Double or Nothing

Jewish Families and Mixed Marriage in the United States

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Speculating on Jewish Futures

Moderator

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Presenters

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Discussant

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Leonard Saxe: I began this morning with a teaching by Shamai: "Say little, do much." Those of us in the academy struggle with controlling our urge to say much, but fortunately, especially because it's late in the day, that's not the case with our next two speakers. Both of them have been forceful advocates for somewhat different approaches to intermarriage, and they do as well as say. We want to wrap up today's conversations with the reactions and ideas of these advocates and policy-makers. First is Dr. Steven Bayme, the director of the contemporary Jewish life department in the Institute on

American Jewish/Israeli Relations at the American Jewish Committee (AJC). (The AJC provided the support for the research that is the core of *Double or Nothing*, and for that, Sylvia Barack Fishman and we at Brandeis are very appreciative.) Dr. Bayme is an historian and one of the leading voices of the American Jewish community, and I'd like to invite him to share some remarks.

Steven Bayme: When I'm invited to talk about the future, I'm reminded of the wisdom of the rabbis that since the destruction of the Second Temple, the gift of prophecy has been given over to knaves and fools. Or as that other immortal Jewish prophet Yogi Berra once put it, "Predictions are very difficult, especially about the future." Actually to some extent, predictions are a luxury, given that whatever they are, whatever the future is, we won't be around to watch it. No one will ever hold us accountable for getting it wrong. But, that doesn't remove our obligation at least to probe: What are the implications for Jewish leadership? What does Jewish leadership need to do? What are the challenges that face us? What might be some of the avenues that it has to pursue?

Before discussing that, I want to signal my gratitude to Sylvia Barack Fishman for spearheading this research project. It is wonderful to see it emerge not only as a book, but as a document the Jewish leadership can discuss. I also want to thank Brandeis: the Cohen Center, and the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute. While I've spoken many times at Brandeis University forums, this is the first time I've been at a Hadassah-Brandeis forum, and as a former staff member of Hadassah, it gives me a great deal of personal gratification and pleasure, as well as the chance to see long-time colleagues who are active on the national board and staff of Hadassah.

I would like to begin by picking up on Jon Woocher's comments, which were

focused on Jewish education, and to suggest that the primary challenge with respect to intermarriage is a change in the normative culture and values. As we said last night and again today, a change in American culture has taken place, and intermarriage is now completely acceptable and desirable. Intermarriage is as American as apple pie. As that change has taken place, similar changes are at work within the Jewish community, which are transforming a 3,000-year norm of endogamy into a more general acceptance of mixed marriage. Let me give you two illustrations from recent popular culture. I don't mean to suggest these are entirely typical; if anything, they're on the extremes, but they show you which way we're heading. Every once in a while, I get my wisdom from the *New York Times*. You may have seen the Sunday Styles section two weeks ago. It reported the marriage of a program officer of a Jewish communal organization to a Hindu woman, officiated by a Hindu priest and co-officiated by a Jewish cantor. As I read the paragraph, I said, "Let's count the number of normative changes that have just taken place." Number one, a prominent Jewish organization features on its staff someone marrying out of the faith. Not new, but certainly a change in culture. Two, a Jewish and a non-Jewish clergyman co-officiating is also accepted as completely normative. Three, neither party feels at all inhibited from parading it in the pages of the *New York Times*. And four, our historical concerns about Jewish monotheism and the Bible, as indicating a cultural battle against the pantheon of deities known as paganism, seems to have fallen by the wayside. It's one cultural change indicating that our resistance to mixed marriage is yesterday's news.

Two, Rosh Hoshanah. Like many of you, I'm sure, I usually get deluged by greeting cards. I got one a year ago from the Jewish Outreach Institute, urging me to

incorporate a new *al-khet* in the Yom Kippur liturgy. I usually ignore these things. I figure I've got enough sins that need confessing. Why add on to the case against me? But this one I found particularly striking. It said, "Incorporate in your Yom Kippur liturgy the *al-khet,* "for the sin that we have committed against thee in the exclusion of the mixed marrieds." Regardless of how one feels about this as a policy, take a look at the normative change. The traditional norm was that intermarriage is the sin, and outreach is a vehicle of coping with it, of mitigating its effects. Now we're being told something totally different. We're hearing that intermarriage is no longer up for grabs, it's no longer an issue. The sin is the failure to do sufficient outreach—a change in normative culture as we speak. The challenge for the future is what we do in terms of engaging that normative culture.

Several directions are up for grabs. Five years ago, the American Jewish Committee adopted a three-fold policy position on mixed marriage. It is the mirror image of that adopted inside the Conservative movement and recently picked up by the newly formed Jewish in Marriage Initiative. The three-fold approach suggests: 1) develop a language of endogamy, encourage Jews to marry other Jews; 2) when that does not happen, articulate conversion as the single best outcome of a mixed marriage; and 3) when that is not in the cards, engage mixed marrieds to raise children exclusively as Jews.

How do we get there? The question with respect to endogamy is: can we afford neutrality on the question, especially at a moment when American culture is dictating to us that intermarriage is completely acceptable, if not desirable? Obviously there are no guarantees, but you can stack the decks in favor of in-marriage. Do whatever we can to

increase the odds of an in-marriage. Frankly, I heard that language often from outreach advocates five, ten, or fifteen years ago. I don't hear it nearly as often today. Sylvia's book suggests four major forms of stacking the decks, some of which have come up this afternoon and this morning: one, developing intensive Jewish homes; two, continuing Jewish education through the critical adolescent years, three, develop Jewish friendship networks, in which natural social encounters will be between Jews, which create the groundwork for dating and marriage; and four, encourage parental resistance rather than submission. This is a profound statement that is not as obvious as it may sound. When a mixed marriage is negotiable, parental messages count. There's no guarantee that they will win, but not making them is fundamentally self-defeating.

In terms of conversion, again one of our major changes normatively within the last fifteen years has been the a more frontal approach fostering conversion. To give you an example, the American Jewish Committee holding a meeting in a fairly far-flung western Jewish community invited the local rabbi in to talk to us about his community. His opening comments were, "We never ask anyone whether they're Jewish or not. If someone comes and tells us they want to convert, we'll make it happen, but we treat everyone equally whether they're Jewish or not. They're entitled to everything that goes on in the synagogue." Later in his address, the rabbi expressed some bewilderment and even anger at the fact that the local Orthodox Jewish day school was not prepared to accept his own children immediately. He said, "Here I am a rabbi wanting to send my children to the day school, and the Orthodox insisted that I show them my marriage papers." I commented that after making public statements like "We never ask people if they're Jewish," don't expect the local Orthodox day school to give you the red-carpet

treatment! They're saying, "Perhaps those same questions apply to your own biography." The critical point here is that the rabbi was saying publicly that we don't have to hold out conversion as the best possible outcome to mixed marriage. Anyone who wants to be Jewish, in any shape, manner, or form, anyone who declares themselves to be Jewish will be treated as a Jew by the local Jewish institutions.

Twenty years ago, conversion was openly stated to be the desired outcome of mixed marriage. Today we're much more neutral on it, we're much more silent. AJC's pro-conversion policy sensitizes the Jewish community once again to the importance of conversion as the best answer to mixed marriage. Conversion by no means resolves all the issues, but in terms of creating a Jewish home, this is our goal, our desired outcome. One final comment on this topic: As I read the literature, I saw that there has been no study of conversion in the last fifteen years. The study done fifteen years ago, by the late Egon Mayer of the American Jewish Committee, indicated that the primary factor behind conversion was what the Jewish side of the family thinks about the issue. In other words, if the Jewish side of the family in the mixed marriage considers conversion to be critical, it raises the chances of conversion. When the Jewish side of the family falls silent, you've decreased those chances. I'm happy to say the AJC has commissioned Sylvia Barack Fishman and the Cohen Center to undertake a study of dynamics of conversion in America in 2004.

