BEYOND WELCOMING
Engaging Intermarried Couples in Jewish Life

Michelle Shain • Leonard Saxe • Fern Chertok
Graham Wright • Shahar Hecht • Theodore Sasson

August 2019
The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS), founded in 1980, is dedicated to providing independent, high-quality research on issues related to contemporary Jewish life.

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Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge the philanthropic support that has made this study possible. In particular, we note with appreciation the support of the One8 Foundation (formerly the Jacobson Family Foundation), the Jewish Funders Network (JFN), the Newton and Rochelle Becker Charitable Trust, the Genesis Prize Foundation, and the Alan B. Slifka Foundation. The study also benefited from the material support of our host institution, the Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University. We are also grateful for Birthright Israel’s support of the Jewish Futures Project, a panel study of Birthright Israel applicants that formed the sample base for this study.

We want to thank our colleagues Deborah Grant for her editorial assistance, Stevie Howland for creating the charts, and Masha Lokshin and Ilana Friedman for managing day-to-day operations.

This project also benefited enormously from the assistance of our research team at Brandeis University. We are appreciative and grateful for their efforts. Naomi Weinblatt was instrumental in developing the online version of the survey, managing data collection, and providing research support. Naomi and Rachel Minkin coded open-ended responses. Alexander Lee and Toby Reiter provided technical support. Micha Rieser prepared the datafile for analysis. A team of research assistants made follow-up phone calls to encourage survey participation. We acknowledge with thanks our callers, including: Rivka Cohen, Tan Gao, Mariah Manter, Joanna Martin, Izabella Nickel, and Tamar Shachaf Schneider.

The cover was designed by Amalya Sherman.

We thank our academic and policy colleagues who reviewed early presentations of the data in this report and commented on drafts. Their feedback was extremely useful, and we hope it is reflected in the quality of this monograph.

Finally, we want to acknowledge the respondents who shared their experiences and thoughts with us. Our work depends on their participation, and we are grateful for the seriousness with which they engage with us.
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Executive Summary

The present study explores the lives of 1,128 contemporary young couples, in which at least one member of each couple is Jewish, to understand the role of religion and Jewish identity in their lives and the factors associated with their engagement with Jewish life. “Beyond Welcoming” is the first large-scale study of the marriages and committed relationships of Gen X and millennial Jews, and the first to systematically collect data from non-Jewish partners about their backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. The fundamental question guiding this study is, “What programs and policy initiatives would best serve the Jewish community in an era where intermarriage is pervasive and young adults in the United States are distancing themselves from religion and religious institutions?”

The findings of this study draw on survey data collected from both members of 607 Jewish+Jewish couples and 521 Jewish+non-Jewish couples. Couples were either married, engaged, or cohabiting. Data were collected in spring/summer 2017. Couples were recruited into the study from respondents to two previous studies of young adults who applied to go on Birthright Israel trips between 2001 and 2014. Individuals who were raised Orthodox were not recruited to participate in this study. Because it is not based on a representative sample of Jewish young adults or couples, the study is not designed to make demographic predictions about the future of US Jewry or to estimate the proportion of intermarried couples that engage in any particular behavior. The study is also not designed as an evaluation of Birthright Israel. Rather, this study aims to identify the critical levers for promoting meaningful Jewish involvement by young intermarried couples.

Key Findings

Jews who are in a relationship with a non-Jew generally had fewer Jewish childhood experiences and fewer post-high school Jewish experiences than Jews who are in relationships with other Jews. At the same time, some Jews with non-Jewish partners still had many childhood and post-high school Jewish experiences.

Non-Jews who are in relationships with Jews generally did not have substantial religious experiences during their childhood or post-high school years. Compared to all non-Jewish Americans in their age bracket, as a group, non-Jews who are in relationships with Jews are more likely to come from mainline Protestant denominations.
For most Jewish+non-Jewish couples, differences in religious background were not a fraught issue early in their relationship. Most Jewish parents were very accepting of their children’s non-Jewish partners, as were most non-Jewish parents of their children’s Jewish partners. In premarital discussions about what role religion would play in their future household, most Jewish+non-Jewish couples agreed on most issues and did not feel they made a lot of compromises.

Most respondents in both Jewish+Jewish and Jewish+non-Jewish couples were highly satisfied with their relationships with their partners and their relationships with their own and their partners’ parents. In Jewish+non-Jewish couples, Jews, as compared with non-Jewish partners, were more likely to seek advice from their own parents and much less likely to seek advice from their partner’s parents.

The majority of young couples, both Jewish+Jewish and Jewish+non-Jewish, felt welcome in the Jewish community. Among Jewish+non-Jewish couples, both Jews and non-Jews reported they felt welcome. Virtually all Jewish+non-Jewish couples who wanted a Jewish officiant at their wedding were able to have one.

Jews in Jewish+Jewish couples were more likely to identify as Jews, to value being Jewish, and to engage in Jewish behaviors than Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples. To some extent, this gap reflects differences in the childhood Jewish experiences of Jews in Jewish+Jewish couples as compared with Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples. Even after accounting for the childhood Jewish experiences of the Jewish partner, however, Jewish+non-Jewish couples still exhibited lower levels of Jewish engagement.

The majority of non-Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples considered themselves atheist, agnostic, or of no religion and aside from Christmas, Christian religious traditions were rarely observed. The majority of Jewish+non-Jewish couples celebrate Christmas, but other Christian behaviors—observing Easter and attending Christian religious services regularly—are relatively uncommon in this population. Neither the religious identity of the non-Jewish partner nor the couple’s Christian behaviors are related to the Jewish childhood experiences of the Jewish partner.

Children of Jewish+Jewish couples were more likely than children of Jewish+non-Jewish couples to have a Jewish naming ceremony or brit milah (Jewish circumcision and naming ceremony); to attend organized Jewish programs or activities; to attend Jewish daycare, nursery school, or preschool; and to be identified by their parents as Jewish. To some extent, these gaps reflect differences in the Jewish backgrounds of the Jewish partners in these couples. However, Jews who have many childhood Jewish experiences and are in Jewish+non-Jewish relationships are less likely to give their children Jewish experiences than Jews who have few childhood Jewish experiences but are in Jewish+Jewish relationships.

When the Jewish partner in Jewish+non-Jewish couples was female, the couple was more likely to agree that they are raising their child exclusively Jewish by religion, and more likely to have their oldest child attend an organized Jewish program or activity for young children. At the same time, the gender of the Jewish partner in Jewish+non-Jewish couples was not associated with any change in the likelihood of both members of the couple celebrating Jewish
holidays or participated in Jewish activities. Similarly, the gender of the Jewish spouse was not associated with any change in celebrating Christian holidays or attending non-Jewish religious services.

**Takeaways**

On the one hand the findings suggest that efforts to make intermarried families feel welcome in the Jewish community have been successful and religion and Judaism are not a fraught issue for these couples. Specifically:

- The majority of Jewish+non-Jewish couples feel welcome in the Jewish community.
- Religion and Jewishness are not contentious issues for Jewish+non-Jewish couples.

On the other hand, the gap in Jewish engagement between Jewish+Jewish and Jewish+non-Jewish couples persists for several reasons:

- As a group, Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples, compared with Jews in relationships with other Jews, had less exposure to Jewish experiences during their developmental years.
- Most Jewish+non-Jewish couples have minimal interest in religion in general.
- Partnering with a non-Jew may simultaneously be a cause and an effect of reduced engagement in Jewish life.

**Policy Recommendations**

The data in this report suggest five opportunities to promote the engagement of Jewish-non-Jewish couples and families with Jewish life and community.

**Build the Jewish “social capital” of children and teens.** Adult engagement with Jewish life is strongly predicted by Jewish experiences earlier in life. The next generation, including those raised in intermarried households, should have the opportunity to develop a foundation of Jewish “social capital” upon which they can build the Jewish lives of their future families, regardless of whether or not they marry another Jew.

**Move beyond “welcoming” to proactive invitations.** Our findings suggest that welcoming those who approach the Jewish community may be insufficient to inspire deep Jewish engagement by intermarried couples. Young couples, many of whom do not have an existing connection to a Jewish community, may need to be actively invited to participate.

**Create non-religious entry points.** Because most intermarried couples feel distant from religion and religious ritual, programs that focus on observance and worship are unlikely to be effective portals into Jewish engagement.

**Invest in multigenerational programs and experiences.** The Jewish+non-Jewish couples we surveyed, like their peers in Jewish+Jewish couples, have very good relationships with their parents and often consult them when making important decisions. The Jewish community can play a critical role by developing programs that promote
intergenerational activities, such as helping parents and grandparents create meaningful Shabbat and holiday experiences, or programs under Jewish sponsorship that allow grandparents, parents and their children to be part of Jewish groups.

**Explore strategies to foster Jewish choices of Jewish+non-Jewish couples in which the Jewish partner is male.** When the Jewish partner in Jewish+non-Jewish couples is male, there is a diminished likelihood that the couple will make Jewish choices regarding their children’s upbringing. Encouraging Jewish fathers in these couples to be active advocates for Jewish choices should be a focus of future programming and research.

**Conclusion**

The present study provides a unique window into the lives of young couples. One of the most important findings is the extent to which Jewish+non-Jewish couples feel welcome in the Jewish community. For them, as well as for their families, religion is not a contentious issue. At the same time, compared to couples in which both members are Jewish, Jewish+non-Jewish couples are less engaged in Jewish life, suggesting that Judaism is not a priority for these individuals. In an environment where intermarried families are welcome, the challenge going forward is to create access points that spark curiosity and enthusiasm about Jewish engagement.
Introduction

Intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews is reshaping the contours of American Jewish life. Before 1960, marriages between Jews and non-Jews were rare: The proportion of American Jews who intermarried was below 10% (Massarik & Chenkin, 1973). That figure rose to 29% in the late 1960s (Goldstein, 1992), then to 43% in the late 1980s (Kotler-Berkowitz et al., 2004)\(^1\) and to 58% in recent years (Pew Research Center, 2013). Some communal leaders and social scientists predict that intermarriage will lead to demographic decline (Bayme, 2010; Cohen, 2006; Fishman, 2004; Wertheimer, 2001) and the dilution of Jewish religious identity (DellaPergola 2014a, 2014b; Rebhun, 2016). Others point to a doubling of the rate at which millennial children of intermarried parents identify as Jews, as compared with earlier generational cohorts, and contend that future demographic trends are uncertain (Sasson et al., 2017).

Regardless of where one stands in this debate, the facts on the ground are incontrovertible. Today, the majority of marriages of Jews are to non-Jews; fully half of Jews in the millennial generation have a non-Jewish parent; and overall, those who marry non-Jews are less involved in Jewish life than their peers who marry Jews (Fishman & Cohen, 2017; Phillips, 2017; Sasson, 2013; Sasson et al., 2017).

What We Need to Learn

The future of US Jewry will be shaped in large measure by the community’s response to intermarriage between Jews and partners from other religious backgrounds. Yet, research has yet to fully capture the preferences and priorities of young intermarried couples vis-à-vis religion and Jewishness. The complex problem of understanding the interplay of forces that affect the decisions of young intermarried couples to engage in or remain distant from Jewish life is at the heart of the study described in this report. The fundamental question the analyses in this report attempt to answer is, “What programs and policy initiatives would best serve the Jewish community in an era where intermarriage is pervasive and young adults in the United States are distancing themselves from religion and religious institutions?”

What We Already Know

The phenomenon of intermarriage in the Jewish community has generated both optimism and concern. There has been a substantial shift in thinking, moving away from rejection of those who intermarry and toward attitudes of acceptance and welcoming. In 1978, Rabbi Alexander Schindler, then president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, urged the
Beyond Welcoming

Reform movement to embrace intermarried families and provide Jewish education to the children raised in these homes. The Reform movement reframed the discourse about intermarriage and created a signature strategy of outreach and welcoming (Case, 2014; Dorff & Olitzky, 2007; Mayer, 1991). A study of Reform-affiliated synagogues during the early 2000s found that intermarried couples experienced a warm welcome in these congregations and that synagogue membership became more diverse after the initiation of outreach efforts (Chertok et al., 2001).

