

## Intermarriage in the United States

INTERMARRIAGE, said Robert Gordis, is "part of the price that modern Jewry must pay for freedom and equality in an open society."<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Gordis is not alone in urging a reluctant acceptance of an inevitable but tolerable level of intermarriage. In 1965 Rabbi Judah Cahn wrote:

I believe that such marriages and such losses are part of the price that we must pay for the freedom we have gained. Social equality, intellectual equality, economic equality have made inevitable a greater number of social contacts between people of different faiths. We must, therefore, recognize and accept that this greater freedom will result in a greater number of mixed marriages.<sup>2</sup>

More recently, at the 1970 convention of the Rabbinical Assembly of America, outgoing president Rabbi Ralph Simon declared, "The inevitable price we pay for living in an open society is the possibility that our children may desire to marry persons of another faith."<sup>3</sup>

However, from time to time, anxious observers, raising demographic-survivalist concerns, proclaim that the price being paid may be too dear. A rising incidence of intermarriage, they fear, may steadily diminish the size of the American Jewish community, ultimately to the point of its disappearance. As Rabbi Richard L. Rubenstein observed, "Few problems concern the Jewish community more directly than that of intermarriage. On it hinges the community's continuing ability to maintain itself."<sup>4</sup> Rabbi Leo Jung characterized intermarriage as "one of the fastest ways toward the destruction of our religion."<sup>5</sup> Others, both within and outside the rabbinate, share these anxieties over the demographic losses intermarriage exacts from the Jewish community.<sup>6</sup> Recent studies bearing on intermarriage rates and their demographic consequences are reviewed here in an attempt to evaluate the grounds for these concerns.

<sup>1</sup> Robert Gordis, *Judaism in a Christian World* (New York, 1966), p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> Judah Cahn, "The Rabbi, Mixed Marriages and Jewish Education," *Reconstructionist*, February 19, 1965, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Jewish Chronicle* (London), April 10, 1970.

<sup>4</sup> Richard L. Rubenstein, "Intermarriage and Conversion on the American College Campus," in Werner J. Cahnman, ed., *Intermarriage and Jewish Life* (New York, 1963), p. 122.

<sup>5</sup> Rabbi Leo Jung, at American Jewish Congress, Commission on Jewish Affairs symposium, "Intermarriage: The Challenge to Jewish Survival," December 1, 1963, n.p. (mimeo.).

<sup>6</sup> See for example Marshall Sklare, "Intermarriage and the Jewish Future," *Commentary*, April 1964, and "Intermarriage and Jewish Survival," *ibid.*, March 1970; also Milton Himmel-farb, "The Vanishing Jews," *ibid.*, September 1963.

## INTERMARRIAGE AND JEWISH DEMOGRAPHY

*Definitions*

In its simplest sense, Jewish intermarriage refers to the marriage between Jew and non-Jew. But the definition is no simple matter. Jewish intermarriage may refer to those Jewish by birth alone, who may be only nominally Jewish, or to those now actively identifying as Jews. Rates of intermarriage will vary depending on which definition is chosen. Ultimately, choosing among them reflects a position on the question of "who is a Jew," though in practice the choice is often dictated by the urgencies of gathering data.

A recent dictionary of sociology adds to the concept the element of communal disapproval:

Marriage between persons belonging to two social groups or categories, the members of one or both of which normally disapprove, at least to some extent, of marriage with members of the other, thereby creating possible difficulties between the husband and wife and/or between them and their respective groups or families of origin. Usually intermarriage is described as involving persons from different religious, social, or ethnic backgrounds."<sup>7</sup>

It is useful to distinguish between marriages in which the partners retain their original religious identification and marriages in which one partner assumes, usually by conversion, the religious identification of the spouse. This distinction is sometimes noted terminologically, "mixed marriage" referring to the former situation and "intermarriage" to the latter. When involving a conversion to Judaism, intermarriage has also been called "mitzvah marriage," the *mitzvah* being that "the faith and identity of the Jew was strong enough to bring the Gentile partner into the household of Israel."<sup>8</sup>

For evaluating Jewish demographic losses it may be useful to refine the concept further. The sociologist J. Milton Yinger, for example, suggests conceiving of intermarriage as a variable. Individuals, then, would be considered not either intermarried or intramarried, but intermarried to a greater or lesser degree:

If we begin to take account of the several dimensions of religion, we may discover that those who are intermarried when viewed in terms of one dimension may be *intramarried* when viewed in terms of another. . . .

Once we think of intermarriage as a variable, not an attribute, we can turn to the task of designing scales to measure it. Two scales, I think, are needed. The first will measure the degree to which the couple is intramarried, considering similarity on the many possible religious factors. . . .

The second scale will measure the extent to which a married couple is bound

<sup>7</sup> George A. Theodorson and Achilles G. Theodorson, *A Modern Dictionary of Sociology* (New York, 1969), p. 212.

<sup>8</sup> Allen S. Maller, "Mixed or Mitzvah Marriages," *Jewish Spectator*, March 1966, p. 8.

into an "integrating" or "separating" network of other persons and groups. If all the persons with whom they interact and all of their significant others are of the same faith, then they are strongly intramarried on this group dimension. If they interact with many other persons of a different faith, if some of their relatives are intermarried, then they are partially intermarried, even if they are members of the same church and hold the same beliefs.<sup>9</sup>

It may be useful to devise ways of tracing significant events in the careers of intermarried couples and individuals, such as changes in the religious or ethnic self-identification of the partners, formal conversions, the times at which Jewish identifications submerge, and when they surface. These suggestions, useful as they may be, have not yet been taken up in intermarriage studies. Furthermore, there has yet to be developed a calculus of the demographic consequences of Jewish intermarriage that would include all the relevant factors—the intermarriage rate, the conversion rate, the divorce rate, the comparative fertility of intermarriages, the proportion of children reared as Jews, the eventual self-identifications of the children of intermarried couples, and their marital choices. Nevertheless, in an attempt to assess the current intermarriage situation the available data for each of these characteristics, at best sparse and fragmentary, will be reviewed in turn.

### *Intermarriage Rates*

#### U.S. CENSUS SAMPLE SURVEY

Estimates of the rate of Jewish intermarriage derive primarily from government records, Jewish community studies, and sample surveys. Among the data collected by government, the potentially most important are census materials. However, because of American sensitivity to governmental inquiry into matters of religion, questions on religious identification were excluded from most censuses, including that of 1970. The last to include questions pertaining to religion was the sample census of 1957.<sup>10</sup>

Though already dated, the 1957 U.S. Census National Sample Survey yielded valuable benchmark figures on Jewish intermarriage, which could be compared with those of local community studies. Presumably, it had the advantage of including Jews on the periphery of Jewish community life, who are generally excluded or underrepresented in community surveys.

