these non-Jewish parents are currently actively engaged in a faith community. As for the Jewish parents of my participants, a strong majority are unaffiliated and consider themselves culturally Jewish, but do not have a strong connection to the religion or any religious/communal organizations. According to the survey, only 2 of the 12 Jewish parents are actively engaged in Jewish life on a weekly basis.

[15] Golin, "The Coming Majority", 16

Participants reported that their Jewish parent's religious activities and affiliation was higher when his/her children were in elementary school and prior to them becoming b'nai mitzvah, but decreased or ceased when the children moved out of the family home.

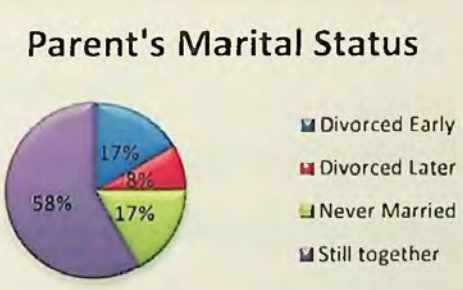


Although not explicitly asked, many participants did mention that, at one point in time, their non-Jewish parent did contemplate conversion. In one case, a non-Jewish mother of one ACI participant finally made the decisions to convert after her daughter moved out of the house.

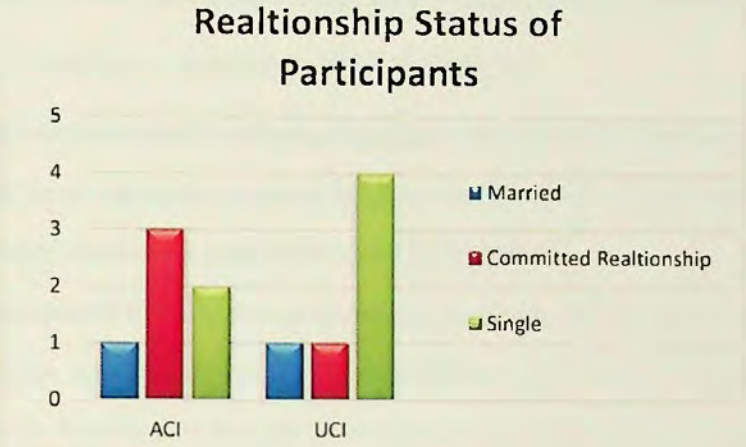
- "When I was eighteen, my mother underwent a Reform conversion. My mother was actually very involved in our synagogue even before her conversion, so when she did officially convert, many of the members of the synagogue were surprised, because they had just assumed she was Jewish."
- "My mother doesn't identify as Catholic, but she never converted to Judaism either. However, she was very involved in our synagogue when I was in high school…but never underwent conversion. She probably would've said that she was raised Catholic but was now a member of the Jewish community."
- "When I was about seven years old, the sisterhood president saw that my mother was very active and involved in our temple, and asked her when she was going to convert, and it gave her pause. So she started thinking about her own faith and religion and decided to give church a second chance, and, consequently, she found a church she really believed in."

- "My mother was raised in a very Catholic household, but she said it never really spoke to her. When she met my dad, she contemplated conversion, but I think she feels like Judaism is really much more than simply a religion and it is something that you have to have a cultural and familial connection to, like you need to be born into it.

In line with the JOI study, a higher percentage of participants reported that their parents were still married, refuting the claim that intermarrieds divorce at a much higher rate. The divorce rate in both this study and the JOI study is consistent with the national average. 1 of the 12 respondents said that his parents had never been married and another said her parents were married a few weeks after her birth, but the marriage was annulled a month later (for simplicity, the annulment has been classified as "never married"). Another 3 participants said that their parents were divorced (2 of these 3 were divorced during their children's formative years, 1 divorced after their son left for college).



As for the participants, a vast majority reported that they are currently unmarried, but (including the 2 participants that are married) approximately half are in some kind of committed relationship. A larger percentage of UCI's are single.



Religious Decision Making

Bruce Phillips' study in 1993 found that a majority of children raised in interfaith families fell into the following four categories of religious upbringing:

1. Christian Only
2. No religion
3. Jewish Only
4. Jewish and Christian (half and half)

Although I did find that my participants fell roughly into these four categories, their upbringings were far more nuanced. For instance, should a child who was raised in a Jewish household that happened to participate in some form of secular celebration of Christmas be considered "Jewish only" or is there another category that might be more applicable, like "Jewish with some secular Christian elements?" Overall, none of my participants were raised in a true "half and half" situation. Many of the participants' families did participate in some kind of Christmas celebration, even if they had agreed to keep a Jewish home and raise the children Jewish. In

nearly every case, the participants reported that they remembered the celebration being very secular and rarely ever or never involving church attendance.

- "We did have a Christmas tree in my house, but I think it was just a Polish tradition and not a religious observance. We would do presents for Christmas, but when I was about 10 or 11 I told them I didn't want it anymore and my mother never said anything."
- "We always did and still do Christmas and Easter with my mother. We only do the very secular parts of it with her, but she does go to church on both holidays. She tries to balance out Chanukah and Christmas by decorating the house with both Christian and Jewish holiday symbols and always buys us gifts for both holidays. My dad just goes along with whatever my mom wants to do. I'm sure it must be difficult for her to be mindful of two religions and their respective holidays."
- "My mother did Christmas and Easter, but only in a very surface, secular kind of way. When I was eleven, we started celebrating the major Jewish holidays. My sister really loved Hanukkah; we would have these intense dreidel tournaments. Although we started doing Hanukkah it wasn't in lieu of Christmas. We did both holidays."
- "We do Christmas in the house because my mother said that it was one of the few things she had any really positive memories about when she was growing up."

In a few cases, these celebrations took place outside of the home, usually at a grandparent's house.

> "We never did any of the Christian holidays; no Christmas at the house and no Easter. We would sometimes join our non-Jewish friends and family at their homes. I can even remember Christmas caroling with my mother and some of her friends."

9 out of 12 participants recall having a Christmas tree in their home. Every UCI participant who grew up with a Christmas tree in their home said that their parents still celebrate the holiday in their household, compared to only 1 of the 5 ACI participants that said they grew up with a Christmas tree at home, but no longer celebrate the holiday. A majority of the ACI participants

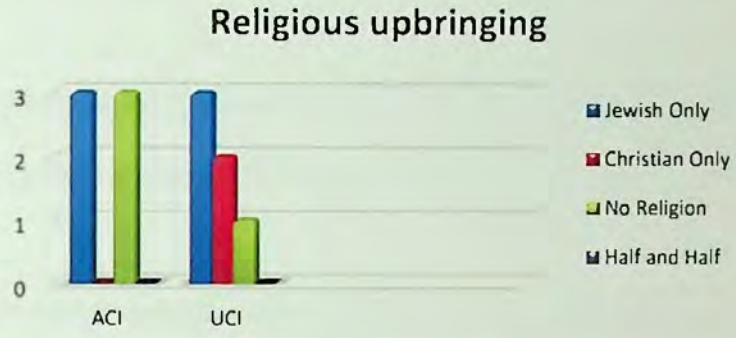
reported that their families stopped doing Christmas celebrations at home when they were approximately 11 years old.

Only a single participant reported having been sent to both Catholic/Christian Sunday school *and* Jewish religious school/Jewish day school, but not at the same time. Phillips says that true "half and half" cases are rare, a claim substantiated by the 2000 NJPS, which reported that only 5% of respondents were raised with equal parts of Judaism and Christianity. Larry Iannaccone, an economist and social scientist who applied economic theories to understand religion described the truly interfaith family (half and half) as "religiously inefficient." Raising children equally in both faiths is often an exhausting effort that requires a great deal of time, energy and money and is typically not tenable over the long term. In most cases, I found that many couples opted to raise their children with nothing, rather than to raise them in both religions, which is also consistent with the 2000 NJPS. The one ACI participant who is the exception said that Christianity and Judaism, while both present during her formative years, never really overlapped:

> "We never really had two religions in our home. Before we joined a synagogue, we had secular Christian celebrations and a kind of non-descript spirituality. After we joined a synagogue, we did only Jewish stuff in our home. However, when I was born, my mom promised certain things to her priest, like that I would be baptized and go through first communion. I have a baptismal certificate, but it doesn't have my dad's name on, instead where my dad's name should be it says 'Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.' At the same time I was baptized, a rabbi was also called in to give me a Hebrew name so that I could join the Jewish people. There was never a certificate given for my naming. In most cases, I don't think many rabbis would be willing to do a Hebrew naming ceremony for a child that had just been baptized, but I think the rabbi was friendly with my father or his family and was willing to make an exception. I went to catechism class when we lived on the military base in Scotland. When we joined Shir Tikvah in Minneapolis, the rabbi told my

parents that we had to enroll in the religious school. I started in the 8th grade, which is why I didn't have a bat mitzvah as a kid."