Millennial children of intermarriage—the first generation born after the Reform movement initiated its outreach programs—are substantially more likely to have received Jewish education and to identify as Jews than children of intermarriage in previous generations (Sasson et al., 2017; Saxe et al., 2014). Reform-raised children of inmarriage and children of intermarriage who have similar experiences of Jewish home ritual, education, and social networks, grow up to look very much alike Jewishly (Chertok, Phillips, & Saxe, 2008).

However, intermarried families, as compared with inmarried peers, are less involved in Jewish life and less likely to seek out Jewish education and involvement for themselves and their children (Fishman & Cohen, 2017; Hartman and Hartman, 2009; Sasson et al., 2017; Sheskin & Hartman, 2015). This gap can be partly explained by the weaker Jewish social networks and lower levels of Jewish education that Jews who intermarry experienced as children and teens, leaving them less predisposed to involvement in Jewish life as adults (Cohen, 2006; Phillips & Fishman, 2006). Substantial evidence suggests that this deficit of “Jewish capital” continues into the next generation; adult children of intermarried parents have less Jewish education and are less involved in Jewish life than their peers with two Jewish parents (see, e.g., Sasson et al., 2017). At the same time, some research suggests that intermarriage has had an independent, negative impact on Jewish involvement, beyond the influence of Jewish experiences in the childhood and teen years (Cohen, 2006). This research suggests that the gap in Jewish involvement between inmarried and intermarried families is rooted in the fact that many Jewish partners in intermarried couples are simply not interested in substantive involvement in Jewish life (Bayme, 1994, 2010; Hauptman, 2017; Held, 2016; Wertheimer, 2001).

At the communal and societal levels, at least two opposing forces are also likely implicated in shaping the Jewish engagement of contemporary young intermarried couples. First, Jewish young adults are part of a generation that has been the beneficiary of a substantial communal investment in Jewish education and therefore have more Jewish capital than their counterparts in previous generations. These efforts, which dramatically increased following release of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (Berkman, 2017; Krasner, 2016), include investments in Jewish summer camp (Sales & Saxe, 2004), Jewish day schools (Huebner, 2009), and Birthright Israel (Kelner, 2010; Saxe & Chazan, 2008).

Second, contemporary American Jewish young adults live in a secular culture that has distanced itself from institutional religion and mainstream religious engagement. Regardless of ethnicity and religious background, religious participation in the United States has declined in the current generation of young adults (Chaves, 2017). Younger cohorts, including
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those that were brought up in a religious tradition, are more likely than older generations to claim no religious preference (Hout & Fischer, 2014). Contemporary young adults also tend to emphasize universal rather than particularistic values, and they are highly individualistic and skeptical of authority and conventional institutions (Elcott & Himmelfarb, 2013; Gardner & Davis, 2013; Hout & Fischer, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2014). These generational characteristics are likely to influence the patterns of Jewish involvement among intermarried couples.

This Study

This study focuses on understanding the role of religion and Jewish identity in the lives of contemporary young couples in which at least one member is Jewish, and on documenting the factors associated with their engagement with Jewish life. The study examines over 1,000 young couples who were either married or in committed relationships. The couples were split about evenly between those in which only one partner is Jewish (Jewish+non-Jewish couples) and those in which both partners are Jewish (Jewish+Jewish couples). In addition to being the first systematic study of the marriages of Gen X and millennial Jews, it is also the first quantitative study to collect data from non-Jewish partners about their backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. Although it includes a diverse group of respondents from a wide variety of backgrounds, this study is not based on a random sample of couples in which at least one member is Jewish. Most notably, Jews who were raised Orthodox were not recruited into the study, although some respondents who were recruited are in relationships with partners who were raised Orthodox. While some of the respondents are themselves adult children of intermarriage, the study does not examine the trajectory of this group. In addition, the sample does not include couples with older children. As such, the study is not designed to estimate the proportion of intermarried couples that engage in any particular behavior or to make demographic predictions about the future of US Jewry. Rather, this study was designed with an eye toward identifying critical levers for promoting meaningful Jewish involvement by young intermarried couples.

Roadmap to the Report

The report begins by presenting the data underlying the findings and then describes the religious backgrounds and experiences of the Jewish and the non-Jewish study participants. We focus on how couples experienced several important moments in their relationship: the initial meetings with parents of their partners, premarital discussions of religion, and wedding planning, including the search for a wedding officiant. Next, we examine the current attitudes of both partners toward Jewishness and the Jewish community as well as Jewish and Christian behaviors in the couples’ homes. Finally, we explore the decisions the couples made for their young children related to religious identity and activities and the role of the Jewish spouse’s gender in Jewish+non-Jewish couples. The report concludes with a discussion of our findings for Jewish communal policy and programs.
About this Report

The Data

This report is based on surveys of 1,128 couples containing at least one Jewish member. Surveys were conducted in spring-summer 2017. Each member of the couple was sent a separate survey, the responses to which were then combined and analyzed together. The couples surveyed were recruited through one couple member who responded to one of two prior studies of applicants to Birthright Israel. The first study, the Jewish Futures Project (JFP), was composed of a stratified random sample of individuals who applied to Birthright Israel in between 2001 and 2009. The second study, the Millennial Children of Intermarriage, was composed of a stratified random sample who applied to Birthright Israel between summer 2009 and winter 2013-14. Both study samples contained Birthright participants as well as individuals who applied to go on Birthright but did not end up participating in the trip. (This group constituted the present study’s initial sample.)

Respondents of these prior studies who were raised Orthodox, were not recruited to participate in this study of couples. Although not a representative sample of Jewish young adults in the United States, the sample includes respondents that represent a diversity of Jewish backgrounds and experiences (Sasson et al., 2015; Saxe & Chazan, 2008). Finally, although the sample is drawn from applicants to Birthright Israel, the study is not designed as an evaluation of the program (see e.g., Saxe et al., 2017). Complete methodological details are available in Technical Appendix A.

The Couples

The 1,128 couples in this study form two groups: 607 couples that included two Jewish partners (Jewish+Jewish) and 521 couples that included a Jewish and a non-Jewish partner (Jewish+non-Jewish) (Figure 1).
The vast majority (93%) of Jewish+Jewish couples consisted of two Jews-by-birth (Table 1). Included in Jewish+Jewish couples were Jews-by-choice partnered with Jews, however, these couples were a very small proportion of all Jewish+Jewish couples. A few (2%) non-Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples were in the process of conversion, and these individuals were considered non-Jews and included as Jewish+non-Jewish couples. These findings are in keeping with other research demonstrating that conversion to Judaism is a relatively rare phenomenon, and the vast majority of non-Jews who marry Jews do not convert (Fishman, 2015). A detailed description of the demographic characteristics of the couples is included in Appendix A at the end of this report.

Most couples in the study (94%) are composed of one partner who identifies as male and a second partner who identifies as female. All couples, regardless of their gender composition, are included in the analysis.

Table 1. Religious composition of couples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Proportion of couples</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jewish+Jewish couples</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jew-by-birth + Jew-by-birth</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jew-by-birth + Jew-by-choice</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jew-by-choice + Jew-by-choice</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal Jewish+Jewish couples</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jewish+non-Jewish couples</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jew-by-birth + non-Jew</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jew-by-choice + non-Jew¹</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jew-by-birth + non-Jew in process of conversion to Judaism²</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal Jewish+non-Jewish couples</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total couples</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1,128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ These four converts to Judaism married non-Jews after their conversions to Judaism.
² Of these 10 non-Jews in process of conversion to Judaism, three are engaged and seven are already married.
Analytic Paradigm

This report presents data on two levels: individual and couple.

At the **individual level** we look at the individuals who make up the couples. We focus on the following comparisons:

**Jews who were members of our initial samples who are in a Jewish+Jewish relationship versus those who are in a Jewish+non-Jewish relationship.** Comparing Jewish members of our sample who are partnered with other Jews to those who have non-Jewish partners enables us to understand the childhood and college experiences that are associated with being in each type of relationship. It also allows us to understand the differences between how Jewish partners in Jewish+Jewish couples view their relationships compared to Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples. Unless otherwise specified, when we discuss Jews in Jewish+Jewish couples, we are referring to the Jewish member of the couple that was part of our initial sample.

**Jews in a Jewish+non-Jewish relationship versus their non-Jewish partners.** Comparing the responses of Jewish and non-Jewish partners in a relationship allows us to understand the unique perspective of each member of the couple, as well as the differences and similarities in their religious upbringing and college experiences.

**Jews in a Jewish+Jewish relationship versus their Jewish partners.** Comparing the Jews in our initial sample to their own Jewish partners allows us to understand the extent to which members of our initial sample are in relationships with other Jews of similar backgrounds.

At the **couple level** we look at the couple as a single unit and compare **Jewish+Jewish couples to Jewish+non-Jewish couples.** These comparisons allow us to understand the extent to which these couples differ in their engagement with Jewish life and with respect to their decisions about their children.\(^5\)
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Jewish Partners: Jewish and Religious Background

Key Findings

Jews who are in relationships with non-Jews generally had fewer Jewish childhood experiences and fewer post-high school Jewish experiences than Jews who are in relationships with other Jews. At the same time, some Jews with non-Jewish partners still had many childhood and post-high school Jewish experiences.

Jewish Childhood Experiences

Importance of Religion

During childhood, religion was somewhat less important to Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples than to Jews in Jewish+Jewish couples (Figure 2). At the same time, more than half of Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples say that religion was either “very” or “somewhat” important to them when growing up.

Figure 2. Importance of religion while growing up (Jewish partners)

**Jewish Parents**
Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples were less likely to have two Jewish parents: 57% of Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples had two Jewish parents as compared to 82% of Jews in Jewish+Jewish couples.

**Jewish Rituals**
Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples were less likely to have celebrated a bar or bat mitzvah, to have had childhood experiences of special Shabbat meals, or to have observed kosher dietary restrictions in their home (Figure 4). Nevertheless, more than one fifth of Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples grew up in households that regularly did something to observe Shabbat.

**Figure 3. Having two Jewish parents (Jewish partners)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jew in Jewish+Jewish</th>
<th>Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Individual-level analysis. Jews in initial sample. Excludes Jews-by-choice (N=46). For details on religious classification of parents see Technical Appendix B. See Table D1 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square value and significance level.

**Figure 4. Jewish childhood ritual practices (Jewish partners)**

- Hanukkah candles: 90% (Jew in Jewish+Jewish), 93% (Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish)
- Passover seder: 88% (Jew in Jewish+Jewish), 85% (Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish)
- Celebrated bar/bat mitzvah: 34% (Jew in Jewish+Jewish), 31% (Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish)
- Jewish religious services monthly: 65% (Jew in Jewish+Jewish), 68% (Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish)
- Special Shabbat meal: 22% (Jew in Jewish+Jewish), 30% (Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish)
- Kosher at home: 7% (Jew in Jewish+Jewish), 18% (Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish)

Note: Individual-level analysis. Jews in initial sample. Excludes Jews-by-choice (N=46). Differences for Passover seder and religious services not significant. See Table D3 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.
**Formal and Informal Jewish Education**

Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples received less formal Jewish education than Jews in Jewish+Jewish couples (Figure 5). Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples were also less likely than Jews in Jewish+Jewish couples to have experienced any informal Jewish education, including camp, youth group, or a peer Israel trip during high school (Figure 6). At the same time, 10% of Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples attended Jewish day schools, and more than one third of Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples attended a Jewish camp.

**Figure 5. Formal Jewish education (Jewish partners)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Part-time</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jew in Jewish+Jewish</strong></td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish</strong></td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Figure 6. Informal Jewish education (Jewish partners)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jewish camp</th>
<th>Jewish youth group</th>
<th>Peer Israel trip in high school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jew in Jewish+Jewish</strong></td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish</strong></td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To summarize across various types of childhood Jewish experiences, we created an index that included childhood Jewish ritual practice as well as formal and informal types of Jewish education. Based on their index scores, respondents were divided into three broad categories: few, moderate, and many Jewish childhood experiences (Table 2). A larger portion of Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples (25%) were in the “few experiences” group as compared to the Jewish+Jewish couples (16%), and a larger portion of Jews in Jewish+Jewish couples (39%) were in the “many experiences” group as compared with 26% of Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples. In the analyses that follow, we distinguish between respondents and couples based on these categories.

