

CHILDREN OF INTERMARRIAGE

A STUDY IN PATTERNS
OF IDENTIFICATION
AND FAMILY LIFE



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FOREWORD

The report presented in these pages reflects the American Jewish Committee's continuing interest in intermarriage and its impact on the Jewish family and the Jewish community. In 1976 the Committee sponsored the first national study in the United States to focus exclusively on intermarried couples, probing their feelings and behavior as Jews, and their relations to each other, their children and other members of their respective families. All earlier information about intermarried families had been gleaned from surveys of individual communities and national demographic studies.

The current study is, to our knowledge, also a "first." Its aim was to ascertain whether the children of intermarried couples continue to identify as Jews, and to compare the expectations of the parents in this regard with the attitudes and behavior of their children.

Since 1976, the Jewish community has experienced a continually rising rate of intermarriage. In Denver, Colorado, a recent study pointed to a rate of 65 percent. In addition, while the National Jewish Population Study of 1971 and the 1976 AJC survey of intermarriage indicated that two-thirds of the Jews who married out of the faith were men, current figures show that many more Jewish women are marrying out of the faith. Since non-Jewish women are far more likely than non-Jewish men to convert to Judaism, this shift is likely to reduce the number of new converts.

This prediction is particularly troubling because it is generally assumed that conversion to Judaism by the non-Jewish parent is the single most important factor in maintaining the family's Jewish identity — an assumption clearly borne out by this report. On almost every scale of attitudes and behavior, children whose Gentile parent converted were "more Jewish" than those whose par-

ents retained their different religions. For example, 84 percent of the children whose non-Jewish parent converted to Judaism identified themselves as Jewish, compared with 24 percent of the children whose parent did not convert; and 92 percent of the latter married non-Jews, compared with 36 percent of the former.

At the same time it must be noted that intermarriage leads to a weakening of Jewish affiliation and observance among the children, whether or not the non-Jewish partner converts to Judaism. Whereas 86 percent of the conversionary couples belonged to a synagogue, only 38 percent of their children did; in the mixed marriage families, 9 percent of the couples, but only 3 percent of their children, were affiliated. Even more troubling: 45 percent of the conversionary couples said they would not be upset if their children did not regard themselves as Jews, and 69 percent said they would not discourage their children from marrying non-Jews.

The study also points to a distinct weakness in ethnic and communal identification among children of intermarriage. In general, the respondents expressed their Jewish identity primarily in religious terms. The majority, while viewing the concept of Jewish peoplehood favorably, rejected any special responsibility to help fellow Jews the world over.

The findings of this study reinforce what concerned community leaders have known and feared for some time: that intermarriage is here to stay and that it is bound to affect the nature of Jewish commitment and affiliation in the years to come. Already, intermarried families constitute a sizable portion of the Jewish community. Unless the non-Jewish partner converts, our data indicate the Jewish community could lose most of the mixed-married families in the span of two generations.

The Jewish community has not yet come to grips with this issue, either with programs to stem the tide of intermarriage or with programs to strengthen the ties of intermarried families to Judaism. Nothing less than a thorough and revolutionary reassessment by communal organizations of their national and local policies can meet the challenge constructively. Synagogues and religious groups must determine how best to encourage endogamous marriages as well as how to attract and involve intermarried families.

Jewish educational institutions, both inside and outside the congregational framework, must develop programs specially geared to youngsters, adolescents and young adults whose parents are intermarried.

Many intermarried families are interested in sharing ideas, feelings and concerns with one another, and are eager to learn

about Judaism in an accepting and non-judgmental environment. Jewish service and communal agencies must plan adult-education programs, counseling facilities, workshops and retreats that serve those who are considering intermarriage, as well as those who have intermarried. Intermarried families would also benefit greatly from the establishment of support networks through which they could discuss mutual problems, participate in joint activities and help organize community services responsive to their special needs. Jewish communal agencies can help develop such networks locally, regionally and nationally.

It is our hope that this study, by focusing on the impact of intermarriage on the second generation, will generate serious thinking along the lines suggested above, and stimulate further research on a subject of such vital importance to the Jewish community and its future.

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INTRODUCTION

The sharp increase in Jewish-Gentile marriage in the United States during the past three decades, coupled with a steadily declining Jewish birth rate, has stirred a great deal of anxiety in the American Jewish community. Indeed, some fear that the weakening of religious and social ties could lead to the virtual disintegration of the Jewish community within several generations. Even discounting this ultimate catastrophe, there is fear that the cultural stresses of intermarriage could seriously undermine the traditional religious and communal forms of American Jewish life, or deprive the children of such marriages of the close ties with parents and grandparents that undergird a stable sense of identity.

How realistic these fears will prove depends in part, most Jewish communal leaders believe, on the number of children of intermarriage who grow up to consider themselves Jews and part of the larger Jewish community.

Given the depth of concern about these issues in the Jewish community, the research regarding intermarriage and its impact on the Jewish family and the Jewish community has been surprisingly sparse. Until 1976, when the American Jewish Committee sponsored the first national survey of intermarried couples, little was known about what percentage of such families consider themselves Jewish, observe Jewish traditions, raise their children as Jews and take an active part in Jewish religious and communal life. That study, also conducted by this investigator, included interviews with intermarried couples in eight large metropolitan centers and did much to fill the lacunae in knowledge concerning the impact of intermarriage on American Jewish life. However, virtually nothing was known about the offspring of the intermarried,

their family relationships and emotional ties, or their religious and communal preferences. It is this vacuum that the study described in these pages has sought, in some small measure, to fill.

This investigation, therefore, had several distinct, though related, aims. One was to discover how the children of intermarriage view themselves religiously and ethnically. Do they consider themselves Jewish, Gentile, a mixture of both, or neither? Are they more likely to follow the identity patterns of their fathers, or of their mothers? Among those who see themselves as Jews, how is this identity manifested? What Jewish practices do they follow? How much Jewish education have they received? Do they feel a commitment to Jewish ethical values, a connection with Jewish history, a bond with the State of Israel? Do they consider it likely that they, too, would marry a non-Jew?

A second goal of the study was to gain some insights into the relationships between children and parents, and between children and grandparents in intermarried families. For example, do children generally feel closer to their mothers or fathers, to the Jewish-born parent or the Gentile-born parent? Does conversion have an effect on these relationships? The Jewish family has long been a model of emotional closeness and intergenerational continuity, and the primary channel for transmitting the Jewish heritage from one generation to another. Relationships within the family, including those with grandparents and other extended family members, have played an important role in the Jewish socialization of children, and family ties have been reinforced by the joint celebrations of Jewish holidays and the customary life-cycle events. Given the concerns about Jewish continuity, it is important to know if these generalizations hold for intermarried families and their children. Are the children of such marriages secure in their identity, or do the diverse cultural and religious heritages exert contradictory pulls on the children that create loyalty conflicts in relation to their parents and grandparents? Do the differences in parental background lead the children to abandon their Jewish self-identification and to distance themselves emotionally from one or another set of parents and grandparents?

Finally, the study attempted to determine whether those who grow up in an intermarried home lack a secure sense of identity and tend to feel that they do not really "belong" anywhere.

In 1937 the sociologist Everett Stonequist coined the term "marginal man" to describe a person who lives on the edge of two cultures, equally at home in both, but not fully belonging to either. Stonequist relied heavily on case histories of children born of

intermarriage as the basis for his description of such marginality. Such people, Stonequist suggested, might have a broader cultural vision, and achieve great mobility between different heritage groups. But they were not likely to be fully accepted in either. The lack of acceptance, or the perceived lack of acceptance, argued Stonequist, tends to make marginal people insecure and anxious about their relations with others, and generally uncertain about who they are. Following Stonequist's lead, this study also sought to examine whether the children of Jewish-Gentile marriages evidenced any unusual discomfort about their own identities and in their relations with others.