Intermarriage was defined in the 1957 census in terms of the current self-identification of respondents and their spouses. The sample therefore did not include marriages in which the non-Jewish partner had converted to Judaism, nor those in which the Jewish partner no longer identified as a

<sup>9</sup> J. Milton Yinger, "On the Definition of Interfaith Marriage," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Spring 1968, p. 105.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Religion Reported by the Civilian Population of the United States: March 1957," *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, No. 29, February 2, 1958. See Uziel O. Schmelz, "Evaluation of Jewish Population Estimates," in *AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK*, Vol. 70 (1969), pp. 279-284.

Jew. Of all married couples with at least one Jewish partner, 7.2 per cent included a non-Jewish partner.

#### SURVEYS OF MARRIAGE RECORDS

Marriage records maintained by government are another source of intermarriage data. Only in two states, Iowa and Indiana—neither of which has a large Jewish population—do these records include the religious identification of registrants.

Iowa marriage records were analyzed by Erich Rosenthal.<sup>11</sup> Intermarriage was defined in terms of the religious identification of bride and groom at the time of marriage, as confirmed by two witnesses and the officiant. A total of 676 marriages involving Jews and contracted between 1953 and 1959 were examined. Of all marriages involving a Jewish spouse, 42.2 per cent were intermarriages.

The Iowa figure should not be generalized. It includes only marriages contracted within the state, and therefore excludes marriages of Iowa residents contracted outside the state, where presumably more Jewish partners could be found. Also, the small, relatively isolated Jewish population of Iowa is not typical of the national Jewish population as a whole, of which 80 per cent are concentrated in urban areas of 500,000 or more.

Rabbi David Eichhorn, conducting his own investigation of the intermarriage situation in Iowa, has come up with considerably different results. He made inquiry of all Iowa rabbis who had been with their congregations for two or more years. The total membership of their congregations equalled half of the state's estimated Jewish population. During their incumbencies they had officiated at 551 marriages, of which 51, or 9.3 per cent, had been intermarriages.<sup>12</sup> Eichhorn's figures, of course, are restricted to marriages conducted under religious auspices, whereas many of the intermarried couples in Rosenthal's data were probably married in civil ceremonies.

Rosenthal has also examined records of all marriages in Indiana involving Jews over a four-year period, from 1960 through 1963.<sup>13</sup> Intermarriage was defined in terms of the religious self-identification of groom and bride at the time of marriage. Of the 785 marriages involving a Jew, 48.8 per cent were intermarriages.

Indiana marriage records were also studied by Christensen and Barber, whose findings closely resemble those of Rosenthal.<sup>14</sup> Of 762 marriages

<sup>11</sup> Erich Rosenthal, "Studies of Jewish Intermarriage in the United States," *AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK*, Vol. 64 (1963), pp. 3-53.

<sup>12</sup> David M. Eichhorn, "Comments on 'Who is a Jew'," *Reconstructionist*, December 6, 1968.

<sup>13</sup> Erich Rosenthal, "Jewish Intermarriage in Indiana," *AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK*, Vol. 68 (1967), pp. 243-264.

<sup>14</sup> Harold Taylor Christensen and K. E. Barber, "Interfaith versus Intrafaith Marriage in Indiana," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, August 1967, pp. 461-469.

involving Jews, solemnized from 1960 to 1963, 47.3 per cent were intermarriages. Of all Jews marrying, 31 per cent married a non-Jew.<sup>15</sup>

As in the case of Iowa, the Indiana figures represent the intermarriage rate of an atypical Jewish community. Similarly, they exclude the marriages of Indiana residents which took place out of state. As Rosenthal has indicated, they also include a significant proportion of couples from out of the state, who presumably eloped and were married in Indiana. The eloped couple is more likely to be an intermarried couple escaping parental and family sanctions.

#### COMMUNITY POPULATION STUDIES

Population studies conducted by the Jewish community are another source of intermarriage data. Usually undertaken by local Jewish community councils or federations, primarily for planning purposes, these studies frequently include questions relating to intermarriage. But their samples, usually cast from master membership lists of Jewish organizations, tend to exclude intermarried Jews who are only marginally involved with the Jewish community. They also cannot include Jewish intermarriages in which the Jewish partner no longer identifies as a Jew. Community studies therefore report *minimal* intermarriage rates. Their findings are remarkably similar; taken together, they report the relatively narrow range of 4 to 9 per cent. Of course, the main drawback of the studies is the diversity of the samples. They are not representative of the country's Jewish population, if for no other reason than that there has been no study of the Greater New York area, with fully 40 per cent of the country's Jewish population. It is to be hoped that the national sample population survey now being conducted by the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds will overcome some of these shortcomings.

Since 1960 the following Jewish communities have gathered data on intermarriage: Rochester, N.Y.; Long Beach, Cal.; Providence, R.I.; Camden, N.J.; Boston and Springfield, Mass.; Baltimore, Md. and Los Angeles, Cal.

a) *Rochester*. A survey of this Jewish community of 20,000 was conducted in 1961 under the auspices of the city's Jewish Community Council. The sample was drawn largely from a master membership list of Jewish organizations. Intermarriage rates were reported in terms of both religion at birth and religious self-identification after marriage. Of all married couples 8.0 per cent included a non-Jew. In 2.7 per cent of all couples the non-Jewish partner had converted to Judaism.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Intermarriage rates based on individuals and those based on couples are often conflated. The distinction, however, is significant. Couple rates are always higher: If for example, of 100 Jews, 80 are intramarried (forming 40 couples) and 20 are married to non-Jews, the intermarriage rate by individuals would be 20 per cent (20/100); by couples it would be 33 per cent (20/60 couples).

<sup>16</sup> Jewish Community Council of Rochester, *The Jewish Population of Rochester* (Rochester, N.Y., 1961).

b) *Long Beach*. The Jewish community of Long Beach, Lakewood, and Los Alamitos, California (some 14,000 to 15,000 individuals), was studied in 1961–62 under the auspices of the Jewish Community Federation. Of all married couples 9.0 per cent included a non-Jew. In 1.9 per cent the non-Jewish partner had converted.<sup>17</sup>

c) *Providence*. A study of the Greater Providence Jewish community of some 20,000 was conducted in 1963 under the sponsorship of the General Jewish Committee of Greater Providence. In terms of the stated religion at birth of respondent and spouse, 4.5 per cent of all married couples were intermarried. Rates were also reported by individuals, reflecting whether or not the non-Jewish spouse had converted to Judaism. Of all Jewish married men, 4.4 per cent were married to non-Jews: 1.8 per cent to a spouse who had converted, and 2.6 per cent to one who had not.<sup>18</sup>