Nearly half of my participants were raised in a "Jewish Only" household, which is higher than the reported national average for intermarried families; 30% according to the 2000 NJPS. Initially, I had theorized that nearly all of my UCI participants would be the product of a "half and half," "no religion," or "Christian only" home. I was surprised to discover that 50% of my UCI participants were raised in "Jewish only" homes, the same percentage as my ACI's.



Many participants were not informed as to how their parents made initial decisions regarding their religious upbringing, but for those who were, they reported varying degree of familial tension. One ACI participant reported that the decision came about naturally:

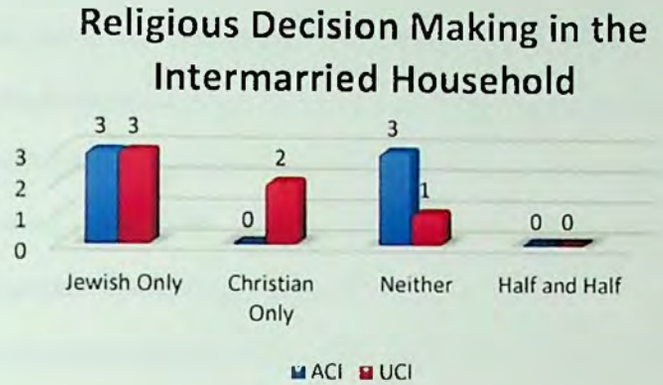
"I do remember my dad saying to my mom when I was in kindergarten that he wanted to go to synagogue and so we went that night and the next day I was enrolled in the kindergarten."

Conversely, another ACI participant said:

"When they decided to have kids, my dad gave my mother an ultimatum and said that they were going to have to raise the children Jewish or they were not going to have children."

A UCI participant who was raised Catholic said:

"There was no real struggle between my parents about my religious upbringing, due to the fact that my mother was so ignorant about her own Judaism. Like she knew about Hanukkah but really nothing beyond that."



Interestingly, one ACI participant whose parents made no decision about his religious upbringing, spoke to a common occurrence among every ACI participants who was raised with no religion:

> "My grandparents, my dad's parents, wanted me to be raised Jewish, but they didn't give my dad a lot of help or guidance in that. My mother has always had a lot of respect for our Jewish traditions, but she didn't know how to raise a Jewish child, either. I always knew that I was Jewish and I started exploring that side of my identity at a really early age...I think when I was ten or eleven-years-old. I think the decision of how I was going to be raised came from me rather than my parents."

Personal Choice and Ownership

One of the most significant findings of my study revolves around choice and ownership. Although it is difficult to think of a young child being able to make meaningful choices about something so existential as religion when they are still young, at least half of the ACI participants were raised by parents who allowed them to make a choice in regards to their own religious leanings. In every case, the ACI participant decided to embrace Judaism around the age of 11.

- "I think they [my parents] were really open. Of course, I think my mother would have been happy if I would have identified with Christianity, but she just wanted me to have religion and God in my life, and so was happy when I embraced Judaism. My father was very encouraging once I made the decision on my own, but I don't think he really knew how to guide me."
- "My mom didn't really pushed me towards anything. She felt like we should be exposed to something but that we should have the right to choose. I think she resented that she was brought up Catholic...she was really open but pretty hands-off.
- "My mother was raised Catholic, but she didn't particularly like being Catholic. Although I think my dad liked being Jewish, he wasn't committed to doing Jewish. I found myself going in search of God by myself when I was a kid and then having to drag my parents along."

Having a sense of ownership over their religious affiliation played a major role in identity formation for each one of my participants that said they were raised with no religion, a total of 4 participants. One ACI participants recalls a traumatic formative experience that led her to seek out a Jewish community and a Jewish education without the prompting of a family member. Raised without a father, her mother, although halachicly Jewish, maintained a secular Christian home. After a family crisis, she turned to her Jewish grandmother for guidance and support:

> "As for my maternal grandmother, she helped me through a tough transition in my life when I was about eleven-years-old. I was having a crisis because my mother was getting remarried for the third time to a guy who was really closer to my age than he was to hers. She met him on the Internet and they eloped one day while I was in school. I hated him. I felt like she chose him over me, so I decided to move in with my grandmother. My mother was initially okay with it, but wanted me to keep in contact with her. When I didn't, she thought that my grandmother had kidnapped me and so she called the police. I wound up in foster care for a while and I didn't know if I was ever going to see my family again. It was a horrible year. It was the summer between 6th and 7th grade and I wound up being placed with this really Christian family. I realized at that point that I definitely wasn't Christian. After that, I went back with my grandmother for a little while and then I returned to my mother. My mother put a restraining order on my grandmother after that

incident. It was at that point in my life that I realized I was really searching for something. When I had to write a paper for my seventh grade class I decided to write it on Judaism. While I was writing this paper I was doing a little bit of research and realized that I really wanted to know more, and so I started going to synagogue with my grandmother. My grandmother called up local synagogues and asked if it was okay if we attend services even if we weren't members. She was really excited to reconnect. My grandmother was not a member of a synagogue before that. Judaism was a part of her identity that she had really given up when she married her Catholic husband. She married him because she just wanted to get to America, but not for any other reason. She was super into the synagogue when we went the first time and so we started going to Shabbat services every week. Later, I told her that I wanted to learn Hebrew and so we enrolled in an adult Hebrew classes together even though I was only twelve."

This same participant later went on to attend a Jewish day school and a Jewish high school and is currently studying to become a rabbi. With some exposure to both Judaism and Christianity, this participant was able to make an informed choice at an age that most researchers say is critical to identity formation. Similarly, another ACI participant reported that choice played a major role in her early Jewish involvement:

"When I was ten and living in Minnesota, I went to Catholic church with friends, but when I decided I really didn't like it, I went down to the public library and checked out every single book I could find about Judaism and the holidays. The first book I picked up was about Sukkot. It really didn't make a lot of sense to me and by all rights I should have just put it down, but there was something special about the book that I just could not explain, like I just had this sense of comfort wash over me when I was reading it. Having moved around my whole life and never having a community and never really feeling like I fit in anywhere there was something about this book that made me feel grounded and centered. So I packed up the books and when I went home that night I told my parents that I was Jewish now, that they were Jewish and that we were going to have a Jewish home. That translated to no more Christmas trees in the house, no more Easter egg hunts, etc."

One UCI participant whose sister is heavily affiliated in the Jewish community said:

> "My sister started exploring Judaism when she was about 10 or 11 and brought a lot of Jewish rituals into the house herself. She also attended synagogue with our aunt and uncle, until they moved away a few years later. I was fascinated with religion in general but from a really early age we both knew that we didn't like Christianity. My mom tried to take us to church once and that was an unqualified disaster. I came to Judaism later than my sister, probably in high school, after dabbling a little in Hinduism and Buddhism."

For those ACI participants who were raised as "Jews only," there was an element of personal choice or ownership that was also expressed:

- "I would say when I was in high school in synagogue youth group that's when Judaism shifted from something that my parents put on me by sending me to religious school to an identity that I embraced on my own."
- "I think my Bat Mitzvah was transformative. It gave me a lot of confidence in my own abilities. I think it is what made me run for President of NFTY Northwest."
- I can't think of a single incident, but I really love camp and think that it has had a lot of influence on my Jewish identity. At camp, suddenly it was me wanting to be Jewish and not just my mom wanting me to be Jewish.

Conversely, none of the UCI participants who were raised either "Jewish Only" or "Christian Only" (5 of 6) made any mention of personal choice being a factor in shaping their religious identities.

This heavy emphasis on personal choice and ownership among ACI's is particularly surprising because it flies in the face of almost all Jewish communal institutions who maintain that giving children religious options will be confusing and, ultimately, detrimental to their future affiliation with the Jewish community. Overwhelmingly, most ACI participants reported that exposure to another religion (namely Christianity) helped cement their Jewish identities. So what might this mean for Jewish communal leaders and clergy in the future? Personally, as the

child of an intermarried family, I have always supported interfaith marriage and am willing to officiate at interfaith weddings, with the caveat that the couple commits to raising their children as Jews. For many Rabbis who are open to interfaith officiation, this means that Judaism will be taught exclusively; the couple must commit to having a Jewish home, sending their kids to Hebrew school or some other informal Jewish educational opportunity, like camp, and observing Jewish holidays and lifecycle events. What we typically do not take into account is the idea that, perhaps, children need to build a sense of ownership over their own religious and cultural identity. Perhaps that sense of ownership comes from the child having some element of choice in their formative religious education and choice typically involves options. A discussion on the impact of choice and how parents and Jewish clergy might go about navigating it can be found in Section 4: Best Practices.