### Table 2. Index of Jewish childhood experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Childhood Jewish experiences of typical category member</th>
<th>Jews in Jewish+Jewish couples</th>
<th>Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Few Jewish childhood experiences</td>
<td>Had a Passover seder and lit Hanukkah candles. Did not celebrate bar or bat mitzvah, go to services regularly, have special Shabbat meals, or keep kosher at home. No formal or informal Jewish education.</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Jewish childhood experiences</td>
<td>Had a Passover seder, lit Hanukkah candles, and celebrated bar or bat mitzvah. Did not go to services regularly, have special Shabbat meals, or keep kosher at home. Had part-time formal Jewish education and one type of informal Jewish education.</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many Jewish childhood experiences</td>
<td>Had a Passover seder, lit Hanukkah candles, celebrated bar or bat mitzvah, attended Jewish religious services regularly, and had special Shabbat meals. Did not keep kosher at home. Had part-time formal Jewish education, attended Jewish camp and was a member of a Jewish youth group.</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: See Table D6 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square value and significance level.
**Jewish Post-High School Experiences**

**Campus Groups**

Jews whose backgrounds included more Jewish childhood experiences were more likely to be involved in Jewish college activities (e.g., Hillel, Chabad, a Jewish fraternity or sorority) when they were undergraduates, regardless of whether their partner was Jewish or not (Figure 7). At the same time, Jews who later partnered with non-Jews were less likely to be involved in Jewish college activities than Jews who had the same level of childhood experience but later partnered with another Jew.

**Figure 7. Involvement in Jewish activities on campus as undergraduate (Jews)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jew in Jewish+Jewish</th>
<th>Few Jewish childhood experiences</th>
<th>Moderate Jewish childhood experiences</th>
<th>Many Jewish childhood experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish</th>
<th>Few Jewish childhood experiences</th>
<th>Moderate Jewish childhood experiences</th>
<th>Many Jewish childhood experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Individual-level analysis. Those without a college degree and not currently enrolled in a degree-granting program at a college or university are grouped with the “not at all” involved. See Table D7 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.
**Organized Israel Travel**

The advent of the Birthright Israel program has dramatically increased rates of organized post-high school Israel travel. The initial sample for this study (Jewish individuals in committed relationships) was drawn from a pool of individuals who applied to a Birthright Israel trip. This group included those who eventually went on the trip and those who did not. Because of the sample source, the majority of Jews in the sample participated in Birthright Israel trips.

Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish relationships were less likely to have an organized, post-high school Israel experience, irrespective of their Jewish childhood experiences, as compared with Jews in Jewish+Jewish relationships (Figure 8).

---

**Figure 8. Organized post-high school Israel travel (Jews)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jew</th>
<th>Few Jewish childhood experiences</th>
<th>Moderate Jewish childhood experiences</th>
<th>Many Jewish childhood experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in Jewish+Jewish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jew</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in Jewish+non-Jewish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Individual-level analysis. Differences by Jewish childhood experience not significant. See Table D8 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.
Differences and Similarities between Partners in Jewish+Jewish Couples

As noted earlier, Jewish+Jewish couples included an individual who was recruited from panels of applicants to Birthright Israel and his or her Jewish partner. On many measures of Jewish engagement in early life, the group of Jews from the initial sample was indistinguishable from the group composed of their Jewish partners: Both groups reported that religion had a similar level of importance in their lives when growing up. Both groups were also equally likely to have two Jewish parents and, with the exception of keeping kosher, equally likely to observe Jewish rituals growing up. Overall, both groups were equally likely to have had few, moderate, or many Jewish childhood experiences.

Jews in the initial sample differed from their Jewish partners on a few measures. Specifically:

- Jews in the initial sample had lower rates of keeping kosher at home, 18% vs. 24% for partners.
- Jews in the initial sample had higher rates of formal Jewish education, 79% vs. 73% for partners.
- Jews in the initial sample had lower rates of peer Israel trips in high school, 5% vs. 17% for partners.
- Jews in the initial sample had higher rates of involvement in Jewish campus groups as undergraduates: 66% were involved at least a little vs. 54% for partners.
- Jews in the initial sample were substantially more likely to have gone on an organized post-high school Israel travel program, 73% vs. 42% for partners. This discrepancy is a result of the study’s sampling procedure.
Non-Jewish Partners: Religious Background

Key Findings

As a group, non-Jews who are in relationships with Jews are more likely to come from mainline Protestant denominations than non-Jewish Americans in their age bracket. Most of these non-Jewish partners did not have substantial childhood religious experiences.

Religious Childhood Experiences

Importance of Religion
Regardless of the religion non-Jews were raised in, nearly half (46%) reported that religion did not play an important role in their lives while growing up (Figure 9).

Religious Tradition Raised In
The vast majority of non-Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish relationships were raised either Christian or no religion (Table 3). Among those raised Christian, respondents were almost twice as likely as all Americans ages 25-44 to have been raised mainline Protestant,

Figure 9. Importance of religion growing up (non-Jews)

- Not at all important
- Not very important
- Somewhat important
- Very important

Note: Individual-level analysis.
Beyond Welcoming and far less likely to have been raised Evangelical or Black Protestant. In part, this may reflect the racial composition of the sample, with a smaller portion of respondents, as compared with national samples identifying as people of color (See Appendix A). Fewer than 6% of non-Jewish partners were raised Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, or another religion.

**Table 3. Religion raised (non-Jewish partners)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Jewish partners</th>
<th>All US adults Ages 25-44 (Not raised Jewish)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mainline Protestant</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical Protestant</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Protestant</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other religion</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Individual-level analysis.
* Authors’ analysis of data from the Pew Research Center’s 2014 US Religious Landscape Study.

**Christian Rituals**

Because the vast majority of non-Jews in this study were raised Christian, examination of the religious background of non-Jewish partners focuses on Christian childhood experiences. The majority of non-Jewish partners in Jewish+non-Jewish couples celebrated Christmas and Easter growing up, were baptized, and attended Christian religious services at least monthly (Figure 10). Fewer than half attended Christian camp or vacation Bible school, or a private Christian religious or parochial school.

**Religious Post-High School Experiences**

The majority of non-Jewish partners in Jewish+non-Jewish couples had no involvement in Christian campus activities (e.g., Campus Crusade for Christ, Newman House, etc.) as undergraduates. Even among those who attended Christian religious services regularly while growing up, fewer than one quarter (23%) were even “a little” involved in Christian campus activities (Figure 11).

**Figure 10. Christian childhood experiences (non-Jewish partners)**

- Christmas: 96%
- Easter: 84%
- Baptized: 74%
- Christian religious services monthly: 56%
- Christian camp or vacation Bible school: 32%
- Private Christian religious or parochial school: 22%

Note: Individual-level analysis.
Figure 11. Involvement in Christian activities on campus as undergraduate by childhood religious service attendance (non-Jewish partners)

No Christian religious services monthly during childhood: 93% not at all, 4% a little, 3% somewhat, very much.

Christian religious services monthly during childhood: 77% not at all, 13% a little, 0% somewhat, very much.

Note: Individual-level analysis. Those without a college degree and not currently enrolled in a degree-granting program at a college or university are grouped with the “not at all” involved. See Table D10 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.
Becoming a Couple

Key Findings

For most Jewish+non-Jewish couples, differences in religious background were not a fraught issue early in their relationship. Most Jewish parents were very accepting of their children’s non-Jewish partners, as were most non-Jewish parents of their children’s Jewish partners. In premarital discussions about what role religion would play in their future household, most Jewish+non-Jewish couples agreed on most issues and did not feel they made a lot of compromises. Virtually all Jewish+non-Jewish couples who wanted a Jewish officiant at their wedding were able to have one.

Parental Acceptance

Respondents were asked how accepting their parents initially were of their partner. More than two thirds of all respondents felt their parents were very accepting of their partners regardless of the parents’ or the partner’s religion. Jews who had a Jewish partner were slightly more likely to report that their parents were accepting of their partner compared to Jews with non-Jewish partners. Jews and non-Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples did not differ in their perceptions of their own parents’ acceptance of their partner (Figure 12).9

Premarital Discussions of Religion

Engaged and cohabiting couples were asked to what extent they discussed the role religion would play in their future households, and married couples were asked to what extent they discussed this question before they were married. Perhaps surprisingly, Jewish+Jewish couples were somewhat more likely to discuss this question than Jewish+non-Jewish couples (Figure 13). About one quarter of Jews and non-Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples indicated that they discussed what role religion would play in their future household “very much,” compared to about one third of Jewish+Jewish couples.
Figure 12. Respondents’ perceptions of their parents’ acceptance of their partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1%</th>
<th>21%</th>
<th>79%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jew</strong> in <strong>Jewish+Jewish</strong> (Jewish partner’s parents’ acceptance of other Jewish partner)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jew</strong> in <strong>Jewish+non-Jewish</strong> (Jewish partner’s parents’ acceptance of non-Jewish partner)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Jew</strong> in <strong>Jewish+non-Jewish</strong> (Non-Jewish partner’s parents’ acceptance of Jewish partner)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Individual-level analysis. Respondents were asked separately how accepting each of their parents were of their partner, with answer options of “not at all,” “a little,” “somewhat,” and “very much.” These two variables were combined to create a single measure of parental unit acceptance. A value of “not at all accepting” indicates that the respondent answered “not at all” with regard to both parents. A value of “very accepting” indicates that the respondent answered “very much” with regard to both parents. All other combinations of responses were considered “somewhat accepting.” Within Jewish+non-Jewish couples, Chi-square test not significant. See Table D11 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.

Figure 13. Extent of premarital discussions about role of religion in future household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>6%</th>
<th>21%</th>
<th>36%</th>
<th>37%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jew</strong> in <strong>Jewish+Jewish</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jew</strong> in <strong>Jewish+non-Jewish</strong></td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Jew</strong> in <strong>Jewish+non-Jewish</strong></td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Individual-level analysis. See Table D12 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.
To explore the extent to which differences in religious background were a source of conflict in premarital discussions, respondents were asked to characterize any premarital conversations about the role that religion would play in their future household.

Focusing on Jewish+non-Jewish couples, we found the majority of Jews and non-Jews reported that they agreed on most matters and did not leave many issues unresolved. Jews and non-Jews in these couples did not differ in their responses to these questions (Figure 14).

Most respondents in Jewish+non-Jewish couples also said that neither they nor their partner made many compromises in discussions about the role of religion in their future household (Figure 15). There were no differences in the views of Jewish and non-Jewish partners about whether either member of the couple made compromises.

Figure 14. Resolution of premarital discussions about role of religion in future household (Jewish+non-Jewish couples only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jewish partner view</th>
<th>Non-Jewish partner view</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agreed on most issues</strong></td>
<td><img src="replace_with_graph" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="replace_with_graph" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Left many issues unresolved</strong></td>
<td><img src="replace_with_graph" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="replace_with_graph" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Individual-level analysis. Chi-square tests not significant. See Table D13 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.
Finding a Wedding Officiant

Eighty-five percent of married Jewish+Jewish couples chose a sole Jewish officiant for their wedding, compared to 22% of married Jewish+non-Jewish couples (Figure 16). The majority of Jewish+non-Jewish couples chose a non-religious officiant, such as a justice of the peace or a friend.

One question examined was whether the Jewish+non-Jewish couples experienced “rejection” by Jewish clergy that possibly hindered their later Jewish engagement. Of all married Jewish+non-Jewish couples, the plurality did not consider having a rabbi or cantor officiate (Figure 17). Only 3% of couples sought out a rabbi or cantor but were unable find one who would agree to officiate. Note that 2% of Jewish+Jewish couples also reported being unable to find a rabbi or cantor who would agree to officiate.
Figure 16. Wedding officiant type (married couples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Jewish+Jewish</th>
<th>Jewish+non-Jewish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jewish only</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish + Other</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-religious only</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other only</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Couple-level analysis. See Table D15 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.