While the present research was limited in scope, it represents the first systematic analysis of the attitudes and behavior of a population that has not been studied before — one that is likely to play an important role in the future of American Jewry. It is hoped that this investigation will generate further research in this area and point the way to some new Jewish communal strategies for dealing with intermarried families and their children.

PARTICIPANTS AND METHODOLOGY

The men and women participating in this study were all offspring of couples who had taken part in an earlier intermarriage survey, sponsored by the American Jewish Committee in 1976.

That study, published in 1979 under the title *Intermarriage and the Jewish Future*, involved 446 intermarried couples from eight large Jewish communities: Cleveland, Dallas, Long Island, Los Angeles, New York City, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Westchester. Unlike most earlier studies of intermarriage, which were limited to single communities and concentrated on the rates and causes of the phenomenon, the AJC survey was designed to shed light on some of the dynamics of intermarriage, to examine its effects on the partners, and to investigate the relationships of intermarried men and women to Jews and Judaism, and to the Jewish community as a whole.

In 1981, letters were sent to all of the couples who took part in the 1976 study, asking them for the addresses of their children aged 16 or older, who might be invited to participate in a follow-up study. According to the earlier data, the 446 couples had a total of 792 children, 491 of them eligible by age for inclusion in the present survey. However, the inquiries to parents yielded usable mailing addresses for only 394.

During the first six months of 1982, a pretested questionnaire was sent to all the reachable offspring; and by September 1982, 117 completed questionnaires had been received, representing children from 70 different families — a response rate of 29.6 percent.

The questionnaire, which took about one hour to complete, was 27 pages long, and included 66 questions designed to examine relationships of the respondents with their Jewish and non-Jewish parents and grandparents; the family and personal ties, formal and informal, to Judaism as a religion and as a cultural tradition; the religious self-identification of the respondents; their attitudes

toward, and involvement with, Jewish practice and belief; and their sense of emotional well-being.

Fifty-five respondents (47 percent) were men; 62 were women (53 percent). The group ranged in age from 16 to 46 years, and 55 percent came from families with annual incomes of \$50,000 or more. Thirty-seven (32 percent) were married; 80 (68 percent) were not.

The major portion of this study compares the responses of two subgroups — the offspring of conversionary marriages and those of mixed marriages.* Forty-two respondents (36 percent) reported that their Gentile-born parent had converted to Judaism; 75 (64 percent) stated that their non-Jewish-born parent had not converted. Three-quarters of the respondents had Gentile-born mothers and Jewish-born fathers — a proportion somewhat different from the 65/35 percent reported in previous intermarriage studies, including the 1976 AJC-sponsored study cited earlier. Another difference between the current sample and the 1976 sample is that in the original survey only 21 percent consisted of conversionary families, while 36 percent of the respondents of the current study come from such families. Thus, the present sample includes a disproportionately large number of children from conversionary marriages.

Like the earlier sample, this group of 117 respondents is somewhat skewed in its regional distribution, and in income and education levels. Since this is the first study of such a population, there are no known general characteristics of the children of intermarriage against which this sample might be measured, and it is possible that children of intermarried couples from smaller communities, or less affluent backgrounds, might respond quite differently to some of the questions posed.

The findings, therefore, must not be viewed as broad generalizations concerning all children of intermarried couples. Rather, the study is in the nature of an exploratory investigation that offers some new perceptions about two subgroups that have never been studied before, and that seem to demonstrate some significant differences and similarities in their relationships with their families and with the Jewish half of their parental heritage. The data provide a body of information regarding the self-identification and

**In this report, as in the 1976 intermarriage study, "intermarriage" is an inclusive term covering all marriages between any individual who was born Jewish and one who was not. The term "mixed marriage" refers to marriages in which neither partner has converted to the other's religion; and the term "conversionary marriage" describes marriages in which the Gentile-born spouse has converted to Judaism.*

attitudes of children of intermarriage — and particularly the relationship of these factors to the conversion or non-conversion of the non-Jewish parent to Judaism. This information, previously unavailable, opens up an area of research that may be of considerable significance to the Jewish community as well as to Jewish parents, educators, rabbis, and the intermarried themselves.

It should be noted that with a sample this size, differences of 15 percent or more between the responses of children of conversionary marriages and those of mixed marriages are generally statistically significant. In terms of the study's objectives, however, the virtual absence of differences in some of the responses of the two groups is perhaps of equal interest.

Finally, a word about what this study does *not* do. No attempt has been made to relate the responses of children of intermarriage with those of the offspring of endogamous Jewish marriages. That undoubtedly interesting comparison certainly deserves its own study at a later date.

HOW DO THEY IDENTIFY?

How and with whom individuals identify are subtle and complex questions that do not readily lend themselves to survey questionnaires. But overt group identification can be investigated in this way, and it is one of the issues addressed by this study.

Jewish group identity is generally defined in terms of both religion and ethnic background. Among the questions the respondents were asked were what religion their parents had designated for them when they were born, and what religious group they most closely identified with at the time of the survey (Table 1).

Children of conversionary marriages were more than three times as likely to identify as Jews than children of mixed marriages.

Table 1

Religious Group Identity at Birth and Affirmed Now

	Percent			
	Children of			
	Conversionary Families		Mixed Marriages	
	Birth	Now	Birth	Now
Jewish	86	84	14	24
Protestant	8	—	16	13
Catholic	—	—	16	13
Other	3	—	16	16
None	3	16	38	34

The overwhelming majority of the children of conversionary marriages were identified as Jewish at birth, and virtually all continued to identify themselves as Jewish at the time of the survey. Sixteen percent said they did not identify with any religion; none said they considered themselves Christians. By contrast, only 14 percent of the offspring of mixed marriages were identified as Jewish at birth, and 24 percent — a 10 percent increase — considered themselves Jewish at the time of the survey. About a third of this group identified with no religious group at all, and the rest considered themselves Christians or members of some other faith community.

Thus, the findings suggest that conversionary families, and their greater likelihood of identifying their children as Jewish at birth, tend to insure a high probability of Jewish identification among the offspring, while mixed marriages are likely to result in a dramatic decline in Jewish identification in the subsequent generation.

The questionnaire also probed the respondents' ethnic identification. Do children of intermarriage identify more closely with their mother's ethnic heritage or their father's? (Table 2)

Table 2

Identification with Parents' Ethnic Ancestry

	Percent			
	Father Jewish-born Mother Gentile-born		Mother Jewish-born Father Gentile-born	
	Mother Converted	Mother Not Converted	Father Converted	Father Not Converted
With father's	48	30	50	19
With mother's	8	26	—	19
With that of both	18	16	50	38
With that of neither	26	28	—	24

A sizable difference in percentage is revealed between those respondents who identified exclusively with the ethnic ancestry of their Jewish-born father when their Gentile-born mother did not convert (30 percent) and those who identified exclusively with their

non-converted Gentile father when their mother was Jewish (19 percent). Where the Gentile-born parents did not convert, amalgamation, or identification with the ethnic ancestry of *both* parents, was more than double when the mother was Jewish-born (38 percent) than when the father was Jewish-born (16 percent).

