Jewish Intermarriage in American Society: Literature Review
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Abstract
As of the 1960s, intermarriage has been the most researched, contentious, and discussed topic of American Jewish family life. Jews, like other ethnic groups, struggle and work hard to find a place in American life, while debating what level of their traditional Jewish heritage is to be maintained. As the tensions and pulls between assimilation and ethnic group loyalty ensue, the greatest debate is the context and impact of intermarriage amongst and between the Orthodox and Reform sections of the Jewish people. On one hand, Orthodox families argue Jewish intermarriage decimates the continuity of the Jewish people. On the other hand, the Reform movement views intermarriage as an opportunity to effectively assimilate within American culture while maintaining a sense of Jewishness. As American life continues to evolve, and as Jews continue to intermarry, the debate for optimal stability, functionality, consistency, and continuity for the American Jewish community will continue.

As of the 1960s, intermarriage has been the most researched and discussed topic of sociologists interested in Jewish family life. When Jewish leaders and commentators declared there is an intermarriage crisis within the American Jewish community, they turned to sociologists for “expert testimony” (Morgan 1964:42-43). Since this declaration, there has been a plethora of opinions from the varying denominations of the Jewish community grappling with what is crucial for the social stability and democracy of the American Jewish family (Berman 2008). This has led to American Jewish organizations hiring sociologists as part of their staff. On a local level, Jewish communities have instituted focus groups, expert panels, and demographic surveys to understand the effects of intermarriage on their respective communities. On a national level, Jewish Federations, the non-profit epi-centers of each major American city, pool this data nationwide for greater understanding of this crisis. The sociologist Richard Alba (2006) discussed nationwide Federation results in 2000/2001, by stating, “it is critical to have a clear-eyed view of how the social landscape in which American Jews find themselves has changed in the post-World War II period” (p. 347). His findings were interesting as they identified the second generation, post-holocaust Jews, as enmeshed in a much more complex situation regarding intermarriage. Many of them believed they “heard the siren call of welcome to the social cliques, clubs, and institutions of white Protestant America. After all, it was simply a matter of learning American ways, was it not, and had they not grown up as Americans and were...
they not culturally different from their parents...” (Alba, 2006:350). In other words, for second generation Jews intermarriage was part of American society, and therefore it was an accepted practice. Jennifer Thompson’s ethnographic research placed intermarried couples at the core of a study how traditional ideas about Judaism, Jewish identity, and Jewish community intersect with modern day ideals about individualism, universalism, and fairness in the American culture (McGinity 2015).

After reviewing the literature on Jewish intermarriage, the main of critics and advocates of Jewish intermarriage reside in mostly the Orthodox (traditional) or Reform (secular) branches of American Jewish society. The Orthodox branch represents the longest and the most traditional view of marriage, believing that a fully recognized Jewish marriage is comprised of a man and a woman who are both Jewish from birth, or have undergone a proper Jewish conversion. In accordance with Jewish law, halacha, these individuals who convert, to an extent, continue throughout their life upholding and practicing the tenets of the Jewish faith (Fishkoff, 2003; Sarna, 2004). On the other hand, the Reform branch of Judaism recognizes Jewish marriage as either the man or woman are of Jewish descent or apply for Jewish conversion for a myriad of reasons. The Orthodox branch expresses great concern for the recognition of loose conversions, especially since future lineage of the Jewish nation is delineated from the mother, either born Jewish, or with a proper Jewish conversion, and never from the man (Thompson, 2013). Also, the Reform movement does not mandate any particular tenets of Jewish life be held in a steadfast manner such as daily Jewish rituals. These philosophical differences between Orthodox Jews and Reform Jews have been referenced as bipolar behavior by the scholar Jonathan Sarna (2004).