What about the third policy or the third plank, raising children exclusively as Jews? Here, outreach is critical. It's the reason that even those who are passionate advocates of prevention acknowledge and even endorse the concept of outreach to mixed marrieds. On issue that I and my late debating partner, Egon Mayer—with whom I

enjoyed a lengthy relationship of give and take in public and private forums, always with the greatest respect and camaraderie—always agreed on was that outreach to mixed marrieds does not mean no criticism of mixed marrieds. It doesn't mean you should avert your eyes from things that are happening that you take exception to. Egon and I agreed that issues like dual-faith childrearing require the outspoken criticism of the Jewish community, even by advocates of outreach. Outreach advocates need to be challenged on at least five major grounds.

First, what do we say about residual Christian content in the home? The Reform movement grappled with this when it took a policy position a number of years ago saying that Jewish education would be denied to those who are raising children partially outside the Jewish faith. That was an explicit criticism of what's taking place among mixed marrieds precisely along the lines of Sylvia's study, but that message by and large doesn't get heard. In the name of outreach, we say, "Don't criticize what mixed marrieds are doing."

Two, what are the fruits of outreach? Sylvia footnotes the important study by UCLA Hillel of two or three years ago indicating that among college freshmen, only 38 percent of those raised with a Jewish mother identified as Jews; and of those raised with a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother, only 15 percent. You can argue that those results would have been even poorer if not for outreach, but two decades of outreach have resulted in only a minority of children reaching adulthood and identifying as Jews—and that's only how they identify, not what they actually are. The expectations of outreach need to be far more realistic than some of its utopian advocates would have us believe.

Three, rabbinic officiates at mixed marriages is not at all meaningful. Fishman's

study demonstrates this explicitly. She builds upon a variety of other studies, again going back to the late Egon Mayer, that while in the Jewish community, there's a great deal of controversy about rabbinic refusal to officiate at mixed marriages, in practice, on the ground, it doesn't make all that much difference. Advocates of rabbinic participation or rabbinic officiates say it's a form of outreach. The research findings suggest otherwise.

Four, the Reform movement's decision for patrilineal descent in 1983, if one reads its exact terms, is a restrictive decision. It says, "Who is a Jew? Only someone with one Jewish parent of either gender and whom both parents commit themselves to raising as a Jew." It sounds like the AJC's the third policy plank of encouraging parents to raise their children exclusively as Jews. In the popular culture, it's not perceived that way. In the popular culture, it's perceived as saying that anyone is a Jew who has a Jewish parent of either gender, regardless of how the children are being raised. The Reform movement needs to be challenged. Outreach advocates need to be challenged: What do you mean by patrilineality? Who qualifies as a Jew under those terms of patrilineality? I suggest that it does not apply to large numbers of self-declared, patrilineal Jews.

Fifthly, outreach advocates need to be challenged to the effect that Jewish tradition cannot be so radically deconstructed as to mean anything we want it to mean. They need to be honest about Jewish tradition. Jonathan Woocher cited the Book of Ezra, and that's one example among many. We've had a 3,000-to-4,000 year tradition of opposition to interfaith marriage. I hear outreach advocates again engaged in what I call radical deconstruction: Isn't intermarriage all over the Bible? Can we reread passages? Certainly, intermarriage occurs in the Bible. Certainly, we can reread passages—but what we can't miss is the norm that Jewish tradition in effect fostered marriage within the

faith. That's been our basic teaching. Radical deconstruction in the name of outreach leads to distortion, if not misinformation and miseducation.

Perhaps the best example is that of the precept, "Love the stranger." It appears, I believe, no less than 36 times in scripture. But there's a second part to that message: "to the extent that the stranger accepts the norms of the society in which we're living." The embrace of the stranger is a basic statement that people who live in our area have rights, but it's their obligation to accept the overall culture in which the Jewish community is working. Again, that doesn't necessarily mean complete conversion. It does mean avoiding transformation of the Jewish institution in the name of outreach.

In Sylvia's final chapter, she suggests that there's a battle between two strategies: what she calls a nuclear strategy, strengthening Jews as Jews; and a boundary-setting strategy, which says, "Let's draw some clear lines between who we are and who we are not." We've had some discussion about this throughout the day, and I'd like to offer a couple of final observations. First, boundaries, by definition, are politically unpopular. Any boundary is frankly a synonym for exclusion, because there's always someone on the outside of the boundary. No one wants to be exclusionary. We all prefer inclusivity. But if we don't define a boundary, if our boundary remains excessively fluid, number one, we get a practical problem of who is a Jew and who is not; and number two, we've undermined the basic distinctiveness about what leading a Jewish life means. We've said, like my rabbi in the west, "Anyone is a Jew who calls himself a Jew." We don't ask any questions about what that means or how that expresses itself.

I'd like to leave you with three questions that challenge the will of Jewish leadership in addressing our communal future: One is about the issue of counterculture.

On the one hand, we've said that the message and language of endogamy in America today is counterintuitive. It runs against the grain of most of what we hear in the broader culture and from our own people. On the other hand, America today values the importance of having a countercultural message. (Jonathan Sarna has spoken about this at greater length in other forums.) When we speak about inclusivity, we always say, "Let's hear from someone with another point of view." So, my first question, regarding toward the future, is: To what extent is the Jewish community prepared to undertake a countercultural initiative? The unfortunate experience of the previous generation was that in the name of showing how much we were like our Christian brethren, we developed a model of a Judeo-Christian tradition that, although it served us well in terms of intergroup relations, it also meant—as Will Herbrick has said, and as Jonathan indicated earlier this morning— that the presentation of Jewish tradition became so bland as to be relatively meaningless. A countercultural approach is a willingness to go against the tide, or as the late Jewish theologian of blessed memory, Emil Fackenheim, argued in his beautiful book, *What is Judaism?*, to be a Jew is to engage in a culture of protest against norms and values that we disagree with. One of those norms and values that we disagree with is interfaith marriage.

Second, the cost of such a position is clearly judgmentalism, an incredibly unpopular stance to take in an America that places enormous premium on respecting individual choice, individual autonomy, and refraining from judgments that sound too negative. Without question, it's a very heavy price to pay. Yet, Jewish tradition prefers some models of behavior and frowns upon others. We could have an extensive discussion about Shabbat, as Zachary mentioned earlier this morning. Should we follow sociology?

In that case, since 99 percent of American Jews do not observe Shabbat, *halakha* should declare Shabbat to be yesterday's news, an anachronism. Obviously, we don't do that. We take a judgmental yet coherent perspective: we uphold Shabbat as an ideal. We say, "This is what we stand for." Then we make room for those who, for whatever reasons, don't uphold that ideal. I suggest a similar policy toward mixed marriage: Uphold the norm of in-marriage, yet recognize that in America today, just as most American Jews don't observe many other aspects of Jewish tradition, they will not observe this one either. Make room for them, but not at the expense of overthrowing cultural or religious ideals.

Finally, to come full circle, [I'd like to examine] the issue of Judaic distinctiveness. *Havdala* has always been my favorite Jewish ritual. It marks the distinction between the holy and the profane, the Shabbat and the rest of the week. The notion of holiness never meant spirituality, as I read the text. Here's my own deconstruction: holiness meant Jewish distinctiveness, Jews' willingness to be recognized for who they are as a distinctive people. When we engage in that ritual of *havdala*, we're making a statement that to be a Jew is to stand apart and distinctive from the rest of society. In this context, the real challenges of interfaith marriage are less about what it will do to the Jewish family—although that's very important—or about what will it do to Jewish education—also, obviously, of enormous importance – than about the extent to which the Jews will remain a distinctive people with specific traditions and values that can be best transmitted in a home in which Judaism is the only faith.

Leonard Saxe: Thank you very much, Steve. We now have one vision of how to shape the future. I am now going to ask our second speaker, Dru Greenwood, to give her view

on shaping the future. Dru is director of outreach and synagogue community at the Union for Reformed Judaism. She leads the URJ's efforts to engage intermarried families in conversion and participation in synagogue life. I must give a disclaimer about Dru similar to the one I gave about Steven and his support of the AJC: under Dru's leadership, the URJ (formerly the UAHC) supported the Cohen Center's work on how Reform synagogues deal with interfaith families.