Figure 17. Consideration of Jewish officiant (married Jewish+non-Jewish couples)

- Never considered: 49%
- Had Jewish + Other: 6%
- Had Jewish only: 22%
- Considered, did not contact: 17%
- Considered, contacted, couldn't find one who would agree: 3%
- Considered, contacted, other issue: 3%

Note: Couple-level analysis. Report of the Jewish partner. Non-Jewish partners reported similar rates of being unable to find a rabbi or cantor to officiate (2%).
Jewish and Christian Wedding Rituals and Customs

Like the choice of a wedding officiant, wedding rituals can signal a couple’s Jewish or other religious affinity. Among married Jewish+Jewish couples, the majority of weddings included a chuppah (Jewish wedding canopy), a ketubah (Jewish marriage contract), sheva brachot (seven blessings), breaking a glass, and a hora dance (Figure 18). These rituals and customs were less common at weddings of Jewish+non-Jewish couples. At the same time, very few Jewish+non-Jewish couples included Christian rituals or customs in their weddings: Only 4%-8% included a unity candle, New Testament reading(s), or Christian music.

Figure 18. Jewish and Christian wedding rituals and customs (married couples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jewish wedding rituals</th>
<th>Jewish+Jewish</th>
<th>Jewish+non-Jewish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breaking a glass</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuppah</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ketubah</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hora dance</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheva brachot</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christian wedding rituals</th>
<th>Jewish+Jewish</th>
<th>Jewish+non-Jewish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recitation of vows</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity candle</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Testament reading(s)</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian music</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eucharist/Holy Communion</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Couple-level analysis. Frequencies indicate that both partners reported including the ritual. See Table D16 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.
Family Relationships

Key Findings

Most respondents in both Jewish+Jewish and Jewish+non-Jewish couples were highly satisfied with their relationships with their partners. Respondents were also satisfied with their relationships with their own and their partner’s parents. In Jewish+non-Jewish couples, Jews, as compared with non-Jewish partners, were more likely to seek advice from their own parents and much less likely to seek advice from their partner’s parents.

Relationship between Partners

More than 80% of all respondents were completely or almost completely satisfied with their relationship, and fewer than 1% were not at all or only a little satisfied. There were no differences between Jewish+Jewish and Jewish+non-Jewish couples in relationship satisfaction (Figure 19).

Relationship with Parents and Partner’s Parents

Relationship Satisfaction

Overall, respondents were very satisfied with their relationship with their own parents, and there were no differences in how different types of respondents or those in different types of relationships felt about their relationship with their own parents (not shown).

Respondents were also asked to evaluate their relationship with their partner’s parents. Among those in Jewish+non-Jewish relationships, there was no difference in how the Jewish and non-Jewish partner rated the quality of their relationship with their partner’s parents. The lowest levels of satisfaction with partner’s parents were reported by Jews in Jewish+Jewish relationships.
Figure 19. Relationship satisfaction with partner

Note: Individual-level analysis. Chi square test not significant. See Table D17 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.

Figure 20. Relationship satisfaction with partner’s parents

Notes: Individual-level analysis. Categories denote mean rating for both parents on a scale of 1 through 6. “Somewhat or less” corresponds to a mean score of satisfaction for partner’s mother and partner’s father of less than 3.5. “Pretty satisfied” corresponds to a mean score of 4-4.5, “Almost completely satisfied” corresponds to a mean score of 5-5.5 and “Completely satisfied” corresponds to a mean score of 6. See Table D18 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.
**Seeking Advice from Parents**

Respondents were asked how likely they are, when making decisions, to seek advice from their own parents, and from their partner’s parents. Jewish respondents, regardless of the relationship type they were in, were more likely to turn to their own parents for advice than non-Jewish respondents were to go their own parents. At the same time, Jewish respondents in Jewish+non-Jewish relationships were less likely to go to the (non-Jewish) parents of their partner for advice compared to either Jews in Jewish+Jewish relationships or non-Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish relationships (Figure 21).

Figure 21. Seeking advice from parents and partner’s parents

Seek advice from **OWN parents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jew in Jewish+Jewish</strong></td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish</strong></td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish</strong></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seek advice from **PARTNER’S parents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jew in Jewish+Jewish</strong></td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish</strong></td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish</strong></td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Individual-level analysis. See Table D19 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.
Jewish Identity and Behavior

Key Findings

Jews in Jewish+Jewish couples are more likely to identify as Jews, to value being Jewish, and to engage in Jewish behaviors than Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples. To some extent, this gap reflects differences in the childhood Jewish experiences of Jews in Jewish+Jewish couples as compared with Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples. Even after accounting for the childhood Jewish experiences of the Jewish partner, however, Jewish+non-Jewish couples still exhibit lower levels of Jewish engagement.

Current Religious Identity of Jews

Most Jews identify as Jewish, either by religion or aside from religion, regardless of whether they have a Jewish or non-Jewish partner (Figure 22). Those who had more Jewish childhood experiences are more likely to identify as Jewish by religion, and those in Jewish+Jewish relationships are more likely to identify as Jewish by religion, regardless of Jewish childhood experiences. Those with more Jewish childhood experiences are more likely to say that being Jewish is important to them. Individuals in Jewish+Jewish relationships are more likely than those in Jewish+non-Jewish relationships to say that being Jewish is important to them, regardless of Jewish childhood experiences (Figure 23).
Figure 22. Current Jewish and religious identity (Jewish partners)

Jew in Jewish+Jewish

- Few Jewish childhood experiences: 71% Jewish by religion, 8% No religion, Jewish aside from religion, 15% Jewish and other religion, 6% Other religion
- Moderate Jewish childhood experiences: 96% Jewish by religion, 3% No religion, Jewish aside from religion, 1% Jewish and other religion
- Many Jewish childhood experiences: 97% Jewish by religion, 2% No religion, Jewish aside from religion, 1% Jewish and other religion

Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish

- Few Jewish childhood experiences: 39% Jewish by religion, 16% No religion, partially Jewish aside from religion, 28% Jewish and other religion, 11% Other religion, 6% No religion, Jewish aside from religion
- Moderate Jewish childhood experiences: 75% Jewish by religion, 9% No religion, Jewish aside from religion, 9% Jewish and other religion, 2% Other religion
- Many Jewish childhood experiences: 83% Jewish by religion, 7% No religion, Jewish aside from religion, 2% Jewish and other religion, 2% Other religion

Note: Individual-level analysis. See Table D20 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.
Figure 23. Importance of being Jewish in life today (Jewish partners)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Few Jewish childhood experiences</th>
<th>Moderate Jewish childhood experiences</th>
<th>Many Jewish childhood experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jew in Jewish+Jewish</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Individual-level analysis. In Jewish+Jewish couples and within the few Jewish childhood experiences group, Jews in the initial sample had significantly higher rates of responding “very much,” 46% vs. 30% for their Jewish partners (p<.01). See Table D21 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.

Current Jewish Behaviors of Couples

The survey questionnaire for this study was extensive (see Technical Appendix D), asking about more than a dozen Jewish behaviors encompassing private and public, formal and informal, ritual, cultural, and social ways of engaging with Jewish life. Here, we report on six Jewish behaviors that reflected the overall patterns observed in the data:
For each behavior, we examine whether both members of the couple engage in the behavior (shown in solid blue) or neither member of the couple engages in the behavior (shown in sold grey). For Jewish+non-Jewish couples, we also examine whether only the Jewish partner does the behavior (vertical blue stripes), and for Jewish+Jewish couples, we also examine whether only one partner does the behavior (horizontal blue stripes). For each type of relationship we report the findings by the number of childhood Jewish experiences of the Jewish partner. The analysis reveals two main findings:

**Jews who had more childhood Jewish experiences were more likely to do each of the six Jewish behaviors.** This was true for Jews whose partners were Jewish and for Jews whose partners were not Jewish. For example, 14% of Jews with a non-Jewish partner and few childhood Jewish experiences had a special meal for Shabbat at least sometimes, compared to 40% of Jews with a non-Jewish partner and many childhood Jewish experiences (Figure 26).

Jews who had many childhood Jewish experiences and had non-Jewish partners were less likely to do the behavior than Jews who had few childhood Jewish experiences but had Jewish partners. The relationship between Jewish behaviors and having a non-Jewish partner cannot be completely explained by differences in the Jewish backgrounds of the Jews in these couples. For all six behaviors examined, Jews who had many childhood Jewish experiences and had non-Jewish partners were less likely to do the behavior than Jews who had few childhood but had Jewish partners. This may be the result of having a non-Jewish partner, but could also be due to other factors that predated the relationship or influenced the choice of partner. Jews who felt little connection to their Jewish identity may have sought out partners who were equally distanced from religious identity and life.
Figure 24. Did something to observe Passover (past 12 months)

**Jewish+Jewish couples**
- Few Jewish childhood experiences: 7% (80%) = 13%
- Moderate Jewish childhood experiences: 5% (86%) = 10%
- Many Jewish childhood experiences: 3% (91%) = 6%

**Jewish+non-Jewish couples**
- Few Jewish childhood experiences: 47% (31%) = 22%
- Moderate Jewish childhood experiences: 25% (62%) = 13%
- Many Jewish childhood experiences: 18% (64%) = 18%

100% 80% 60% 40% 20% 0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

- Neither partner
- Both partners
- Only one partner (Jewish+Jewish)
- Only Jewish partner (Jewish+non-Jewish)

Note: Couple-level analysis. Jewish+Jewish couples are classified according to the Jewish childhood experiences of the Jew in the initial sample. Among Jewish+Jewish couples, differences by Jewish childhood experiences are not significant. See Table D22 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.

Figure 25. Did something to observe Purim (past 12 months)

**Jewish+Jewish couples**
- Few Jewish childhood experiences: 48% (36%) = 16%
- Moderate Jewish childhood experiences: 40% (41%) = 20%
- Many Jewish childhood experiences: 28% (55%) = 17%

**Jewish+non-Jewish couples**
- Few Jewish childhood experiences: 92% (5%) = 4%
- Moderate Jewish childhood experiences: 79% (12%) = 9%
- Many Jewish childhood experiences: 76% (15%) = 9%

100% 80% 60% 40% 20% 0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

- Neither partner
- Both partners
- Only one partner (Jewish+Jewish)
- Only Jewish partner (Jewish+non-Jewish)

Note: Couple-level analysis. Jewish+Jewish couples are classified according to the Jewish childhood experiences of the Jew in the initial sample. See Table D23 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.
Figure 26. Attended a special meal on Shabbat at least “sometimes” (past 12 months)

**Jewish+Jewish couples**

- Few Jewish childhood experiences: 35% Jewish+Jewish couples, 80% Jewish+non-Jewish couples
- Moderate Jewish childhood experiences: 26% Jewish+Jewish couples, 66% Jewish+non-Jewish couples
- Many Jewish childhood experiences: 13% Jewish+Jewish couples, 50% Jewish+non-Jewish couples

**Jewish+non-Jewish couples**

- Few Jewish childhood experiences: 14% Jewish+Jewish couples, 6% Jewish+non-Jewish couples
- Moderate Jewish childhood experiences: 24% Jewish+Jewish couples, 11% Jewish+non-Jewish couples
- Many Jewish childhood experiences: 40% Jewish+Jewish couples, 10% Jewish+non-Jewish couples

Note: Couple-level analysis. Jewish+Jewish couples are classified according to the Jewish childhood experiences of the Jew in the initial sample. See Table D24 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.