The figures suggest that the children of conversionary marriages are more prone to see their ethnic identity than their religious identity as an amalgam of two heritages. Thus, while the overwhelming majority (84 percent) of the respondents whose Gentile-born parents had converted to Judaism affirmed their current *religious* identity as Jewish, far fewer (only about half) identified exclusively with the *ethnic* ancestry of their Jewish-born parents.

From these figures it would appear that Jewish-born fathers are more likely than Jewish-born mothers to have children whose ethnic identification is exclusively Jewish. Gentile-born fathers seem to have less of an effect on the ethnic identity of their children than Jewish-born fathers.

To determine how the respondents felt about their religious identity and their ethnic ties, they were asked to rate the relative importance of the two factors (Table 3). The differences between

Table 3

Relative Importance of Religious Identity and Ethnic Ties

	Percent			
	Children of			
	Conversionary Families		Mixed Marriages	
	Religious	Ethnic	Religious	Ethnic
Very important	36	25	20	10
Somewhat important	33	53	34	51
Unimportant	31	22	46	39

the two groups, while not great enough to be conclusive, do indicate a trend. Religious identity, however defined, seems more important to a larger percentage of all the respondents than ethnic ties; it

fits in more comfortably with their world view and family circumstances. It would also seem that those children of intermarriage who identify as Jews do so more comfortably through private expressions of Jewishness than through public affirmation.* Perhaps as a result, those who identify as Jews are more likely to do so through religious than through ethnic means.

From another item in the questionnaire, it was interesting to note, however, that some 67 percent of the children of both conversionary and mixed marriages believed that it was “very important” to help improve relations between ethnic groups — again, suggesting a tendency toward amalgamation.

*For a discussion of “religion as a private matter” see p.24.

IMPORTANCE OF JEWISH IDENTITY

After establishing whether the children of intermarried families considered themselves Jews, the survey attempted to find out how those who did felt about it. The issue was broached with a hypothetical question suggested by Simon N. Herman's work on Jewish identity (1977) (Table 4).

Table 4		
“If you were to be born again, would you...”		
	Percent	
	Children of	
	Conversionary Families	Mixed Marriages
Definitely want to be Jewish	39	9
Probably want to be Jewish	30	17
Not care one way or another	25	47
Probably not want to be Jewish	3	15
Definitely not want to be Jewish	3	12

Respondents whose Gentile-born parent became Jewish were far more likely to opt for being born Jewish if they had a choice (69 percent vs. 26 percent) than those with only one Jewish parent. But

even among the former, 25 percent were not committed to being Jews, and another 6 percent would prefer not to be. Among the children of mixed marriages, only 27 percent said they probably or definitely would *not* want to be Jewish, and 47 percent indicated that they did not care one way or another, suggesting not so much a competing identification with a non-Jewish heritage as a general indifference to an ethnic or religious identification as such.

Table 5

“Being Jewish is very important to me”

	Percent	
	Children of	
	Conversionary Families	Mixed Marriages
Agree	70	18
Uncertain	15	23
Disagree	15	59

Two further questions probed how much the respondents valued Jewish identification (Tables 5 and 6). The figures in Table 5 reinforce the earlier findings that Jewish identification is stronger among respondents from conversionary families. But Table 6 sug-

Table 6

“I personally feel myself to be a remnant of a people who were almost exterminated”

	Percent	
	Children of	
	Conversionary Families	Mixed Marriages
Agree	45	26
Uncertain	30	17
Disagree	25	57

gests that even among those respondents whose Gentile-born parents had become Jews, identification with the suffering of the Jewish people in the Holocaust is difficult for the majority.

Tables 4, 5 and 6 also indicate that the parents' conversion does not automatically guarantee the Jewish identity of their offspring. Each of these tables records a significant minority among children from conversionary marriages who either did not care about Jewish identification or rejected it. Conversely, a significant minority among children of mixed marriages affirmed a strong and consistent sense of Jewish identification, even though one of their parents was not Jewish. Generally, however, children of conversionary marriages were three or four times more likely to identify as Jews than children of mixed marriages.

Interestingly enough, only a minority of all respondents were uncertain about their Jewish affirmation. This suggests that ambivalence or identity confusion — associated by Stonequist with the marginality of the children of intermarriages — may, in fact, not be a problem for the majority of children of present-day intermarried families.* At the same time, the respondents were divided on whether parents should try to influence their children in matters of religious belief and practice. About 42 percent thought parents should exert such influence, 38 percent thought parents should not, and 20 percent were undecided. A slightly larger percentage of respondents from conversionary marriages thought that parents should try to influence their children's religious beliefs and practices. Unlike the respondents of the 1976 study, neither group gave clear endorsement to the notion that children should be left to decide religious issues for themselves when they grow up.

*This is discussed more fully on pp.35-37.

PATTERNS OF JEWISH BEHAVIOR

One important goal of the study was to explore the depth of Jewish identification among children from conversionary families and mixed marriages, and particularly to determine how such identification manifested itself in behavior. The behavior patterns most commonly regarded as expressions of Jewish group membership include: belonging to a synagogue, attending religious services, observing Jewish holidays, supporting Jewish charitable causes, going through the Jewish rites of passage, and learning about Jewish history, culture and tradition.

Synagogue Affiliation

One clear indication of whether people consider themselves Jews or Christians in American society is their membership in a synagogue or a church. Therefore, the respondents were queried about their current synagogue or church membership, and about their parents' affiliation when the respondents were teenagers (Table 7).

Table 7

Synagogue or Church Affiliation of Respondents and Their Parents

	Percent			
	Conversionary Families		Mixed Marriages	
	Children	Parents	Children	Parents
Synagogue	38	86	3	9
Church	—	3	21	36
Both	—	—	—	6
Neither	62	11	76	49

Both the children and parents in conversionary families had a higher rate of synagogue membership than their counterparts in mixed families. The latter were more likely to report church affiliation. On the other hand, there was a large falloff in synagogue affiliation in conversionary families — from 86 to 38 percent — from the parent generation to that of their children.

Adult respondents were then asked how often they attended synagogue or church as teenagers, and how often they did so now. Teenagers were only asked about their present behavior (Table 8).

Table 8

Frequency of Synagogue and Church Attendance

	Percent			
	Children of			
	Conversionary Families		Mixed Marriages	
	Teens	Adults	Teens	Adults
Synagogue				
Never	15	42	81	93
High Holidays	36	50	15	5
4-5 times a year	15	4	4	2
6-10 times a year	12	4	—	—
More than 10 times a year	22	—	—	—
Church				
Never	64	96	36	47
1-2 times a year	31	4	19	18
3-4 times a year	—	—	7	13
5-10 times a year	—	—	—	5
More than 10 times a year	5	—	38	17

The responses indicate that attendance at religious services was greater among teenagers than among adults. Moreover, church attendance among the offspring of mixed marriages was considerably more frequent, both among teenagers and among adults, than synagogue attendance among the offspring of conversionary mar-

riages. Particularly interesting is the fact that nearly one-third of the respondents from conversionary marriages reported having attended church once or twice a year as teenagers — a finding underscoring a residual tie to the non-Jewish family (probably to the grandparents) that remains despite the conversion of the non-Jewish parent.

In general, the findings in Table 8 clearly indicate that the great majority of children in both conversionary and mixed marriages did not consider participation in institutionalized religious life as the principal expression of their Jewish identification. As the later responses to attitudes about religion confirm (see p.24), most participants in the study believe that “religion is purely a private matter” — a belief which seems to work against institutionalized forms of religious expression.