On the issue of interfaith officiation at their parents' wedding ceremonies, only one participant reported that their parents had a rabbi officiate at their wedding. In only three cases was rabbinic officiation sought, and, in 2 of the 3 instances, the couples had a negative experience. Two UCI participants reported that their parents looked for a rabbi to officiate at their wedding:

- "When we got a new rabbi at our temple, my dad was really hoping it would be someone who officiated at interfaith weddings, not because it would have benefited him in anyway—my parents were already married—but for the principal of the thing. He was really angry when he couldn't find a rabbi to marry them and has held a grudge ever since."
- "My dad was interested in having a rabbi officiate, but I think, coming from a more traditional community, he understood why it wasn't done. I think my mom was more upset by it. I know that she had contemplated conversion for a while, but I think that and other things really turned her off."

The ACI participant whose parents sought out a rabbi to officiate at their wedding reported an overall positive interaction:

- "My parents were married by a rabbi! It was Rabbi _____'s first interfaith marriage. They did counseling with Rabbi _____ who actually lived in Seattle, but was an assistant rabbi and wasn't allowed to do interfaith weddings due to his contract or something having to do with the synagogue he was in at the time, and Rabbi _____ flew in to do the wedding."

Of the two married participants in the study, the married UCI participant reported that she also had a negative experience when she sought rabbinic officiation for her wedding:

> "We had a Jewish style ceremony, but my rabbi would not officiate. I think I tried really hard not to feel hurt by my rabbi's refusal to do the ceremony, but I think I did feel that there was judgment on me. I didn't go to synagogue much after that because I felt that they didn't accepted me and my husband."

While it is unclear why a majority of the ACI parents did not request rabbinic officiation at their weddings, one might conclude that, had they sought officiation and been rejected, like the two UCI couples mentioned above, it may have impacted their children negatively, but there is no clear causal link between raising UCI children and refusal of rabbinic officiation. Rabbinic officiation will be discussed in greater detail in Section 4.

Dual Identities

When asked what it was like to grow up with parents from two different religions, most UCI participants reported little or no tension or acknowledgment of there being two different religions represented in their homes:

- "My parents raised my brother and me as Jews. We did have Christmas in the house while I was growing up because my mother just wasn't willing to give that up, but otherwise she was a pretty low-key Catholic."

- "My mother was never a practicing Catholic in my house. She agreed to raise Jewish children and she really threw herself into doing that to the best of her ability. I don't feel like there were two different religions represented in my household."

Only two UCI participants mentioned ethnicity or race being a bigger factor than religion in their upbringing. In other studies, many CI's do not view their Jewish identity through a religious lens, but, rather, as an ethnicity, culture or even a race.

- "Since my parents both decided to become Unitarians, I didn't feel like there were two different religions in my house, just two different cultures. I think I naturally gravitated more to the Italian side of the family. I looked at other Jewish kids at my school and in my neighborhood and I just didn't feel like one of them. It was easier to be Italian than it was to be a child of a father who had been Jewish, but wasn't anymore. That just wasn't information that I liked sharing because it wasn't something most Jews I knew liked hearing. So we were multi-ethnic, but not inter-faith, at least not in my mind."
- "I didn't really get the sense that I was being raised with two different religions. Judaism was just not all that present in my household. My Dad's Catholic family was the centerpiece of my religious life and being Hispanic was a big part of that."

Only three participants reported any real tension over religion in their households:

- "Although I didn't grow up in a household with parents from two different religions (absentee father), I do feel like there was some conflict between my mother and my grandmother...like I had to choose sides. There would be times that I would want to go spend Passover with my grandmother but my mother was angry that I was leaving for Easter. So the conflict in my household with my 'parents' was between my mother and my grandmother."
- "I think I didn't realize that there was anything strange about my mother going with us to the temple until she started going to church regularly. I remember a specific incident where my mother was trying to get us to behave in shul and I turned around and said in a really bratty tone "why do you care, you're not even Jewish?!?!" We had a long talk in the car on the way home. I think that is the first time that I realized that there was something fundamentally

different about my mother. A little later, when I found out more about what Christian's believe about Jews, I confronted her and asked if she thought we were all going to hell. She told me that she believed that we are all good people and will be okay because we're connected to her."

- "We always celebrated the Jewish holidays in my house, but my dad would never go with us to temple. It was weird to go to temple with just my mother and look at all the other kids with both their parents there. I think maybe my dad went a couple of times with us for big events and celebrations but he would never wear a kippah, and he didn't know any of the prayers or what to do. He was there for my bat mitzvah. I don't think he was anti-religion in general, I just don't think he felt comfortable in that setting. I know my parents did argue about it."

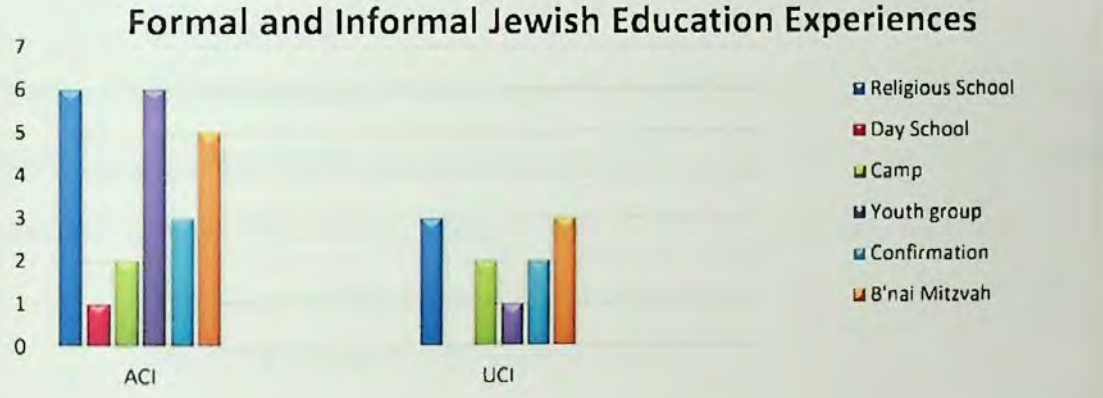
Formal and Informal Jewish Education Experiences

In the category of religious education (both formal and informal experiences), all 6 ACI participants had a formal religious school experience, with three of the six receiving that formal education only a short time before, or shortly after the age of 13. All 5 of the 6 ACI participants had a b'nai mitzvah ceremony when they were 13 (although the 6th ACI participant did have a bat mitzvah ceremony much later in life). Only 3 of the 6 UCI participants had a formal Jewish religious school education and all three of those participants had a b'nai mitzvah ceremony. Although many studies have shown camp to be a key feature among heavily affiliated young adults from both in-married and intermarried homes, there wasn't a high incidence of camp attendance among my participants. Only one of the ACI participants said that camp was an important factor for her continued involvement in Jewish life, the other said:

> "I went to camp for one week between fourth and fifth grade and it was okay but it was very expensive and wasn't worth our time or money."

Overall, youth group seemed to be highly important to the identity formation of most ACI participants. According to Phillips, "it is surprising that informal Jewish education (and youth

group participation in particular) should emerge as such a powerful promoter of endogamy [which Phillips believes is a primary indicator of Jewish connectedness]."[16] To explain this finding, he goes on to cite the 1993 Survey on Mixed Marriage that highlights the importance of forming peer groups among Jewish adolescents. The study found that participating in Jewish peer group activities in high school is key to building strong adult Jewish friendships and also offers young people the ability to meet other Jews for dating purposes and, thereby, create a formative paradigm for endogamous dating and marriage.



Nearly all ACI participants felt that both of their parents were equally involved in their Jewish education, if not always in the same ways. All UCI participants who had some kind of Jewish educational experience reported that their dads were much more involved with the process than their moms. Overall, there appeared to be heavy participation from the non-Jewish spouse.

- "My [non-Jewish] mother was the one who kept pushing me to re-enroll in religious school, she was the one who called the youth group advisor and told him to reach out to me. My mother was definitely more involved than my father. My father got the ball rolling, but it was

[16] Bruce Phillips, 6

my mother pushing me to get a religious education. She was involved in the sisterhood my father was not involved in the brotherhood, etc."