Speculating on Jewish Futures
by Dru Greenwood, MSW

Assimilation. Intermarriage. Conversion. Outreach. Anyone have an opinion? My experience over the years in speaking about these matters in Reform contexts and beyond is that often, as soon as these words are spoken, everyone in the audience has instantaneously written my remarks for me and it becomes a heroic effort to get beyond the "freighted" terms[1] to the actual points at hand. That we care passionately about these matters is indispensable to our future; that we fail to hear one another is an impediment we can ill afford. I must use these words, because I know no other way of speaking about the complexities of Jewish American life that Sylvia Barack Fishman so richly describes in her study and that is the topic for this conference[2]. My challenge to you is to listen.

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What I plan to do is to reframe the terms of our discussion. First, speaking

[1] Jonathan Sarna notes that "assimilation" is such a freighted term that its use distorts rather than clarifies meaning. *American Judaism* (Yale 2004), p.xix.
[2] Sylvia Barack Fishman, *Double or Nothing? Jewish Families and Mixed Marriage*, Brandeis University Press, 2004.

personally as someone deeply embedded in Reform Outreach, I want to reframe for you the Jewish motivations and textual roots from which American Outreach grows; second, I'll reframe this work called "Outreach" about which there appear to be some significant preconceptions and misapprehensions and to outline a few of the understandings and directions that flow from this reframed definition; and finally, and most critically, I hope to reframe the terms of our common discourse.

Motivations and Textual Roots

I am a religious American Reform Jew and, yes, I am a whole-hearted Outreach advocate and activist. Talk about "freight!"

As a professional rooted in contemporary American culture, of course I appreciate what sociology and social psychology can teach us. The Brandeis Cohen Center study of Outreach[3] that Dr. Fishman refers to frequently is an in-depth qualitative study of Outreach in six Reform congregations that was commissioned by the Outreach Department at the Union for Reform Judaism. Its insights have helped to shape our work during the past two years in significant ways. Beyond that, at a very basic level, the demographics of the Jewish community including the high rate of intermarriage is a compelling reason to wrestle mightily with the questions before us. No intermarriage, no discussion. But, as Rabbi Alexander Schindler said in the speech that marked the initiation of Outreach in the late 1970s and that was occasioned in part by the reality of increasing intermarriage noted in demographic studies of that time, "Intermarriage is the sting that comes with the honey of our freedom." Yes, there is a compelling communal

[3] *Outreach Families in the Sacred Common*, Fern Chertok et al., 2001.

norm, known in religious terms as a mitzvah, dating back to Deuteronomy that tells us that intermarriage and the subsequent turning to other gods will wipe us out. Simple, straightforward, devastating. Not much *midrash* here in the tradition. I suspect that the shadow of that fear is what unites every person reading this paper and surely reverberates in every study and every contemporary Jewish response to intermarriage across the entire spectrum. By the way, in demographic terms I'm in the more is more camp. More Jews, stiff-necked though they may be, more Jewish families, tentative though they may be, all are good and may grow to be even better.

But let me return to the freighted self-definition I gave you before. I am an Outreach advocate who is a religious American Reform Jew. Demographics aside, I do Outreach (American for *keruv* —drawing near those who are far) because I regard that and even more *ahavat ha-ger* (loving the stranger) as fundamental, if not the fundamental mitzvot of Jewish life.

- Loving the stranger is embedded in Maimonides' third positive commandment, related inextricably to the commandment to love God. You know the story: we were strangers and God remembered us and took us out of the straits of Egypt to come into covenant with the Holy One. We imitate God and practice coming close to the Holy One when we love the stranger and provide the bread of Torah and the clothing that covers the stranger's vulnerability, enabling him to come near. This is hard to do. The thing about strangers is that they are strange, other, not us. That's why the mitzvah variously expressed as loving the stranger (in Deuteronomy alongside the prohibition of intermarriage), knowing the heart of the stranger, treating her with respect and not

oppressing him is the most often repeated mitzvah in the Torah—36 times, double *chai*.

- *Halachah* (Jewish law) expansively and carefully delineates boundaries, requirements and procedures for admitting strangers as converts, debating specifically conversion in the context of relationship with a Jew.
- *Midrash* on loving the stranger abounds throughout the ages of Jewish tradition. One of my favorites is from *Bemidbar Rabba*, commentary on Numbers (*Naso* VIII, 2-4):

  > Who is a God like ours who loves those who love God, and draws near the far as well as the near? ... God says, "If you keep far off those who are far, you will end by making far off those who are near."

- Abraham welcomed strangers who brought the promise of the future—his son Isaac's birth, and in his zeal at going forth at the very beginning of his journey, Abraham made souls. Sarah suckled gentile infants who became Jews. And so on.

This is not something that Outreach advocates made up and it is not a misreading of Jewish history in order to define early societies as inclusive in the way America is today; it is a strand of Jewish tradition that is deep and wide and complex and rich and challenging. These radical mitzvot have profound implications for our actions as a community:

- We must remember deeply the sources within our tradition that teach us to see ourselves in the stranger who stands within our gate, to teach him our ways, to respect her integrity and her journey and his ability to come close.

- Without guarantees we must do the difficult and long and uncertain work of relationship building, including having the hard and real conversations about intermarriage and the value of Jewish life.
- We must cherish the finest fruits of our tradition and be able to bring them in the moment in a way that can be received.
- We must not shame the one who is a stranger or who feels estranged.

This is the art, sometimes botched, sometimes touched by inspiration, of fulfilling the mitzvah of *keruv*.

This is the Torah of Outreach, not an example of coalescence, the unconscious confluence of American values and Judaism that ends in a distortion of Judaism, but a Judaism that is deeply rooted and relevant and challenging for America's Jews.

What is Outreach?

A short "American" definition of *keruv* or Outreach is "inviting Jewish choices."[4]

Outreach enables a psycho-social-educational-spiritual developmental **process** (amply described by Dr. Fishman) and it succeeds when Jewish choices are made. Conversion, joyfully embraced by a person who has been thoroughly educated in our tradition and found a home in Judaism, is one goal—not the only goal—of Outreach. Outreach also fulfills its goal when a new interfaith couple meets with a rabbi to discuss wedding plans and then chooses to take Introduction to Judaism; when an adult whose parents are intermarried seeks out her roots in "A Taste of Judaism" class; when a non-Jewish mother develops a "Celebrations" guide for herself and other pre-school parents about Jewish holiday and life-cycle events; when a Jewish man chooses to marry a

[4] For a full explication of "inviting Jewish choices," please go to www.urj.org/outreach and click on this phrase in the introductory paragraph.

Jewish woman in order to establish a Jewish home; when a new Jew-by-choice or a long-time Jew-by-birth chooses to become an Outreach Fellow[5] and mentor others exploring Jewish life for themselves.

Good Outreach programs are gateways that embody the core values of Jewish community in their implementation and content: they're educational, they build bonds of mutual respect, care and commonality among group members, and they connect the Jewish meta-story of ultimate meaning with the individual lives of participants. (*Bet midrash, bet keneset, bet tefila)* At their best they offer a sophisticated, challenging and engaging as well as skill-building and empowering positive encounter with Judaism.

Here's a prime example of a gateway program that has welcomed more than 55,000 people in the past ten years. *A Taste of Judaism* is short, just three sessions; it's free, which is a shock; widely advertised in the secular press so Jews and non-Jews who aren't necessarily even looking for something Jewish can find it. It's a serious and engaging text-based class for beginners Jewish or not, inviting them to explore Jewish spirituality, ethics and community (American for God, Torah, and Israel). Early studies indicate that 1/3 of Taste graduates go on to Introduction to Judaism, 14% of non-Jews enter the conversion process, and 18% of the Jews subsequently affiliate with synagogues.

A few implications of "inviting Jewish choices" for the future:

- **To welcome the strangers within our gates, we need gateways**.