Celebrating the Holidays

Jewish holiday celebrations, particularly in the home with one's family, allow for more private expressions of one's religious-ethnic identification. Therefore the respondents were asked which of the major religious holidays they had observed in the past year and their recollection of such observances when they were teenagers in their parents' home (Table 9).

Table 9

Celebrating the Holidays

	Percent			
	Adult Children of		Teenagers of	
	Conversionary Families	Mixed Marriages	Conversionary Families	Mixed Marriages
Christmas	70	95	65	95
Easter	19	53	19	80
Hanukah	76	30	92	33
Passover	79	35	100	37
Rosh Hashanah	66	22	88	21
Yom Kippur	66	18	88	20
Shabbat	21	4	50	6

The findings show that although children of conversionary marriages observed Jewish holidays far more than did children of mixed marriages, they were less observant than their parents had been. (The “slippage,” however, was not as great as that involving synagogue attendance [cf. Table 8]). As many as 70 percent of the offspring of conversionary marriages also celebrated Christmas — a figure considerably higher than the percentage of mixed-marriage offspring who celebrated Passover and Hanukah, the two most popular holidays among American Jews. Indeed, while observance of Hanukah is widely believed to have evolved as a kind of “Jewish equivalent” to Christmas, the cultural preference in intermarried families seems to work largely in favor of Christmas. Thus, while a great many respondents from conversionary families who reported celebrating Hanukah also said they celebrated Christmas, only a relatively small proportion of those from mixed marriages who celebrated Christmas also reported celebrating Hanukah.

This conclusion is somewhat tempered by the fact that the observance of Christmas in the homes of most conversionary families focused on its most secular and contemporary dimension — the giving of presents (Table 10). And the percentage of children

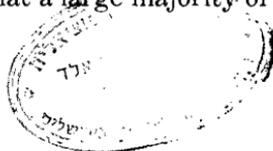
Table 10

Home Celebrations in the Past Year

	Percent	
	Children of	
	Conversionary Families	Mixed Marriages
Decorating a Christmas tree	22	81
Giving Christmas presents	59	93
Lighting candles on Hanukah	69	24
Making a Seder on Passover	69	24
Fasting on Yom Kippur	44	6

of mixed marriages who lit Hanukah candles in their homes (24 percent) was approximately the same as the percentage of children of conversionary marriages who decorated a Christmas tree (22 percent).

Both Tables 9 and 10 show that a large majority of the respon-



dents from conversionary marriages observed the major Jewish holidays of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Passover.

In 1981, Steven M. Cohen surveyed a random sample of American Jewish adults — overwhelmingly from endogamous Jewish families — for the American Jewish Committee. He found that approximately 77 percent attended a Passover Seder, 67 percent lit candles on Hanukah, 54 percent fasted on Yom Kippur, and only 5 percent refrained from shopping or working on the Sabbath. It appears that children of conversionary marriages who identify as Jews tend to behave in these matters much as the broader Jewish community does, except for their additional observance of the secular aspect of Christmas.

Bar Mitzvah, Bat Mitzvah and Confirmation

Jewish rites of passage, the traditional Bar Mitzvah, and the more modern American innovations of Bat Mitzvah and confirmation, have become the major life-cycle events through which American Jews inaugurate their adolescent children into the Jewish community.

Observance of these rites of passage is markedly different among the children of conversionary and mixed marriages (Table 11). In the 1976 interviews of the parents of the respondents to the

	Percent	
	Children of	
	Conversionary Families	Mixed Marriages
Bar Mitzvah/Bat Mitzvah and/or Confirmation	73	14
Neither Bar Mitzvah/ Bat Mitzvah nor Confirmation	27	86

present study, approximately 71 percent of the conversionary and 30 percent of the mixed marriage couples said their children had been Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah, or that they expected them to be.

In the current findings, 73 percent of the children of conversionary families performed one of these rites, while only about 14 percent of the children of mixed marriages did so.

Jewish Education

In the 1976 survey of intermarried couples, 66 percent of the conversionary couples and 20 percent of the mixed couples said their children were receiving a Jewish education or that they expected them to do so. Among the current respondents (Table 12),

Table 12		
Formal Jewish Education		
	Percent	
	Children of	
	Conversionary Families	Mixed Marriages
Yes	85	20
No	15	80

85 percent of the children of conversionary families and 20 percent of the children of mixed families received some Jewish education. The discrepancy between expectations and experience among the children of conversionary families may be due to a sampling error; or it may be that when parents are actually faced with rearing their children, they opt for more formal Jewish educational experiences than they had earlier intended.

Of those receiving some formal Jewish education, 35 percent attended only Sunday school and 40 percent attended afternoon Hebrew school as well. The rest either received home instruction or attended a Jewish day school.

Giving to Charity

Another prevalent form of Jewish identification in American life is philanthropy. The respondents were asked whether they or someone in their immediate family had contributed to a Jewish charitable cause in the past year (Table 13).

Table 13

Charity Given to a Jewish Cause in the Past Year

	Percent	
	Conversionary Families	Children of Mixed Marriages
Yes	56	32
No	16	43
Don't know	28	25

The figures for the offspring of conversionary marriages are very close to those for the American Jewish population as a whole. And even for the children of mixed marriages, contributing to Jewish charity remains a tangible link to the Jewish community.

Table 14

Jewish Religious and Cultural Artifacts in the Home

	Percent		
	1976 Study		Current Study
	Memories of Jewish Parents' Homes	Intermarried Homes	Memories of Intermarried Parents' Homes
Mezuzah	55	39	23
Sabbath candlesticks	45	28	25
Kiddush cup	33	27	25
Menorah	67	55	41
Jewish prayer book	46	39	23
T'fillin	14	9	4
Jewish Bible	35	34	20
Jewish musical records	25	26	13
Jewish art objects	44	40	26

Jewish Artifacts in the Home

Traditional Jewish homes communicate their heritage through a variety of religious and cultural artifacts. To determine transmission of the Jewish heritage by means of such artifacts, data from the current survey were juxtaposed with data from the 1976 study of the parents of the present respondents (Table 14). In 1976, the parents were asked to indicate the Jewish religious and cultural objects they remembered from *their* parents' home and whether they themselves owned and used such objects. In the present survey their children were asked which of these ritual and ceremonial objects they remembered in their parents' home.

Though these figures depend heavily on the recollections of two generations of respondents, the trends they describe are significant. The intermarried couples reported owning and using Jewish artifacts considerably less than their parents had. And their children, in turn, recalled seeing these objects to a much lesser degree than the intermarried couples themselves had reported.

When the current respondents were asked which religious and cultural objects they had in their own home, the children of conversionary marriages reported using as many or more of them — particularly those ceremonial objects used in family celebrations — than their parents did, and sometimes as much or more than their Jewish grandparents. The children of mixed marriages, on the other hand, reported few such artifacts in their home. The most popular object among all three groups — the intermarried parents, as well as the children of both conversionary and mixed families — was the Hanukah menorah.

Social Relationships

In the 1976 survey of intermarried couples, the overwhelming majority of the Jewish partners (about 80 percent) had reported that their friends were all or mostly Jewish, both when they were teenagers and as adults. Their children, however, reported that fewer of their friends were all or mostly Jewish (Table 15). Although considerably more of the adult children of conversionary families had mostly or exclusively Jewish friends (22 percent), than the adult children of mixed marriages (6 percent), the majority in both groups indicated little difference in their friendship patterns. In fact, the findings indicate that the friendship patterns among the children of conversionary marriages were more like those of chil-

Table 15

Composition of Respondents' Friends Currently and as Teenagers

	Percent			
	Children of			
	Conversionary Families		Mixed Marriages	
	Teens	Adults	Teens	Adults
All or mostly Jewish	24	22	16	6
About half Jewish	51	48	45	43
All or mostly non-Jewish	25	30	39	51

dren of mixed marriages than those of the American Jewish population studied by Cohen, 61 percent of whom reported that more than half of their closest friends were Jewish.