In the Orthodox view, Jewish intermarriage is a major contributor to instability and dysfunction to the very foundations of the Jewish people; whereas Reformists disagree and believe that the society in which one lives and works should play a significant role within the Jewish lifestyle. These bipolar philosophical differences primarily lie within the internal beliefs and daily practices of mandated Jewish behaviors and customs. Thus, this very contentious topic breeds dissension and on-going debate between those who are invested in this way of life – in either maintaining an Orthodox definition of Jewish marriage or broadening the definition to include intermarriage in the Reformist movement.
BRIEF HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF JEWISH MARRIAGE

Jewish Marriage before the 20th century in Europe was typically guided by Jewish laws and carefully detailed by traditional writings in a “shtetl-like environment” (Mindel, Habenstein and Wright 1998:428). Marriage was often arranged between a matchmaker and the parents of the young couple, usually with others in the same shtetl. The prevailing wisdom was parents know best and the children respected their parents’ judgment. Marriage was (and some assert still is) paramount, as it kept the communities united and assured continuity of the Jewish people. The marital roles were clearly defined. The husband regularly studied the teachings of the Jewish faith and/or assumed the economic responsibility for the family. The wife played a dominant role in family life and the outside world. Her role was interchangeable, as she ran the home, but was ready to assume work outside the home, based on the needs of the family (Mindel et al.1998; Sarna 2004). This lifestyle still holds true in the Orthodox community today.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, many Jews moved west to North America. The Russian and Polish Jewish communities were forced to leave, due to inhospitable living conditions. German Jews, many of whom were already enlightened by modern society, headed to America, often without their wives and families in search of greater financial opportunity. As the families came to America, by force or by choice, they endured by peddling dry goods and starting small businesses. Often men came alone, saved enough money and then paid their way for their wives and children to join them in America. Some of the families found fortune as the developers of dry good department stores such as Macy’s, Bloomingdales, Neiman Marcus and others. (Mindel et al. 1998)

As marriage changed in America, with more choices taking shape in the 20th and 21st centuries, many of the Jewish people found the institution of American marriage as a choice to assimilate with. Andrew Cherlin (2010) concurs that the meaning of marriage is changing. There are now many choices of marriage for individuals to choose from and “more alternatives to marriage are socially acceptable” (p. 220). Also, as marital roles become less clearly defined, herein lies more room for negotiation and flexibility. The Jewish community is no less susceptible to changing American culture, for better or for worse, than other groups of individuals who are looking for love in their own backyard, or elsewhere.
Despite the options of “reforming” marriage and intermarriage in the Jewish community, traditional marriage within the Orthodox tradition remains intact. For example, Stephanie Coontz (2006) asserts that Jewish teachings revere marriage as “God's commandment... [which] celebrate[s] sexuality within marriage” (p. 86). Also, Ammiel Hirsch and Yosef Reinman (2002) define traditional marriage as “a man and woman, united in body, heart, spiritual aspirations, and the purpose of their existence,” while adding, “this is where Judaism veers sharply from the secular mode” (p. 92). The late Rabbi Sherwin Wine, a devout Jewish atheist, who had a lifelong partnership with a non-Jewish man, said that marriage is the heart of the family culture, and that the patriarchal Jewish marriage was unrelated to love and romance but a way to procure continuity. Moreover, he argued that “husbands and wives were the agents of their families, chosen by venerable custom to arrange for appropriate children" (Wein 1995:192). Conversely, Rabbi Wein (1995) was the purveyor of the “humanistic” marriage, reasoning that “marriage is more than living together. It is a public promise by two people to offer each other mutual support and exclusive sexual intimacy” (p. 193). Historically, all of these perspectives attempt to convey the evolution of the Jewish marriage and its bipolar-like qualities that are embedded within the concept of Jewish intermarriage.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to analyze the dissension surrounding intermarriage within the Jewish people, the functionalist theory and the postmodern theory will be used as frameworks. According to Cherlin, (2010), the functionalist theory “attempts to determine the functions or uses, of the main ways in which a society is organized” (p. 29). This perspective, developed in the 1940s, proclaims a sense of importance for cultural customs and norms within the family context. The Jewish marriage and family, along with other societies, can, and hopefully will, continue to be stellar examples of the Functionalist perspective. Whether the (Jewish) couple are both Jewish or one of the parties is Jewish, or there is intermarriage involved, they consider themselves a cohesive unit and in their own way determine the functions or uses of society. In either case the reality is, when one marries a person, they marry not just the man or woman, but the whole family and ideally should get along with the whole family.
In a traditional Jewish marriage, this context fits well into the functionalist perspective, since family is the foundation of Jewish life, an (functionalist) institution unto itself. The Jewish marriage with its rich tradition has for the most part been intact ever since the laws of Moses, and subsequently have been passed down from generation to generation for over three millennia (Hirsch and Reinman 2002). However, a non-traditionalist reform Jewish couple would most likely fit within the postmodern perspective framework. For example, this would include choosing their spouses on their own, or with the help of friends, family, or co-workers. Moreover, one’s self identity is important and they feel they have the power to make their own choices, albeit, inside or outside their community and/or social structure of their choice.