d) *Camden*. The Jewish community of Camden (some 15,000 individuals) was studied in 1964. A sample was drawn from a master list of Jewish residents supplemented from other sources. Intermarriage rates were reported in terms both of religion at birth and current religious identification, as reported by those interviewed. Of all married couples between 5 and 6 per cent included a non-Jew. In 2 per cent the non-Jewish partner had converted to Judaism.<sup>19</sup>

e) *Boston*. The Greater Boston Jewish population of approximately 208,000 was surveyed in 1965 under the auspices of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston. Advanced sampling techniques assured the inclusion of even those Jews who usually slip through uncounted in Jewish community surveys. An individual was considered to be a Jew if he so considered himself, or if his parents identified as Jews. Of all married couples involving a Jew 7 per cent were intermarried couples.<sup>20</sup>

f) *Springfield*. This small Jewish community was studied in 1966–67, under the auspices of the Springfield Jewish Community Council. Of all married couples 4.4 per cent included a non-Jew. In 2.6 per cent the non-Jewish partner had converted.<sup>21</sup>

g) *Baltimore*. The Greater Baltimore Jewish community was studied in 1967–68 under the auspices of Baltimore's Associated Jewish Charities. The sample for the study was drawn primarily from Associated Jewish Charities and Welfare Fund master lists, with some attempt to add names from other

<sup>17</sup> Fred Massarik, *A Study of the Jewish Population of Long Beach, Lakewood and Los Alamitos, 1962* (Long Beach, Cal.: Jewish Community Federation, 1962).

<sup>18</sup> Sidney Goldstein, *The Greater Providence Jewish Community: A Population Survey* (Providence, R.I.: General Jewish Committee of Providence, 1964). Also, Sidney Goldstein and Calvin Goldscheider, *Jewish Americans: Three Generations in a Jewish Community* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1968).

<sup>19</sup> Charles F. Westoff, *Population and Social Characteristics of the Jewish Community of the Camden Area, 1964* (Camden, N.J.: Jewish Federation of Camden County, 1965).

<sup>20</sup> Morris Axelrod, Floyd J. Fowler, Jr., and Arnold Gurin, *A Community Survey for Long Range Planning: A Study of the Jewish Population of Greater Boston* (Boston: Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston, 1967).

<sup>21</sup> Sidney Goldstein, *A Population Survey of the Greater Springfield Jewish Community* (Springfield, Mass.: Jewish Community Council, 1968).

sources. Religion of spouses was determined by self-identification. Presumably, these referred to current religious identification and therefore included both individuals born into and converted to Judaism. Of all married couples 4.9 per cent included a non-Jew.<sup>22</sup>

h) *Los Angeles*. A 1968 study found that 5.4 per cent of all married couples involving a Jew constituted intermarriages.<sup>23</sup>

#### ANALYSIS BY AGE AND GENERATION

From the perspective of demographic concern, the intermarriage situation reflected in these studies would seem small cause for alarm. A rate of 4 to 9 per cent, one would imagine, is a price the Jewish community can afford to pay—but only if it reflects current trends. These studies report overall ratios of intermarried couples to all marriages involving Jews and, as such, include marriages contracted forty, fifty, or more years ago. But how many young Jews, the perpetuators of the Jewish community, are currently marrying non-Jews. Some of the community studies touch upon this question.

A cross-sectional analysis by age of the Providence data did not reveal a marked pattern of intermarriage increasing among the young. While the youngest husbands, those between 20 and 29, had the highest intermarriage rate—7.7 per cent, compared to 1.7 per cent for those between 30 and 39—intermarriage was nearly as frequent (7 per cent), among those between 40 and 49. Rate differentials according to generational status showed much the same weak pattern. Slightly more than 5 per cent of third-generation men were intermarried, compared to slightly more than 1 per cent of first-generation men; but, again, slightly more than 5 per cent of second-generation men had intermarried.

One might expect to find the highest intermarriage rate among young third-generation Jews. Actually, the highest rate, over 12 per cent, was found among third-generation men between the ages of 40 and 59. Third-generation men between the ages of 20 and 39 intermarried at a rate of less than 4 per cent.<sup>24</sup>

The Springfield study also included cross-sectional analysis by age and generation, and again a clear trend was not apparent. The rate for men between 20 and 29 was about 4 per cent; it was about the same for those between 30 and 39, and was *higher*, nearly 6 per cent, for those between 40 and 49. By generational status, the rate was *lowest* among third-generation men, below 2 per cent.<sup>25</sup>

The figures from Boston tell a different story, one of increasing incidence of intermarriage among younger couples. Seven per cent of the marriages in

<sup>22</sup> *The Jewish Community of Greater Baltimore: A Population Study* (Baltimore, Md.: Associated Jewish Charities of Baltimore, 1969).

<sup>23</sup> *A Report on the Jewish Population of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Jewish Federation Council, 1968).

<sup>24</sup> Goldstein and Goldscheider, *op. cit.*, p. 159 ff.

<sup>25</sup> Goldstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 145–148.

which the husband was between 31 and 50 were intermarriages, but of marriages in which the husband was under 30, 20 per cent were intermarriages.<sup>26</sup>

Marshall Sklare has extrapolated from the Boston figures to a serious nationwide situation. "If by 1965 one in five young Jewish couples in Boston constituted a case of intermarriage, we can safely assume that the figure is now approaching one in four. And if this is true in so conservative a city as Boston, it must mean that intermarriage has reached large-scale proportions throughout the country as a whole."<sup>27</sup>

Boston, however, includes a large student and graduate-student population, as well as individuals employed by universities and the super-modern technical industries that surround Boston. It is a highly mobile population, fully 31 per cent having lived at their current address for less than five years. It is difficult to determine the extent to which these factors affect the results, but they do put in question the "conservative" character of the Boston Jewish community. That Boston's 20 per cent is a good indicator of the national situation cannot so readily be assumed.

#### NORC STUDY

A better source than the Boston study for information on current intermarriage rates is a large-scale national sample survey undertaken in 1961 by the National Opinion Research Council (NORC), which collected data for a study of career plans from members of the 1961 graduating class at 135 American colleges and universities. Of the 34,000 respondents in the initial survey in 1961, some 3,650 were Jews. In 1964 a follow-up questionnaire was returned by 23,000 respondents, about 10 per cent of them Jews. In the interval between the first survey and the 1964 follow-up, 60 per cent of the respondents had married; the percentage among Jewish students was 57. Since the survey instrument included questions on the religious identification and marital status of the students, the data collected are a valuable source of information on the current intermarriage situation. They reach beyond the local scope of community studies. They have drawn into their net Jews who might not be included in samples drawn from Jewish community master lists—i.e., any student who declared that he was a Jew or was willing to acknowledge that his parents were Jews—at a time when the large majority of young Jews are in college: a rich catch, indeed. The data are currently being analyzed for a study of intermarriage by Fred Sherrow of Columbia University.<sup>28</sup>

However valuable and inclusive, the findings of the NORC survey, too,

<sup>26</sup> Axelrod *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

<sup>27</sup> Marshall Sklare, "Intermarriage and Jewish Survival," *Commentary*, March 1970, p. 52.