Figure 27. Member of a synagogue or other Jewish congregation

**Jewish+Jewish couples**

- Few Jewish childhood experiences: 67% Jewish+Jewish couples, 92% Jewish+non-Jewish couples
- Moderate Jewish childhood experiences: 55% Jewish+Jewish couples, 84% Jewish+non-Jewish couples
- Many Jewish childhood experiences: 45% Jewish+Jewish couples, 79% Jewish+non-Jewish couples

**Jewish+non-Jewish couples**

- Few Jewish childhood experiences: 3% Jewish+Jewish couples, 3% Jewish+non-Jewish couples
- Moderate Jewish childhood experiences: 9% Jewish+Jewish couples, 9% Jewish+non-Jewish couples
- Many Jewish childhood experiences: 8% Jewish+Jewish couples, 13% Jewish+non-Jewish couples

Note: Couple-level analysis. Jewish+Jewish couples are classified according to the Jewish childhood experiences of the Jew in the initial sample. See Table D25 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.
Figure 28. Participated in activity or event sponsored by local Jewish community (past 12 months)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Few Jewish childhood experiences</th>
<th>Moderate Jewish childhood experiences</th>
<th>Many Jewish childhood experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jewish+Jewish couples</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish+non-Jewish couples</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Couple-level analysis. Jewish+Jewish couples are classified according to the Jewish childhood experiences of the Jew in the initial sample.

Figure 29. Consumed Jewish or Israeli culture* (past 12 months)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Few Jewish childhood experiences</th>
<th>Moderate Jewish childhood experiences</th>
<th>Many Jewish childhood experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jewish+Jewish couples</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish+non-Jewish couples</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Couple-level analysis. Jewish+Jewish couples are classified according to the Jewish childhood experiences of the Jew in the initial sample.

* (e.g., music, literature, film, etc.)
**Feeling Welcome in the Jewish Community**

Another question regarding potential barriers to participation in Jewish life is whether Jewish+non-Jewish couples feel welcome in the Jewish community. Survey respondents were asked an open-ended question about whether they and their partners (and children, if applicable) feel that they are welcome in the Jewish community. Responses to this question were coded into six categories as described in Table 4.

Among Jewish+non-Jewish couples, 33% of Jews and 42% of non-Jews feel completely welcome in Jewish settings without qualification (Figure 30). An additional 14% of Jews and 11% of non-Jews feel completely welcome in liberal Jewish settings, and 17% of Jews and 12% of non-Jews have minimal exposure to or interest in the Jewish community, but think they would be welcome. The proportion of Jews with non-Jewish partners who feel completely unwelcome is 6%, and the proportion of non-Jews who feel completely unwelcome is 4%. Perhaps surprisingly, only 62% of Jewish+Jewish couples feel completely welcome in Jewish settings.

Looking at the responses of those in Jewish+Jewish relationships and those in Jewish+non-Jewish relationships, it is clear that the two types of couples differ in their reasons for not feeling completely welcome. Respondents in Jewish+Jewish couples emphasized having a hard time finding the right fit for their style of engagement. Respondents in Jewish+non-Jewish couples emphasized their feelings of being “other” and not fitting in (for select quotes, see Appendix B).

### Table 4. Feeling welcome in the Jewish community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Completely welcome</strong></td>
<td>Feels completely welcome in the Jewish community, or in own Jewish community, or among Jewish friends/family. No qualifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Welcome in religiously liberal Jewish settings</strong></td>
<td>Feels welcome in Jewish settings that welcome non-observant Jews and/or are welcoming of intermarried families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Welcome, uninterested</strong></td>
<td>Has minimal exposure to and/or interest in the Jewish community, but feels welcome or feels that he or she would be welcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Somewhat welcome</strong></td>
<td>Feels neither completely welcome nor completely unwelcome in the Jewish community. Includes descriptors like “mostly,” “fairly,” “reasonably,” “pretty” and “somewhat.” Includes those who claim to feel welcome but also mention a barrier. Also includes feeling welcome in some Jewish communities, but not in others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unwelcome</strong></td>
<td>Feels completely unwelcome in the Jewish community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Irrelevant</strong></td>
<td>Has minimal exposure to and/or interest in the Jewish community, and does not know or mention whether he or she would be welcome.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 30. Feeling welcome in the Jewish community

- **Jew**
  - in **Jewish+Jewish**
    - Unwelcome: 1%
    - Somewhat welcome: 19%
    - Irrelevant: 19%
    - Welcome, also uninterested: 7%
    - Completely welcome among liberal: 62%

- **Jew**
  - in **Jewish+non-Jewish**
    - Unwelcome: 6%
    - Somewhat welcome: 20%
    - Irrelevant: 8%
    - Welcome, also uninterested: 17%
    - Completely welcome among liberal: 14%
    - Completely welcome: 33%

- **Non-Jew**
  - in **Jewish+non-Jewish**
    - Unwelcome: 4%
    - Somewhat welcome: 19%
    - Irrelevant: 10%
    - Welcome, also uninterested: 12%
    - Completely welcome among liberal: 11%
    - Completely welcome: 42%

Note: Individual-level analysis. See Table D28 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.
Christian Identity and Behavior

Key Findings

The majority of non-Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples consider themselves atheist, agnostic, or of no religion. The majority of Jewish+non-Jewish couples celebrate Christmas, but other Christian behaviors—observing Easter and attending Christian religious services regularly—are relatively uncommon in this population. Neither the religious identity of the non-Jewish partner nor the couple’s Christian behaviors are related to the Jewish childhood experiences of the Jewish partner.

Current Religious Identity of non-Jews

The current religious identity of non-Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples is shown in Table 5. The Jewish childhood experiences of the Jewish partner are not significantly related to the current religious identity of the non-Jewish partner—in other words, those with many Jewish childhood experiences do not gravitate disproportionately to partners who currently identify as atheist, agnostic or nothing, rather than Christian or another religion. The majority (56%) of non-Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish relationships currently do not identify with a religion. Only 23% of those who currently identify as having no religion were raised with no religion; the majority (72%) were raised Christian. A small number of non-Jews are in the process of converting to Judaism (2%) or consider themselves “informally” Jewish or partially Jewish but are not pursuing formal conversion (4%).

Table 5. Current religious identity (non-Jewish partners)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Jewish partners</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No religion</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other religion</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informally Jewish or partially Jewish</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In process of converting to Judaism</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Individual-level analysis.
Current Christian Behaviors of Couples

Because the vast majority of non-Jews in this study were raised Christian, we focused our analysis on the following three non-Jewish religious behaviors:

- Observance of Christmas
- Observance of Easter
- Regular attendance at Christian religious services

For each behavior, we examined whether both members of the couple engage in the behavior (shown in solid green) or neither member of the couple do the behavior (shown in solid grey). We also examined whether only the non-Jewish partner does the behavior (vertical green stripes). Participation in each of the three behaviors examined was unrelated to the Jewish childhood experiences of the Jewish partner. We therefore report rates of observance for each behavior for all Jewish+non-Jewish couples as a group.

The majority of Jewish+non-Jewish couples celebrate Christmas, with both partners participating. In contrast to Christmas, only a minority of Jewish+non-Jewish couples observe Easter, and an even smaller portion attend Christian religious services regularly (Figure 31).

Among Jews in Jewish+Jewish couples, overall 24% reported that at least one partner celebrated Christmas. Of the Jewish+Jewish couples who celebrate Christmas, three quarters have at least one partner with a non-Jewish parent. Among Jewish+Jewish couples, overall 14% reported that at least one partner celebrated Easter, and none reported attending Christian religious services regularly. As with Christmas, of the Jewish+Jewish couples who celebrate Easter, 70% have at least one member with a non-Jewish parent.

Figure 31. Christian observance in past 12 months (Jewish+non-Jewish couples only)

Note: Couple-level analysis. Did anything to celebrate Christmas and Easter in the past 12 months. Attended Christian religious services monthly or more frequently in past 12 months.
In Focus: Meaning of Religious Celebrations to Jewish+non-Jewish Couples

What does the observance of major religious holidays mean for Jewish+non-Jewish couples? Do they hold a religious meaning or are they perceived as opportunities to connect with family and family traditions? Do Jewish holidays have a different meaning than Christian holidays? Do Jewish and non-Jewish partners ascribe the same meaning to the holidays of different religious traditions? To answer these questions we examined how Jewish+non-Jewish couples view two major holidays: Christmas and Passover.

The majority of Jewish and non-Jewish partners viewed Christmas very much as a time to participate in family traditions. Most Jewish and non-Jewish partners described Christmas as more of a family celebration than a religious one. However, non-Jewish partners were more likely than their Jewish partners to ascribe religious meaning to Christmas (Figure 32). Viewing Christmas as a predominantly non-religious holiday is in line with general trends in the United States: Half of millennials who celebrate Christmas describe it as more of a cultural holiday than a religious holiday (Pew Research Center, 2017).

Similar to their views on Christmas, both Jewish and non-Jewish partners viewed Passover more as a time to participate in family traditions than as a religious holiday (Figure 33). Non-Jewish partners tended to ascribe religious meaning to Passover at rates similar to their perceptions of Christmas: 51% said that to them personally, Passover was at least “a little” a religious celebration compared to 49% who said the same about Christmas. Jewish partners were far more likely to ascribe religious meaning to Passover than their non-Jewish partners were to Christmas: 65% of Jewish partners said that to them personally Passover was at least a little a religious celebration compared to 49% of non-Jewish partners that said the same about Christmas.
Figure 32. Meaning of Christmas observance (Jewish+non-Jewish couples only)

**Christmas is a religious celebration**

- **Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish**
  - 54%: Not at all
  - 9%: A little
  - 5%: Somewhat
  - 4%: Very much
  - 27%: Didn't observe

- **Non-Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish**
  - 31%: Not at all
  - 18%: A little
  - 17%: Somewhat
  - 14%: Very much
  - 20%: Didn't observe

**Christmas is a time to participate in family traditions**

- **Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish**
  - 1%: Not at all
  - 14%: A little
  - 55%: Somewhat
  - 2%: Very much
  - 27%: Didn't observe

- **Non-Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish**
  - 9%: Not at all
  - 68%: A little
  - 2%: Somewhat
  - 20%: Very much
  - 20%: Didn't observe

Note: Individual-level analysis. See Table D29 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.

Figure 33. Meaning of Passover observance (Jewish+non-Jewish couples only)

**Passover is a religious celebration**

- **Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish**
  - 7%: Not at all
  - 20%: A little
  - 24%: Somewhat
  - 21%: Very much
  - 29%: Didn't observe

- **Non-Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish**
  - 10%: Not at all
  - 4%: A little
  - 17%: Somewhat
  - 20%: Very much
  - 39%: Didn't observe

**Passover is a time to participate in family traditions**

- **Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish**
  - 1%: Not at all
  - 11%: A little
  - 57%: Somewhat
  - 2%: Very much
  - 29%: Didn't observe

- **Non-Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish**
  - 11%: Not at all
  - 46%: A little
  - 11%: Somewhat
  - 3%: Very much
  - 39%: Didn't observe

Note: Individual-level analysis. See Table D30 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.
Raising Children

Key Findings

Children of Jewish+Jewish couples are more likely than children of Jewish+non-Jewish couples to have a Jewish naming ceremony or brit milah (Jewish circumcision and naming ceremony); to attend organized Jewish programs or activities; to attend Jewish daycare, nursery school, or preschool; and to be identified by their parents as Jewish. To some extent, these gaps reflect differences in the Jewish backgrounds of the Jewish partners in these couples. However, Jews who have many childhood Jewish experiences and are in Jewish+non-Jewish relationships are less likely to give their children Jewish experiences than Jews who have few childhood Jewish experiences but are in Jewish+Jewish relationships.

Entering Parenthood

Jewish+Jewish couples are more likely to have children living in their households than Jewish+non-Jewish couples (Table 6).

This difference persists even controlling for the fact that Jewish+Jewish couples are more likely to be married (rather than engaged or cohabiting) and that Jews in Jewish+Jewish couples are an average of 1.6 years older than Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples. The average age of the oldest child of a Jewish+Jewish couple is 5.0 years, and the average age of the oldest child of a Jewish+non-Jewish couple is 4.2 years. Fifty-eight percent of Jewish+Jewish couples and 68% of Jewish+non-Jewish couples did not yet have a child in kindergarten in the 2016-17 school year. Although it is not yet possible to examine choices related to the Jewish education of these children, we can examine the Jewish or other religious rituals that accompanied their births, the children’s participation in Jewish activities, and what parents say about how their children are being raised.

