INTERMARRIAGE AND RABBINIC OFFICIATION

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FOREWORD

Perhaps no issue has so divided the Reform rabbinate as the question of whether to officiate at interfaith marriages. All of the movements oppose rabbinic officiation in the absence of conversion to Judaism, for a mixed marriage is not a Jewish one. The Orthodox and Conservative movements forbid rabbinic participation outright; rabbis who violate these prohibitions can expect severe sanctions and possible expulsion from their organizations. The Reconstructionist movement has developed guidelines for rabbinic participation without formal officiation. In contrast, the Reform rabbinate remains divided. Reform leadership opposes officiation yet grants each rabbi the autonomy to decide whether to officiate and under what conditions. The Joint Placement Commission of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and Hebrew Union College publicly opposes the decision of Reform congregations to refuse to employ rabbis who will not officiate at interfaith weddings, thereby supporting the movement's formal opposition to rabbinic officiation.

Reform rabbis who decide this question affirmatively do so for a variety of reasons. Some do so out of ideology -- as heirs of classical Reform leaders like Samuel Holdheim, who pronounced intermarriage the ideal marriage in the new age of enlightenment. More commonly, rabbis who officiate do so out of consideration for the feelings of the couples and families involved. Many, if not most, do so on the assumption that rabbinic officiation will open the door to further outreach efforts, sensitizing the couple to the Jewish presence within their marriage and paving the road to ultimate conversion.

It is this last assumption that this study probes. No one knows what difference rabbinic officiation -- or, conversely, refusal to officiate -- actually makes in the subsequent Jewish experiences of the intermarried couple. The American Jewish Committee therefore commissioned Professor Egon Mayer to review earlier studies of intermarrieds and compare the experiences of those couples who successfully sought rabbinic officiation, those who did so unsuccessfully, and those who did not ask at all.

Although of the study deals with a limited sample, the data suggest that rabbinic officiation at mixed marriages is more frequent now than in the past. A sizable minority of couples in the sample who were refused officiation by one rabbi were able to find another rabbi willing to officiate. However, there is little evidence indicating that rabbinic officiation does in fact presage subsequent conversion or other involvement in Jewish communal life. To be sure, those married by rabbis appear to have more favorable attitudes than those rebuffed, but positive attitudes, in this case, do

not necessarily translate into positive actions. In turn, those who never asked a rabbi are the most likely to be distant and alienated from organized Jewish life.

This "null" hypothesis -- namely, that no positive connection may be posited between rabbinic officiation or nonofficiation and subsequent communal involvement -- challenges one of the prevailing assumptions in the debate over rabbinic officiation. To be sure, there are other ideological and psychological considerations, and it is upon these areas that debate and further research are focused. Yet as the rate, and perhaps even the incidence, of conversion to Judaism declines because of the increased acceptability of intermarriage, rabbis who do perform intermarriages should reconsider whether their actions are in fact advancing the goals they articulate. Conversely, those who do not officiate should ask whether they have explained their position to the intermarrying couple in a sensitive and understanding manner and left open windows of opportunity for subsequent outreach and communal initiatives.

This report carries further earlier studies on intermarriage and the Jewish community directed by Professor Mayer for the American Jewish Committee. We are particularly indebted to Dr. Sherry Rosen, research associate in the Jewish Communal Affairs Department, for her assistance in the development and completion of this report.

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The increase in marriages between Jews and non-Jews in the 1970s and 1980s has generated mounting concerns about the impact of intermarriage upon the Jewish family and the Jewish community. One of these concerns is demographic: what does the high rate of intermarriage portend for the future size of the Jewish population? Closely related is a strong concern about the quality of Jewish life in intermarried families.