<sup>28</sup> Fred Sherrow, *Patterns of Intermarriage Among Recent College Graduates*, Ph.D. dissertation (in process), Columbia University. We thank Mr. Sherrow for having shared his preliminary findings with us.

must be regarded as underestimating the extent of current intermarriage. The data refer to a young population of whom only a portion had married; available evidence suggests that those who intermarry tend to marry at a later age than those who remain endogamous.<sup>29</sup> It is therefore likely that the intermarriage rate of the 43 per cent not yet married in 1964 will be somewhat higher than that reported for the already married population.

Sherrow derives various Jewish intermarriage rates from the NORC data, ranging from 5 to 21 per cent. Twenty-one per cent of all married couples with at least one partner a Jew by birth are intermarried couples, one spouse being a non-Jew *by birth*. This figure is comparable to the 20 per cent found in Boston. But when current religion, rather than religion of origin, is examined, the rate falls sharply, to 12 per cent. A considerable portion of the drop is to be attributed to conversion of non-Jewish spouses to Judaism. Another part is to be attributed to an opposite cause, the abandonment of Jewish identification by the Jewish partner.

These rates are for couples. The intermarriage rates of individuals are considerably lower. The NORC data reveal that between 10 and 12 per cent of individuals who were Jews by birth married a spouse of non-Jewish origin. With *current* religious identification, the individual rate drops to 7 per cent.

It is frequently stated that more Jewish men than women intermarry. Israel Ellman reports that "An outstanding feature in all surveys of Jewish intermarriage, not only in America, is the fact that a far larger number of Jewish males marry out than do Jewish females. . . The evidence is overwhelming."<sup>30</sup> Berman, who agrees with the finding, speculates about why this is so:

In a society in which exogamy is strongly discouraged, the taboo is more likely to be violated by males, whose sex role designates a greater degree of independence and aggressiveness. The Jewish daughter, on the other hand, would seem to be more vulnerable to threats of ostracism.<sup>31</sup>

Rabbi Eichhorn, on the other hand, suggests that this is no longer the case:

This was true until perhaps about ten years ago, but it is true no longer. Time was when a Jewish daughter was subjected to much stronger family and communal pressure in an intermarriage situation than was a Jewish son, and many a fearful Jewish girl chose to die an old maid rather than marry a dearly

<sup>29</sup> The reasons for this phenomenon usually refer to the limited availability of marriage partners of one's own religion, and the loosening of ties with parents, who are a force against intermarriage, as one gets older. "After a certain number of marriageable years have passed and a Jew has been unable to find a Jewish mate, the intermarriage taboo apparently loses some of its force": Louis A. Berman, *Jews and Intermarriage: A Study in Personality and Culture* (New York, 1968), pp. 94-95. See also Jerrold S. Heiss, "Premarital Characteristics of Religiously Intermarried," *American Sociological Review*, 1960, pp. 47-55, and Erich Rosenthal, "Jewish Intermarriage in Iowa," *AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK*, Vol. 64 (1963), pp. 46-49.

<sup>30</sup> Israel Ellman, "Jewish Intermarriage in the United States of America," *Dispersion and Unity* (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1969), p. 125.

<sup>31</sup> Berman, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

beloved non-Jewish boy. This particular species of Jewish female is getting rarer.<sup>32</sup>

Sherrow's analysis of the NORC data contributes significantly to resolving the question of differential intermarriage rates for Jewish men and women. A difference was found, though not nearly as great as some community studies indicate. (In Providence, for example, only 0.1 of the 4.5 per cent of intermarriages involved a woman.) By religious origin, the rates for men and women are 14 and 10 per cent, respectively; by current religious preference, they are 8 and 5 per cent, respectively. The narrowing gap between male and female intermarriage rates may have resulted from the inclusion of that portion of the Jewish population most frequently under-represented in intermarriage studies—the Jewish girl who marries out and is lost to the Jewish community—as well as from real changes in intermarriage patterns.

### *Effect on Jewish Community*

Summing up the various studies of intermarriage rates and recognizing the limitations of the available data, one can hazard a guess that in the United States somewhere between 10 and 15 per cent of all married persons who are Jews by birth have spouses who are non-Jews by birth. This estimate is higher than the figures given in most of the studies reviewed here, which, for the most part and for various reasons, report minimal estimates. About the same percentage probably is currently intermarrying. These figures are higher than in earlier decades, when the Jewish commitment to endogamy was stronger (or when the welcome from Gentile quarters was less warm). But the rates are not yet high enough to warrant fear of an imminent dissolution of the American Jewish community by intermarriage.

Intermarriage results in losses to the Jewish community, but the net loss is less than the gross intermarriage.

### CONVERSION

First of all, there are the non-Jewish spouses who convert to Judaism. The various community studies indicate that their number is sizable: in Rochester almost 30 per cent; about 20 per cent in Long Beach; more than 40 per cent in Providence; about 30 per cent in Camden; more than 50 per cent in Springfield.

And there is some evidence suggesting an increasing rate of conversion to Judaism. In Providence, Goldstein and Goldscheider found that there had been no conversion of spouses in intermarriages where the husband was over 60; that where the husband was between 40 and 59, 4 out of every 10 spouses had converted; in the youngest group, with the husband under 40,

<sup>32</sup> Eichhorn, *loc. cit.*, p. 19.

there were 7 conversions for every 10 intermarriages.<sup>33</sup> The same trend was noted when generational comparisons were made. In intermarriages involving the foreign born one-third of the non-Jewish spouses had converted, but in those involving the third generation more than half. Similar results were found in Springfield. In intermarriages involving Jewish men over 50 about a quarter of the non-Jewish wives had converted, but in those involving men under 30 two-thirds of the non-Jewish wives.

Speculation about the reasons for the apparent increase in conversions has focused on the improved status and successful acculturation of the Jew in America. As Jews have risen in status and adopted American ways, they have become more acceptable to Gentiles, and thus conversion to Judaism has become a more viable option for the non-Jewish spouse. As Berman put it, "Today a Jewish father-in-law is more likely to be a well-educated professional and member of a Reform temple, than an immigrant peddler who *davens* in the Anotevsker *shul*." <sup>34</sup>

Data from the NORC study do not corroborate a trend toward increasing conversion among the young. They show a conversion rate in intermarriages of less than 20 per cent, far lower than that of the younger population of the community studies. Eighteen per cent of the Protestant wives of Jewish husbands, and 15 per cent of Protestant husbands of Jewish wives, converted to Judaism. Eighteen per cent of Catholic women married to Jews converted, and 13 per cent of Catholic men. Fourteen per cent of women with no religious identification who married Jews converted to Judaism, and 9 per cent of no-religion men.