SOCIOLOGISTS’ CONTRIBUTION TO JEWISH INTERMARRIAGE DEBATE

The Jewish people have been scuffling over intermarriage for hundreds of years. Literally, hundreds of laws and customs have been written and enacted about marriage and family as the cornerstone of Jewish life. According to Wine (1995), Jews initiated the ban on intermarriage starting in the sixth century B.C.E. because the Jewish aristocracy had been captured and taken into exile by the Chaldeans. The aristocratic Jews, not wanting to assimilate, and enticed by luxury, gave in to “inbreeding” so they could enjoy both worlds. Some allege this ban was reiterated as original divine law, while others claim it was instituted by the rabbinical authorities of that generation.

Although this history shows that Jewish intermarriage has always been a contentious topic, it was not until the early to middle 1900s that sociologists began studying Jewish life. Their initial studies included defining intermarriage as a step toward creating a true melting pot, with the intention of fully uniting the Jewish people regarding their scuffles over intermarriage. Moreover, in an effort to work with cultural trends, sociological thought shifted from defining Jewish exogamy (or outmarriage) as a helpful step in the direction of assimilation in order to defend Jewish endogamy (or inmarriage) as vital to the values of democracy and the preservation of American social stability. (Berman 2008).

As survivors of the Holocaust immigrated to the United States, they were either eager to rebuild their lives with their faith intact, in-spite of war-torn Europe, or suffer a complete loss of faith. In either case, the role of assimilation (as a major factor in intermarriage) became more
pressing than ever. Simultaneously, Jewish leaders (and sociologists, to an extent, seeking to find sociological meaning, found themselves in a quandary as they had to hide their own (post-war) deep beliefs. Nevertheless, the sociologists, on their own, and sought out by the Jewish community, continued their important work assessing and reporting the patterns and implications of Jewish intermarriage. For example, Alba (2006) sees Jewish intermarriage as a by-product of a fundamental change of boundaries. As the Jewish people assimilated, ambiguity became greater because some individuals could easily (and successfully) present themselves as Jews, members of various societal groups, and/or “at least fellow travelers, of the other” (p. 355). Similarly, according to Daniel Greene (2011), one of the reasons Jewish life is of such great interest to the sociological tradition is because Jews, like other minority ethnic groups, struggle and work very hard to find a place in American life. The tensions and pulls of assimilation and group loyalty are designed as a focal point of American life, and people want to fit in.

In 1964, the well-known sociologist Marshall Sklare made a bold statement blaming Jewish liberalism for the rise of intermarriage. He stated that “(a) commitment to the idea of equality and... belief in the transitory character of the differences which distinguish people from one another” are bad for marriage, and turn the notion of marrying someone of the same background into unsavory politics (Sklare 1964:52). Numerous statements and ads followed in its wake. According to Lila Berman (2011), in 1974 sociologists were proclaiming to the Jewish community the messages that if you are Jewish, chances are your grandchildren will not be. The New York board of Education ran a full-page ad in the New York Times with this very “warning” message. Hence, these displays of activism were the lightning bolts for Jewish intermarriage views becoming a part of the American cultural phenomena. Notwithstanding, Ami Eden (2004) reconfirms that overall the sociological research thus far has helped the Jewish community to understand themselves in both deeper, meaningful, and sometimes complicated ways.