Largely as a result of these concerns, and of the continuing penchant of young American Jews to choose mates who were not born Jewish, both public opinion and communal policy toward intermarriage have changed dramatically in the American Jewish community since the 1970s. Succinctly put, there has been a shift from feelings of outrage to strategies of outreach.[1]

Beginning in 1978 with the bold policy of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations to "reach out to the non-Jewish partners in mixed marriages . . . to welcome them into the community . . . and to encourage them to choose Judaism as their own personal faith," both the organized Jewish community and individual Jewish families touched by intermarriage have placed increasing emphasis on the value of drawing the non-Jewish partner into the Jewish community. Just how the "drawing near" (*kiruv* in Hebrew) of the non-Jewish partner is to be accomplished and how much "drawing near" is necessary to ensure that the couple and their children identify as Jews are open questions.

Previous studies conducted by this researcher have shown that, where the non-Jewish partner converts to Judaism, the resulting conversionary family is far more Jewish in its pattern of personal identification, affiliation, and conduct than the mixed-married family.[2] However, only 25-30 percent of the non-Jews who marry Jews opt to become Jewish. Most intermarriages are mixed marriages, in which neither spouse converts to the religion of the other. The previous studies have also shown that, in a small minority of mixed marriages, there is a commitment to Judaism, and the children are raised as Jews. Jewish leaders, therefore, have sought ways to encourage the conversion of non-Jewish spouses and to enhance the quality of Jewish life within mixed-married families so as to increase the likelihood that children born to such families will be raised as Jews.

After nearly two thousand years of reluctance by the Jewish community to accept converts, the overwhelming majority of American rabbis today have shifted toward a policy of welcoming non-Jewish spouses who wish to consider becoming Jewish. Some rabbis actively encourage such consideration. In addition, the Reform and Reconstructionist movements have also taken the position -- contrary to halakhah (Jewish law) and the standards that apply in the Orthodox and Conservative branches of the Jewish community -- that children born into a mixed marriage where the mother is not Jewish (and the children themselves are not converted) may be regarded as Jews

if they are raised as Jews. In further contrast to the rules of halakhah and the standards of practice of most rabbis, a large and growing minority of Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis perform marriages between Jews and non-Jews.

These rabbis -- and many lay people as well -- believe that a rabbi's response to a dual-faith couple seeking rabbinic officiation at their wedding can make a significant difference in the Jewish content of the couple's subsequent married life. They feel that such rabbinic involvement encourages the ongoing ties of these couples to the Jewish community, infusing Jewishness into their future family lives, whereas rabbis who decline to officiate at mixed marriages communicate a powerful rejectionist message to the mixed-marrying couples, alienating them from Jewish identification, affiliation, and participation. Thus rabbinic officiation is seen as a critical determinant of the future Jewishness of mixed-married couples and their children.

Whether rabbinic officiation at mixed marriages in fact has consequences for the future Jewishness of the couples involved is a matter of conjecture. To shed light on this issue, the present study offers some data from a survey of intermarried couples, both conversionary and mixed. It examines the relationship between rabbinic officiation at mixed marriages and subsequent expressions of Jewishness among these couples. It compares certain measures of Jewish identification in mixed-married families and in conversionary families. It also compares these measures in mixed-married couples who were married by rabbis and mixed-married couples who were not -- either because a rabbi refused them or because they never asked a rabbi. Of course, many factors besides rabbinic officiation may contribute to the Jewish identification (or lack thereof) of mixed-married families, as of all families.

In addition to trying to determine whether or not there exists a positive relationship between rabbinic officiation and subsequent Jewishness, we seek also to raise for future exploration a variety of related questions regarding rabbinic refusal: Is there a negative relationship between rabbinic refusal and subsequent Jewishness, and especially between rabbinic refusal and subsequent interest in conversion? How in fact do couples perceive refusals -- as personal rebuffs or as principled statements of rabbinic integrity? And does rabbinic rebuff necessarily end their search for a rabbi to officiate at their wedding?

Examining aspects of rabbinic officiation and rabbinic refusal will enable us to understand more about the complex interplay between institutional religion and lay practice, and between couples' attitudes and their actual behaviors. Such knowledge may suggest new ways for Jewish religious leaders to support and show concern for mixed-religion couples without necessarily jeopardizing halakhic standards.