The substantially lower conversion rate among the NORC respondents can be variously explained. The conversion rates found in Providence and Springfield may not be representative of the national situation. It also may be that the NORC data suggest a newly emerging conversion pattern reflecting a weakening of proscription against intermarriage. The process leading to such a change may be this:

While the proscription still retains effectiveness, it is breached, even as it is acknowledged. The intermarrying couple's attempt to make their act acceptable by formal conversion is an expression of that acknowledgment. As the proscription is breached with increased frequency, conversions, too, increase, but grow ever more formal, until they come to be regarded as only a formality. Eventually conversion is seen by the marrying couple, their peers, their parents, and, in some instances, by their rabbi, as dispensable and unnecessary. At that point in the weakening of the intermarriage proscription, conversions can be expected to decline. The NORC data may suggest that we are now at that point.

<sup>33</sup> Goldstein and Goldscheider, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

<sup>34</sup> Berman, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

## JEWISH IDENTIFICATION OF INTERMARRIED INDIVIDUALS

Many intermarried Jews continue to identify as Jews, even where spouses do not convert. Indeed, intermarriage may spur an individual's discovery of his Jewish identity. Thinking himself indifferent toward his Jewish background, of which he is largely ignorant; tempted by the Gentile world; lured by an ideal of romantic love and a democratic universalism, both of which disregard group distinctions and allegiances, he may enter into an intermarriage innocently and in good faith, and only later discover significance. He may discover basic values or orientations, or small phrases rich with familial meaning, or an occasional and surprising emotional stirring at small or great events in the Jewish world that cannot be shared or appreciated by the non-Jewish spouse. From the demographic perspective, the new recognition is of significance only if it culminates in a reaffirmation of Jewish identity. Of course, no data are available on the frequency of such recognitions resulting in reaffirmation of Jewish identity.

The NORC study does provide data on the retention of Jewish identification among those who intermarry. Sixty-six per cent of Jewish men married to Protestants remained Jews, and 58 per cent of Jewish girls married to Protestants. Of Jews married to Catholics, 62 per cent of the men and 53 per cent of the women remained Jews. Of Jewish men married to spouses having no religious identification, 38 per cent continued to identify as Jews; of Jewish women, 50 per cent. In sum, more than 55 per cent of all intermarried individuals retained their Jewish identification.

By considering the retention of Jewish identification and conversion to Judaism, on the one hand, and the abandonment of Jewish identification through indifference or active conversion, on the other, Sherrow has calculated from the NORC data the demographic loss to the Jewish population caused by various types of intermarriage. In intermarriages involving Protestants, the net loss for Jews was 20 per cent; in marriages involving Catholics, 26 per cent, and in marriages between Jews and those of no religious identification, 47 per cent. The net demographic loss from all Jewish intermarriages was 30 per cent of the population involved in intermarriages.

Elsewhere, and especially in a study of the small town, it was found that many of those who intermarry remain actively involved in the structures and forms of Jewish life. Nearly all the intermarried individuals attended services and observed some Jewish rituals. The exogamous person remained "part of the Jewish community, maintaining his position in the temple and other Jewish organizations. Even . . . [as] teachers of religion and community leaders, exogamous Jews are accepted."<sup>35</sup>

The retention of Jewish identity and the continued involvement in Jewish activity by those who intermarry diminish Jewish losses. But the situation has another aspect. The example of the intermarried Jew who retains a

<sup>35</sup> Eugene Schoenfeld, "Intermarriage and the Small Town: The Jewish Case," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, February 1969, p. 63.

position in the Jewish community, often of influence and leadership, may weaken the effectiveness of the intermarriage proscription. As Rabbi Henry Kagan has asserted, "To our youth it appears that as long as a high status as a Jew is achieved it is all right to marry a Christian."<sup>36</sup> Schoenfield has in fact described an ideological shift in the small towns from compulsory to "preferred" endogamy.

#### DIVORCE

Divorce has for long been the workhorse argument of those who would discourage intermarriage. Under the best circumstances, the argument runs, marriage requires a difficult adjustment and accommodation between two very different individuals. The introduction of religious differences only complicates the marital adjustment, causing additional conflict and unhappiness. Intermarriage, the argument continues, is most likely to end in divorce. Among its recent proponents are Rabbis Allen S. Maller, Ira Eisenstein, and William Berkowitz.<sup>37</sup>

This argument is today losing ground. The individual to whom it is addressed, who is challenged, in effect, to weigh the strength of his love or his will against the odds for marital happiness, need find only one successful intermarriage to be encouraged in his plans. Finding such a marriage has become increasingly less difficult. Also, the individual may claim, and today often with some justification, that between him and his prospective spouse there are no religious differences, only differences in religious labels. Still, what little recent statistical evidence there is—and it hardly is compelling—suggests that divorce *is* more frequent among intermarried than among intramarried Jews.

In an examination of marriages in Indiana which were contracted in 1960 and ended in divorce or annulment within five years, Christensen and Barber found divorce more frequent in mixed marriages involving Jews than among Jewish intramarriages. Using a standard whereby one (1) equalled the average Indiana divorce rate of 8.4 per cent, they found the divorce rate among intramarried Jews to be .31 and among intermarried Jews 1.83. However, the findings are based on only 52 marriages and are limited to a five-year period after marriage, and therefore are not conclusive.<sup>38</sup>

In Providence, Goldstein and Goldscheider found a higher intermarriage rate for remarriages than for first marriages. Among men between 40 and 59, married twice or more often, 25 per cent intermarried; for those married

<sup>36</sup> Henry E. Kagan, "Summation of Intermarriage Conference—November 17, 1968. Sponsored by Synagogue Commission of New York Federation of Jewish Philanthropies," *News and Views*, February-March 1969, p. 10.

<sup>37</sup> Allen S. Maller, "New Facts About Mixed Marriage," *Catholic Digest*, September 1969, pp. 115-117; Ira Eisenstein, "Intermarriage," *Jewish Information*, No. 2, 1969, pp. 49-59; William Berkowitz, *Ten Vital Jewish Issues* (New York, 1964), pp. 89-108.

<sup>38</sup> Christensen and Barber, *op. cit.*

once, the intermarriage rate was only 4 per cent.<sup>39</sup> Rosenthal found a similar situation in Iowa and Indiana.<sup>40</sup>

These findings do not deal directly with marital instability as a consequence of intermarriage, for we do not know whether the first marriages were inter- or intramarriages. Indeed, those who remarried non-Jews may have first been married unsuccessfully to Jewish partners. But the findings are suggestive, and lend some indirect support to the contention that intermarriage and marital instability are related. Berman suggested that those who intermarry are prone to divorce: "Attitudes which predispose a person to flout society's opposition to intermarriage should also help him flout society's opposition to divorce. In each case the individual is guided by the dictum that his marital state is a private affair."<sup>41</sup> In some instances, intermarriages ending in divorce may be followed by endogamous remarriages, thus further diminishing demographic losses.