- "My [non-Jewish] mother was much more actively involved in the synagogue, but my parents were partners in raising us Jewish after I prompted them."
- "My [Jewish] father was the driving force in getting us to go to religious school, but my mother was, literally, the driving force that got us to and from religious school. My dad was usually working and my mother's schedule was much more flexible so she had pick-up/drop-off duty. She became good friends with some of the other mom's at the temple and would even help the teachers with their classes occasionally, like if we were doing an art project or something like that."

The b'nai mitzvah ceremony, the culmination of religious schooling for most young Jews, was relatively uneventful for the CI's that participated in my study, with most participants reporting that their families were allowed to be involved as much or as little as they wanted.

- "I have no sense of any strange goings-on during my bar mitzvah. My mother participated fully. To the synagogue's credit, I never noticed anything unusual."
- "The Rabbi allowed everybody to hold the Torah scroll and pass it to me. My non-Jewish family members thought it was cool, as if they accidentally found themselves at a Puerto Rican festival; a kind of cultural fascination. It was actually a nice family get-together; one of the few my family ever had, considering all the tension. Everybody behaved well and everybody was made to feel comfortable and included."
- "My rabbi let my [non-Jewish] mother participate fully in the ceremony."

In only two instances were negative occurrences reported, both by UCI participants:

- "The part-time rabbi that did my bar mitzvah was a little old-school and didn't want my mother to really participate in any part of the ceremony. He actually seemed a little shocked when she expressed an interest in participating. She actually knew all the prayers and all the Hebrew better than most of the people there, but it wasn't like she was asking to bless the Torah or anything. She was offended that my dad and grandparents were allowed to

participate in the ceremony but she wasn't. I think that's when she made up her mind that she would never convert. I think she was made to feel like she wasn't good enough, somehow. I didn't know all the details when my bar mitzvah was happening, but I found out several years later, after that rabbi had already left, and I was angry on my mother's behalf."

- "Yes, I had a bar mitzvah, and my mother was not asked to participate. I don't think she really wanted to, but my dad was angry that she was excluded. He felt like she was being snubbed and that he was being judged. He has harbored a lot of resentment since that day. When my grandfather passed away, he e-mailed a rabbi he had studied with to make sure that my mother could attend the funeral and would be welcomed. I think the incident at my bar mitzvah made him feel a little ashamed to be Jewish."

Issues of Authenticity

When asked whether or not they felt generally accepted by the Jewish community, many participants spoke about their own "authenticity" as Jews and the issue of conversion was revisited. Nearly every participant with a non-Jewish mother had something important to say on the subject:

- "I never felt my Jewish identity was questioned. For example, I never did any kind of formal conversion simply because my mother isn't Jewish. I was only vaguely aware of the concept of matrilineal descent as a child...I didn't feel different in any way but it did hit home once when it was "Orthodox Day" in Hebrew school and an Orthodox rabbi came to talk to my class and afterwards, when we were talking together in small groups, I told him about my mother not being Jewish and he told me I wasn't Jewish. It didn't really bother me, it was just more proof of how backwards the Orthodox community was in my mind."
- "For the most part, I feel very accepted. During my year in Israel, I had a lot of people there telling me that I wasn't really Jewish and it really bothered my classmates, but I dealt with all that crap when I was thirteen during my bat mitzvah, so it really doesn't faze me now. I really don't think I need other people's consent to be Jewish; I don't need their approval. I realize that everybody has to have boundaries and red lines, but it doesn't change the way that I think

about myself. I never gave any serious thought to conversion because I looked at the Jews around me and I realized that I was doing a lot more than they were. I always considered myself Jewish enough. And what is a mikveh anyway? I think of it as a cleansing space and I just didn't feel dirty."

- "I think I struggled for a long time with how I viewed myself, rather than just how the Jewish community viewed me. I felt fully accepted at my Reform synagogue when I was a kid, but as I got older, I felt a little disingenuous. When I was in college, I started experimenting with my own observances and thinking about what kind of Jew I wanted to be. When I realized that I wanted to live a more Orthodox lifestyle, I realized that I would have to do an Orthodox conversion, so I started studying with an Orthodox rabbi."
- "For the longest time, my dad kept warning my sister and I that none of the movements in America considered us Jews because our mother wasn't Jewish and that we might have to do a conversion someday (which my sister and I were not interested in doing), but a few years ago we had this student rabbi serving our congregation and she told my dad that the Reform Movement had accepted Jews of patrilineal descent since the early 80's and he was shocked."
- "I did consider doing a conversion at one point. Israel was the first time that I started questioning my validity as a Jew. I always realized that my family and our community was different from the rest of the Jewish world. On my Birthright Israel trip, I had a religious Jew spit in my face when I told him that my mother wasn't Jewish. I started dating an Israeli guy and when things started getting serious, he told me that I wasn't really Jewish and that he and his family couldn't accept me. After that I explored the possibility of an Orthodox conversion, but didn't find a good solution. When I started my year in Israel at HUC, I had a professor tell me that I had to go to the mikveh for a conversion. That really upset me and I told that person that I was Jewish and was covered by Reform standards and refused to go to the mikveh."
- "I did feel compelled to do a Jewish conversion when I was in high school. There were a lot of students there that had mixed backgrounds like mine. At first I felt very resistant. I felt like it would be making a negative statement on my Reform principles in kowtowing to the Conservative or the Orthodox, but then I changed my mind because a lot of my friends who

were raised Reform decided to do it. I felt like it was important for me to be fully accepted in all liberal Jewish communities...I felt a little bit like a sellout afterwards, but it was a really nice ceremony. After the fact, it was something that I really questioned whether or not I should've done."

Regarding ways in which CI's speak about themselves, I found that, overwhelmingly, most participants had a negative reaction to the term "half-Jewish."

- "How the $&%* are you 'half' Jewish!?!"
- "I think that term would only work if Judaism was a race, and that really doesn't sit well with me. I would never call myself 'half.'"
- "I don't like it. It's like being called a half-breed."
- "It's not a term that I would use to describe myself. Either you are or you're not."

Some participants, however, revealed that they had used the term "half-Jewish" to refer to themselves when they were younger, but no longer use that term to describe themselves.

- "I think when I was a kid I used to call myself half Jewish. I don't think of myself that way anymore. I don't think that it's right to say that just because somebody doesn't have two Jewish parents they are only half."
- "I think of that term very negatively now, but I grew up calling myself that. I think I made the switch in high school. I grew up in a majority Jewish town, but that being said, there was a lot of ambiguity. A lot of the kids around me would say they were 'half-Jewish,' so it didn't seem strange at the time."
- "I tell people that I am 'half Jewish,' but only from an ethnic perspective."

In talking about authenticity and personal identity, participants were asked whether or not they felt comfortable telling people they were from an interfaith household. In most instances, the participants said that they would tell the truth if asked directly, but that it is not information they typically volunteer. Some participants said that they are typically hesitant with disclosing their interfaith background:

- "I wouldn't lie about it, but I know that lots of people in my community have hang-ups about intermarriage, especially when your mother isn't Jewish."
- "I definitely don't tell people often that I'm from an interfaith family, because I don't want to have to explain my whole story, because it's long and complicated, but I find that I've been more open about it lately."
- "I don't feel very comfortable. If it is someone I know well, I feel fine. If someone asks me directly, I will tell them, but it is not something I openly share."
- Everyone that I grew up with knows, but when I meet new people, it definitely isn't the first thing I mention about myself. I think I would have to feel pretty comfortable with them before talking about it.

Another authenticity question took into account the behavior of other Jews and whether or not participants judged themselves by what they observed. Participants were asked "do you have a general sense of certain things that Jews are supposed to do? Do you ever judge yourself based on that assessment?" Although very few ACI participants responded in the affirmative to this question, a majority of UCI participants reported that they did:

- "I always felt like I didn't fit in with the other Jewish girls because my family was not like theirs; we weren't wealthy. I also thought that Jewish families were supposed to be functional. Family is an important Jewish value, and my family was far from functional."
- "I didn't judge myself by other Jews before because I didn't know enough Jewish people to really say what they did or didn't do. Now I see the orthodox Jews at Hillel and feel like there are all these thing I should know or be able to do that I can't. I already don't look or sound Jewish, so it is really intimidating."
- "I think I felt that way more when I was in college where there were a lot of traditional students. I went to Hillel once or twice, but felt super intimidated, because they knew the blessings and all of the little rituals and I didn't. I didn't want to be singled out as the 'stupid Jew.' I felt like people would accuse me of not really being Jewish if they knew that my facility with the rituals and knowledge base was so low. I think I have come to learn that there

are more people like me out in the world than there are people like them, but I still don't feel super comfortable in religious settings and try to avoid them."