JEWISH ORTHODOX TRADITION AND INTERMARRIAGE

As previously discussed, the Orthodox (and conservative) movement defines intermarriage, as when an individual is married to either a man or a woman, who is not born to a Jewish mother or had conversion outside of traditional halachic (Jewish law) conversion (Hirsch
and Reinman, 2002; Sarna, 2004). Today the Orthodox movement, by and large, is saddened by the alarming rate of Jewish intermarriage in American society. In addition, the voices of Orthodox Jews are very loud and wide reaching since they believe this crisis affects the very foundations of Judaism, and its struggle for growth. Intermarriage is, and has been, one of the greatest fears for the traditional Jewish community since the industrial revolution.

According to Kalman Packouz (2004), intermarriage is a recognized threat to the survival of the Jewish people, “stating the Jewish people, have flourished in spite of having been through crusades, inquisitions, blood libels, pogroms, and holocausts only to survive and continue as a mighty people” (p. 4). He adds that the source of the problem is the lack of awareness for Jewish people of their heritage. A limited number of Jewish people study the tenets of the faith, Torah, or apply the directives in their daily lives. Reform and conservative children attend “after school” Hebrew Day Schools, while the children of Orthodox families attend Jewish day school full-time. Consequently, he argues numerous Jewish children have no idea of the beauty and depth of Judaism. As Packouz (2004) contends, “they have nothing Jewishly relevant to their own lives which they wish to preserve” (p. 4).

Dennis Prager and Joseph Teluskin (1981) describe the following vignette as a common case within the Jewish community:

“The answer is sadly simple. Parents who approach a Rabbi concerning the imminent intermarriage of their child are usually showing serious interest in their child’s Judaism about twenty years too late. By this time, their son or daughter is already in love with a non-Jew and the only obstacle to their child’s complete happiness may be a guilty feeling that if he or she intermarries, ‘my parents would be distraught.’ But this will not ultimately affect their decision to intermarry, because they will refuse to sacrifice real feelings of love for vague feelings of guilt. In most cases the parents approach to the Rabbi, and their other efforts to prevent their child’s intermarriage, constitute the first time that they have ever shown passionate interest in their child’s Jewish identity” (p. 141).

Here, the vignette conveys the deep feelings surrounding the ramifications of breaking the family chain of Jewish continuity as a people. However, it is important to note that Judaism does welcome non-Jews who choose to become educated in Jewish life, and share the traditional Jewish tenets and principles (Fishkoff, 2003; Hirsch and Renman, 2002; Prager and Telushkin, 1981; Sarna, 2004.)
Also, many Jews, who are Jewish by birth or married non-Jews (or both) are finding their way back to their roots, ironically since the end of the Holocaust. These individuals are referred to as Ba’ale Teshuva, which means in Hebrew to return to one’s roots, paralleling the Christian concept of ‘born again’ (Fishkoff 2003; Sarna 2004). As prevalent as intermarriage is in America, so is the revitalization of Judaism, which is for the most part embraced by Orthodox Jews. The Ba’ale Teshuva movement, and Jews who have carried their traditional Judaism for millenniums, are by far the largest group resisting intermarriage, thus acting as the forerunner in the continuity of the Jewish people (Gordon and Horowitz 2007). The recent growth within Orthodoxy has created higher marriage rates and increased family size; hence, low intermarriage rates, because propensity of those raised Orthodox remain within the fold. (Gordon and Horowitz 2007).

A journalist named Susan Fishkoff (2003) spent a year interviewing one of the largest sect of the Orthodox community known as Chabad Lubavitch. As Fishkoff (2003) shows in following this group's daily activities, the lasting impact of the late Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, also adoringly remembered as the Rebbe, created a revolution for the Jewish people, Orthodox and Reform Jews alike. As the last major spiritual leader of this movement, his charisma and wisdom inspired numerous young Jewish couples to literally uproot to every corner of the earth running brick and mortar Chabad Houses with messages of encouragement, Jewish paraphernalia for everyday and holiday living such as kosher food, Jewish education, i.e.. books and classes, events, support groups, Sabbath services and so forth. His sole purpose was to reach out to every Jew (and non-Jew) and inspire them to embrace divine laws and principles, which he proclaimed are our responsibility and prescription for a great life.