#### CHILDREN

It is sometimes suggested that intermarried couples have fewer children than intramarried couples. However, data are sparse, the only recent findings being those of Goldstein and Goldscheider in Providence. There a significantly higher proportion of intermarried than of intramarried couples were childless, 26.1 per cent compared to 9.7 per cent among those couples where the wife was over 45, and 14.3 per cent compared to 8.0 per cent where the wife was under 45. Similarly, the mean number of children ever born to intermarried couples was lower than of those born to intramarried couples: 1.6, compared to 2.2, in the older group. Goldstein and Goldscheider speculate that the narrowing of the fertility gap among the younger intermarried couples may reflect an increase in the social acceptability of interfaith marriages.<sup>42</sup> Others, speculating on the reasons for inconclusively demonstrated lower fertility among the intermarried, have suggested that it reflects a poor marital adjustment, or an awareness by intermarried couples of the problems their children would have to face. Berman sees the lower fertility, together with the willingness to intermarry and the proneness to divorce, as manifestations of weak commitment to the norms of marriage and parenthood. The intermarried individual may have instead a greater commitment to a professional career, to leisure interests, or personal comfort.<sup>43</sup>

The children of intermarried couples whose non-Jewish partner has converted tend to be raised as Jews. In Camden,<sup>44</sup> Providence,<sup>45</sup> and Spring-

<sup>39</sup> Goldstein and Goldscheider, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

<sup>40</sup> Rosenthal, "Jewish Intermarriage in Indiana," *loc. cit.*, pp. 259-260; "Jewish Intermarriage in Iowa," *loc. cit.*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>41</sup> Berman, *op. cit.*, p. 178 ff.

<sup>42</sup> Goldstein and Goldscheider, *op. cit.*, p. 167 ff.

<sup>43</sup> Berman, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

<sup>44</sup> Westoff, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>45</sup> Goldstein and Goldscheider, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

field,<sup>46</sup> all such children were being raised as Jews. A significant proportion of the children in homes where the non-Jewish spouse has not converted were also being raised as Jews: a third in Camden, about two-fifths in Providence, and more than two-thirds in Springfield. Additional data concerning the children of intermarried couples—the religious identifications they eventually adopt and their marriage choices—are not available.

### THE FUTURE

Sociological factors bringing young marriageable Jews and Gentiles into contact (or, conversely, keeping them apart), or separating young marriageable Jews from one another, will play a major part in determining the future of Jewish intermarriage in the United States. A consideration of these factors suggests that the stage is set, at least sociologically, for a rising incidence of intermarriage.

First, the cultural differences between Jew and non-Jew have diminished, allowing for extensive and deep personal contact. For the most part, American Jews have improved their status and entered the mainstream of American life. Their levels of education, income, and occupation are as high as those of virtually any other religious group in the country. Besides, according to some observers, differences have further narrowed, as “the tastes, ideas, cultural performance, and life styles professed by many Jews are more and more becoming to be shared by non-Jews.”<sup>47</sup>

Secondly, there are forces bringing Jew and Gentile into more immediate contact, the most important of them related to education and occupation. About 85 per cent of Jewish youth attend colleges and universities, which are also attended by non-Jewish youth. The college campus and the college years, a place and time of personal growth in which religious and ethnic boundaries are often viewed as confining parochialisms, provide favorable opportunities for deep and intimate contact between people from various religious and ethnic backgrounds.

The challenge of the campus to Jewish endogamy has for some time been the focus of acute and concerned attention. In partial response to the challenge, B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations have sought to improve the understanding and counseling skills of Hillel directors. Parents have sometimes responded by sending their sons and daughters to schools with large Jewish student populations. Choosing such a school is facilitated by the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations and B'nai B'rith Vocational Service *College Guide for Jewish Youth*, which gives information on the Jewish populations and facilities of American colleges. It is, of course, impossible to say how far such measures reach, or how effective they are in stemming the extremely

<sup>46</sup> Goldstein, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

<sup>47</sup> Ellman, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

powerful forces encouraging the kinds of contact that may lead to intermarriage.

Changes in the occupations of Jews also have brought Jew and Gentile into contact. As Ellman notes, "The general tendency of the young generation to leave the traditional Jewish occupations, with their strong Jewish family and social associations, and the shift to the salaried professions combine to make the changing Jewish occupational structure one of the most potent causes of Jewish intermarriage. Jews are now working with Gentiles as colleagues instead of serving them as merchants and professionals."<sup>48</sup>

A recent study of Jewish college freshmen undertaken by the American Council of Education for the American Jewish Committee shows that their career plans would continue to place them in occupations fostering contacts with Gentiles.

Intermarriage would be further encouraged within the context of cultural convergence and personal contact if a special complementarity or mutual affinity existed between Jew and Gentile. It has been suggested that at times this is the case. Berman hypothesizes that the Jewish ethos fosters traits fitting exceedingly well the masculine role in Western society. The Jewish male tends to be serious-minded, hard-working, ambitious, and intellectual, all of which make him an attractive potential mate for the Gentile girl. Berman further suggests that the traits fostered in Jewish girls may, by comparison, make Gentile girls more attractive to the Jewish male. He approvingly cites Werner Cahnman:<sup>49</sup> "Jewish mothers sensitize their daughters more to their rights than to their obligations, so that they insist that their future husbands be conveniently docile in the home, moderately 'ambitious' in the market place, and capable of satisfying the highest material expectations of 'happiness.'" Berman continues: "Jewish men 'feel oppressed by the expectations of the relentless pressure of the obligations to which they will be subjected in the families of prosperous Jewish spouses,' a burden which he need not shoulder if he married 'a simple Gentile girl.'"<sup>50</sup>

Hacker, perhaps more facetiously, offers a suggestion along similar lines: "Both Jews and women are outsiders; neither feel entirely comfortable in a world dominated by Gentile males."<sup>51</sup>

The proscriptions against intermarriage, if powerful, could effectively neutralize the sociological factors encouraging intermarriage. The relatively low incidence of intermarriage indicates that the proscription does retain force. Intermarriage still is disapproved in large measure. But the signs are that the intermarriage ban is being weakened. Studies of parental attitudes

<sup>48</sup> Ellman, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

<sup>49</sup> Werner J. Cahnman, "Intermarriage Against the Background of American Democracy," in Werner J. Cahnman, ed., *Intermarriage and Jewish Life: A Symposium* (New York: 1963), p. 190.

<sup>50</sup> Berman, *op. cit.*, p. 341.