- "I think Jews are people who go to synagogue and keep kosher and stuff like that. That's why I don't really consider myself Jewish. My family doesn't do any of those things."
- "Growing up, I didn't have a sense of what Jews were supposed to do, but I did feel like most Jews know what they are doing and why, and I just didn't."

When asked whether or not they felt like they had any outward characteristics that made them feel more or less Jewish, most respondents said that they did not feel like they "looked Jewish" or had been told by someone that they did not "look Jewish."

- "I'm told that I don't looks Jewish, which is pretty subjective. My last name isn't exactly Goldberg, but it is pretty Jewish, so that probably helps me pass."
- "When I was flying to my pulpit last year, I did have an elderly Jewish couple on my flight who were shocked when I told them I was a rabbi and then proceeded to have a 15 minute discussion with each other, while I was sitting right next to them, about how I didn't look Jewish."
- "It's funny, I think I do look Jewish. I have dark hair and dark eyes, but when we were kids, my Jewish friends would always say that I was the only one in our group who didn't look Jewish. That used to really irritate me. Clearly, my last name isn't Jewish."
- "When it was at day school, I felt my nose didn't look Jewish enough. I always wanted a Jewish nose. I wanted there to be no question that I was Jewish."
- "I really don't look Jewish. I look like my dad. I have blonde hair blue eyes. I'm always a little surprise."
- "Sometimes, in Jewish settings, I just introduce myself by my first name only because I hate it when people try to figure out if they know anyone who might be related to me, which they almost never do. I wish people would get a new hobby."

Personal Feelings about Being Jewish

When asked whether or not they had any positive or negative feelings about being Jewish, interestingly, there was no common answer. Each participant described a unique positive connection:

- "When I think about Judaism, I think about safety, community and food. There's something special about it, especially when I was little and nobody liked me…I was like, 'I don't need you people; I've got Judaism!'"
- "I love the emphasis that Judaism puts on education and social justice. I think that Jews are really exceptional people. We're smart and tough, we're survivors and despite all the things that we have faced throughout our history, we still are dedicated to making the world a better place for everyone."
- "I love that Judaism is kind of like a fraternity, when my family moved to North Carolina for boarding school we got in a really bad car accident near Reno, Nevada and we were stranded. I told my grandma that I wanted to find a place to spend Shabbat, so we called up the local synagogue and told them why we were there and it was like instant connection. You can't just do that with strangers."
- "I think Judaism is the best religion because of the multiplicity of opinions and the importance of questioning."
- "I'm really proud of our history and our tie to tradition. I like the Jewish values behind doing mitzvot and tikkun olam."
- "I like how Judaism doesn't shove dogma down your throat. They don't proselytize. They're confident about their religion."
- "I love the morals and values associated with Judaism. I do believe in God for the most part, but I'm also a science teacher. Judaism doesn't demand me to put the rational part of my brain on hold."
- "I think Jews are generally pretty smart and successful."

- "I really like how Judaism is so family focused. I think our family is much closer because we are Jewish. A lot of my friends tell me that they don't have that kind of bond with their parents and siblings and they envy me."
- "I love the fact that Judaism allows me to question. I am a very skeptical kind of person and I couldn't ever see myself being comfortable with a religion that didn't allow for questioning."

Conversely, when asked about their negative associations with Judaism, there was a very common response among almost all participants: Judaism is too elitist and exclusionary:

- "I think the Jewish community can be a little too self-centered and insular. We think we are so special and unique. I don't get Jewish exceptionalism. I think choseness is something we need to let go of."
- "My family had a very hard time finding a community that would accept us. I feel that my status is often questioned because of my family background."
- "I don't like how judgmental and unaccepting people can be. Like they are too picky about who can be Jewish."
- "I would also say that there is a barrier to involvement in the Jewish community; a barrier that kept my mother away and is hard for me to overcome. There needs to be more outreach."
- "I hate that it is such an exclusive club. My mother wasn't Jewish and my husband isn't Jewish and if they aren't accepted, then I have no interested in being a part of the community."
- "I don't have many negative associations besides the one I mentioned in regards to my mom not feeling fully accepted."

Many who do research on interfaith couples and their children assume that there are only negative consequences to intermarriage and those consequences must be managed. There has never been a deep exploration of what positive "side-effects" there might be to incorporating CI's into the community. The participants of my study, however, felt that there were a few distinct advantages to being from an interfaith family. Many participants reported that being

from an interfaith family taught them a great lesson about tolerance and empathy for other people who are different:

- "Although it was difficult at the time, I think my dual identities made me a more open-minded and liberal person. It's taught me to consider the other side; there's always another side to the story."
- "Yes, when I'm teaching religious school and one of my children tells me that their mother isn't Jewish, it's so helpful to tell them that my mother isn't Jewish either... I'm really able to empathize with them. To see an adult from an intermarried family who is secure in their Judaism... I think that is so powerful! I think it also gives me a really good perspective on what the rest of the world looks like, and makes me more open-minded. I think being from an interfaith family has made it so much easier for me to live in the world."
- "I think it was great to have a mother who was so open with her own religion and open to discussing religion with me, but from a different perspective. It gave me a greater appreciation for people from other faiths and for doing interfaith work."
- "One advantage of being raised the way I was is that I understand why people wouldn't want to affiliate. It gives me an outsider's perspective. I think that people who work in synagogues or belong to synagogues can't understand why everyone doesn't want to do it. Also, I feel that, in general, people are more excited about things they choose for themselves."
- "I wish there hadn't been any tension over my mother not being Jewish. I think people can be very closed minded and they don't realize that they are dealing with real people who have real feelings. I am upset that my mother had to go through that, but the whole situation does make me far more sympathetic to other people in similar situations."

Siblings

My study participants were all from small families. 3 participants had no siblings, 2 participants had one or two half-siblings, 1 participant had two siblings, and the majority of my participants had only one full siblings; a grand total of 11 siblings/half siblings. There was only one case of a heavily affiliated sibling, ironically, the sister of a UCI:

"I think my sister figured out the Jewish thing much earlier in life. She has also always been a very spiritual kind of kid, so she was much more serious about it than I was. I know that she sought out opportunities to make Jewish friends and do Jewish things. She also went to Israel on Birthright when she was 23 and I was supposed to go with her, but met a man who is now my husband and decided to stay in the US. I know that trip was really life-changing for her. I sometimes wonder what would have happened had we gone together as planned."

Only one sibling, paradoxically the sibling of an ACI participant, converted to Christianity:

"My brother is unaffiliated, but considers himself culturally Jewish. My sister identifies as Christian, but does tell people that her family is Jewish. She is very Christian and attends church three times a week. Both my brother and sister had b'nai mitzvah ceremonies at Shir Tikvah and my sister was in religious school from the time she was in pre-school from age 3 onward. She was raised exclusively Jewish, but has completely rejected Judaism. She disconnected with Judaism during her bat mitzvah but we don't know exactly what that was about; it was enough to push her away. She felt Judaism was confusing and that people at the synagogue wouldn't answer her questions. She said that even from a young age she always felt alienated from Judaism."

The remainder of the participants describe their siblings as primarily unaffiliated.

The data suggest that there is some kind of inconsistency between the religious upbringing of my participants and that of their siblings. In analyzing this data, there must be an acknowledgement that, even though two children are raised in the same household with the same parents, every

child's experience is unique. However, the very high number of UCI siblings in relation to ACI participants is an interesting finding and will be addressed more fully in Section 4. Overall, most participants reported that their siblings had many of the same Jewish educational opportunities that they did, but often responded to those opportunities in very different ways:

- "I was excited to be Jewish and do Jewish things, but my sister will always harbor resentment that she was forced do things…She had a bat mitzvah, she did youth group, and she did confirmation."
- "My brother dropped out of religious school and didn't do youth group, but says that he likes being Jewish. He did camp too, but wasn't as into it [as I was] and stopped going after a few summers."
- "My oldest sister didn't really get on the Jewish boat. She had a Wicken phase. Afterwards, she kind of got into Judaism for a while, but then decided that Hebrew was too hard and she didn't want a bat mitzvah anymore. I don't think my sister really considers herself Jewish. As for my youngest sister [the new baby] my mother and stepfather decided to raise her Jewish and Catholic because my stepfather is Catholic, but I don't think they're doing anything."
- "My brother is 10 years younger than me. He was only five-years-old when my parents split up, so although we have the same parents, he had a very different upbringing. He's only 15 now and he made the decision two years ago not to become bar mitzvah. He's really into science; he says he doesn't believe in God. My mom stopped going to synagogue when I left high school for financial reasons. She was not in a position to pay for membership at a synagogue. She felt uncomfortable telling anybody about her financial issues."
- "My parents were a lot more lenient on my brother. They told him that he could quit religious school when he was done with his bar mitzvah. I wasn't given that option. He chose not to continue his education and I think he now regrets that."