Some of the Rebbe’s followers have referred to him as a modern-day prophet (Fishkoff 2003). Today Chabad-Lubavitch is thriving as it includes over 3400 Chabad Houses worldwide (approximately 1000 in America). This traditional Orthodox organization is entrenched in promoting Jewish daily living, including working with intermarried couples, without judgment. For example, Fishkoff (2003) traveled to the Chabad house in Alaska, where she learned and witnessed first hand how the Greenbergs, the Alaskan Emissaries, assisted intermarried couples in maintaining their Jewishness. One couple living in Alaska — Karen, a Jewish girl who is
married to Steve, a non-Jewish man — have three children. According to Karen, “she’s tried taking her family to Anchorage’s reform synagogue, but she says the Rabbi gave her non-Jewish husband the cold shoulder.” (p. 145). Chabad looks for unity, and encourages non-Jews who are married to Jews to learn the laws of conversions, thus showing them the beauty of Jewish life. The Chabad Houses include both Jews and non-Jews in all of their pre-schools, camps, and holiday celebrations. Within Chabad houses worldwide, the only part of Jewish life, which is not inclusive for non-Jews are the Jewish, mandated ritual aspects. Contrary to conventional wisdom, Orthodox Jews are interested in assisting non-Jews in becoming Jewish in accordance with traditional law, as Fishkoff’s (2003) experience with the Alaskan Chabad house describes.

**JEWISH REFORM TRADITION AND INTERMARRIAGE**

The Reform movement was created in the early 1800s in Germany by Israel Jacobson as a way to keep disgruntled Jews from converting to Christianity. Some Jews felt their traditions had become old-fashioned and the Reform movement used modern culture to make Judaism more appealing and meaningful. To begin with, the Reform movement changed the curriculum in schools by adding secular subjects and having a co-ed learning environment. In the later 1800s, as Reform Jews began emigrating from Europe to America, their Reform philosophy was immediately embraced by Jews already living in the States. American Jews were accustomed to the traditional Jewish teachings as there were yet no Rabbis or scholars in America teaching otherwise. The Reform movement taught that the separation between church and state was to be upheld, (i.e. keep your religious beliefs quiet and join the State, so to speak). Said differently, embrace the Christian culture by adapting your social and philosophical surroundings to fit in (Borowitz and Patz 1985); hence the beginning of segue into postmodern society. For example, American Jews switched their prayer services largely into English and discontinued mentioning returning to Israel/Zion in the prayers. The rationale was that it made no sense for American Jews to continue observing laws designed for people living in ancient Israel and had their focus on America, their land of promise (Borowitz and Patz 1985: p.95). Thus, as Jewish families assimilated into the American culture, intermarriage became part of the process. With this process came new perplexing issues for the Reform movement.
Reform Rabbinical scholars and sociologists cite intermarriage as the most distressing and ambivalent contexts within Jewish life. One of the more distressing questions for the Rabbinate is, can they, the Rabbis, halachically marry Jews and non-Jews? Within the Reform Jewish movement there is angst. In the 1940s at the annual Reform Rabbinical convention, Rabbis would not speak officially against intermarriage. They were, however, according to Berman (2008), “perfectly comfortable relying on the authority of sociology to condemn intermarriage” (p. 34). They wanted to rely on sociologists who could report without bias that the fundamental differences between Jews and non-Jews add to the demise of the marital relationship. Sociologists instead offered the description of the ways things were and are, and not how things should be.

The Reform movement lives in accordance with this dogma of not making demands on their congregants beyond normative living of the times (Berman 2008). Eugene Borowitz and Naomi Patz (1985) report that some of the reform Rabbis accept intermarried couples in order to “keep the door open” instead of chasing away the couple, their children and future generations, although the Central Conference of American Rabbis stated that this form of freedom to decide who to marry and who not to marry is not “wise” (p. 67). Also posed amongst the Central Conference is the issue as to whether “some Reform Jews have the right to tell others what to do?”