I expect that, as Dr. Fishman demonstrates, there will be a wide range of degrees of linkage, practice and self-understanding in interfaith households, depending on a

[5] Outreach Fellows are congregation-based lay mentors trained to work with those in the process of conversion in an HUC-URJ-CCAR certification program offered annually at Hebrew Union College.

whole host of variables. Further, as Dr. Fishman demonstrates for interfaith couples and Dr. Bethamie Horowitz shows for "just Jews",[6] linkage, practice and self-understanding will shift with circumstances over time. As a matter of policy, the Jewish community cannot control or determine where or when people choose to engage Jewish life. What we can do, hopefully each in our own distinctive ways, is to strongly and positively self-define and make sure that at every point in the calendar year and in the life-cycle there are multiple, clearly marked entry points. This will need a well-funded and well-coordinated community-wide effort, encompassing everything from web-based projects like interfaithfamily.com and widespread Taste of Judaism classes to programs for new couples and new families of all kinds, and so on. Here again more is more. As the Cohen Center study demonstrates and Dr. Fishman's observations about the dense social networks of Jewish women show, multiple connections for interfaith couples lead to deeper engagement. Next steps must be ready, programs where learning opportunities are embedded in relationship and community. Gateways that uniquely target specific interfaith family needs, say for pre-bar/bat mitzvah interfaith families who wonder how to include non-Jewish family, must be balanced with general offerings that integrate the whole community for common purposes. Both kinds of entryways are needed.

- **Christmas trees are our friend**.

I'm not worried about Christmas trees. They are not crèches or crosses; they are an ambiguous symbol—often sacred for Jews, secular for many non-Jews, including Christians, and the ground for much productive work within families. As Dr. Fishman

[6] Bethamie Horowitz, *Connections and Journeys: Assessing Critical Opportunities for Enhancing Jewish Identity*. New York: UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, 2000.

points out, we are all—across the spectrum—hypersensitive to boundaries. Christmas trees are boundary objects, surrogates for the task of self-identification in relation to the other that Jews in America (intermarried or not) must do. As we do Outreach, we need to use them with more intentionality, as did my rabbinic friend who set up a Christmas tree on the bimah before Shabbat services one evening in order to engender a most animated and meaningful conversation among his congregants. Yes, he took it down afterward!

- **When diversity is the commonality, then "knowing the heart of the stranger" must become a way of life and community-building a preoccupation**.

If NJPS tells us anything, it tells us that the Jewish community is increasingly diverse. In the Reform Movement, which I know first-hand, we see what my colleague Rabbi Richard Address calls the "unity of diversity." The multi-generation Ashkenazi family with no intermarriage or conversion is equally a part of North American Jewish diversity as a gay interfaith couple with an Asian Jewish child. All of which makes encounter, listening, relating and therefore community-building more, not less complex. (This is why the Outreach department at the URJ has been restructured and called "Outreach and Synagogue Community.") If the stranger is one who is disproportionately absent from our community, who particularly is missing? And who do we need intentionally to reach? Here's where we're focusing attention in the Reform Movement now:

  - young adults (single, in-married, intermarried, with one or more Jewish parents, either father or mother

- Jews of color who've come into our communities by birth, adoption or conversion
- Single people of all ages, (women, men, offspring of intermarriage)
- Interfaith gay and lesbian couples and their children
- Men: A disproportionate number of Jewish men intermarry; a disproportionate number of Jewish men convert out of Judaism, while a disproportionate number of women convert in.[7] The ambivalent Jewish male partner (intermarried or not) has become an "identified patient," a "problem" that Jewish professionals often berate. The synagogue culture that Dr. Fishman describes as so comfortable for women reinforces the strong tendency toward success for Jewish and non-Jewish women raising Jewish children in intermarriages and for women Jews-by-choice assimilating deeply into community. What about our men? This is an urgent topic that deserves its own immediate study and action.

In every instance we need, as a community, to have our antennae out for those who are underrepresented in communal life and make sure they can come to the table and that we hear their voices and learn from them.

- **If Outreach is "inviting Jewish choices", then let's get on with the invitation!**

The Cohen Center study suggests that clergy have ambivalent feelings about inviting next steps for interfaith families who have been welcomed into the synagogue. Dr. Fishman remarks on the same reluctance within families and wonders if no invitation gives the message that making Jewish choices is not really so important. In the same

[7] These findings were confirmed privately by Egon Mayer (*z''l*) based on data from the American Religious Identification Survey, Egon Mayer (*z''l*) et al., 2001.

way that we review sample bar mitzvah or wedding invitations to help us find good wording for our own, we must develop and disseminate and practice ways to invite Jewish choices, out loud. Our invitations must reflect who we are and fit the context—the relationship—in which they are made. There is an exquisite invitation from husband to wife on the back of the pamphlet, "Inviting Someone You Love to Become a Jew,"[8] and one of my favorite rabbis models how he invites involved non-Jewish congregants whom he senses are ready: meeting her in the religious school hallway, he looks her in the eye and says, "Nu?" There is an urgent need to broaden the invitation not only for non-Jews but for Jews as well. We can all learn a lot from Chabad in this regard. I look forward to learning from the new "In-Marriage Initiative" as well.

- **Non-Jewish spouses and parents can bless us if we let them.**

Jewish tradition teaches that we are to say 100 blessings every day, an outlook that disposes us fundamentally, even in the darkest of times, toward gratitude and hope. Those who are social scientists know that the research questions themselves provide the frame for the findings. That's why the questions must be carefully honed. When we study "intermarriage," it's hard to find blessing because we're immediately looking for deficit—and there's plenty to find. When we practice "outreach" or "keruv," we find—not perfection certainly, but hope and the possibility of growth. A heartfelt attitude of gratitude for the gifts, the blessings even, that non-Jewish partners do bring leads to openness, dialogue and often deeper Jewish choices. Here is one such blessing, given on the bimah by Richard Galli to his son on the occasion of his

[8] Available at www.urj.org/outreach.

bar mitzvah:

I want to clear up some confusion. You know, for a long time I have been very happy with the way the community in this area has accepted us as a mixed/married family. But some time ago I heard that there was a rumor circulating and I thought I should correct it: 'Galli' is not an Israeli Jewish name.

Of course most of you here already know about that, but there may be others who don't, so I wanted to make it clear: 'Galli' is not an Israeli Jewish name. I am not Jewish. My ancestors didn't come from a shtetl or a kibbutz. They came from little towns in Ireland, England, and a place called Luca in Italy. And what is happening today is unprecedented in our family. We have never before had a member of the Galli family become a Bar Mitzvah.

When you, my son, were born, there was no question that you were going to be raised as a Jew. And there was no doubt that I would never become a Jew. Over the last thirteen years, I have sometimes worried about whether that would cause a problem between us. Thank God, I can say that it has not.

But lately I've been thinking. My father had only one son, named Galli. And I have only one son. When you are older, and you have children of your own, they will be Jewish children whose name is Galli.

And so the confusion I want to clear up today is this: Galli is not an Israeli Jewish name. It is an American Jewish name, and I would like you to make me proud of it.[9]

New terms for the common discourse

Now I turn to the task of reframing the terms of our American Jewish discourse on boundaries, authority, and authenticity. Intermarriage stands so often at the focal point in these central issues simply because it is a boundary phenomenon. Who's in and who's out? Who says so and by what rights? The stakes are high: survival and integrity. No wonder the rhetoric outruns itself at times! The tendency toward polarization is like a powerful magnetic force, one that we must resist. Outreach without boundaries is no panacea and can't possibly be effective. Then there's nothing to invite the stranger to. Prohibition of intermarriage without the gentleness born of care is simply irrelevant to those it's meant to convince. Authenticity and true authority that does not insist on itself are hard won treasures in this anxious time.

In his conclusion to his important new book, *American Judaism*[10], Jonathan Sarna enumerates what he calls the "many bitter divisions in Jewish life," then goes on to articulate the questions that seem to define the decisions we face:

- "Should [Jews] focus on quality to enhance Judaism or focus on quantity to increase the number of Jews?
- Embrace intermarriage as an opportunity for outreach or condemn it as a disaster for offspring?
- Build religious bridges or fortify religious boundaries?

[9] This and other poetry and prose gathered to honor the 25th anniversary of Outreach may be found at www.urj.org/outreach by clicking on Outreach at 25 havdalah. Used with permission of the author.
[10] Sarna, *op. cit.*, p.373.