Visiting Israel

Cohen's national survey found that approximately 37 percent of American Jews had visited Israel at least once. In the current study, 33 percent of the children of conversionary families and 11 percent of the children of mixed marriages said they had made the trip — yet another pattern of difference between the children of conversionary marriages and mixed marriages. The proportion of those from conversionary marriages who have visited Israel closely matches the percentage of the general American Jewish public who have made the trip, again underscoring some of the behavioral similarities between the children of conversionary marriages and American Jews in general.

ATTITUDES REGARDING JEWS AND JUDAISM

As the previous pages show, normative Jewish behavior is an important yardstick against which to measure the degree of Jewish identification in a group, and a most useful way of distinguishing between the children of conversionary families and mixed marriages. But identification is also expressed in attitudes — those subjective beliefs or dispositions that subtly influence norms and values and, ultimately, behavior as well.

Religion

Fifty-nine percent of the children of conversionary marriages and 39 percent of the children of mixed marriages had a favorable attitude towards religion generally. When the respondents were asked specifically about their attitude to Judaism as a religion, these numbers rose to 78 and 63 percent, respectively (Table 16).

	Percent	
	Conversionary Families	Mixed Marriages
Favorable	78	63
Uncertain	16	21
Unfavorable	6	16

Since both groups seemed more favorably disposed toward Judaism as a religion than to religion in general, it may be that many regard Judaism less as a religion than as a broad cultural framework.

Organized Jewish Life

It was noted earlier that relatively few of the children of either the conversionary or mixed families belonged to a synagogue or attended services. The basis for this pattern becomes clear in the responses to questions probing how the respondents felt about participating in synagogue activities and what importance they attached to membership in a congregation: The vast majority in both groups (60 percent of the children of conversionary marriages and 90 percent of the children of mixed marriages) considered synagogue affiliation unimportant.

There is a discrepancy between the respondents' favorable attitude toward Judaism generally and their attitude toward its specifically religious forms. In fact, 57 percent of the children of conversionary marriages agreed with the statement: "Synagogue rituals have very little to do with expressing true religious feelings." Forty-nine percent of the children of mixed marriages were uncertain. In both groups, only 19 percent saw synagogue rituals as meaningful expressions of personally held religious feelings.

On the other hand, when asked to comment on the statement, "Judaism is much less concerned with spiritual values than other religions," 52 percent of the children of mixed marriages were uncertain, and 56 percent of the children of conversionary marriages disagreed.

A clue to the meaning of these attitudes may come from the respondents' reactions to the statement: "Religion is purely a private matter" — a view with which the overwhelming majority (80 percent) in both groups agreed, 48 percent of them "strongly." This pervasive sense of "privatism" in matters of faith and religious practice, which is a characteristic view of religion on the part of Americans as a whole, seems to shape the attitudes of the respondents of the present survey as well. Thus, while only few felt it important to belong to a synagogue and believed that synagogue rituals express genuine religious feelings, many more respondents thought it "very important" or "somewhat important" to "study about Judaism" and to "provide children with a good Jewish education" (Tables 17 and 18). As the two tables indicate, children from conversionary marriages were far more likely than the others to consider it "very important" to study about Judaism and to give their children a good Jewish education. Among the children of mixed marriages, almost twice as many considered it at least "somewhat important" to study about Judaism as to provide their children with a good Jewish education. The difference in these responses seems to imply some hesitancy about transmitting their

Table 17

Importance of "Studying about Judaism"

	Percent	
	Children of	
	Conversionary Families	Mixed Marriages
Very important	27	9
Somewhat important	46	45
Unimportant	27	46

Table 18

Importance of "Providing Children With a Good Jewish Education"

	Percent	
	Children of	
	Conversionary Families	Mixed Marriages
Very important	30	3
Somewhat important	42	24
Unimportant	28	73

sense of Jewishness, whatever it might be, to the next generation. The children of conversionary marriages, on the other hand, showed a high degree of consistency in the responses to both questions.

In sum, the respondents' attitudes toward Judaism as a religion seem, on the whole, favorable. But when it came to attitudes about participation in or belonging to a synagogue, and even about studying about Judaism, the percentages of the favorably disposed declined quite radically for both the children of conversionary marriages and the children of mixed marriages. As might be expected, the responses of those whose Gentile-born parents became Jewish were more favorable towards institutionalized Judaism than those whose Gentile-born parents did not convert.

But even among the former, the strongest indications of meaningful attachments to Judaism were expressed only by a minority.

Jews as a People

The 1976 study of intermarried couples found that Jews who marry non-Jews generally have a secular outlook on life. They attach greater significance to Jewish culture and history, to modern Jewish political concerns and to Jewish contributions to the general culture and society than to religious precepts and ritual practices. Families in which the non-Jewish partner had converted tended to be more religiously oriented. To some extent the present survey corroborates those findings with respect to the children of the intermarried couples.

To explore the secular dimensions of the respondents' Jewish identification, the present survey asked a number of questions about their attitudes to the Jewish people, as distinct from their attitudes toward Jewish religion (Tables 19-21).

A comparison with the findings of Table 16, which examined their attitudes to Judaism as a religion is illuminating. Among both groups of respondents, more were favorably disposed towards Jews as a people than towards Judaism as a religion. The difference was most pronounced among the children of mixed marriage. While 68 percent said they favored Judaism as a religion, 92 percent favored Jews as a people (Table 19).

Attitude Towards Jews as a People		
	Percent	
	Children of	
	Conversionary Families	Mixed Marriages
Favorable	87	92
Uncertain	10	5
Unfavorable	3	3

Slightly more respondents from conversionary families

expressed uncertainty about their attitude towards Jews as a people than respondents from mixed marriages. On the other hand, as the questions regarding expressions of Jewish peoplehood became more specific, the percentage of respondents who expressed favorable attitudes about them declined (Table 20).

Table 20

Attitudes Towards Specific Expressions of Support for Jewish Peoplehood

Issues	Attitude	Percent	
		Children of	
		Conversionary Families	Mixed Marriages
Supporting political candidates favorable to Jews	Favorable	53	60
	Uncertain	41	30
	Unfavorable	6	10
Helping to promote the interests of Jews the world over	Favorable	69	67
	Uncertain	28	24
	Unfavorable	3	9
Making the world remember the suffering of the Jews (Holocaust)	Favorable	69	65
	Uncertain	19	25
	Unfavorable	12	10

The item that generated the most uncertainty among both groups of respondents was the one about "supporting political candidates favorable to Jews." More of the respondents from conversionary marriages expressed uncertainty about this (41 percent) than those from mixed families (30 percent).

The idea that the Jews of the world are interconnected also seemed to trigger uncertainty among a substantial proportion of the respondents (Tables 21-23). While the attitudes of both groups regarding issues of Jewish peoplehood were relatively similar, striking differences emerged when the respondents were asked: "Do you believe that you as an individual have a special responsibility to Jews in need of help, or have no greater responsibility to Jews in need of help than to any other human being in need?" (Table 22).