Table 6. Number of children in household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jewish+Jewish couples</th>
<th>Jewish+non-Jewish couples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expecting first child</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Couple-level analysis. See Table D31 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.
**Welcoming Rituals**

Among Jewish+Jewish and Jewish+non-Jewish couples, having a Jewish naming ceremony for an oldest daughter is more common when the Jewish parent had more Jewish childhood experiences (Figure 34). Regardless of the Jewish childhood experiences of the parents, Jewish+Jewish couples were far more likely than Jewish+non-Jewish couples to have Jewish naming ceremonies for their oldest daughters.

Circumcision of an oldest son was pervasive among both Jewish+Jewish and Jewish+non-Jewish couples (Figure 35). Jewish+Jewish couples were far more likely than Jewish+non-Jewish couples to have a *brit milah* (Jewish circumcision and naming ceremony) for their oldest sons. *Brit milah* was also more common among couples where the Jewish parent had more Jewish childhood experiences.

Fewer than 20% of Jewish+non-Jewish couples had a baptism or christening for their oldest child. There was no relationship between rates of baptism or christening and the Jewish childhood experiences of the Jewish partner. However, rates of baptism or christening were positively related to the Christian childhood experiences of the non-Jewish partner. For example, 21% of Jewish+non-Jewish couples where the non-Jewish partner was baptized also baptized their oldest child, compared to almost no Jewish+non-Jewish couples (N=1) where the non-Jewish partner was not baptized.

---

**Figure 34. Oldest daughter had a Jewish naming ceremony**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jewish+Jewish couples</th>
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<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Few Jewish childhood experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Jewish childhood experiences</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Many Jewish childhood experiences</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish+non-Jewish couples</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few Jewish childhood experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Jewish childhood experiences</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many Jewish childhood experiences</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Couple-level analysis. See Table D32 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.
Jewish+Jewish couples were far more likely than Jewish+non-Jewish couples to report that their child, not yet in kindergarten, attended an organized Jewish program or activity for young children (Figure 36) or a Jewish daycare, nursery school, or preschool (Figure 37). Jewish+non-Jewish couples where the Jewish parent had many Jewish childhood experiences were only somewhat more likely to give their children these types of Jewish early childhood experiences as compared with couples where the Jewish partner had few childhood experiences. Jewish+Jewish couples, however, were substantially more likely to give their children early childhood Jewish experiences than Jewish+non-Jewish couples, regardless of the Jewish partner’s own level of childhood Jewish experiences. For example, only 6% of Jews who had many childhood Jewish experiences and a non-Jewish partner chose Jewish daycare, nursery school, or preschool for their child, compared to one third of Jews who had few childhood Jewish experiences but had a Jewish partner.

**Figure 35. Oldest son had a brit milah or medical circumcision**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Few Jewish childhood experiences</th>
<th>Moderate Jewish childhood experiences</th>
<th>Many Jewish childhood experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jewish+Jewish couples</strong></td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jewish+non-Jewish couples</strong></td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Couple-level analysis. See Table D33 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.
Figure 36. Oldest child not yet in kindergarten attended organized Jewish program or activity for young children (past 12 months)

Jewish+Jewish couples

- Few Jewish childhood experiences: 43% Never, 24% Once or twice, 33% Three times or more
- Moderate Jewish childhood experiences: 31% Never, 21% Once or twice, 48% Three times or more
- Many Jewish childhood experiences: 21% Never, 17% Once or twice, 62% Three times or more

Jewish+non-Jewish couples

- Few Jewish childhood experiences: 81% Never, 11% Once or twice, 9% Three times or more
- Moderate Jewish childhood experiences: 65% Never, 15% Once or twice, 20% Three times or more
- Many Jewish childhood experiences: 63% Never, 16% Once or twice, 21% Three times or more

Note: Couple-level analysis. Differences by childhood Jewish experiences among Jewish+non-Jewish couples not significant. See Table D34 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.

Figure 37. Oldest child not yet in kindergarten attended Jewish daycare, nursery school, or preschool (2016-17 school year)

Jewish+Jewish couples

- Few Jewish childhood experiences: 35% Non-Jewish preschool, 33% Jewish preschool, 31% Not in preschool
- Moderate Jewish childhood experiences: 42% Non-Jewish preschool, 33% Jewish preschool, 24% Not in preschool
- Many Jewish childhood experiences: 28% Non-Jewish preschool, 48% Jewish preschool, 24% Not in preschool

Jewish+non-Jewish couples

- Few Jewish childhood experiences: 68% Non-Jewish preschool, 4% Jewish preschool, 28% Not in preschool
- Moderate Jewish childhood experiences: 60% Non-Jewish preschool, 8% Jewish preschool, 32% Not in preschool
- Many Jewish childhood experiences: 55% Non-Jewish preschool, 6% Jewish preschool, 39% Not in preschool

Note: Couple-level analysis. Differences by childhood Jewish experiences among Jewish+non-Jewish couples not significant. See Table D35 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.
Religious Identity of Children

Parents were asked in what religion or religions their children were being raised. They were also asked if their children were being raised Jewish or partially Jewish “aside from religion.” Twenty-eight percent of Jewish+non-Jewish couples agreed that their children were being raised Jewish by religion as compared with 89% of Jewish+Jewish couples (Table 7). Diverging answers between partners over this question were more common in Jewish+non-Jewish couples (36% gave different answers) as compared with Jewish+Jewish couples, where only a small portion gave different answers (7%).

Among the Jewish+non-Jewish couples who gave different answers to the questions about how their oldest child was being raised, the Jewish partner was more likely to claim the child was being raised Jewish, and the non-Jewish partner more likely to claim the child was being raised with no religious identity (see Appendix C). The question is to what extent do diverging responses among Jewish+non-Jewish couples over how their oldest child is being raised reflect substantive disagreement over the child’s identity, different understandings of the question text, or a combination of both factors. In order to shed more light on these questions, we examined what partners who gave divergent answers about how their oldest child was being raised said when asked to describe the factors that were important to them in deciding their child’s religion. In many cases, there was no evidence of substantive disagreement over the child’s identity—many parents simply chose different labels for the same approach to raising children (Table 8).

Table 7. Jewish and religious identity of oldest child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Both parents agree child is being raised:</th>
<th>Jewish+Jewish couples</th>
<th>Jewish+non-Jewish couples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jewish by religion</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion, Jewish aside from religion</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion, partially Jewish aside from religion</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish and another religion</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another religion</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents gave divergent answers about religion in which child is being raised</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Couple-level analysis. See Table D36 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.
Table 8. Disagreements over Jewish and religious identity of oldest child (Jewish+non-Jewish couples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jewish partner says...</th>
<th>Non-Jewish partner says...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Atheist or agnostic, and partially Jewish aside from religion</strong></td>
<td><strong>Atheist or agnostic, and not Jewish aside from religion</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Since my husband and I are atheist, we do not plan on discussing the idea of God with her, aside from any questions she may have. We will continue to celebrate Jewish and Christian holidays with our respective families, but from a completely secular manner.”</td>
<td>“My wife and I are both atheist, so it makes sense to raise her the same.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Jewish and Muslim</strong></th>
<th><strong>Nothing in particular, and partially Jewish aside from religion</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“We wanted her to inherit both of our religions. We see Islam and Judaism as being similar in their values, so it feels easy to raise her in both religions. We will celebrate holidays from both Judaism and Islam. I am very comfortable with this.”</td>
<td>“We wanted her to understand her roots, the common origins of the two religions, and see the similarities. We also were keen on participating in some of the rituals and celebrations from both religions, particularly those which involve family and community.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Jewish</strong></th>
<th><strong>Jewish and Christian</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“She will be raised ‘mostly Jewish’ in my husband’s words. As I am the parent more focused on preparing the day-to-day activities inside our home, I will be making sure that we celebrate holidays and experience the cultural traditions that I grew up with. Religion is not that important to my husband. So we will celebrate Christmas with his family, and get together for Eastern brunch, but neither of those events will be particular religious. What is most important to us is that she carries on the values that are important to us.”</td>
<td>“It was most important to me that she be educated in both religions. My wife and I agreed that she’ll be mostly raised following Jewish traditions at home, recognizing some Christian traditions. When she’s older we’d like her feedback.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Names have been removed and replaced with pronouns or “my wife” or “my husband.”
In Focus: The Importance of the Jewish Spouse’s Gender in Jewish+non-Jewish Couples

Past work (Fishman, 2004; Hartman, 2015; Sheskin & Hartman, 2015; cf. Phillips, 2017) has found that, among heterosexual Jewish+non-Jewish couples, a couple is more likely to engage in Jewish behaviors and raise Jewish children if the Jewish partner is female. In 58% of the heterosexual Jewish+non-Jewish couples in this study, the Jewish partner was female and the non-Jewish partner was male. This section explores the extent to which these two types of Jewish couples differ in the Jewish outcomes of their families.

Partners’ Religious Background

In this study’s sample, Jewish men and Jewish women who had a non-Jewish partner did not differ with respect to their Jewish background: they had the same level of Jewish experiences in childhood and college and they were equally likely to have two Jewish parents. The non-Jewish partners of Jewish men and those of Jewish women were also equally likely to have been raised in a religious tradition and had the same levels of Christian childhood experience. This suggests that any differences observed between Jewish+non-Jewish couples in which the Jewish partner is male and Jewish+non-Jewish couples in which the Jewish partner is female are not due to pre-partnership differences in Jewish background of the Jewish spouse or the religious background of the non-Jewish spouse.

Observing Jewish and Christian Traditions

The gender of the Jewish partner in Jewish+non-Jewish couples was not associated with any change in the likelihood of both members of the couple celebrating Passover, Purim, or Shabbat, participating in Jewish or Israeli activities, or consuming Jewish or Israeli culture. Couples were, however, slightly more likely to be members of a synagogue when the Jewish partner was female (19%) compared to when the Jewish partner was male (12%). The gender of the Jewish partner was not associated with any change in the likelihood of celebrating Christmas, celebrating Easter, or attending non-Jewish religious services.
Religious Upbringing of Children

When the Jewish partner in Jewish+non-Jewish couples was female, there was a greater likelihood that the couple would make Jewish choices regarding their children in a number of areas. The couple was also more likely to agree that they are raising their child exclusively Jewish by religion, and more likely to have their oldest child attend an organized Jewish program or activity for young children (Figure 38).

The couple was also more likely to have had a brit milah for their oldest male child, as opposed to a medical circumcision or no circumcision at all (40% when the Jewish partner was female, versus 16% when the Jewish partner was male). Similarly, they were less likely to have baptized their oldest child (11% when the Jewish partner was female, versus 23% when the Jewish partner was male).

Figure 38. Religion of oldest child and attending Jewish program or activity for young children by gender of Jewish partner (heterosexual Jewish+non-Jewish couples)

Both partners agree that child is being raised Jewish by religion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jewish partner is male</th>
<th>Jewish partner is female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Child attends organized Jewish program or activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jewish partner is male</th>
<th>Jewish partner is female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Couple-level analysis. Heterosexual couples only. See Table D37 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.
Engaging Intermarried Couples in Jewish Life

Discussion

The goal of this study was to understand how young couples—those in which both partners are Jewish, and those where one partner is Jewish and the other is not—engage with Jewish life. We wanted to understand the religious background of each partner, their experiences of negotiating family dynamics and decisions about religion during their relationship, the ways in which being Jewish fits into their identity, and their current involvement in Jewish life. We also sought to understand couples’ experiences in the Jewish community, their current family connections, and how these factors influence their engagement with Jewish life. In conducting this study, we aimed to move beyond debates over the implications of the proportion of intermarried couples on the trajectory of Jewish demography in the United States. Rather, our intent was to use this information to draw implications about programs and policy initiatives that have potential to promote meaningful Jewish involvement by young couples, in particular, those who are intermarried.