Methodology

This study is based on a previously collected sample of 200 non-Jews and 109 Jews-by-choice (converts) married to Jewish-born spouses. The sample was obtained by means of a "randomized snowball technique." Local telephone directories were consulted in fifteen areas of major Jewish population, including the five boroughs of New York City, Long Island, Westchester, Denver, Los Angeles, Washington, Atlanta, Portland, Nashville, Chicago, and Houston. Using a list of distinctive Jewish names (DJNs), 175 names were selected in each community. The total of 2,625 names was pooled as a "resource sample" to be used in generating the actual research sample. Interviewers contacted the resource sample and asked them to refer close relatives in either conversionary or mixed marriages. This approach helped avoid the usual biases associated with the use of DJN samples (e.g., bias in favor of the Jewishly identified and bias toward Jewish men married to non-Jewish women).

Between March and December of 1984, names and addresses of 615 prospective subjects -- all non-Jewish-born spouses of born Jews -- were obtained from the resource sample. These 615 individuals were sent survey questionnaires, of which 309 were returned. The 309 respondents constitute the research sample on which this study is based.

Two-thirds of the sample were women; nearly three-quarters married after 1971; nearly three-quarters had one or more children; more than three-quarters had completed at least four years of college; and more than three-quarters were employed outside the home. The average age of the respondents was 39 years, and they had been married an average of ten years. These characteristics suggest a group with established family life-styles, making the sample appropriate for examining the relationship between the officiating of rabbis at their weddings and the subsequent quality of Jewishness in their lives.

In order to properly determine the relationship of rabbinic officiation or refusal to any subsequent attachment to or alienation from the Jewish community, it is important to distinguish between those who were not married by a rabbi because they *never asked* a rabbi to officiate and those who had asked but *had been refused.*

Therefore, tables below are subdivided into the three groupings: (a) respondents whose marriages were conducted by a rabbi, (b) respondents whose marriages were *not* conducted by a rabbi because their request was refused, and (c) respondents whose marriages were *not* conducted by a rabbi because they never asked. In addition, the relative Jewishness of these three groups will be compared to that of respondents who had converted to Judaism. Such a comparison sheds light on how well various expressions of Jewishness are preserved in families where conversion has taken place, as opposed to those where no conversion has taken place but the couple was married in a ceremony with rabbinic officiation.

Some would contend that the distinction between groups (b) and (c) is not all that appropriate because a great many, if not most, of those who did not request officiation from a rabbi at their marriages probably acted on the assumption that the rabbi would refuse them. But, as will be seen, there are some noteworthy differences between the two groups. Moreover, almost a third of those who were initially *rebuffed* by one rabbi went on to find another who would officiate.

The sample (table 1) was divided into a number of subgroups. Of the 200 non-Jewish respondents in mixed marriages, 58 had been married by rabbis (16 in co-officiated ceremonies involving Christian clergy). Twelve of these 58, or one-fifth, had previously been refused by other rabbis. A total of 142 of the non-Jewish mixed-marrieds had not been married by rabbis; 27 had been refused, and 115 had never asked rabbis to officiate. Some of these 142 had been married in Christian ceremonies, the others in civil ceremonies. Of the 109 converts, 80 had been married by rabbis; 29, not having been converted at the time of their weddings, had not been married by rabbis.

In this study, the two principal groups and the various subgroups were compared on a series of indicators selected as measures of greater or lesser Jewishness. In attempting to measure Jewishness, the tools of social science are very blunt instruments. They do not permit a deep probing of soul or psyche. Instead, they require us to settle for proxy indicators: observable, measurable characteristics that are by and large external to an individual or to a family, but which strongly hint at less directly observable traits. Thus, for example, synagogue attendance (observable) becomes at least one proxy indicator of an individual's affinity for institutionalized Jewish religious worship (nonobservable). The indicators of Jewishness selected for this study were

- religious activities
- communal activities

- cultural activities
- Jewishly oriented attitudes

Religious activities were elicited by the following questions on the questionnaire: Did you attend a Passover seder this year? Were Hanukkah candles lit in your home this year? Did you attend synagogue this past Rosh Hashanah? Do you regularly participate in Jewish religious services?