- Strengthen religious authority or promote religious autonomy?
- Harmonize Judaism with contemporary culture or uphold Jewish tradition against contemporary culture?
- Compromise for the sake of Jewish unity or stand firm for cherished Jewish principles?"

These dichotomous and ubiquitous questions—succinctly and elegantly articulated here, presuppose an either/or answer. Again, we need to take care with how we name our questions or we may get the answers we fear. I would suggest a different set of questions to frame our dilemmas and encourage a productive direction:

- How can we enhance Judaism through quality and quantity?
- How can we embrace opportunities for outreach (inviting Jewish choices) to all, including those who are intermarried and their offspring?
- How can we build bridges of understanding that strengthen and honor the integrity of different religious perspectives?
- How can we strengthen religious authority that respects the role of individual autonomy in religious life?
- How can we bring into dialogue the wisdom of Jewish tradition and the needs of the contemporary world?
- How can we stand firm for Jewish principles, including *ahavat hager* and *shalom bayit*? (love of the stranger and peace in the household)

Double or nothing? The work that lies ahead of us all must not be a game of chance where winner takes all and the loser comes up empty. As Dr. Fishman describes throughout, the internal processes for couples are complex. Outcomes are not clear before

the fact and findings such as Jewish men are less likely than Jewish women to raise Jewish children in an intermarriage, and Jewish women are less likely to encourage a spouse to convert must not be taken as prescriptive. A rich Jewish context of relationship and purpose and invitation and education can affect the choices of individuals and families.

> God says, "If you keep far off those who are far, you will end by making far off those who are near." God brings near the far, and supports the far as well as the near. And not only that, but God offers peace to the far even before the near, as it is said, "Peace, peace to the far and the near."

May our passionate engagement, dispassionate scholarship and compassionate deeds lead to shalom—peace and integrity for our people and the world.

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Double or Nothing? Jewish Families and Mixed Marriage Conference—April 26, 2004

The Hadassah-Brandeis Institute and The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies

Speculating on Jewish Futures

Dru Greenwood

Dichotomous Questions That Define Our Dilemmas

Should [Jews]…

1. Focus on quality to enhance Judaism or focus on quantity to increase the number of Jews?

2. Embrace intermarriage as an opportunity for outreach or condemn it as a disaster for offspring?
3. Build religious bridges or fortify religious boundaries?
4. Strengthen religious authority or promote religious autonomy?
5. Harmonize Judaism with contemporary culture or uphold Jewish tradition against contemporary culture?
6. Compromise for the sake of Jewish unity or stand firm for cherished Jewish principles?

Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism*, Yale Press, 2004

Unidirectional Questions That Challenge Our Creativity

1. How can we enhance Judaism through quality and quantity?
2. How can we embrace opportunities for outreach (inviting Jewish choices) to all, including those who are intermarried and their offspring?
3. How can we build bridges of understanding that strengthen and honor the integrity of different religious perspectives?
4. How can we strengthen religious authority that respects the role of individual autonomy in religious life?
5. How can we bring into dialogue the wisdom of Jewish tradition and the needs of the contemporary world?
6. How can we stand firm for Jewish principles, including *ahavat hager* and *shalom bayit*? (love of the stranger and peace in the household)

Leonard Saxe: Our discussant is Deborah Coltin, director of the Jewish Continuity Committee and Interfaith Outreach of the Jewish Federation of the North Shore. She is an outstanding Jewish educator, and we're very pleased to have her with us today.

Deborah Coltin: Before I begin my remarks, I'd like to thank Sylvia Barack Fishman for inviting me to participate in this very important conference. Her book is going to be an invaluable resource for all of us.

We've heard about how, in the past few decades, mixed marriage has dramatically changed the landscape of the American Jewish community. Jewish family life continues to morph from what used to be easily recognizable and identifiable to a much broader spectrum that includes various degrees of Jewish-style family life. The broad-based acceptance of mixed marriage combined with the challenge of promoting endogamy is polarizing the Jewish community. The response of the Jewish community to intermarriage has been a proliferation of outreach and *keruv* programs. That's the good news.

During the last two decades, the growth of outreach efforts to the mixed-married community has been enormous in terms of financial and human resources. Some claim that the investment in outreach has greatly weakened the Jewish community by eliminating our Jewish boundaries and weakening Jewish identity. Others assert that mixed marriage is good: it increases the pool of potential Jews who, when effectively reached, could strengthen and significantly grow the Jewish population.

The tensions are a great challenge to both outreach advocates and supporters of in-marriage. While outreach to the mixed-marrieds has exploded over the past two decades, there has been little programmatic and communal support for in-marriage. The

last two National Jewish Population Surveys (NJPS) beg for our community to give the same degree of support to in-marriage as we have given to outreach efforts to the intermarried.

Sylvia reports in her book that the family is critical in transmitting the message of in-marriage to the next generation, yet the absence of parental guidance is widespread. The majority of mixed-married informants in her study said that they received no parental guidance regarding Jewish dating or marriage. The opposite was true for most of the in-married informants, who said that their parents clearly articulated the expectation of in-marriage.

One response is that of the newly formed organization, which Steve briefly mentioned, the Jewish In-Marriage Initiative (JIMI). JIMI believes that the vitality of Jewish life today and in the future depends upon the successful formation and existence of Jewish families. It has resolved to sensitively and respectfully encourage Jews to marry Jews. Furthermore, JIMI actively supports the conversion to Judaism of the non-Jewish partner as the best eventual outcome of an intermarriage; and it advocates for intermarried parents to raise their children exclusively within the Jewish faith. JIMI is developing a programmatic and supportive framework, similar to that of outreach efforts, to meet the needs of those for whom promoting in-marriage is important. One such program is “Why Marry Jewish,” which offers helpful suggestions to parents about how to discuss the importance of in-marriage with their children.

As a matter of policy, what is the Jewish community to do? Can policy be developed to change the normative culture in support of in-marriage, while still successfully reaching out to and drawing in those who have intermarried? Is it possible to

do both and be successful? Since preservation of the Jewish family is critical to ensuring a Jewish future, how can the Jewish communal world meet the challenges and needs of the mixed-married families while still promoting in-marriage as a communal norm? And how should we allocate our precious funds and resources to accomplish this?

One successful model is the community I work in: the Jewish Federation of the North Shore, headquartered in Salem, Massachusetts. We have developed and implemented exciting Jewish educational programs, both formal and informal, to engage, inspire, and create proud, committed Jews all the way from young children right through teen years. We take their families along with them.

The Jewish community has a responsibility to leverage its limited human and financial resources to deal with the challenge of promoting and supporting in-marriage and reaching out to mixed-marrieds. While much has been invested in outreach over the past two decades, there is a growing need to redirect some of these investments and resources to promote and support in-marriage as well. One of the Jewish community's greatest challenges is to recognize and make room for both approaches.

Here are some important questions to consider when speculating on our future: How is support of in-marriage conveyed? What role does outreach have in preserving the Jewish family, which is one of the main vehicles of transmission of Jewish culture? If the goal is simply to make Jewish choices, what impact can be realistically expected? Is making a Jewish choice enough to ensure a Jewish future? What are the limitations of supporting endogamy? To what degree should we be concerned about those we may be alienating or offending? How can those who are committed to outreach to mixed-marrieds as well as those who are committed to promoting in-marriage respectfully

support each other's efforts, and what are the gains in doing so?

Our Jewish future is dependent upon creative and realistic answers to these questions. Solutions are currently being investigated and tried, but they require mutual respect, understanding, and support on both sides of the issue—and perhaps, as Sylvia proposes, greater emphasis on providing quality Jewish educational experiences, formal and informal, for both Jews and others, as common ground we can travel together. Based on these positive Jewish experiences, people choose to be Jewish, so these experiences play a critical role in defining our next generation of Jews.

Leonard Saxe: I can tell that this conference is about a Jewish subject: every presentation ends up laying out more questions than it started with! We're going to take a couple of questions, and I'd like to group them, so ask them of either or both of the speakers. I'll give them a chance to respond, then I'll make a couple of quick remarks, then we'll move into some final remarks by Sylvia.