Table 21

“Jews the world over have a special responsibility for one another”

	Percent	
	Children of	
	Conversionary Families	Mixed Marriages
Agree	52	51
Uncertain	32	29
Disagree	16	20

Table 22

Personal Responsibility to Jews in Need of Help

	Percent	
	Children of	
	Conversionary Families	Mixed Marriages
A special responsibility to Jews	41	17
No greater responsibility to Jews than to others in need	59	83

The responses show that however favorably disposed the respondents were toward Jews as a people and to issues pertaining to Jewish peoplehood, the majority in both groups seemed to reject any particularistic expression of that attitude. As many as 83 percent of the children of mixed marriages and 59 percent of the children of conversionary marriages indicated that they felt no greater responsibility to Jews than to others in need.

The same rejection of particularism was evident in the fact that only a small minority of both groups considered it important to belong to a Jewish community (Table 23).

Table 23

Importance of Belonging to a Jewish Community

	Percent	
	Conversionary Families	Mixed Marriages
Very important	19	4
Somewhat important	25	15
Unimportant	56	81

The overall impressions conveyed by the findings, then, is that most respondents, while generally favorably disposed to Jews as a people, did not feel much of a particularistic link to the Jewish community.

Israel

Surveys of recent years have shown that America's Jews are deeply attached to the State of Israel and feel committed to its welfare. Indeed, many Jews express their loyalty to the Jewish people through their feelings for and actions on behalf of Israel.

The study sought to determine how children of intermarriage perceive Israel and how closely they identify with the State. The first question probed if they take pride in its accomplishments (Table 24).

It is clear that respondents from conversionary and mixed married families show greater differences regarding the issue of Israel than on the issues of Jewish peoplehood explored previously. The respondents from conversionary families generally showed greater pride in Israel and its accomplishments than those from mixed families.

Yet some general trends are worth noting. Pride in Israel's achievements declined in responses relating to Israel's relations with the Arabs. (The fact that the questionnaires were filled out in the summer of 1982, at the height of the Lebanon war, and that the media were critical of Israel at the time, undoubtedly influenced many of the respondents.) And the lower level of pride shown for American Jewish support for Israel, while not statistically signi-

ficant, seems to bear out the general reluctance for particularism noted earlier.

On the whole, more children of conversionary marriages (48 percent) than those of mixed marriages (30 percent) seemed ready to acknowledge a special responsibility to support Israel (Table 25). However, almost half of the former (46 percent) and half of the latter saw their responsibility to Israel as no greater than that of other Americans.

A comparison of Tables 25 and 22 reveals another interesting finding: More respondents in each group (48 percent of the children of conversionary marriages and 30 percent of the children of mixed

Table 24

Pride in Israel's Achievements

		Percent	
		Children of	
		Conversionary Families	Mixed Marriages
The fact that Israel exists	Very proud	75	43
	Somewhat proud	18	42
	Not proud	7	15
Israel's military ability	Very proud	68	52
	Somewhat proud	26	35
	Not proud	6	13
Israel's scientific and cultural accomplishments	Very proud	69	60
	Somewhat proud	31	37
	Not proud	—	3
Israel's relation- ship with Arabs	Very proud	13	2
	Somewhat proud	48	25
	Not proud	39	73
American Jewish support for Israel	Very proud	54	47
	Somewhat proud	36	30
	Not proud	10	23

Table 25

Responsibility to Support Israel

	Percent	
	Conversionary Families	Children of Mixed Marriages
Special responsibility	48	30
No greater responsibility than other Americans	46	51
No responsibility at all	6	19

marriages) acknowledged a special responsibility to support Israel than acknowledged a responsibility to help Jews in need (41 percent and 17 percent, respectively). Indeed, among the children of mixed marriages, those who acknowledged a special responsibility to help Israel outnumbered those who recognized a special responsibility to help Jews in need by almost 2:1. It would appear, at least from this last comparison, that feelings about Israel tend to override some of the fear of particularism among those who otherwise are most resistant to it.

EXCLUSIVENESS AND GROUP IDENTITY

Quite apart from their patterns of religious behavior or religio-ethnic attitudes, Jews have historically maintained their distinctiveness by limiting their closest associations (e.g., mating, friendship) to other Jews. Obviously, such exclusiveness is unlikely for the children of intermarriages. It is therefore of interest to find out how those among them who regard themselves as Jews relate to the non-Jewish world around them.

Earlier questions regarding the ethnic composition of the respondents' friends (cf. Table 15) indicated that most had both Jewish and non-Jewish friends. And when they were asked if they felt more comfortable with those who were Jewish or non-Jewish, an overwhelming majority (over 80 percent) of both groups reported feeling equally comfortable with both Jews and non-Jews — an attitude quite in line with their view of religion as purely a private matter, and the fact that they are not very much involved in either religious or ethnic communal life. Likewise, when the respondents, both married and non-married, were asked about their dating patterns as teenagers, the great majority of both the children of conversionary families and mixed marriages indicated that they had dated both Jews and non-Jews. Only a small minority in each group (13 and 17 percent, respectively) had dated mostly Jewish partners.

The study sought to explore whether the relative unconcern of the children of intermarriage with ethnic exclusiveness and their lack of involvement with Jewish communal life were likely to lead to a lack of concern about Jewish continuity (Tables 26 and 27).

Asked whether they would be upset if their children did not regard themselves as Jews, four times as many respondents from conversionary families (45 percent) as from mixed marriages (11 percent) said they would be (Table 26). However, it is worth noting

Table 26

“I would be very upset if my children did not regard themselves as Jews”

	Percent	
	Children of	
	Conversionary Families	Mixed Marriages
Agree	45	11
Uncertain	33	18
Disagree	22	71

that, in Table 5, 70 percent of the conversionary group and 18 percent of those from mixed marriages had agreed with the statement: “Being Jewish is very important to me,” both figures higher than the responses regarding their children in Table 26. Evidently, even when Jewish identification is strongly felt, there is a high risk that it will not be transmitted to the next generation. Thus, the full impact of intermarriage, both on the sheer size of the Jewish community and on the commitment of its members, may not be as apparent in the second generation as it may become in the third. This is clearly borne out in the study: The great majority of the respondents would not discourage their own children from marrying non-Jews (Table 27).

In fact, when the non-married respondents in the sample — 68 percent — were asked whether they themselves expected to marry Jews, the great majority (85 percent of the children of conversionary families and 69 percent of the others) replied that they had no expectation either way. Of the married respondents, 64 percent of the conversionary group and only 8 percent of the others had married Jewish partners.

Table 27

“I would discourage my children from marrying someone who was *not* Jewish”

	Percent	
	Conversionary Families	Children of Mixed Marriages
Agree	24	3
Uncertain	7	6
Disagree	69	91

The rate of intermarriage among the children of conversionary families was virtually identical to what is generally considered to be the rate of intermarriage among American Jews in general. The difference lies in the rate of conversion of the non-Jewish partner. According to available data, about one-third of all intermarriages among American Jews involve the conversion of the non-Jewish partner to Judaism. It is therefore worth noting that none of the respondents from either group had themselves entered into conversionary marriages.

FEELINGS ABOUT ONESELF AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

While this study focused primarily on various aspects of Jewish identification and how they are reflected in the relationship of the individual to society, it also sought to explore some of the more personal components of identity, such as the respondents' relationship with their parents and grandparents, and their subjective evaluation of their own social and emotional well-being.

Feelings About Oneself

As Stonequist's "marginal man" concept underscores, it has long been believed that children of intermarriage belong, in some sense, to two cultures, without feeling fully at home in either. To probe for evidence of such discomfort, the questionnaire asked the respondents to react to 11 statements describing different emotional states, and to indicate how frequently they experienced these feelings (Table 28).