These questions dealt with communal activities: Are you a member of a Jewish congregation? Are you a member of any Jewish organization (not synagogue-related)? Have you contributed to a Jewish fund-raising drive this year?

On cultural activities, respondents answered these questions: Do you regularly read any Jewish newspapers or periodicals? Do you make a special effort to watch TV programs like "Holocaust" or Abba Eban's "Heritage" series? Do you prefer to vote for political candidates who are supportive of Israel? Do you take any courses from time to time on Jewish life, history, or culture?

And Jewish attitudes were plumbed by these: Do you feel comfortable in Jewish settings? Do you feel a need to be a part of the Jewish community? Do you feel that you would like your own children to live as Jews? Are you strongly in favor of United States aid to Israel?

Respondents were also asked questions about any continuing involvement in Christian religious and/or cultural life. These questions were: Are you a member of a church? Do you regularly participate in non-Jewish religious services? Did you have a Christmas tree in your home this past year?

The answers are presented in the following tables. Because not all respondents answered all the questions on the questionnaire, the tables sometimes reflect the answers of less-than-total groups and subgroups. In all cases, however, the number of responses being analyzed (represented by the letter *N*) is given in the tables.

Some tables indicate the magnitudes of the differences between the groups and subgroups. Statistical (chi-square) tests performed on these data confirmed that, with small subgroups of the kind analyzed in this report, between-group differences of less than twelve percentage points could occur by chance so easily that they could not be regarded as statistically significant. However, differences greater than twelve percentage points indicate sociologically meaningful relationships between rabbinic officiation at mixed marriages and the subsequent quality of the couples' Jewish life.

Before we turn to the research findings, it must be noted that this entire study is based on the self-reports of intermarried individuals who were not born Jewish. Born-Jewish spouses of the respondents were not addressed. The study is limited, therefore, to the perceived impact of rabbinic officiation or refusal to officiate upon the intermarried as reported by the non-Jewish-born spouses. It should also be noted that *rabbis'* perceptions of officiation or refusal to officiate may also vary greatly from the perceptions reported here.

It is important to bear in mind that the findings reported below apply to groups of individuals as a whole, not to every individual in any group. Undoubtedly, there are some individuals in mixed marriages who were more profoundly affected than others by the presence of a rabbi at their weddings, just as there are some individuals who were more profoundly distressed than others by having been refused by a rabbi. Surely, there are some Jews-by-choice whose conversions to Judaism were less meaningful than those of others. This study makes no attempt to account for such individual differences in any of the subgroups.

Findings

When one looks at the entire subsample of individuals whose request for rabbinic officiation was refused at least once (39), a total of 31 percent (12) reported that they found another rabbi who was willing to officiate. Twenty-eight percent (11) indicated that they were subsequently married in a ceremony conducted by a non-Jewish cleric, and 41 percent (16) indicated that they were married in a civil ceremony. Those who were married by non-Jewish clergy include all whose original wedding plans called for a co-officiated ceremony.

These figures suggest that at least a substantial minority (almost one-third) who are refused their first request for officiation by a rabbi can find another rabbi to meet their request. Nearly another third probably proceed with their original wedding plans, *sans* rabbi. And a bit over a third proceed to marry without the benefit of clergy altogether.

This finding is all the more interesting because when respondents whose request for rabbinic officiation is reported to have been refused were asked, "How did you feel about the rabbi's refusal?" the great majority (87 percent) reported feeling upset by it. Nevertheless, more than half the respondents who had experienced a rabbinic rebuff indicated feeling that the rabbi explained the reasons for refusal "sensitively," while 48 percent felt that the rabbi who had refused them did not explain the reasons for doing so at all sensitively. It is possible that those who persisted in obtaining rabbinic officiation were more committed to a Jewish official presence at their wedding, either because of personal convictions or because of family pressure, regardless of how they might "feel" about any initial rabbinic refusal.