<sup>51</sup> Andrew Hacker, "How You Got Your Jewish Son-in-Law," *New York* (World Journal Tribune), March 26, 1967, p. 3.

indicate that disapproval is often balanced by a significant incidence of only mild disapprobation, or indifference, or even approval.

In Kansas City 54 per cent of Jewish parents strongly disapproved of intermarriage, 20 per cent indicated mild disapproval, 13 per cent were indifferent, while 8 per cent indicated mild or strong approval.<sup>52</sup> In Baltimore 67 per cent disapproved outright, while 20 per cent expressed reserved opposition, and another 8 per cent expressed either indifference or approval.<sup>53</sup> In Fargo, North Dakota, 46 per cent disapproved and 47.2 approved.<sup>54</sup> In Boston 26 per cent strongly approved, 44 per cent would discourage it, while an additional 25 per cent were neutral or accepted it.<sup>55</sup> In Lakeville 29 per cent would be very unhappy, 43 per cent somewhat unhappy, and 24 per cent indifferent.<sup>56</sup>

Disapproval itself is generally tempered by the American ethos, shared by most American Jews, which places primary emphasis on the individual—his will, his choices, his personal well-being. Young people about to marry participate in this ethos when they conceive of marriage as a path to *personal* happiness, as *personal* fulfillment. The individual weighing a marriage decision expresses the ethos when, in considering a potential spouse, he brings to bear the egalitarian, universalist principles upon which he had been nurtured: that people should be judged by their personal merits, not by race or religion. Parents acknowledge it when they argue against intermarriage as allegedly leading to marital discord and unhappiness, instead of invoking the religious prohibitions. (In Lakeville, for one, the most frequent objections to intermarriage have to do with just such issues of personal happiness.) Similarly, parents acknowledge the primacy of individual choice when, however heavy-hearted, they accept their children's intermarriages, rather than go into mourning, as was traditionally done. Lakeville parents were wont to say:

I would make every effort to show him the error of his way. Then I'd accept the situation, but I'd be broken-hearted. . . .

I'd accept it, but my heart would bleed. . . .

I'd do everything in my power to make them see the light. Then if they did marry non-Jews, I'd accept it. . . .<sup>57</sup>

Potentially and in fact, this ethos is in conflict with the proscription against intermarriage. In purpose and consequence the proscription is trans-individual, expressing the will of the group and its law. Where Jewish conscious-

<sup>52</sup> Mannheim Shapiro, *The Kansas City Survey* (American Jewish Committee, 1961), p. 97.

<sup>53</sup> *As We See Ourselves* (American Jewish Committee, 1964), p. 7.

<sup>54</sup> Robert Lazar, *From Ethnic Minority to Socio-Economic Elite: A Study of the Jewish Community of Fargo, North Dakota* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1968), p. 196.

<sup>55</sup> Axelrod *et al.*, *op. cit.*

<sup>56</sup> Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenblum, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier* (New York, 1967).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 319.

ness is not particularly strong, the ethos of individual well-being and of individual will can lead effortlessly to intermarriage. Where a commitment to Jewish existence retains any force at all, conflict between the ethos of the individual and the intermarriage ban is felt on all levels: by the young couple, by their parents, at times even by their rabbis. It is frequently the intermarriage ban that gives ground. The dilemma described by Rabbi Richard J. Israel, Hillel director at Yale University, is a case in point.

When confronted by a student considering intermarriage, he finds his goals as campus rabbi and as counselor incompatible. As counselor, his role is to help the counselee understand as clearly as possible his situation, to help him "come to the best possible decision he can." As counselor, therefore, his commitment is to the individual, who, in his freedom and in the best understanding of his situation, may very well choose to go ahead with his intermarriage plans. But as rabbi, Israel's goals refer to his Jewish commitment, and he wants "very much to break up the impending marriage." Caught in this crosscurrent, he resolves to "go about doing the best possible counseling job he can, permitting the students to come to their own decisions in the presence of one who accepts them as people, while not sharing their value systems."<sup>58</sup> To do otherwise, to admonish, Rabbi Israel declares, simply does not work:

Whether storming about abominations or coolly reeling off the latest statistics on intermarriage divorces—I have thus far achieved a perfect record: I have not yet been involved in a single case of intermarriage counseling in which either my threats or sage advice were recognizable factors in effecting a break-up. The only wedding cancellations in which I have been involved were those in which the counselee himself decided that he was getting involved in a mismatch because of a number of areas of potential conflict, among which the Jewish issue generally is only a small factor. The people we counsel in these matters either do not care much about the perpetuation of the Jewish tradition, or their present commitment to their partner has taken them beyond the point of no return. Their immediate experience of love far outweighs what is for them the more impersonal claim of a tradition.<sup>59</sup>

Rabbi Israel accepts the individual's decision as a consequence of his assumption of the counsellor role. Other members of the rabbinate have acknowledged the primacy of individual choice in their role as rabbis, even when that choice leads to intermarriage. Whether as a strategy for Jewish survival or as religious conviction, the position of these rabbis tends to weaken the effectiveness of the intermarriage proscription within the larger community.

At the extreme are those whose acceptance of individual decision is so radical that they are prepared to accept as its consequence the dissolution

<sup>58</sup> Richard J. Israel, "A Note on Counseling Young People Contemplating Intermarriage," in *Campus 1966: Change and Challenge* (Washington, D.C.: B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation, 1966), p. 54.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 49–50.

of Judaism. They are few in number. Rabbi Sherwin T. Wine, the "agnostic" rabbi of Detroit, expresses that viewpoint: <sup>60</sup>

We must be willing to enter into meaningful human relations without persistently asking, "Is it good for the Jews?" We must be daring enough and free enough to see that when two people of different religious families love each other in a bond of shared values and beliefs, their marriage is neither a disaster nor an unavoidable evil, but a beautiful harboring of a better world.<sup>61</sup>

Similarly, Rabbi Everett Gendler sees the possibility of a new religion in the making, and would encourage its development by having established Judaism support interfaith marriages:

There is indeed "the possibility that a new religion is in the making." Its birthplace may be the lives of the youth, especially those most devotedly involved in bringing about desperately needed social change. It may be, if it develops, the new Judaism, or the re-Judaized Christianity, or the new cosmic humanism, or ?????? As we consider soberly, not hysterically, the circumstances of its emergence; as we anticipate its likely embodiment of many traditional values; as we reflect on the inadequacy to the present crisis, both societal and personal, of any traditional structure; and as we realize how desperate is the need for the developing "invisible religion," now private, subjective, and split off from social concerns, to become visible, public, objective, and effective once again in civilization; how, then, can we do other than relate supportively to such a development? <sup>62</sup>

More typical is the position, based in part on religious persuasion, that inwardness and sincere conviction are the only grounds for establishing what is religiously valid—a position which justifies itself as one way of assuring Jewish survival. Its proponents accede to an individual's desire to intermarry, but with the ostensible purpose of demonstrating the reasonableness of Judaism, and hoping thereby to gain adherents. It is, one would suspect, the position taken by the majority of Reform rabbis willing to officiate at mixed marriages without requiring conversion of the non-Jewish partner. According to Rabbi David Max Eichhorn, today they number well over 100.<sup>63</sup>

Rabbi Eichhorn, himself a leading advocate of this position, sought to compile and make public a list of Reform rabbis willing to officiate at mixed marriages. In a letter to those rabbis, stating the rationale for his position, Eichhorn called attention to the problem of defection from Judaism:

It is clear that the unrestricted availability of this list will help to combat the

<sup>60</sup> See B. Z. Sobel and Norman Mirsky, "Ignosticism in Detroit: An Experiment in Jewish Religious Radicalism," *Midstream*, December 1966, pp. 35-45, for a discussion of Wine's unique position within Reform Judaism.