The results of this study mirror previous findings (Fishman & Cohen, 2017; Phillips, 2017) about the differences in levels of engagement in Jewish life between couples in which both members are Jewish and those in which one partner is Jewish and the other is not. This study finds that Jewish+non-Jewish couples are less involved in Jewish life compared to Jewish+Jewish couples—this is the case even for those Jewish+non-Jewish couples where the Jewish partner had high levels of Jewish childhood education and engagement. It should be noted that because Jews who were raised Orthodox were not recruited into this study, these differences cannot be explained by the presence of a high number of Orthodox Jews among Jewish+Jewish couples. Specifically, we find that Jews with partners from other religious backgrounds are less likely to identify their religion as Jewish or say that being Jewish is important to them. They are less likely to observe Passover or Purim, have a special meal on Shabbat, join a synagogue, participate in Jewish activities, or consume Jewish or Israeli culture. The children of Jewish+non-Jewish couples are also less likely to be raised Jewish, to have a Jewish naming ceremony or brit milah, to attend Jewish programs for young children, or to attend Jewish preschool. In addition, children of Jewish+non-Jewish couples are substantially more likely to be raised exclusively Jewish and to have Jewish experiences when their mothers are Jewish than when their fathers are Jewish.

What contributes to the lower engagement of Jewish+non-Jewish couples in Jewish life, particularly for Jewish men with non-Jewish partners? The data suggest that many factors
that were long thought to be serious barriers to Jewish engagement by Jewish+non-Jewish couples are no longer barriers. Yet, other challenges remain.

**Barriers to Engagement with Jewish Life Have Been Largely Eliminated**

The findings suggest that efforts to make intermarried families feel welcome in the Jewish community appear to have been successful and religion and Judaism are not a fraught issue for these couples. Specifically:

- The majority of Jewish+non-Jewish couples feel welcome in the Jewish community. Both partners in Jewish+non-Jewish couples reported that from the beginning of their relationships they felt accepted by both sets of parents. Virtually all Jewish+non-Jewish couples who wanted a Jewish officiant at their wedding were able to find one, and there is no evidence that “rejection” by Jewish clergy is a deterrent to their current Jewish engagement. Indeed, the majority of Jewish+non-Jewish couples described feeling welcome in the Jewish community.

- Religion and Jewishness are not contentious issues for Jewish+non-Jewish couples. The majority of these couples agreed on the role religion would play in their household, and few felt that they or their partner made substantial compromises on religious matters. These couples have high levels of marital satisfaction, not different from Jewish+Jewish couples. Both partners in Jewish+non-Jewish couples also described good relationships with their parents and their partner’s parents, suggesting that their relationships have not caused tension with or alienated them from their extended families.

**Continued Challenges**

Several factors that affect the gap in Jewish engagement between Jewish+Jewish and Jewish+non-Jewish couples remain:

- As a group, Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples, compared with Jews in relationships with other Jews, had less exposure to Jewish experiences during their developmental years. Childhood and post-high school Jewish experiences have a significant, positive impact on later Jewish engagement. Some of the Jewish engagement “gap” between Jewish+Jewish and Jewish+non-Jewish couples can be attributed to differences in the Jewish childhood experiences of the Jewish partners, including Jewish rituals, formal Jewish education, Jewish camp, and Jewish youth group. The gap can also be explained by differences in Jewish experiences after high school. The Jews who ultimately chose non-Jewish partners were less likely to have had Jewish experiences during the college years, e.g., engagement with campus Jewish groups and peer trips to Israel.

- Most Jewish+non-Jewish couples have minimal interest in religion in general. Although Jewish+non-Jewish couples are less involved in Jewish life, they are also not actively engaged in Christian behaviors. Only one in ten reported that at least one member of the couple regularly attends Christian religious services, and fewer than one in five had their oldest child baptized.

These findings suggest that lack of interest in religion among a substantial portion of this group may contribute to their low levels of Jewish involvement.
Partnering with a non-Jew may simultaneously be a cause and an effect of reduced engagement in Jewish life. The present study also shows that the differences in Jewish engagement between Jewish+Jewish and Jewish+non-Jewish couples persist even after accounting for the childhood and college Jewish experiences of the Jewish partners. It may be that having a non-Jewish partner depresses Jewish attitudes and behaviors. Across a variety of measures, Jews who have many childhood Jewish experiences and non-Jewish partners have lower levels of Jewish engagement than Jews who have few childhood Jewish experiences but have Jewish partners. However, it is also possible that the lower levels of engagement among Jewish+non-Jewish couples are influenced by pre-existing disparities in interest in Jewish matters among those who eventually choose to marry a non-Jewish partner, or by other aspects of their contemporary experience for which we could not account. Marrying a non-Jew is simultaneously a cause and an effect of reduced engagement in Jewish life.

**Policy Recommendations**

Our research indicates that Jewish communal institutions have been largely successful in making intermarried families feel welcome. However, the findings of the present study raise concerns about the patterns of Jewish engagement of intermarried couples and their children. We believe that additional changes in the approach toward intermarriage can alter the Jewish trajectories of many of these families. Five opportunities to alter the patterns observed here and promote the engagement of intermarried families with Jewish life and community follow. Each is informed by the findings of this study.

**Build the Jewish “social capital” of children and teens.**

This study shows that adult engagement with Jewish life is strongly predicted by Jewish experiences earlier in life. There is a significant, positive association between childhood and post-high school Jewish education and experiences and adult Jewish engagement—regardless of whether or not the partner is Jewish. Research has consistently demonstrated that Jewish education—even occurring as late as young adulthood—can have a significant impact on Jewish identity and engagement (Goldstein & Fishman, 1993; Sasson et al., 2015). The next generation, including those raised in intermarried households, should have the opportunity to develop a foundation of Jewish “social capital” upon which they can build the Jewish lives of their future families, regardless of whether or not they marry another Jew. Educational programs—both formal and informal—should focus on the value they offer participants and provide content that addresses the diversity of parents’ backgrounds. Prior knowledge and existing home practices should not be assumed.

**Move beyond “welcoming” to proactive invitations.**

Our findings suggest that welcoming those who approach the Jewish community may be insufficient to inspire deep Jewish engagement by intermarried couples. The focus of Jewish institutions should start but not end with welcoming. Interventions designed to attract intermarried couples and families, allowing them to “try out” engagement, are needed. Young couples, many of whom do not have an existing connection to a Jewish community, may need to be actively invited to participate. choices regarding their children’s upbringing.
Create non-religious entry points.
The results of this study make clear that most intermarried couples feel distant from religion and religious ritual. Programs that focus on observance and worship are unlikely to be effective portals into Jewish engagement. Programmatic options that are secular in focus, including those related to Jewish cultural heritage and social justice, may be more attractive to young couples. Programs that focus on the particular life challenges and decisions young couples face, including those related to career, choosing where to live, and parenting, may also appeal to couples “where they are.” Programs for couples and families need not take place only in typical Jewish settings, but also in playgrounds, museums, and other cultural and recreational venues. Providing Jewish+non-Jewish couples with multiple, nontraditional entry points to Jewish exploration may help them to identify facets of Jewish engagement that they find meaningful and interesting.

When considering access points that may facilitate curiosity about Jewish life, Birthright Israel may be instructive. Birthright was designed to attract young Jewish adults who had little prior interest in Israel or Jewish life in general. By making the trip free and of relatively short duration, framing it as a “fun vacation,” and emphasizing an ecumenical understanding of Jewish identity, Birthright lowered the barrier to entry for young Jews who did not think they were “interested” in Israel. Other examples of such efforts include Honeymoon Israel and PJ Library.

Invest in multigenerational programs and experiences.
The Jewish+non-Jewish couples we surveyed, like their peers in Jewish+Jewish couples, have very good relationships with their parents and often consult them when making important decisions. Research has demonstrated that having close ties with Jewish grandparents had a direct effect on a variety of Jewish outcomes (Sasson et al., 2015). These ongoing and positive lines of connection and communication provide a relatively unexplored avenue for making young Jewish+non-Jewish couples aware of new opportunities. The Jewish community can play a critical role by developing programs that promote intergenerational activities. From helping parents and grandparents create meaningful Shabbat and holiday experiences, to programs under Jewish sponsorship that allow grandparents, parents and their children to be part of Jewish groups, the options are limitless.

Explore strategies to foster Jewish choices of Jewish+non-Jewish couples in which the Jewish partner is male.
When the Jewish partner in Jewish+non-Jewish couples is male, there is a diminished likelihood that the couple will make Jewish choices regarding their children’s upbringing. Encouraging Jewish fathers in these couples to be active advocates for Jewish choices should be a focus of future programming and research.
Conclusion

The present study was designed to understand the potential for engaging the next generation of young couples, both those with two Jewish partners and those with one Jewish and one non-Jewish partner. Because of the size of our sample and its focus on young couples, as well as the inclusion of the perspective of both members of the couple, this research provides a window into the lives of Jewish+non-Jewish couples that has not been previously available. Perhaps the most surprising finding is that Jewish+non-Jewish couples feel welcome in the Jewish community and that, for them as well as for their families, religion is not a contentious issue. At the same time, compared to couples in which both members are Jewish, Jewish+non-Jewish couples are less engaged in Jewish life, suggesting that Judaism is not a priority for these individuals. In an environment where intermarried families are welcome, the challenge going forward is to create access points that spark curiosity and enthusiasm about Jewish engagement. The present study identifies several strategies for doing so.
Notes

1 A 52% rate of intermarriage was reported initially (Goldstein, 1992; Kosmin et al., 1991), but it was later revised downward following criticism from Cohen (1994).

2 In describing the findings from this study we refrain from referring to the couples as “inmarried” or “intermarried” because although they were all in committed relationships not all of them were married.

3 Several qualitative studies have included non-Jewish partners (see, Fishman, 2001, 2004; Kim and Leavitt, 2016; McGinity, 2014; Thompson, 2013).

4 Respondents who indicated in previous surveys that they were raised Orthodox were not recruited to the study. A small number (N=6) of respondents in this study, however, indicated that they were raised Orthodox, contradicting their previous answers. In addition, in 41 of the Jewish+Jewish couples the respondent’s partner was raised Orthodox.

5 All differences reported in the figures and tables of this report are statistically significant at the 95% level, unless otherwise noted. Complete information about significance tests can be found in Technical Appendix D.

6 The components of this index included the following three variables. 1: How many of the following six Jewish ritual practices the respondent participated in during childhood: Passover seder, lighting Hanukkah candles, Shabbat meals, keeping kosher at home, celebrating bar/bat mitzvah, attendance at Jewish religious services. 2: The most intense form of Jewish education attained by the respondent: Jewish day school, supplementary school, or nothing. 3: Whether the respondent had any informal Jewish education (Jewish camp, Jewish youth groups, or youth Israel experience). These three items were standardized via Z-scores and added together. This continuous measure was then broken up into three categories based on the distribution of responses.

7 Individual-level analysis. See Table D9 in Technical Appendix D for Chi-square values and significance levels.

8 However, non-Christian partners were still included in these analyses.

9 It should be noted that the parents of Jewish respondents may not both be Jewish themselves. Seventy-nine percent of Jews in Jewish+Jewish couples and 53% of Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples had two Jewish parents. In contrast, 97% of non-Jewish partners had two non-Jewish parents.
In most cases, both members of the couple were in agreement about the officiant of their wedding, and when disagreements existed they could usually be explained and resolved using open-ended responses. However, for the 29 couples where disagreements could not be resolved, one partner was randomly chosen as the “informant” and this partner’s responses were used.

Cases where only the non-Jew in a Jewish+non-Jewish couple does the Jewish behavior are shown in grey—that is, with no one doing the behavior.

These findings also hold when considering Jewish college experiences: Jews who had no involvement in college experiences and had a Jewish partner were more likely to do any one of the six behaviors reported than Jews who were very much involved in Jewish college activities and had a non-Jewish partner.

Cases where only the Jew in a Jewish+non-Jewish couple does the Christian behavior are shown in grey—that is, with no one doing the behavior.

Finding based on logistic regression model on having any children controlling for relationship type (Jewish+Jewish vs Jewish+Other), marital status and age of both partners. Results available upon request.