In terms of the possible effect of the *emotional tone* of a rabbi's refusal to officiate at a mixed marriage, it is also instructive to note that most respondents (74 percent) who experienced a rabbinic rebuff felt *unencouraged* by the rabbi to remain in contact with that synagogue. Yet, when asked, "Was the rabbi's refusal to officiate a reason for you to distance yourself from Judaism?" only 28 percent replied in the affirmative. The great majority (72 percent) did not feel that the refusal was a reason for them to distance themselves from Judaism. And as we have seen, nearly a third found another rabbi to officiate.

By the same token, not all those whose request for rabbinic officiation was met with acceptance were religiously transformed by the experience. Nor does it appear that rabbinic officiation at a mixed marriage is necessarily a prologue to subsequent conversion on the part of the non-Jewish partner. Yet rabbinic officiation at mixed marriages seems to have had little impact on the quality of Jewish life of the mixed-married couples in the sample, judging from the responses of the non-Jewish spouses to the question: "Has the fact that you were married by a rabbi had an influence on your life?" For the majority (60 percent), it made no difference at all; only 8 percent reported that it made their family life definitely more Jewish (table 2). On the other hand, converts who were married by rabbis reported more positive effects.

When the data on mixed marriages are examined over time, we find a slight increase in the frequency of mixed couples seeking rabbinic officiation in recent years (table 3) and a fluctuating increase in the willingness of rabbis to officiate (table 4). At the same time, there has been a substantial decrease in the percentage of conversions (table 5). When rabbinic officiation was sought in the past, it was more likely to involve also the conversion of the non-Jewish partner to Judaism. In recent years, mixed-marrying couples appear to have been more likely to seek out rabbis, but only to officiate at their weddings, not to conduct the conversions of the non-Jewish partners.

Table 6 confirms yet again that those who sought rabbinic officiation and were refused were

generally more favorably disposed toward being Jewish than those who never asked. But, as this table suggests, they were not quite as favorably disposed as those whose marriages were in fact conducted by a rabbi. However, the table does not permit one to infer which of the variables is cause and which effect. But, in comparing tables 6 and 7, we see that regardless of whether or not a rabbi officiated, significantly fewer non-Jewish partners felt they were being influenced by a rabbi to consider conversion than apparently had considered it on their own initiative.

One more general observation that would seem to underscore this point most sharply is the frequency of conversion after marriage among those whose marriages were conducted by a rabbi and among those whose request for officiation was rebuffed.

The majority of mixed couples who sought rabbinic officiation at their weddings in recent years readily obtained it. This contrasts with the situation in previous years, when rabbis were somewhat less likely to be asked and less likely to agree to officiate. It is surprising, however, that few rabbis who consented to officiate at mixed marriages seem to have used the opportunity to encourage the non-Jewish partner to convert (table 7). Nevertheless, those who were married by rabbis were more likely to have considered conversion than those who had been rebuffed by rabbis (table 6).

If we add the 29 converts who had not converted at the time of their weddings to the 200 mixed-marrieds, we can examine the influence of rabbinic officiation on postmarital conversion of originally non-Jewish spouses for the sample as a whole. We have data for only 208 members of this subgroup, but table 8 suggests that rabbinic officiation had no impact on the incidence of postmarital conversion.

On the four measures of Jewish religious activity, converts, as expected, scored higher than the mixed-marrieds (table 9). The *magnitudes* of the differences between the scores of the converts and those of the three subgroups of mixed-marrieds (table 10) tell us a great deal. Most of the differences in the religious activity of those mixed-marrieds married by rabbis and those who were not are statistically insignificant. The statistically significant differences are between the scores of the converts and those of the nonconverts. In other words, whether or not rabbis officiated at the mixed marriages made no difference in the future religious activity of the couples.

Tables 9 and 10 provide other, less-expected insights. Occasional, family-centered celebrations, such as lighting Hanukkah candles and participating in Passover seders, are quite widespread among the mixed-marrieds, though not as widespread as among conversionary families. On the other hand, *public* religious expression (as reflected in synagogue attendance) is far less prevalent among the mixed-marrieds. Moreover, the patterns of participation in public activities do not differ to any significant degree between those mixed-marrieds whose weddings were *conducted* by rabbis and those who were *refused* by rabbis. The group most remote from Jewish religious activity are the mixed-marrieds who never asked rabbis to officiate at their weddings.