Arnie Dashefsky: I'm Arnie Dashefsky from the University of Connecticut. There were some clear differences in the emphasis in the presentations by Steve and Dru. Could each of you articulate the areas where you agree and the areas where you don't?

Mark Rosen: I'm Mark Rosen with the Cohen Center. I would like you to articulate your ideas about conversion. In the study we did for you, Dru, we found that there were a number of people who didn't convert for as long as ten, fifteen, or twenty years after their marriage. They had lived with a Jew for many years and finally came around to converting. It finally grew on them. So to have a policy to advocate for conversion as an alternative to in-marriage would presuppose that people are receptive and would want to become Jews, when I'm not clear that that would always be the case. I'd like you to

speak to this issue, because it seems to me that there's an over-optimism about the potential for conversion in your conversation.

Michael Rukin: Michael Rukin, Boston. I'm troubled by several of the presentations I've heard this afternoon, including at least one if not both of the ones I've just heard. I hear them all in the context of a desire to go back to what that wonderful TV program of 30 or 40 years ago called *That Was the World That Was*. I'm not a sociologist, although I've had the privilege of cochairing demographic studies of the Boston community.

In physics, the Heisenberg uncertainty principle says you can't know both the location and velocity of an object out there in distant space, and in this case, the object in distant space is the American Jewish community, which is flowing in a great river of American experience. But the talks I've heard this afternoon trouble me because they all violate a corollary to the Heisenberg principle, which says that none of it matters if you don't know where you are in the first place. What I hear from these speakers is that they refuse to acknowledge where they are, and they're talking in terms of a world that no longer exists. So Steve, particularly, I'd like to ask you, in the context of the world that is, what are some pragmatic implementations that address this world, as opposed to things you might have done 25 years ago? That's not today's world.

Q: It's characteristic of programs in the Jewish community that any systematic attempt to evaluate outcomes is usually missing. I'd like to know from all three of you how much of your budgets are devoted to evaluating outcomes and how systematically you are planning to research in terms of the impact of these programs. This is very important. You're making programmatic statements that represent very important, different philosophic positions. I think that if you're going to do that, it's essential to be realistic

about outcome measurement.

Q: Missing from this whole discussion is the impact both on the Jewish community and on individual families of intermarriage. What is the impact, for example, on funding when children have intermarried? How does that affect the funding stream? I could go on and on with a million questions, but the role of the extended family in this whole subject has been disregarded, or at least we haven't dealt with it today.

Q: A question for you, Dru. Many of the programs you talked about that you've worked on seem to be great successes. Your story about the non-Jewish father speaking to his son was very moving. I've experienced that in my own Conservative synagogue, where I've had the non-Jewish spouse speak. It's very wonderful. I've seen great successes where one child is raised as a Jew—the son is raised as a Jew by a Jewish father, and the daughter is raised as a Catholic, and they consider it a success. Can you address some of the issues that have come out when you look at the second generation, that son? The chances of him marrying Jewish is completely diminished—most do not. Very few children of mixed marriages will identify as Jewish. So even with all the wonderful programs you've talked about, and the great successes, I'm still hearing failure.

Shulamit Reinharz: I'd like to make one small point. One underlying theme that was sometimes expressed and sometimes not in all the sessions was the survival of the Jewish people. Intermarriage or endogamy are not exclusively going to make that an assured thing. It also has to do with fertility rates: the size of our Jewish families. Replacement is not enough. If we think that the intermarriage rate is rising, while the number of Jewish families raising Jewish children is decreasing, and the number of children being born is decreasing, we have a lot of bleak figures. Still, no matter what the figures are, I bet the

three of you would not stop what you're doing. So I don't believe the numbers are really what's driving you, because the numbers are so bad, not just regarding intermarriage but also the birth rate, marriage itself, and involvement. It's something else. I would say that you're doing the activity you are doing because of its holiness. I would think you would want to describe it as being valuable in and of itself, and maybe we should respect that.

Leonard Saxe: I thought your comments were going to be uplifting, but they're depressing. In that set of questions, we could have an agenda for an entirely new conference. In five minutes or so each, could you each respond to them? If you don't have a chance to do it in detail, we'll have some time afterwards for smaller group conversations. Steve, let me ask you to go first.

Steven Bayme: I am taken by Shula's comment. She's added another dimension to this debate that should have been up front: this debate is not about numbers or demographics. It's about principle. In that respect, I am prepared to say that even if mixed marriage rose as high as 99 percent, Shula's absolutely correct. I would not be giving up the battle under any circumstances. So fundamentally, what's at stake here is a debate about culture, norms, values, and what it means to be a Jew, not about the demographic realities that certainly exercise us and concern us. But no, this is fundamentally a debate about principle.

It's in that light that I would answer Michael Rukin's comments about realism. There are two points that I was trying to engage. The first is that as we speak, Jewish communal culture has been transformed by a pro-intermarriage culture. I regret that transformation. I regard the battle as still quite fluid. It seems to me that a 3,000-year-old norm does not disappear overnight. Much of my comment is an appeal to Jewish leaders

that as we face the realities on the ground, there is a constructive role for outreach. That's the area that I think Dru and I do agree on: as we confront realities, let's keep our principles and priorities in place. Jews have stood for in-marriage for 3,000 years. When an intermarriage occurs, the most preferred outcome is the conversion of the non-Jewish spouse. When that's not in the cards, let's encourage people to raise children exclusively as Jews. If none of those things is in the cards, then I would throw the question back to you and ask, "Where is the realism among outreach advocates?" Are you expecting non-Jewish spouses are going to be Jewish because we wish them to be Jewish? We could redefine our parameters and boundaries to include anyone with a Jewish ancestor or anyone with a Jewish relative or anyone who does something Jewish at some point in their lives. But historically speaking, we have had boundaries. So I believe that, while this is fundamentally a debate about norms, values, and principles, we have to be realistic. Just as intermarriage has become pervasive, so have the successes of raising children Jewishly in mixed marriages, when children have been raised unambiguously as Jews. That may be a luxury that realistically we can't afford, but we should hold it out as our norm.

A second issue was raised about extended families. I want to repeat what I did say, because I think it bears repeating: I had many disputes with Egon Mayer, of blessed memory, but the one thing we always did agree on is that the Jewish side of the family makes the difference. The more the Jewish extended family makes the Jewish case, the better the chances for success. Now making the Jewish case at this moment in time is often "politically incorrect." The thrust of Sylvia's research is that mixed-marriage families would prefer to hear an embracing message that validates what they do. Often

that means do it the American way, coalescence, a little of this and a little of that. But Jewish leaders can't afford neutrality, saying nothing, let alone endorsing that perspective. We need to encourage the Jewish side of the family to pull out all the stops in ensuring the Jewishness of the offspring.

Thirdly, a legitimate question was raised about conversion, and again I want to make my argument in as clear a fashion as possible. My comment is about a change in the normative culture. Twenty years ago, we were explicit in saying that conversion is the preferred outcome. Now we are silent. Lest you think that's just me speaking, Rabbi Alexander Schindler, of blessed memory, said to the Reform movement in 1994, "Outreach can be properly faulted for its attitude of neutrality towards conversion." Following Shula's suggestion, I want to say that it's fundamentally an issue of principle. Most mixed marrieds are not converting. But that should not inhibit us from articulating our preferred outcomes.

Lastly, the question of where do we agree and where do we disagree. Once again, I would go back to a speech by Rabbi Schindler, again of blessed memory, in 1978, which he then repeated at numerous forums down to his very last days. He said that we cannot afford neutrality on mixed marriage. His argument was, "As Reform Jews, we must oppose mixed marriage. Given the reality that it has occurred, then we need the room for outreach towards conversion as an ideal, and when that's not in the cards, raising children unambiguously as Jews." Now without question, the outreach movement is entitled to evolve well past that, but if you ask where we agree, I think we agree in principle behind Rabbi Schindler's comments.