<sup>61</sup> Quoted in *Jewish Post and Opinion*, October 3, 1969, from an article in *Congregational Bulletin* (Birmingham [Michigan] Congregation).

<sup>62</sup> Everett Gendler, "Identity, Invisible Religion, and Intermarriage," *Response*, Winter 1969-70, p. 31.

<sup>63</sup> Norman Mirsky, "Mixed Marriage and the Reform Rabbinate," *Midstream*, January 1970, pp. 40-46.

defection of many of our people who are being lost to Judaism because of the spiritual insensibility of so many of our colleagues.<sup>64</sup>

The argument in support of this position was advanced by Rabbi Charles E. Shulman:

If the end sought by the rabbi is adequate Jewish living and closer affiliation with the lot of the Jewish people, the personal conversation which he holds with the mixed couple may do more to portray to them the character and beauty of the Jewish religious experience than all the impersonal instruction in a class for converts can possibly do. *Per contra*, a rabbi's negative attitude . . . may create an impression of Judaism that will not evoke much appreciation of its merits in the minds of the mixed couple. The rabbi's refusal to officiate will have no bearing on their intentions, but may serve only to create an image in their eyes of a harsh and unyielding religion.<sup>65</sup>

Almost total accession to individual choice may be based on an unabashed universalism unqualified by a belief in the necessity and the mystery of Jewish continuity. Or, it may be based on a belief that the only important Jewish allegiance is one freely chosen by the individual, without the compulsion of objective law. In either case, it seriously undercuts the intermarriage proscription. As has been argued, to officiate at mixed marriages is to encourage them by bestowing upon them a legitimacy, making them acceptable to the Jewish community. Rabbi Eichhorn, himself, has expressed only a lukewarm disapproval of intermarriage:

Differences in educational and economic backgrounds, different basic personality and outlook, sexual incompatibility—these are the most frequent causes that impel married couples to separate and divorce. Religious differences play a quite secondary role in this very complicated process known as “marital adjustment.” The sooner the Jewish community comes to understand that this is so, the sooner will it put the whole matter of intermarriage in its proper place and begin to deal with it intelligently. Religious intermarriages are not to be encouraged or welcomed, but neither are they to be execrated and abominated.<sup>66</sup>

The legitimation of intermarriage by sectors of the rabbinate creates structural problems for the Jewish community, establishing or emphasizing divisions that may become unbridgeable. Rabbi Jakob Petuchowski has pointed to these: Whereas the ostensible goal of officiation at mixed marriage is to keep individuals within the Jewish fold (by not antagonizing them), its effect is to bring down the fences defining that fold. Within the realm of marriage, the ultimate consequence of polydoxy—the view that Reform Judaism “has only one dogma, the absolute freedom of the individual to think and do what he likes”—is to isolate Reform Judaism from other forms of historical Judaism by creating “a state of affairs where the offspring of

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>65</sup> Charles E. Shulman, “Mixed Marriage, Conversion, and Reality,” *CCAR Journal*, January 1964, p. 31.

<sup>66</sup> David Max Eichhorn, “Comments on ‘Who is a Jew,’” *loc. cit.*, p. 20.

the marriage at which we 'officiate' is unable to intermarry with the offspring of the other heirs of historical Judaism."<sup>67</sup>

The violation of a group's prohibition focuses consciousness on the transgression, and, by doing so, often provides occasion for recommitment to the group's traditional values. The violation of the intermarriage proscription in some sectors of the American Jewish community may serve to encourage its reaffirmation in other sectors. Certainly, the Orthodox and Conservative branches have remained unwavering in their assertion of the ban on intermarriage. The Orthodox position has recently been restated by Rabbi Chaim Rozwaski:

The Torah prohibits marriage between a Jew and a non-Jew and violation of this injunction is to be punished. Such a marriage is banned and not legally binding or effective. Consequently, an intermarried Jew does not live in a state of marriage at all, but rather in that of promiscuity. . . . A Jew living with a non-Jewess lives in a state of harlotry and is responsible for violating all the moral laws concerning such behavior. . . . [Judaism] leaves no room for intermarriage within the Jewish way of life and grants it no quarter within its faith.<sup>68</sup>

The Conservative position, while less severe in tone, also reaffirms "unqualified opposition to the marriage of a Jew to a non-Jew."<sup>69</sup>

Even within the Reform rabbinate, the willingness to make concessions to individual will, at the expense of the intermarriage law, has not spread deep, far, or wide. As Mirsky notes, "Reform rabbis are still not happy with those of their colleagues who perform [mixed marriages]."<sup>70</sup>

The (Reform) Central Conference of American Rabbis has consistently rejected attempts to modify its official position on intermarriage, adopted in 1909:

[Intermarriages] are contrary to the tradition of the Jewish religion and should therefore be discouraged by the American Rabbinate.<sup>71</sup>

\* \* \*

The future of Jewish intermarriage in America cannot be forecast. On the one hand, powerful influences from within the Jewish community, and from without, encourage its increase. On the other hand, currents in American and Jewish life, at this moment only dimly noted, may tend to curb it. Major shifts in the sociological position of the Jews in America could have unforeseen consequences for the future of intermarriage, as could radical alterations in the level and intensity of Jewish religious or group consciousness.

ARNOLD SCHWARTZ

<sup>67</sup> Jakob J. Petuchowski, "Realism About Mixed Marriages," *CCAR Journal*, October 1966, p. 38.

<sup>68</sup> Chaim Z. Rozwaski, "Jewish Law and Intermarriage," *Jewish Life*, July-August 1969, pp. 18-23.

<sup>69</sup> Max J. Routtenberg, "The Jew Who Has Intermarried," *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America*, 1964, p. 245: majority opinion of Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, Rabbinical Assembly, January 15, 1963.

<sup>70</sup> Mirsky, *loc. cit.*, p. 42.

<sup>71</sup> Central Conference of American Rabbis, *Year Book*, Vol. 19 (1909), p. 170.