Future Plans

1. Marriage

Only two study participants were married (1 ACI participant and 1 UCI participant). Not surprisingly, the ACI participant married a Jewish spouse and the UCI participant married a non-Jewish spouse. When describing her wedding, the UCI participant said:

> "We had a Jewish style ceremony, but my rabbi would not officiate. Instead, I had my sister officiate (long before she decided to become a rabbi). I think I tried really hard not to feel hurt by my rabbi's refusal to do the ceremony, but I think I did feel that there was judgment on me. I didn't go to synagogue much after that because I felt that they didn't accepted me and my husband."

The ACI Participant described a very radically different scenario with his wedding:

> "My wife and I met through a shadkhan (a Jewish matchmaker) and my family thought that was a little odd, but they knew how much I wanted to meet someone. We had a Modern Orthodox wedding and I'm sure some members of my family felt a bit out of place, but everyone was very well behaved."

In regards to Jewish practice with her spouse, the UCI participant said that her non-Jewish spouse encourages her to do more Jewish things:

> "We visited my sister in Israel together for a month when she was in rabbinical school. We did a 2 year trip around the world and during that time my husband advocated for us celebrating Shabbat together, even if it was just over chapattis and bottled water, like we did in India. My husband likes a lot of the Jewish morals and values, especially how Judaism emphasizes family. I think he likes the idea of doing Shabbat together as a family, but I really can't see him ever attending shul with me. He did go to Erev Yom Kippur services this year, but only because my sister was leading the service."

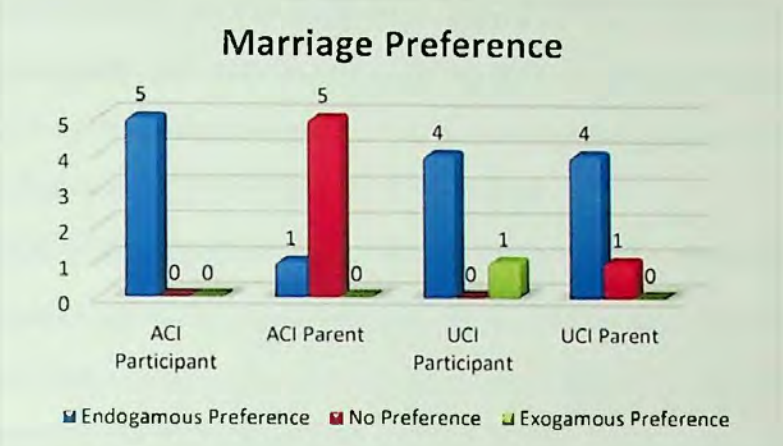
The married ACI's response to the same question was much more straightforward:

"We celebrate every Shabbat together and she joins my congregation for the holidays. We live a fully observant lifestyle and keep a kosher home."

For the vast majority of participants who were unmarried, every ACI participants said that it was extremely important to them that they marry a Jew, but 5 out of 6 said that it wasn't necessarily important to their parents. In some cases, the ACI participants, many of whom are clergy or are studying to be clergy, are expressly forbidden by their seminaries to marry non-Jews. In spite of this fact, they all said that they would want to marry a Jews regardless of the prohibition, but not all of them are comfortable with their school's policy. For the unmarried UCI participants, all but one said that they would prefer to marry a Jew, but are not willing to make it a qualifying criteria because they believe that finding a Jewish partner is unlikely:

- "I wanted to marry someone who was Jewish when I was a kid so that we could all be together as a family. It was something I wanted for myself, but never had, so I wanted to give that to my kids. Without having family here in LA, I don't have anyone to do Jewish stuff with. I have never had a Jewish boyfriend, so I don't know what that would be like. Jewish guys never seem to show an interest in me. I want that, but I don't think it will ever happen."
- "I would love to have a Jewish husband, but I realize that this is going to be difficult, especially for a gay men like myself, but it would be nice. I think it would be easier for me to find a Jewish partner if I was heterosexual and not multiracial."
- "I would like to marry someone who is Jewish, ideally, but I have never dated anyone that's Jewish and, even in college, I haven't met a lot of attractive, single Jewish girls, so I don't think I can make that a criteria. My girlfriend right now isn't Jewish."

Unlike the ACI participants who overwhelmingly said their Jewish parents would not care if they married someone Jewish, 4 of the 5 unmarried UCI participants said that they think their Jewish parent would prefer them to marry someone who is Jewish.



2. Children

When asked if they had given any thought to whether or not they wanted to try to pass on their religious and/or ethnic identity to their children, all ACI participants said that they planned to raise their children Jewish if they choose to have them (two ACI participants said that they did not think they wanted children). Surprisingly, all UCI participants also expressed the desire to raise their children as Jews, with exception to the one participant who was raised Unitarian who doesn't think he wants to have children. In regards to what it means to "raise Jewish children" many of the respondents didn't have concrete details of what that might look like, but said that they wanted to offer their children more than what they received as children:

- "I wanted a more actively Jewish home life for my children, different from how I was brought up."
- "Unlike myself, I would like [my kids] to grow up with two parents that feel really passionate about being Jewish and do all the holidays together."
- "I want to give my children more than I had. I think that it will be easier to do that with two committed Jewish parents. We plan to send them to Jewish pre-school and probably Jewish day school and high school."

- "I would like to give my children a bigger community to grow up in. I think my parents did the best they could in our small town, but not having any Jewish friends and a tiny religious school is not what I envision for my kids. I want my kids to have the opportunity to do camp and youth group and all of those things that I missed out on."

Only a small handful of participants expressed any kind of fear of over-saturating their children:

- "If my kids are anything like my husband, who is very shy and introverted, they might hate religious school. I think it is more important that they love Judaism, and if I don't think religious school will help in that endeavor, I won't send them."
- "I don't believe you can give a child nothing and then expected them to choose something, but I do wonder if it's very hypocritical of me to force it on my kid since it wasn't forced on me. I think I would want to give my kids a choice of what they wanted to attend, but as the Rabbi I might not have that kind of flexibility; people might have an expectation of what I do with my own child. I would love to send my kids to Jewish boarding school or day school because I think you learn so much more there than you do in religious school, but I don't want my children to have a negative experience. I would take them out if they didn't like it."
- "I want to raise [my kids] in a kosher home. I want them to celebrate Shabbat in our home. I want them enrolled in Jewish childcare, but I don't want to do day school for them. I don't think it matters where they go to school as long as I give them Judaism in the home. Of course I want my kids to go to religious school and be a part of the community, but I don't think it should be their only existence."

Section 4: Best Practices

Although some researchers have claimed to have the answer to ensuring Jewish continuity, such as Jewish day schools or Jewish camp, the more I studied and conducted field research on the topic of children of intermarriage, the more I felt that there truly is no "magic ingredient" to raising well-connected, heavily affiliated Jewish children. The Jewish Outreach Institute, in its efforts to connect intermarried families to Jewish life, has found that there is little difference between the unaffiliated intermarried and the unaffiliated in-married. For instance, many of the participants I interviewed had a Jewish parent who grew up in an in-married household and yet, in many cases, did not receive a very strong Jewish upbringing. For the few parents who were raised in Jewishly committed homes, endogamy was clearly not the ultimate indicator of Jewish connectedness. These parents did not marry out because they found Judaism wanting; they married out because they fell in love with someone who happened to not be Jewish. Although Jewish communal organizations are quick to create an artificial causal link between Jewish apathy and intermarriage, most American Jews do not see it that way. Gone are the days of arranged marriages and professional matchmakers who pair people up based on logical and rational elements of compatibility. Most young adults in America today simply do not operate on that level. In the past, I have argued that intermarriage is merely the symptom of the larger disease of Jewish apathy, but, through my research, I have come to the conclusion that intermarriage is really a completely separate issue and should not be the main focus of Jewish institutions going forward. Assistant Executive Director of the Jewish Outreach Institute, Paul Golin, writes: "Intermarried households are fast approaching the majority of all households containing one or more Jews. Among young families with children, the intermarried population

has already been the majority for the past decade. More children under the age of 12 have been born into intermarried households than to in-married households." Taking this into account, what should be the "true North" for most Jewish communal institutions? Rather than fighting the losing battle against intermarriage, they should be trying to help intermarried couples raise committed Jewish children.