As far as where we disagree, I jotted down three things: First, the idea that

Christmas trees are our friends. I don't agree. This is an issue of fundamental principle. As we read in Sylvia's book, the Christmas tree is symbolic of a wide variety of other things that are happening inside the mixed-married home. What are the chances of getting an unambiguous Jewish home where the Christmas tree has become a symbol, especially compared to the in-married Jewish home? Since the 1950s, to go back to Michael's analogy, the Christmas tree has disappeared. Dru will forgive me, but I came across an article in the Boston *Jewish Advocate* from 1992, which quoted my dear friend Dru Greenwood as saying, "The Christmas tree has no place inside the Jewish home." I think she was right then.

Secondly, she quoted I think Richard Address, saying that our unity is our diversity. The example she gave I found troubling, namely that there is no difference between the in-married, two-parent Jewish home raising Jewish children in an unambiguous fashion and the mixed-married home. I can't say the two are equal, although I can say, "Don't give up the ship. Don't give up your hopes on that latter family." Without question, I support anyone who is trying to raise children as Jews within the latter kind of family. Still, I certainly would not say the two are equally preferred models. One is something we've been working towards and trying to realize, the other is something that's a reality of Jewish life that we need to accommodate and reconcile ourselves to. But ideally, unity is not our diversity. Our diversity often means there are some forms of Jewish behavior that we endorse, there are other forms that we protect, there are other forms that we permit, and frankly, there are other forms that we prohibit.

Dru Greenwood: I'd like to start with the last point that Steve made. What I meant was that the Jewish community is diverse, and that we are unified in that diversity: the

commonality that we have is that we are journeying. The Ashkenazi multigenerational family with no intermarriage and no conversion is as diverse as the gay interfaith family with an Asian child. The two families have diversity in common, and we need to pay attention in each instance to the Jewish choices that are being made by each family. The point is not to place more value on one or the other kind of family, it's to say that the diversity is the reality in which we live now, and we need to work with that diversity.

Christmas trees are not Jewish. Everybody agrees with that. However, Christmas trees, because of the kind of objects they are, are very helpful in the conversations that interfaith families have. We need to use the ambiguity of the Christmas tree to help families to articulate their issues and to come to a closer understanding of one another. Young interfaith couples don't have the language to speak about their religious differences. Christmas trees can be very helpful for doing that. It does not mean that we put them in Jewish homes. But an interfaith family, even one that is raising Jewish children, may have a Christmas tree.

I am very eager for systematic evaluation of the work that we're doing. We do very extensive internal evaluations of our programs, but for the most part, they are not long term. We are beginning to do some long-term evaluations, particularly of Taste of Judaism, and it's impressive. We find that people from Taste of Judaism will go to two, three, or even four additional kinds of programming, which is exactly what we have in mind. That's one measure.

I'm not sure that I understood the question about intermarriage and the impact on funding. If you look at the amount of money that's been spent on outreach in the entire Jewish community, it is minuscule. I hope that that will not be diverted to an in-marriage

initiative. I think that would be counterproductive. In-marriage is a Jewish choice that is part of outreach. It's not one way or the other. In that way, we agree.

Let me back up a minute to talk about the relationship between intermarriage and outreach. Outreach doesn't advocate intermarriage because it gives the opportunity for outreach. That's not the motivation. But intermarriage is a fact on the ground. It is very challenging, very problematic. It leads to loss. We know that. That's clear. That's why I'm suggesting that we flip that over, and instead of focusing on intermarriage, we focus on inviting Jewish choices, at every level. That's why I kept speaking about the fact that we need to reach Jews as well as those who are not Jewish or not yet Jewish. That's a critical piece of this. When someone who is Jewish is confronted with someone in their immediate vicinity whom they love who's asking them questions about Judaism, that is an incredible opportunity for that Jew to increase their Jewish knowledge and to come close to Judaism. That was reflected in Sylvia's work, again and again.

LEONARD SAXE: I want to thank both of our speakers, our discussant, and all of you for a wonderful set of important and provocative questions. I want to make a couple of closing summary remarks, and then I'm going to turn the microphone over to Sylvia.

At one point in the last 24 hours, I thought of the discussion as if there were one goalpost that was universalism and the other goalpost that was particularism. And we struggle. This is part of life. We struggle between wanting to be part of the whole, of trying to be part of American society; yet we also struggle to maintain our distinctiveness, as having a unique culture, as being Jewish.

Being part of a Jewish-founded, but fiercely secular, university, it's hard not to have these kinds of thoughts all the time. What are the implications of being

particularistic? What are the implications of being universalistic? As Chris Winship was urging us to add a little dose of theory to this discussion of data and descriptions of experience, I was thinking of Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone*. The thesis of *Bowling Alone* is that we're losing our sense of community in this country, that the pathology of individualism has taken hold, and that we need to rebuild what he calls social capital.

What's interesting about this theoretical idea of social capital, this notion of connections among people, is that there are different kinds of ways to have connections. One way, which Putnam calls "bonding social capital," is connecting to people who are already like you. Religious groups are places where bonding social capital takes place. "Bridging social capital" is connecting to people who are different from you.

Is bonding social capital—being part of families, being part of religious groups, being part of neighborhoods—the building block for bridging social capital? I think it is. It is important for us to maintain the particularism of a unique culture, of a unique religious tradition, because this is the building block for creating a community. We talk about creating a society of diverse groups, each of which has profound connections to the others.

In-marriage is good because it helps to create bonding social capital. You use bonding social capital to form in-marriages. Outmarriage, interfaith marriage, could be a kind of bridging social capital. It's a legitimate way to build social capital in a society. It is also, as many people have pointed out, a fact of life. The problem is the interfaithless marriage, in which there is no tradition, no sense of community to pass on to another generation.

So it seems to me that from a policy perspective, it is necessary to support and

promote in-marriage. It's not un-American. At the same time, it is necessary and important to support those people who are involved in interfaith marriages.

Our environment shapes our behavior. Before this conference, the profound ways in which television programs shape how we view one another hadn't really occurred to me. Most of the television programs that Joyce referred to during lunch are things that I've only seen as "silent films," sitting on an airplane with my PC, but watching the TV screen. So I learned a lot about what I'm supposed to know about American culture.

It's clear that the portrayal of healthy in-married relationships—healthy bonding social capital relationships—is very problematic. We live in a society where negative stereotypes about groups are perpetuated. These have important implications for how we live our lives and for how our children live their lives. What are we to do about this?

Jonathan Woocher's suggests that Jewish education plays a critical role. But it seems to me that the overarching question is, "How do we create a vibrant Jewish community that people actually want to be part of?" Aside from whatever we can do to encourage people to in-marry, aside from whatever we might do to encourage those who are interfaith married to raise their children Jewishly, and to encourage non-Jewish spouses to convert—it seems to me the fundamental issue is, Have we created a Jewish community in this society, in this era, in this diaspora, that people actually want to be part of?

I was struck this morning, as I was when I originally read Harvey Cox's book, with his description of Shabbat at his household. How wonderful that Harvey Cox has learned how to appreciate Shabbat, how wonderful that he has created Shabbat with his wife for his son, and that he has invited his children who are not Jewish into this

experience. How sad it is that even many Jews might not know what he was talking about.

Some of my own research over the last couple years has involved hanging out at a Jewish camps. There's a book called *How Goodly are Thy Tents* that describes some of the work that Amy Sales and a group of us did at Jewish camps. When I am not at camp being bitten by bugs, I am with Birthright Israel groups in Israel. We've studied 50,000 to 60,000 North American young people who have been to Israel on Birthright Israel trips. Every time I see this, it hits me again: how extraordinary that young people, 20 to 23 years of age, born, in many cases to Jewish parents, have never had the experience of Shabbat until they got to Israel. Unless we can create a community that people want to be part of, in which people feel the joy the children who are at a Jewish camp feel, or participants in Birthright Israel feel, all of the policy solutions, all of the efforts to influence people, are not going to be successful.

With that, I would like to invite Sylvia to literally have the last word and share some of her own thoughts about our discussion.

Sylvia Barack Fishman: Shulamit Reinharz said that numbers aren't the underlying concern, but for more than a decade, the American Jewish community has, in fact, been preoccupied with numbers: How many Jews really are there in the United States? 4.3 million? 5.2 million? six million? eight million? A corollary to these population questions has been a concern about mixed marriage and the impact that mixed marriage has on numbers. Today, we're been much more concerned with the quality of Jewish life, and I think that that is an appropriate place to put our attention. But I would like for a moment just to place what we know about the mixed married numbers in the United States into an

international scene.