The findings are similar when the Jewish communal activity of converts is compared with that of the several subgroups of the mixed-marrieds (tables 11 and 12). The converts are much more active in communal affairs than the mixed-marrieds. Among the latter, there is little difference between those who were married by rabbis and those who were refused by rabbis. Again, the mixed-marrieds who never asked rabbis to officiate score lowest on communal activity.

It is also instructive to note, as one compares the overall figures in table 9 with those in table 11, that significantly more of the mixed-marrieds, regardless of whether they have been married by a rabbi or rebuffed by one, participate in Jewish religious ceremonial life and, to a lesser degree, synagogue life than are formally affiliated by way of membership.

Surprisingly, this is even more pronounced by the discrepancy between the percentages who attend synagogue services *regularly* (30-24 percent) and the percentages who are members of some Jewish organization other than a synagogue (14-14 percent).

The synagogue, with its major ceremonial activities (viz., High Holiday services), remains a more powerful draw for even those mixed-marrieds who were rebuffed by a rabbi than membership in secular Jewish organizations. However, those activities are not as attractive as either private, home-based ceremonies or other private, home-based cultural activities.

When Jewish cultural activity is compared, the converts, as usual, score highest (tables 13 and 14). All but one of the differences among mixed-marrieds who were married by rabbis, who were refused by rabbis, and who never asked rabbis are statistically insignificant.

Once again, the figures reveal that those married by a rabbi as well as those whose requests for rabbinic officiation were rebuffed are significantly *less* Jewish in their cultural activities than converts, but somewhat *more* Jewish in their TV watching and in their voting preferences than those who never requested rabbinic officiation. On the whole, those who had never experienced rabbinic rebuff to their request for marriage officiation were apparently not any more *turned off* to things Jewish than their counterparts, who were married by Jewish clergy, were *turned on*. The consistency of this general point is borne out yet again in the subsequent tables.

Converts again scored higher on Jewish attitudes than did the mixed-marrieds (tables 15 and 16). Surprisingly low percentages of mixed-marrieds who had been married by rabbis felt they needed to be part of the Jewish community or cared if their children were Jewish. Perhaps the most interesting anomaly is the 80 percent of mixed-marrieds who never asked rabbis to officiate at their weddings who professed to be comfortable in Jewish settings.

As can be seen in table 15, while the overwhelming majority (91 percent) of converts would like to see their children "live as Jews," the others are relatively indifferent to this issue. However, those whose request for officiation were rebuffed are significantly less interested in their children being Jewish than those who were married by a rabbi. Thus, the willingness of rabbis to officiate at mixed-religion marriages seems to be related to the prospects of such parents raising their children as Jews. The long-term demographic consequences of even such a small relationship may be quite important for the Jewish community as a whole.

Finally, when Christian influences were measured among converts and nonconverts, converts scored significantly lower than nonconverts in mixed marriages (table 17). Apart from the Christmas tree, which was to be found in a majority of the mixed-married homes regardless of rabbinic officiation or refusal, there is very little institutionalized Christian involvement on the part of any of the groups in question. Those who were rebuffed by a rabbi were *not* at all more likely to belong to a church, *nor* at all more likely to attend one with regularity, than those whose marriages had the benefit of Jewish clergy. It is also useful to note that those who had not sought rabbinic officiation were also *not* more likely to belong to a church or attend it regularly. Whether mixed-religion couples were married by rabbis or refused by them seems to have no impact on the persistence of Christian influences on them. The similar scores of mixed couples who never sought rabbinic officiation suggest that they are largely indifferent to institutionalized religion of any sort.

Conclusion

Analysis of data presented in this report suggests that rabbinic officiation at mixed marriages has relatively little, if any, connection to the expressed Jewishness in the family lives of non-Jews

married to Jews. Similarly, rabbinic refusal to officiate at mixed marriages seems to have relatively little, if any, connection with large-scale alienation from Jewish attachments.