Individual replies were scored on a scale from 1 to 7. A score of 1 indicated that the respondent experienced the particular feeling rarely or never. A score of 7 indicated that he or she had the particular feeling often.

For the first seven items a high average score suggests a high degree of comfort about relationships with others as well as about the respondents themselves; for the last four items a low average score suggests a high degree of comfort. Thus, the scores on the items in Table 28 can be read as indicating higher or lower degrees of what Stonequist called marginality. (More discomfort suggests greater marginality.)

Among the first seven items, the respondents demonstrated their highest degree of marginality on Items 3, 4, and 7 ("having a sense of close fellowship with a group"; "being at peace"; "some Higher Being caring about me"). Among the last four items, their marginality was highest on Item 8 ("no one really understanding me").

Table 28

Indicators of Comfort With One's Identity

The feeling of	Average Frequency
1. Being well liked by those I really care about	6.0
2. Finding family occasions a source of warmth	5.4
3. Having a sense of close fellowship with a group	4.7
4. Being at peace	4.6
5. Being confident about my future	5.1
6. Knowing my own mind and what I want out of life	5.0
7. Some Higher Being caring about me	3.2
8. No one really understanding me	3.2
9. Wishing I could be born again as someone else	1.8
10. A lack of historic roots	2.2
11. Wishing I knew what my parents expect of me	2.4

On the other hand, apparently very few respondents felt their marginality keenly enough to want to be reborn as someone else (Item 9). Nor did they seem to connect their feelings of marginality, if they had any, with a lack of historic roots (Item 10).

The fact that the majority felt well liked by those they really cared about (Item 1) and found their families a source of warmth (Item 2) suggests that the respondents did not experience any significant sense of discomfort concerning their identity — and probably could not be said to experience much marginality. It should be emphasized that these scores remain only exploratory and speculative estimates of the degree of marginality among children of intermarriage. However, in the absence of more reliable data, and given the widespread concern about possible emotional consequences of childrearing in intermarriage, it is useful to have some benchmark measurements. For the present it may be hypothesized that marginality, in the sense described by Stonequist, is not a problem for the great majority of such children.

It is worth pondering that respondents from mixed marriages felt no greater lack of historic roots (Item 10) than children of conversionary marriages; neither did they indicate a greater sense of conflict about what their parents expected of them (Item 11). In

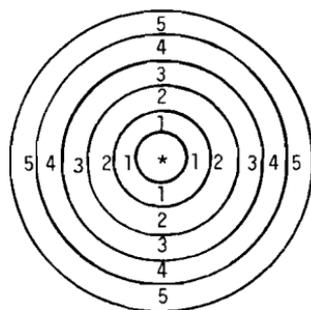
fact, if the responses are representative of a broader pattern, children of conversionary marriages appeared to be somewhat more prone to symptoms of marginality. There could even be a slight psychological disadvantage to being the child of such a marriage.

For example, when the replies to “How much personal stress have you experienced in choosing your ethnic identity?” were rated on a scale from 1 (“very little or none”) to 8 (“a great deal”), the average score for all the respondents was 2.2. The children of conversionary marriages whose mothers converted scored 2.4, and the children of mixed marriages whose mothers did not convert scored 2.0—again, differences that are not statistically significant but consistent enough to be suggestive. It is possible that since in conversionary families religion is of greater significance than in mixed marriages, children of the former are somewhat more prone to experience symptoms of marginality than children of the latter. This hypothesis remains to be tested by more controlled data.

Relations With Parents

Do children of intermarried families feel a conflict of loyalties in relation to their parents? Are they drawn more to one than to the other? Do the children of conversionary marriages differ in this matter from children of mixed marriages?

To measure the emotional closeness of the respondents to parents and relatives, they were asked to imagine themselves at the center of five concentric rings.



Ring 1, nearest to the center, represents the closest relationship, with each consecutively numbered ring representing relationships

of progressively greater emotional distance. The respondents were asked which of those circles best represented how close they felt to their mothers, fathers and grandparents.

On the average, the children of conversionary families had an overall parental closeness score (a summary value measuring their closeness to both parents) of 1.5; they were equally close to both their parents.

The overall parental closeness score for the children of mixed marriages was 1.7. These respondents were closer to their Jewish-born mothers (1.2) than to their Jewish-born fathers (1.9). Those with Gentile fathers in this group were even closer to their Jewish mothers (1.2) than children of conversionary marriages with Jewish-born fathers and mothers who became Jewish (1.5). But children of typical conversionary marriages (non-Jewish mother converted) were slightly closer to their Jewish-born fathers (1.5) than children of typical mixed marriages in which their Jewish-born fathers were married to non-Jewish mothers (1.9). The closeness score for Gentile-born fathers was 1.8.

In the 1976 survey of intermarried couples, respondents were asked how frequently they visited their parents and spoke to them on the telephone. About 55 percent of the Jewish-born respondents said they saw their parents at least a few times a month; 77 percent spoke to them on the telephone at least once a week. Only about 30 percent of their Gentile-born mates visited their own parents as often, and only 55 percent called them as frequently. In the current survey, those respondents who no longer lived at home were asked how often they spent at least one hour with their parents, and how often they spoke with them by telephone (Tables 29 and 30).

The children of conversionary marriages were more likely to see and call their parents than the children of mixed marriages. Children of mixed marriages were the least likely to see their parents on a weekly or even a monthly basis. However, children of Jewish mothers married to non-converted Gentile fathers called their mothers most often of all. This finding is in keeping with the "closeness score" of 1.2 established earlier.

In sum, the children of conversionary marriages seemed to follow the characteristically Jewish pattern of frequent visiting and phoning, and the children of mixed marriages seemed to follow the more characteristically Gentile pattern of less frequent visiting and phoning (except for the frequent telephone contact with their Jewish mothers). This finding is consistent with a number of socio-psychological theories of cognitive and affective balance. Such theories postulate that people confronted by very difficult or impossible choices often withdraw from both. Perhaps one way

that children of mixed marriages resolve having to “choose” between the heritages of their parents is to distance themselves from both. Since the children of conversionary marriages are not

Table 29

Frequency of Spending at Least One Hour with Parent

	Percent		
	Children of		
	Conversionary Families	Mixed Marriages	
	Gentile-born Mother*	Gentile-born Mother	Gentile-born Father
With mother			
at least once a week	55	37	20
at least once a month	15	19	30
less than once a month	30	44	50
With father			
at least once a week	50	40	20
at least once a month	20	14	20
less than once a month	30	46	60

*Since examples were so few, the category of Gentile-born father was omitted.

faced with such a choice, they may be more likely to feel equally close to both of their parents and closer to their parents altogether than the children of mixed marriages.

Relations With Grandparents

The placements on the consecutively numbered concentric rings made it clear that the respondents felt less close to their grandparents than to their parents. Interestingly, while children of conversionary marriages were slightly closer to their parents than children of mixed marriages, the pattern was reversed in the

Table 30

Talking to Parents on Telephone

	Percent			
	Conversionary Families	Children of		
		Gentile-born Mother*	Mixed Marriages	
			Mother	Father
To mother				
at least once a week	70	48	74	
at least once a month	30	52	26	
less than once a month	—	—	—	
To father				
at least once a week	70	44	45	
at least once a month	30	47	44	
less than once a month	—	9	11	

*Since examples were so few, the category of Gentile-born father was omitted.

relations with their grandparents. The children of conversionary marriages had an average closeness score of 3.0 vis-à-vis their grandparents, and the children of mixed marriages had an average score of 2.7. (It should be recalled that the higher the numerical score the greater the implied emotional *distance*.)