I've been lucky to plan this conference with the two institutions that make it possible for me to do my work, the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute and the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies. Steve Bayme mentioned that I am now embarked on a new study of conversion and the decision-making process through which families decide whether the non-born-Jewish partner will become a Jew, formally or not. So to me it's really quite wonderful to have these two institutions coming together for this conference.

In December, the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute had a conference on intermarriage internationally. At that conference Sergio dela Pergella compared rates of mixed marriage around the world. He told us that the lowest rates of mixed marriage, not surprisingly, are found in Israel. The highest rates, 75 percent or more, are found in the former Soviet Union and in Cuba, with other European countries such as Austria, Germany, and the part of Eastern Europe that is not part of the former Soviet Union lagging only slightly behind these sobering rates, at 55 to 75 percent rates of mixed marriage.

According to dela Pergella's figures, the United States falls into a third grouping, of between 45 and 55 percent mixed marriage rates. We are in the same category as Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the Asian former Soviet Union.

Putting the United States into an international context raises a lot of questions, most of which we don't have any answers to. For example, in other places in the world, it looks as though Jewish education doesn't make a difference. In other places in the world, there isn't a correlation between getting an extensive Jewish education and the likelihood that one will be highly identified Jewishly and create a Jewish home. But in the United States there is, in fact, a very strong correlation. Is the United States in fact different? Are

these differences real? And why is there such a big difference between the impact of Jewish education, especially extensive Jewish education that extends into the teen years, in the US and the rest of the world? That the uniqueness of the United States is, I think, something that is certainly worthy of further exploration.

For 24 hours we've been reflecting on the phenomenon of mixed marriage in the United States with a series of thinkers who are involved in cutting-edge research. Every single participant is worthy of some commentary. I am just going to touch on those aspects that seem most vivid to me right now. Like many of you, I was very struck, as I always am, by Harvey Cox, and very moved by his conviction that there is something about Jewish culture that is precious. Jews feel that to lose Jewish culture would be to lose something of inestimable value, and that that is the reason for our concern about Jewish cultural continuity. That interpretive framework, which posits that this Jewish cultural heritage is precious and worth passing on, is a vantage point that certainly many Jewish social scientists have. It was the vantage point of Marshal Sklare, of blessed memory, and also of our colleague Charles Liebman, who passed way much too soon. It is quite possible to be a content survivalist and still to conduct dispassionate research. I don't think that the two are mutually contradictory.

I was very struck by Richard Alba's presentation and his neat description of the three kinds of boundaries: those that get crossed, those that get blurred, and those that shift. I think that's a very useful way to think about our life here in the United States, where we have a lot more boundary-blurring and boundary-shifting, or relocation, at this point, and less necessity for boundary-crossing than Jews have had in past situations.

I found Bruce Phillips' materials quite wonderful. The day before Bruce's paper

arrived in our office, Shula said to me, "You know what you really need to understand the data that you're working on? You need a typology that looks at four different types of mixed-married families. And you know what else? You can't just have a typology, you need to give each type a name." The next morning Bruce's paper, with its typology of four different types of mixed-married families, with names for each of them, came into the office. His categorization of the strategies that mixed-married families use, and the types of families are very helpful indeed. He named the strategies each type of family uses: "neutrality," the family that deals with religious difference by not dealing with it, by not engaging with it, by retreating from it. And "reciprocity," the strategy in which the two spouses make deals with each other: "Okay, I'll give you two menorahs for one Christmas tree."

The third strategy he calls "efficiency," when one partner says to the other, "You care much more than I do, and I'm tried of fighting about this, so you do your thing, and I don't care about my religion." I have trouble calling that model "efficiency." I would call it "subordination," which is a much more loaded term. You may think of other names. I think we should have a group project of letting Bruce know what he should call that third strategy, because I think "efficiency" doesn't capture the kind of transaction that goes on. Also, from my research, I've found that when families use the strategy of what he is calling efficiency, resentments pop up later on. One partner may say, "you just do your thing," but if they're not invested in it, if it's not something that they want to do—if they're not Harvey Cox—then as the years go on, very often there are emotional prices to pay in the family unit.

His family types were interesting. He based them on where people started out: the

"Judaic," a secular Christian and a Jewish-by-religion Jew; the "dual religion", in which both spouses are identified with their religion; the secular family, in which neither spouse identifies with their religion; and the Christian family, with a secular Jew and an identified Christian. But when he looked at those family types and how they behaved later on, he found that their behavior didn't match well with the way he had categorized them in the beginning.

Aside from individual variation, where there are always a lot of surprises because human personality is, at bottom, an enormous mystery, one of Bruce's striking findings was that there was exactly, but exactly, the same level of Judaic observance in the households that he called Judaic as there was in the households that he called dual religion. The difference was in the amount of Christian observance in the household. The dual-religion households had significantly higher levels of Christian functioning.

Jonathan Woocher's talk was really compelling, and left us with an enormous number of things to think about. His honesty in asking questions is something that the whole Jewish community needs to pay attention to. Regardless of which of the moving and passionate presentations we felt most closely drawn to in our last session on policy—regardless of which of those was the most personally engaging to us—there is no question that the presence of a critical mass of people who do not identify as Jews within Jewish families, Jewish schools, and Jewish institutions does have an effect. Jonathan points out that, on the one hand, education cannot educate if it ignores the life experience of the people who are being educated. You can't have kids with two-faith heritages in your classroom and pretend that they're not there. You can't ignore them. If you want to educate them well, you have to in some way take account of their life experience.

But on the other hand, Woocher asks, if we try to take account of their life experiences in the ways we educate, are we altering and distorting Judaism? Are we adapting it to the people we are trying to educate?

I had a personal experience this Passover which, to me, reinforces this question. I was at a seder the second night that had more non-Jews than Jews at the table. The person who was leading the Seder spent most of it explaining the symbolism of the Seder to the non-Jews. There was almost no discussion that involved the Jewish people at the Seder in some educational way. Because the person leading the Seder was anxious that the non-Jews should be able to relate to the subject matter, he compared the matzo—as it was compared this morning, actually—to communion wafers. There were young children at the table, but they weren't my young children, so I was more bemused than frantic—but I wondered, when will they get to talk about the aspects of the Seder that are salient to Jewish experience and Jewish history? That is an anecdotal example of what happens to content when your concern is people who don't come from your faith tradition.

I'm always happy to have an opportunity to reiterate what I consider to be the three pivotal prongs of trying to produce Jewish homes and a more vibrant Jewish community: Jewish education, especially through the teen years; Jewishly active homes; and peer groups that include cool Jewish people. Those are the things that make people want to be Jewish, which is really what we are aiming for.

On the last subjects that we discussed—do we advocate against intermarriage or do we advocate on behalf of in-marriage—I have to weigh in on advocating for the creation of Jewish homes. That's they way I like to think about it, and I think that needs to be explicit. Both as parents and as educators, we have to talk about why it is important

to us that Jewish homes be created. What is special about a Jewish home? Pragmatically, it's hard to advocate against something and sound anything but negative. But I think we can have many of the same goals by advocating for the creation of Jewish homes. Is this possible? Is it going to make a difference? That's where "double-or-nothing" comes in. I think the Jewish community is gambling that we can make a difference, and we have no choice but to undertake that gamble.

I want to thank all the people who helped to make this wonderful day possible. The first group of people I want to thank is everybody who is sitting here. I'm thrilled with the interest that my book has evoked, and I'm thrilled with the conversation that I believe is just beginning. I'm even happy about the people who disagree with me vehemently, because I think that their concern shows that they care. The fact that so many people, from so many different vantage points, care about these issues is what makes me feel that we do have a chance. Finally, I'd like to thank Barbara Gaffa, Nancy Vineberg, Deborah Stanhill, Debbie Olins, Helene Greenberg, the Grinspoon Foundation, the family of Art and Annie Sandler—Leila, Jessica, Max, and Dillon Sandler—the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute, and the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish studies. Let the conversation continue!