These findings should not be interpreted as an argument against rabbinic officiation at mixed marriages. A great many of the couples who seek such officiation -- and many of the parents of the Jewish partners -- wish the rabbi to participate for a variety of personal, emotional, and aesthetic reasons other than strengthening the Jewishness of the bride and groom and the new family they are creating. For example, the presence of the rabbi can serve as a source of comfort to the Jewish family; it may demonstrate to the parents of the non-Jewish partner the standing of their new Jewish in-laws in the Jewish community; it may be perceived by the Reform or Reconstructionist Jew as an entitlement of congregational membership.

Whether to officiate at a mixed marriage or not is a problem primarily for Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis. Since halakhah forbids such marriages, neither Conservative nor Orthodox rabbis may perform them. Reform or Reconstructionist rabbis who must decide on their own whether or not to perform a mixed marriage do not only calculate the extent to which this act might bring the couple closer to Jewish life. The rabbi must also confront the emotions of a family that may be in turmoil over the marriage of a child to a non-Jew; must balance ethical commitments, loyalties to an ancient body of religious law, and psychological sensibilities; and must consider the political repercussions within the congregation as well.

This essay is limited to one issue: the connection between rabbinic officiation or nonofficiation and the subsequent Jewish expressions of the couple. It found no such connection. Rabbis who have justified their decisions to officiate at mixed marriages on the assumption that they were helping "save" the couple for Judaism may wish to reconsider their position. Although the present study is too limited to be conclusive, it at least challenges the conventional wisdom and argues for more thorough research on a question of considerable urgency to the Jewish community.

Notes

1. For a fuller discussion of these changes, see my article "Intermarriage Research at the American Jewish Committee: Its Evolution and Impact," in Steven Bayme, ed., *Facing the Future: Essays on Contemporary Jewish Life in Memory of Yehuda Rosenman* (New York: KTAV Publishing and the American Jewish Committee, 1989), pp. 164-176.

2. Egon Mayer and Carl Sheingold, *Intermarriage and the Jewish Future* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1979); Egon Mayer, *Children of Intermarriage* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1983); Egon Mayer and Amy Avgar, *Conversion among the Intermarried* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1987).

Table 1
Rabbinic Officiation at Mixed and Conversionary Marriages

	Mixed marriages		Conversionary marriages	
	%	N	%	N
Married by a rabbi	29	58	73	80
Co-officiated ceremony		16		
Previously refused		12		
Not married by a rabbi	71	142	27	29
Rabbi refused		27		
Never asked		115		
Total	100	200	100	109

Table 2
Self-Reported Impact of Rabbinic Officiation on Quality of Jewish Life (in percents)

	Mixed marriages (N = 58)	Conversionary marriages (N = 80)
A great deal	8	44
Somewhat	32	32
None at all	60	24
Total	100	100

Table 3
Rabbinic Officiation at Mixed Marriages, by Year (in percents)

	Through 1970 (N = 47)	1971-1980 (N = 74)	Since 1980 (N = 62)
Asked a rabbi	43	45	48
Never asked rabbi	57	55	52
Total	100	100	100

Table 4
Responses to Requests for Rabbinic Officiation at Mixed Marriages, by Year (in percents)

	Through 1970 (N = 47)	1971-1980 (N = 74)	Since 1980 (N = 62)
Rabbi officiated	58	49	67
Rabbi refused	42	51	33
Total	100	100	100

Table 5
Conversion to Judaism of Non-Jewish-Born Spouse, by Year of Marriage (in percents)

	Through 1970 (N = 62)	1971-1980 (N = 122)	Since 1980 (N = 78)
Converted	43	36	23
Not converted	57	64	77
Total	100	100	100

Table 6
Consideration of Conversion, by Rabbinic Officiation at Mixed Marriage (in percents)

	RabMar (N = 58)	RabRef (N = 27)	NevAsk (N = 115)
Considered conversion	52	37	28
Did not consider conversion	48	63	72
Total	100	100	100