Children of conversionary marriages were found to be slightly closer to their Jewish grandparents (average score, 3.0) than to their Gentile grandparents (3.4), while respondents from mixed marriages were somewhat closer to their Gentile grandparents (average score, 2.6) than to their Jewish grandparents (2.8).

Why children of conversionary marriages seem more distant from their grandparents on both sides — assuming the data on this matter are valid — is open to conjecture. It is possible that the conversion to Judaism by the non-Jewish spouse creates an emotional distance between the conversionary couple and their Gentile in-laws, which carries over to the children. Paradoxically, the conversion may also lead to distancing from Jewish in-laws who, in many cases, urged that step on the younger couple. Having

satisfied their Jewish parents, conversionary couples may express a residual resentment by distancing themselves and their children from the parents.

The adult respondents were asked whether they and their family had lived “close by” (within an hour’s drive) their grandparents as children or teenagers (Table 31).

Table 31

Residential Proximity to Grandparents

	Percent*		
	Children of		
	Conversionary Families	Mixed Marriages	
	Gentile-born Mother**	Gentile-born Mother	Gentile-born Father
To maternal grandparents	38 (G)***	47 (G)	69 (J)
To paternal grandparents	54 (J)***	68 (J)	40 (G)

*Columns do not add up to 100 percent because figures were omitted for those living farther than one hour of driving.

**Since examples were so few, the category of Gentile-born father was omitted.

***Gentile (G) or Jewish (J) grandparents.

More respondents in all categories had lived close by their Jewish grandparents as children than near their non-Jewish grandparents. Even more children of mixed marriages had lived near their Jewish grandparents than those of conversionary marriages; in fact, 69 percent of the children of unconverted Gentile fathers — more than any other group — had done so. Closer scrutiny of the data revealed that in this last category of respondents, 38 percent, the highest percentage of all, had lived within walking distance of their Jewish grandparents. Children of typical conversionary marriages, on the other hand, had the highest percentage (46) living more than a five-hour drive away from their Jewish grandparents.

Obviously physical proximity to one’s grandparents is not necessarily either a cause or a consequence of particular attitudes or behavior. But the findings underscore that there is no simple

association between the conversion of the non-Jewish partner and the closeness of extended Jewish family ties.

Social research has found that grandchildren are generally closer to their maternal than to their paternal grandparents, and that this is even more likely when the maternal grandparents are Jewish. In this study, too, when the respondents were asked how much they enjoyed spending time with their grandparents, all seemed more favorably disposed toward their maternal than toward their paternal grandparents (Table 32).

	Percent	
	Children of	
	Conversionary Families	Mixed Marriages
	Gentile-born Mother	Gentile-born Mother
Of maternal grandparents		
a lot	58	36
somewhat	34	48
not at all	8	16
Of paternal grandparents		
a lot	45	33
somewhat	33	56
not at all	22	11

Fifty-eight percent of the children of conversionary marriages, and 36 percent of those of mixed marriages, reported that they enjoyed the company of their maternal grandparents "a lot." In this case, however, the maternal grandparents were Gentile. In contrast, 45 percent of the conversionary offspring and 33 percent of the mixed-marriage offspring felt the same way toward their paternal — Jewish — grandparents.

Since the analysis in this table was limited to children of Gentile-born mothers, it is not known whether the preference for the Gentile grandparents was due to maternal influence or also to religious-ethnic variables. This is a fit subject for further research.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This investigation, which studied the religious and ethnic identification, the emotional well-being and the family relationships of children of intermarried couples, focused on the differences that could be discerned between those respondents whose non-Jewish parents converted to Judaism and those whose non-Jewish parents did not convert. Despite the limitations of a relatively small sample, and a circumscribed focus, a number of salient findings emerge from the study.

Jewish Identity

— Most of the children of conversionary marriages considered themselves Jewish, in contrast to only a quarter of the children of mixed marriages. The majority of the former valued their Jewishness, while the majority of the latter were indifferent to it.

— Both groups of respondents attached greater importance to their religious identity than to their ethnic ties. The majority tended to see their ethnic heritage as an amalgam of their parental backgrounds, while those who affirmed a religious identity clearly affirmed one to the exclusion of the other.

— The only Jewish ethnic dimension endorsed by the majority of all respondents was a pride in Israel's accomplishments (although there was less agreement on whether American Jews had a special responsibility to support Israel).

— The children of conversionary marriages were more likely to receive more intensive Jewish education, celebrate their Bar Mitzvah, Bat Mitzvah or confirmation and observe Jewish holidays, and had more Jewish artifacts and ceremonial objects in their homes than children of mixed marriages.

— With respect to Jewish education received, observance of major Jewish rites and holidays, and participation in Jewish philanthropy, the children of conversionary marriages were much like American Jews in general. But in their attitudes toward participation in the religious life of the organized Jewish community, and in their views on Jewish peoplehood, they were more like the children of mixed marriages than like the larger American Jewish population. Many reported observing Christmas as well as Hanukah, and some said they observed Easter as well as Passover.

— While the children of conversionary marriages did have a higher rate of synagogue affiliation than their counterparts, it was not as high as the rate of synagogue attendance on the part of their parents.

— Both groups were inclined to think of their Jewishness as a private matter and reject particularistic notions of that identification that involved them in the larger Jewish community. Thus, for example, home holiday celebrations or “studying about Judaism” were preferred over synagogue attendance, and a general identification with the Jewish people was more prevalent than a special sense of obligation to help Jews in need or to support political candidates who favor Jewish interests.

— There were greater differences in the responses of the two groups in matters concerning behavior than in matters pertaining to attitudes.

Relations With Others

— Most of the respondents in both groups did not indicate any appreciable feeling of “marginality.” In fact, contrary to the social science literature pointing to stress and marginality resulting from intermarriage, the children of intermarriage who participated in this study were remarkably free from such discomfort in connection with their identity and social relations. Equally surprising, the children of conversionary families showed slightly greater indications of marginality than the children of mixed marriages.

— The social networks — friends and dates before marriage — of all children of intermarriage included more non-Jews than had been true for their Jewish parents. The great majority in both groups reported that they felt equally comfortable with Jewish and non-Jewish friends.

— Over a third of the married children of conversionary couples and the overwhelming majority of the children of mixed couples had non-Jewish partners. Over two-thirds of the children of conversionary marriages and more than 90 percent of the children of

mixed marriages said they would not discourage their own children from marrying non-Jews. And not one of the non-Jewish spouses among the children of the intermarried had converted to Judaism.

— All the respondents felt somewhat closer to their mothers than to their fathers, especially when the mother was Jewish. Children of conversionary families not living with their parents visited them and spoke with them on the telephone somewhat more often than the children of mixed marriages, but the latter called their Jewish-born mothers more frequently than any other group.

— Children of conversionary marriages also seemed to have a closer relationship with their parents than the others, although relations with grandparents seemed to be distant for both groups of respondents.

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Current estimates of the rate of intermarriage in the American Jewish community stand at about 40 percent, and this figure is not likely to decrease in the near future. It is also estimated that there are between 400,000 and 600,000 children of such marriages, and this number will undoubtedly grow in the years to come. Given a total American Jewish population of some 5½ million today, it is clear that children of intermarried families will have a significant religious, cultural and communal impact on American Jewish life.

How well the Jewish community can deal with that impact depends, in large measure, on how much is known about what these children believe and consider important. It is hoped that this study has made some small contribution to this knowledge, and that it will encourage further research into the issues touched upon.