Early Outreach to Couples

A majority of my participants said that their parents did not seek rabbinic officiation for their weddings, a relatively clear indication that they were not affiliated with a synagogue prior to being married. For those couples who sought rabbinic officiation but were refused, participants reported that their parents harbored a great deal of resentment. Many in the Jewish communal world would say that a couple who is committed to having a rabbi perform their wedding ceremony will not be easily deterred (much like the convert who is supposed to be turned away three times). Some rabbis who refuse to officiate at interfaith weddings are willing to refer couples to more progressive rabbinic colleagues, but for many people who live in small, geographically isolated Jewish communities, similar to many of my study participants, this is not always a feasible option. When a couple seeks a rabbi to officiate at their wedding, they are making a statement that Judaism, in some way, shape or form, is important to them; important enough to play a central role in one of their most profound lifecycle events. That is why it should come as no surprise that intermarried couples who are turned away, even with the best of intentions, will likely have negative feelings towards the rabbi and synagogue in question and, perhaps, even towards Judaism itself. It should not be difficult to empathize with these couples. Almost all of us have felt the sting of rejection when we were denied admissions to a school or not hired for a job. What rabbis need to understand is that rejection is difficult to swallow,

regardless of how you sugar coat it. In the vast majority of cases, rabbinic refusal to officiate does not appear to dissuade the couple from marrying, but it can have far-reaching negative consequences on their family's future affiliation. When asked about their own negative feelings towards Judaism, a majority of participants said that they felt Judaism was too elitist and exclusionary. Although this might be a general sentiment shared by many progressive Jews, every single participant in my study reported that they had personally experienced some form of exclusion from the wider Jewish world because their parents chose to intermarry. The whole purpose of building and maintaining a religious community is to provide people with a safe space where they can learn and worship with like-minded individuals who love and accept them. Golin says that Judaism's exclusionary tendencies are directly responsible for the dramatic population decline we have seen over the past several decades. He says that "fighting this decline means fundamentally changing the organized Jewish community, because right now the community pushes away more people than it welcomes in. This is a dysfunctional model by any standard." I believe that rabbinic refusal to officiate at interfaith weddings is a big part of this dysfunctional model. Although many Reform rabbis have changed their stance on officiation over the past 20 years, there are still a surprising number of rabbis who have not. It is pointless to ask whether or not intermarriage is "good for the Jews." Instead, we need to start asking the more pro-active question of "how can we make intermarriage good for the Jews?" Welcoming interfaith couples into the community needs to be the first step, and perhaps the chuppah is the doorway.

Engaging the Non-Jewish Parent

Opening the door and being welcoming is just one piece of the puzzle. Jewish institutions need to provide our interfaith families with more engaging educational options. Many study

participants said that their non-Jewish parent would often drive them to and from religious school or youth group, but did not actively participate in their religious education. In most cases, the non-Jewish parent did not necessarily show a lack of willingness to participate, but, rather, a lack of knowledge and familiarity with Judaism and its rituals which thereby created a barrier to participation. Participants raised in a "Jewish Only" intermarried households said that, although their non-Jewish parent had agreed to raise Jewish children, they often felt inadequate when faced with the task. Many rabbis who do officiate at interfaith weddings do so on the condition that the non-Jewish spouse agrees to raise the children as Jews. It would, therefore, be hypocritical to hold these parents to their commitment if we are not willing to give them the tools they need to be successful. Many synagogues have begun experimenting with family education programs where parents and children learn together. Although this is a good model for educating and engaging a non-Jewish parent with his or her first child, the curriculum is often repeated each year for the different grade levels and therefore offers no new material for a parent who has been through the program with multiple children. Imagine, if you will, teaching a child the alphabet in kindergarten, and then again in 3rd grade, and then again in 7th grade; the process would be maddening for student and teacher alike. How much more painful is it for an adult to be taught the exact same material repeatedly? In order to be truly successful, these family educational programs must find a way to offer a standard curriculum for the children while offering something new, or at least more nuanced for the parents. Another educational program model that has enjoyed some success over the past few years are weekend family camp retreats. These short but intensive educational opportunities provide non-Jewish parents with a basic understanding of Judaism and some of the central daily/Shabbat rituals. In addition, it affords non-Jewish parents the opportunity to meet and bond with other parents in the community. In

many cases, these family camp retreats are part of a child's religious school experience and not offered in lieu of formal religious school classes.

Educating Jewish Children

My study showed a high correlation between religious school attendance and future affiliation, however, it is important to point out that religious school, in and of itself, is not necessarily effective in creating Jewish connections for all children. Only 50% of my heavily affiliated study participants attended religious school when they were in elementary school and for those who started religious school shortly before age 13, it was of their own choosing. It is also important to note that 50% of my unaffiliated participants were sent to religious school when they were in elementary school, but had not Jewish involvement after their bar/bat mitzvah. An even higher percentage of my participants' siblings, a vast majority of whom are unaffiliated, were sent to religious school when they were in elementary school. Based on this data, I propose the following:

1. If you live in a large Jewish community, invest some time in selecting the right synagogue for your family and the right religious school for your children. Although many religious schools are wonderful places, they are not "one-size-fits-all." If your child is having a negative experience in religious school, work with the teachers and administration to try to improve the situation, but do not force your child to stay in a school where they are unhappy or feel uncomfortable; this is bound to backfire. Seek out other Jewish opportunities for your child, like camp, youth group, etc.
2. If you truly want your child to choose, give them solid options. Many parents feel that they should not push their religion on their children, so, instead, they offer them nothing and expect them to then choose something. Think of your child's religious upbringing as

a buffet with many options to choose from, rather than an empty plate waiting to be filled. If you are intent on raising Jewish children, there is no need to shelter them from other religious ideas and ideologies. The majority of my heavily affiliated participants felt that their Jewish identity was only strengthened when they came into contact with other religious ideas. Additionally, it is important to give your child Jewish options: religious school, camp, youth group, teen trips to Israel, Jewish community service projects, etc. The more a child feels like they have some choice over their own religious activities, the more they will show ownership over those choices.

3. Jewish parents must be the model for enthusiastic lifelong Jewish learning. Telling your child "I had to suffer through religious school and so do you" sends the wrong message and is counter-productive. Likewise, telling a child that they are only in religious school so that they can have a bar/bat mitzvah presents an artificial and disingenuous "end goal" to Jewish learning. While having an enthusiastic Jewish parent is important, having a supportive and involved non-Jewish parent is also key. Many children enjoy activities more when both parents are involved, whenever possible. The Jewish parent is not simply raising Jewish children, but creating a Jewish home, and all member of the family should be included in this effort.
4. This and other studies have shown that a child who is involved in Jewish education after the age of 13 is more likely to affiliate later in life and commit to having a Jewish home/raising Jewish children, whereas a child who stops their religious education/activities at or shortly after the age of 13 typically does not make Jewish commitments later in life. If, for some reason, you have to choose between pre or post

b'nai mitzvah education for your child, pick the latter. For instance, if you can only afford Jewish day school or Jewish High School, choose Jewish High School.