Six percent (N=33) of couples who were same-sex were excluded from this analysis.

Multivariate models were also run on all of the outcomes discussed in this section, controlling for the Jewish and Christian background of each partner, as well as the Jewish parentage and Jewish college experiences of the Jewish partner. Same-sex couples were also included in these models and designated with a separate binary variable. The results of these models (available upon request) confirm the bivariate results reported in this section.
References


Beyond Welcoming


Appendix A:  
Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Age

The mean age of Jews in Jewish+Jewish couples was just over 35. Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples were slightly younger with a mean age just under 34. The mean age of non-Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish couples was just under 35 (Table A1).

Table A1. Age of couple members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean Age</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jew in Jewish+Jewish couple</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>Min – 24, Max - 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Jews in Jewish+Jewish couple</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>Min – 23, Max - 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish couple</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>Min – 23, Max - 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish couple</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>Min – 24, Max - 47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Individual-level analysis

Gender

The vast majority of couples in the study (94%) are composed of one partner who identifies as male and a second partner who identifies as female (Table A2).

Table A2. Gender composition of couples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female-Male</td>
<td>1,065</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female-Female</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female-Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male-Male</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male-Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,128</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Couple-level analysis
**Race/Ethnicity**

Almost all Jews surveyed identify as non-Hispanic White (Figure A1). Among non-Jewish partners, 7% are Hispanic, 6% are Asian, and 7% are mixed or other races.

**Figure A1. Racial/ethnic identification**

**Educational Attainment**

Our sample is highly educated. A large majority of the respondents have at least a bachelor’s degree (Figure A2). The majority of Jews also have a master’s, professional, or doctoral degree, as do 43% of non-Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish relationships.

**Figure A2. Educational attainment**
**Household Income**

The sample is also well-off. In 2016, the median household income in the United States was $57,617 (Guzman, 2017). We don’t have a direct measure, but 71% of Jewish+Jewish couples and 63% of Jewish+non-Jewish couples live in ZIP codes where the median household income is greater than the US median household income (Figure 41). Furthermore, 12% of Jewish+Jewish couples and 6% of Jewish+non-Jewish couples live in ZIP codes where the median household income is more than twice the US median household income, such as Nassau and Westchester Counties in New York and Essex County in New Jersey.

*Figure A3. Median household income of ZIP code*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jewish+Jewish</th>
<th>Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Blue** represents Median income for ZIP code less or equal to US median (up to $56,617)
- **Orange** represents Median income for ZIP code up to twice US median (up to $113,234)
Appendix B: Open-Ended Example Quotes for Welcoming Categories

Completely welcome. Feels completely welcome in the Jewish community, or in own Jewish community, or among Jewish friends/family. No qualifications.

**Jewish+Jewish couples** say:

*Very. We are part of a beautiful Jewish community that is very open and accepting and caring. (Jew in Jewish+Jewish)*

*We feel very welcome in the Jewish community. Friends and family always invite us over for holiday dinners and celebrations, and we know we would be readily accepted into any organizations or religious events. (Jew in Jewish+Jewish)*

*100% welcomed. We have a large and open community. (Jew in Jewish+Jewish)*

**Jewish+non-Jewish couples** say:

*I have felt accepted in the Jewish community as [my husband]'s spouse, as a person who makes him happy and supports him. I have been included in family religious celebrations and invited to partake in Jewish services and ceremonies. While I am not considered Jewish, I certainly feel welcome. (non-Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish couple)*

*Completely, nobody has questioned our involvement or intimated a problem with either of us participating in Jewish events. (Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish couple)*

*I have always felt included and welcomed by both family and friends, as well as the community at large. That I was not Jewish or did not convert was never an issue. (non-Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish couple)*

*I feel totally included in our community. The education director at our shul says that we don't have an interfaith family, we have a family with one parent who isn't Jewish. (Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish couple)*
Welcome in religiously liberal Jewish settings - Feeling welcome in Jewish settings that welcome non-observant Jews and/or are welcoming of intermarried families.

**Jewish+Jewish couples** say:

I feel like we are welcome to the Jewish community in general, but not the Orthodox.

We’re plenty welcome. There’s never an air of hostility. We’re always respectful and polite, and we only frequent Reform synagogues that are much more tolerant of non-actively service attending Jews.

We feel very welcome in the community. Our Jewish friends are very open and do not get hung up on the “pedigree” of one’s Judaism.

I know [my spouse] has a branch of family that is very Orthodox, and unfortunately, I feel that they have not always been welcoming with regard to her religious upbringing (Conservative/Reform). I’m not sure how they feel about me, personally, but frankly it doesn’t matter to me.

**Jewish+non-Jewish couples** say:

Living in a liberal city with a small Jewish population, there are several places we feel very accepted in the Jewish community as an interfaith, mostly secular couple. Living in New York, we didn’t feel accepted, as there was a much more rigid definition of who was considered Jewish. (Jewish in Jewish+non-Jewish)

I feel that we would be welcome, especially among individual Jewish people as opposed to larger groups more focused on the religious rather than the cultural aspects of Judaism. (non-Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish)

If we’re talking about the culturally Jewish community, then we are completely welcome. In more traditional Jewish circles, we may not be, but virtually all of our Jewish friends are very open-minded. (non-Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish)
Welcome, uninterested - Has minimal exposure to and/or interest in the Jewish community, but feels welcome or feels that he or she would be welcome.

**Jewish+Jewish couples** say:

I know we are welcome, but we have not made a huge effort to explore the community since we just moved. I expect when we are ready to, it will be there with open arms. (Jew in Jewish+Jewish)

*Generally feel welcome, though I’m not especially interested.*

(Jew in Jewish+Jewish)

**Jewish+non-Jewish couples** say:

Religion is not a large part of our relationship at all. Given that, this is a difficult one to answer. I guess I would say that I’ve never not felt welcome in the Jewish community. (It has never been an issue)

(non-Jews in Jewish+Jewish)

I believe that should we decide to make Judaism a part of our lives, we would be welcomed by the Jewish community. But we don’t foresee that occurring in the future. (Jewish in Jewish+non-Jewish)
Somewhat welcome - Feels neither completely welcome nor completely unwelcome in the Jewish community. Includes descriptors like “mostly,” “fairly,” “reasonably,” “pretty” and “somewhat.” Includes those who claim to feel welcome but also mention a barrier. Also includes feeling welcome in some Jewish communities, but not in others.

**Jewish+Jewish couples** say:

It’s difficult in the sense that we often feel the davening we would like to be doing is in the Modern Orthodox community, but we don’t feel accepted in those communities as a queer couple. In other Jewish communities (Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, etc.), we feel accepted but don’t enjoy the davening or the spirit of the place as much and often there aren’t young families around. (Jew in Jewish+Jewish)

I feel welcome in our family as Jewish members. We enjoy Passover every year. But I do not feel that I could walk into a temple and feel comfortable, because I wouldn’t know about the rituals (Jew in Jewish+Jewish)

I feel that we are welcomed in the Conservative and (to an extent) Orthodox communities. I find that we both struggle to find a place in Reform communities because of our Zionist or pro-Israel stances. (Jew in Jewish+Jewish)

We have found that it’s difficult to find a community/congregation given where we are at this life stage (not single but not yet parents, just a young married couple) and somewhat observant but not totally (“Conservadox”) otherwise feel welcome in general. (Jewish in Jewish+Jewish)

[My spouse] feels welcome. I would feel more welcome if someone would cut out the whole God aspect of things. (Jew in Jewish+Jewish)

Somewhat. Not having been as immersed in the culture and traditions as I would have liked, it is difficult to feel like I fit in. (Jewish in Jewish+Jewish)

**Jewish+non-Jewish couples** say:

I’m never very sure how welcome I am in the Jewish community. I am not religious, but I identify with the traditions because they were a part of how I was raised. Often, that doesn’t feel like it is quite “good enough” to be considered part of the community, and I certainly don’t want to disrespect anyone’s religious practices, Jewish or otherwise, for sake of my desire to be included. I practice my beliefs the way I feel comfortable and don’t feel the need to change that. I have grown up on the outside of Judaism and Christianity, never fully embraced, but not rejected either. It’s like people are waiting for me to make a choice I don’t plan on making. (Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish)

Only a little. [My spouse] is Asian, and I am only half Jewish and on my father’s side, so it’s a high bar of welcoming to ask. I’m sure there are some Jewish institutions that would feel welcoming, but I’m not sure they all would. (Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish)
Engaging Intermarried Couples in Jewish Life

Depends on the community and their perspective on non-Jewish people/partners/couples. Some I feel welcome in, but most I do not. If I’m not welcome then [my spouse] doesn’t want to be affiliated with that community. (non-Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish)

[My spouse’s] family is largely made of secular Jews. They do not observe the Sabbath, but the mother tries her best to observe Jewish traditions. She has an extensive family who are observant to various degrees. Her devotion to family and community are probably her most Jewish traits. I feel like they are very open people, and extremely open to different worldviews and ideas. To this end, I feel accepted into their family, but I am somewhat uncertain of how much this brings me into the folds of the Jewish community at large. (non-Jews in Jewish+non-Jewish)

Fairly. In all family and religious ceremonies I have been welcomed and experienced no bias or hostility. (non-Jew in Jewish+Jewish)
Unwelcome - Feels completely unwelcome in the Jewish community.

**Jewish+Jewish couples** say:

We don't have a Jewish community. Nobody has reached out to us. Jewish people our age can be very reserved and unwilling to welcome new faces.

We are formerly Orthodox. I feel like we don't have a home among the Orthodox or non-Orthodox groups now.

**Jewish+non-Jewish couples** say:

I don't feel welcome in any Jewish community. As a mixed race lesbian family, there just isn't a place for us. (Jewish in Jewish+non-Jewish)

I feel very unwelcomed into the Jewish community. The majority of my experiences have been highly exclusive of me, and in some ways seem to shame [my spouse] for his choice of me as a wife. Judaism is not a religion of inclusion to me, it is one of exclusion and oftentimes thinly veiled elitism. (non-Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish)

Irrelevant - Has minimal exposure to and/or interest in the Jewish community, and does not know or mention whether he or she would be welcome.

**Jewish+Jewish couples** say:

We aren't involved with a Jewish community at this time. (Jew in Jewish+Jewish)

**Jewish+non-Jewish couples** say:

We have never attempted to join or be a part of a Jewish community. (Jew in Jewish+non-Jewish)
Appendix C:
Religion Children are Being Raised In

The tables that follow summarize the responses of both parents to the question about the religion their oldest child is being raised in. Table C1 reflects the responses of Jewish parents in Jewish+Jewish couples. Among Jewish+Jewish couples there was little disagreement between parents regarding the religion their child is being raised (green cells represent agreement). Table C2 shows the responses of each parent in Jewish+non-Jewish couples. Among these couples, disagreement about the religion in which the child was being raised was higher compared to Jewish+Jewish couples. In this table green cells reflect agreement, yellow cells reflect the non-Jewish parent’s responses and the blue cells reflect the Jewish parent’s responses.
Table C1. Jewish and religious identity of oldest child by partner (Jewish+Jewish couples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jewish partner 1</th>
<th>Jewish</th>
<th>No religion, Jewish aside from religion</th>
<th>No religion, partially Jewish aside from religion</th>
<th>Jewish and other religion</th>
<th>No religion</th>
<th>Other religion</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jewish partner 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion, Jewish aside from religion</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion, partially Jewish aside from religion</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish and other religion</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other religion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Individual-level analysis. Green cells indicate agreement between partners.
Table C2. Jewish and religious identity of oldest child by partner (Jewish+non-Jewish couples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jewish partner</th>
<th>Non-Jewish partner</th>
<th>According to Jewish partner only (row totals)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jewish (row totals)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion, Jewish aside from religion</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion, partially Jewish aside from religion</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish and other religion</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other religion</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>According to non-Jewish partner only (column totals)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Individual-level analysis. Green cells indicate agreement between partners. Yellow cells reflect the non-Jewish parent’s responses, blue cells reflect the Jewish parent’s responses.