Table 7
Rabbinic Encouragement of Conversion of Non-Jewish Partner in Mixed Marriages (in percents)

	RabMar (N = 58)	RabRef (N = 27)	NevAsk (N = 115)
Encouraged	20	20	2
Did not encourage	80	80	98
Total	100	100	100

Table 8
Conversion of Non-Jewish Spouse after Marriage, by Rabbinic Officiation at Intermarriage (in percents)

	RabMar (N = 56)	RabRef (N = 40)	NevAsk (N = 112)
Converted	12	12	11
Did not convert	88	88	89
Total	100	100	100

Table 9
Religious Activity of Converts and Nonconverts, by Rabbinic Officiation at Mixed Marriages (in percents)

		Nonconverts		
	I Converts (N = 109)	II RabMar (N = 58)	III RabRef (N = 27)	IV NevAsk (N = 115)
Attend seder	94	70	63	65
Light Hanukkah candles	93	80	69	55
Attend synagogue Rosh Hashanah	90	38	34	17
Attend synagogue regularly	59	30	24	14

Table 10
Differences in Religious Activity among Groups I, II, III, and IV in Table 9

	Percentage difference		
	I-II	II-III	III-IV
Attend seder	24	7	2
Light Hanukkah candles	13	11	14
Attend synagogue Rosh Hashanah	52	4	17
Attend synagogue regularly	29	6	10

Table 11
Communal Activity of Converts and Nonconverts, by Rabbinic Officiation at Mixed Marriages (in percents)

		Nonconverts		
	I Converts (N = 109)	II RabMar (N = 58)	III RabRef (N = 27)	IV NevAsk (N = 115)
Member synagogue	84	22	23	11
Member organization	68	14	14	11
Contribute	82	52	43	30

Table 12
Differences in Communal Activity among Groups I, II, III, and IV in Table 11

	Percentage difference		
	I-II	II-III	III-IV
Member synagogue	62	1	12
Member organization	54	0	3
Contribute	30	9	13

Table 13
Cultural Activity of Converts and Nonconverts, by Rabbinic Officiation at Mixed Marriages (in percents)

	I Converts (N = 109)	Nonconverts II RabMar (N = 58)	III RabRef (N = 27)	IV NevAsk (N = 115)
Read Jewish papers	76	26	21	36
Watch TV programs of Jewish content	85	64	63	56
Attend courses on Jewish subjects	72	32	31	30
Vote for candidates favorable to Jews	79	50	48	39

Table 14
Differences in Cultural Activity among Groups I, II, III, and IV in Table 13

	Percentage difference I-II	II-III	III-IV
Read Jewish papers	50	5	15
Watch TV programs of Jewish content	21	1	7
Attend courses on Jewish subjects	40	1	1
Vote for candidates favorable to Jews	29	2	9

Table 15
Attitudes of Converts and Nonconverts, by Rabbinic Officiation at Mixed Marriages (in percents)

		Nonconverts		
	I Converts (N = 109)	II RabMar (N = 58)	III RabRef (N = 27)	IV NevAsk (N = 115)
Comfortable in Jewish settings	90	73	69	80
Need to be part of Jewish community	72	22	8	14
Want children to be Jewish	91	34	21	21
Favor U.S. aid to Israel	90	64	57	50

Table 16
Differences in Attitudes among Groups I, II, III, and IV in Table 15

	Percentage difference		
	I-II	II-III	III-IV
Comfortable in Jewish settings	17	4	11
Need to be part of Jewish community	50	14	6
Want children to be Jewish	57	13	0
Favor U.S. aid to Israel	26	7	7

Table 17
Christian Influences on Converts and Nonconverts, by Rabbinic Officiation at Mixed Marriages (in percents)

	I Converts (N = 109)	Nonconverts: II RabMar (N = 58)	Nonconverts: III RabRef (N = 27)	Nonconverts: IV NevAsk (N = 115)
Church member	3	22	20	19
Regularly attend church services	0	18	20	16
Christmas tree in home	12	64	69	75

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