5. Love leads to learning. First, teach your child to love Judaism and being Jewish, the rest is commentary.

Authenticity

Many of my participants struggled with issues of authenticity. Some felt that a formal conversion was the only means by which they could gain full acceptance as Jews. Others took an adversarial stance against those who made them feel unwelcomed, yet chose to affiliate regardless. Feelings of anger and inadequacy should not have a place at the table in modern Jewish life, especially within progressive and liberal circles. Sometimes, particularly in the Reform Movement, we worry that our boundaries are too porous. Our insecurities give voice to the critiques of our more observant co-religionist who claim that liberal/progressive Judaism has created a slippery slope that waters Judaism down to something unrecognizable. And so, within our own Movement, we often try to tighten our ranks and create more rigid definitions for who is in and who is out. But it is important for Jewish professionals to understand that, regardless of how we try to define people, their own personal self-identification is sacrosanct. Many of my participants recalled encounters with people who told them that they "were not really Jewish" because they did not have Jewish mothers, or because they had been raised with some element of Christianity when they were children. A few of my participants said that they had even been encouraged to go to the mikveh for a formal conversion. In almost every such case, the participant was offended and felt that the encounter made them feel less accepted by the community. Regardless of our views on patrilineal descent or the Reform Movements definition of who is a Jew, we need to start accepting people at face value, rather than trying to vet them at

every turn. Even as we try to reimagine Judaism for the 21st century, we have trouble shaking our deep-seated stereotypes of what is or is not "Jewish." The modern American Jewish community is now far removed from the shtetls of Europe and we must learn to view ourselves with different eyes. For instance, the phrase "you don't look Jewish" is not a compliment to those who have thrown their lot in with the Jewish people and are looking for acceptance. Playing "Jewish geography" with someone's last name can make children of intermarried families feel defensive or just concretize their insecurities. Jewish professionals should be helping people feel confident and supported in their Jewish choices, not stigmatized and inadequate. Although the stigma of being from an interfaith family is slowly dissipating, many of my study participants said that they did not always feel comfortable telling people that they were from an interfaith family. There is clearly a pressing need for the Jewish community to redouble its efforts in integrating interfaith families and their children. We can take a positive step towards this by thinking about the language that we use in educational and communal settings. Inclusive and normative language about interfaith couples and their children needs to be a part of our standard narrative. Although this is still difficult for some, I believe that those from interfaith families who are heavily affiliated with the Jewish community need to openly share information about their own experiences growing up in an interfaith family in order to dispel the negative stereotypes and set a positive example for their respective communities. It was encouraging to find that the heavily affiliated participants in my study reported that their home synagogues managed to seamlessly incorporate their non-Jewish parents into their regular synagogue activities and major life cycle events, like b'nai mitzvah ceremonies. Conversely, many of my unaffiliated participants related experiences of their non-Jewish parents being somehow excluded from full synagogue participation, either overtly or covertly. These stories served as further proof that you cannot

hope to draw interfaith families into the community with one hand while pushing them away with the other. On the issue of interfaith programming, I do not believe that most interfaith families want or need any kind of special, interfaith-specific programming, but every effort should be made to make them feel welcomed, included, and most importantly, valued.

The Impact of Choice

I was surprised to find that, for many of my study participants, choice and ownership played an important role in their level of affiliation. Although our communal survival depends on the children of interfaith families, I no longer believe that Judaism needs to be pushed to the exclusion of everything else. I was heartened to find that, when given a choice, or at least exposed to other options, participants of my study, even as very young children, were able to make important religious decisions for themselves and, overwhelming, chose to embrace Judaism. I believe that sometimes, when we obsess over issue like intermarriage and the declining Jewish population, we lose our focus on what is truly important. We have a wonderful religion that is rich in meaningful traditions, grounded in sound morals and values, open to questioning and exploration and deeply spiritual. I realized that the participants who were given a choice and encouraged to investigate their own religious leanings had a profound encounter with Judaism on their own terms, just like many Jewish converts do. And just like converts, these interfaith children who chose Judaism for themselves built deep connections and forged an unbreakable bond with Judaism, not because it was expected of them, but because it was deeply personal. It is not enough to simply ask intermarried families to care about raising Jewish children; that is just the first step. The more important task is to help intermarried families raise children who truly care about being Jewish. With that goal ever-present in our minds, may we, as a community, go from strength to strength.

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Appendix: Qualitative Questionnaire

Upbringing

1. Where did you grow up?
2. How would you describe the neighborhood where you grew up?
3. To your knowledge, were there other Jewish families in that neighborhood?
4. When you were growing up, what was your mother's religious or ethnic identity? Your father's?
5. To what extent does your Jewish parent currently think of himself or herself as being "Jewish"? Has this always been the case or was it ever different? What about your non-Jewish parent?
6. To what extent was your Jewish parent brought up in a household that did Jewish things?
7. What about your non-Jewish parent: How strongly does he/she identify with this religion? Was he/she raised in this religion?
8. Were your parents together most of the time while you were growing up?
9. Did your parents seek out a rabbi to officiate at their wedding? Were your parents married by a rabbi?
10. Please describe what it was like to grow up with parents who come from two different religions?
11. How did your parents decide about your religious upbringing?
12. When you were growing up, did your parents encourage you to identify with a particular religion or ethnic group? Which Religion?

13. Did any other family members encourage you to or discourage your from identifying with a particular religion?
14. When you were growing up, whom did you talk to if you had questions regarding religious beliefs or spiritual issues?
15. What were the areas of agreement between your parents regarding your religious upbringing and what were the areas of disagreement?
16. How were these agreements and disagreements resolved or not resolved and how did they affect your day-to-day life?
17. Did you receive any religious education or Instruction (Jewish or otherwise)? What kind? (E.g. did education take place in a religious setting/institution or did you receive private tutoring?). For how many years did you receive this education/instruction?
18. If you receive any kind of religious education, which parent was most involved in the process (I.e. taking you to religious school, enrolling you in camp, going with you to cultural events, etc?)
19. Did your parents ever attend religious services when you were growing up? What kind of services? Individually or as a couple? Did you attend with them? How often and with whom?
20. Did your family celebrate any religious holidays when you were growing up? Which ones? Do they still celebrate the same holidays?
21. When you were growing up, did you have significant contact with any of your grandparents? Jewish or non-Jewish grandparents? How about now?
22. When you were growing up, were your friends mostly non-Jews, mostly Jews or a mixture of both Jews and non-Jews? How about in college? How about now?

23. Did you have a bar/bat mitzvah? How did it go? What did you "do" for their bar/bat mitzvah? Which family members were involved? Any issues?
24. Did you observe any personal milestones in any other religion – for example, were you baptized?
25. Do you have any brothers or sisters? If yes: with what religion, if any, do they currently identify?
26. To what extent were your brothers' and sisters' experiences regarding family, religion and ethnicity different from yours? How?
27. Thinking about yourself, as the son/daughter of an intermarried couple, how accepted do you feel by the Jewish community?
28. Were than any advantages to growing up with parents from two different heritages? Disadvantages?
29. Do you feel that any particular individual or individuals in the Jewish community reached out to you or your family in any way?

Personal identification

30. When people ask you about your religious, ethnic, or cultural background, how do you usually respond?
31. Was there ever a time that you didn't think of yourself that way?
32. **If they mentioned a background characteristic, ask**: How important is this (or each of these, If more than one mentioned) to who you think you are?
33. How about your feelings about being Jewish? What are your positive feelings about being Jewish, if any?

34. On the other end of the spectrum. What are your negative feelings about being Jewish, if any?
35. Do you have a general sense of certain things that Jews are supposed to do? Do you judge yourself based on that assessment?
36. How does being Jewish/having Jewish roots get expressed in your life, if at all?
37. Some people with a Jewish and non-Jewish parent describe themselves as "half-Jewish." How does that term resonate with you?
38. Do you feel comfortable telling people that you are from an intermarried household?
39. Do you feel that other people, Jewish and non-Jewish, acknowledge and accept the way in which you personally identify? (I.e. if you say you are Jewish, do family and friends see you and accept you as Jewish?)
40. Do you have any features or characteristics that compliment or detract from how you personally identify (I.e. last name, appearance, etc.)?
41. To what extent do you feel a sense of connection with Jews around the world?
42. Has the European Holocaust affected you in any way? For instance, to your knowledge, did any of your relatives perish in the Holocaust?
43. Have you had a pivotal experience in your life that influenced you to feel more or less Jewish? If yes, please describe
44. Has an encounter with a particular individual influenced you to be more or less Jewish? If yes. Please describe
45. ASK IF NOT JEWISHL Y IDENTIFIED: Was there a time in your life when you thought of yourself as Jewish?
    a. Yes but no longer, ask: why do you no longer think of yourself as Jewish?

Choosing a Jewish Spouse

IF UNMARRIED

46. How important is it for you to marry or partner with someone with whom you share a religious and/or ethnic background?
47. Do you think it will be Important to your Jewish parent that you marry or partner with someone with whom you share a religious and/or ethnic background? How about your non-Jewish parent?

IF MARRIED

48. Does your partner identify with any specific religion? If yes, which?
49. Can you describe what your wedding was like? Was there any family drama around your dating/marriage?
50. Do you and your spouse/partner do anything Jewish together?

Children

51. Have you given any thought to whether or not you will want to try to pass on a religious and/or ethnic entity to your children, should you decide to have children?
52. Have you given any thought to the kind of religious instruction (if any) you might want to provide your own children?

Summation

53. Looking back at the interview and the survey which you have completed, have we omitted any topic or issue that has played an important role in shaping your religious and/or ethnic identity? If yes, which?