Borowitz and Patz (1985) concluded that there is no right or wrong answer, but suggest the Reform movement wants to give its members freedom of expression, while adding there can be no freedom without some boundaries. The late Rabbi Wine (1995) says that Jewish feelings are too ambivalent. On the one hand Jews share humanity through work, culture and friendship. However, their dormant feelings of inhospitable treatments amidst “the struggle for minority survival” are primal. Moreover, Wine (1995) adds, at the same time, no effective Judaism can avoid dealing with this issue again, because most Jews think they should marry other Jews as a form of consistence and continuity. More often than not, Reform Rabbis who agree to officiate at intermarriage ceremonies often apologize for validating this union; the lesser of two evils: intermarriage is bad, but cutting off a Jew from their happiness is worse (Sarna 2004; Wine 1995). Moreover, from the 1960s to the present day, some within the Reform movement profess
that to oppose intermarriage of different ethnicity and faith is un-American and racist (Sarna 2004). It is interesting to note that the Reform Rabbis are keenly aware that most converts who go through a Jewish conversion before marrying a Jew do so not because they are enlightened but because they want to remove a barrier to the labeling of future children (Wine 1995). For example, Christian women who marry Jewish men urge more Jewish observance for their families. This is often the case because the women become the caretakers of their family’s relationship to Judaism, teaching both their children, and Jewish husbands about the Jewish traditions and have a strong sense of Jewish continuity (McGinity 2015).

In summary, the Reform movement appears to be a major component of Jewish intermarriage. Antony Gordon and Richard Horowitz (2007) report staggering results based on “current intermarriage rates... the chances of young contemporary American Jewish families having Jewish children and great grandchildren, with exception of the Orthodox, are increasingly remote” (p. 9).

JEWISH INTERMARRIAGE STATISTICS

According to Sarna (2004), as statistics became relevant to American life, and through today, the Jewish community is the most statistically-conscious religious group in America. Compiling Jewish intermarriage statistics began in the 1920s-1930s and has been fluctuating, and/or on the rise ever since. As intermarriage rose, so did non-Jews interest in studying Jewish philosophy, history and theology, often resulting in conversion to Judaism. This data extracted mostly through large cities, placed the intermarriage rate in the United States between 1-2% respectfully between 1920 and 1930. In 1963, two significantly different studies were reported: 1) Washington D. C. reported 13.1% intermarriage; 2) Iowa reported 42.2 percent (Berman 2008). This 1963 data followed shortly after Richard Rubenstein (1963) wrote that Rabbis contended intermarriage is “sociologically inevitable... here to stay” (p. 14)

Up until 1970, it was Jewish men, rather than Jewish women who predominantly intermarried. In 1971, 10% of those married and Jewish by birth had married non-Jews. Among this grouping 34% of the non-Jewish spouses had converted to Judaism. By 1985 intermarriage was cited between 7-16% (Mindel et al.1995; Sarna 2004). In 1990 the national Jewish Population survey reported the largest intermarriage data at 54% (Berman 2008; Gordon and
Horowitz, 2007; Mindel et al.1995; Sarna, 2004). Charles Mindel et al. (1995) describe this phenomenon of “Americanization” as having “profound effects upon the nature of the Jewish American family” (p. 437). The results depict three distinctive Jewish family types: 1) homogenous, whereas both parents are born Jewish; 2) convert-in, whereas one spouse is born Jewish and the other spouse converts to Judaism, and 3) religiously heterogeneous families, where as one spouse is born Jewish and the other spouse remained of their faith (Mindel et al, 1995). To further illustrate, as of the year 2000, Jewish intermarriage is comprised of 6% of Orthodox, 32% of conservative Jews; 46%-49% of reform/secular Jews (Gordon and Horowitz 2007). More recently, according to the comprehensive Pew report (2013), the Jewish population is comprised of affiliating 40% reform, 22% conservative, 12% orthodox, and 19% no affiliation. Despite these numbers, sociologists are beginning to conclude that there is a new “post-denominational milieu is the wave of the future with the divisions along the lines of traditional verses progressive, rather than specific denominational affiliations.” (Kwall 2014, p. 125). This is not to say that traditional is synonymous with orthodox, or that progressive is reform.

DISCUSSION

Whether one is Orthodox or Reform, traditional or progressive, intermarriage in American Jewish life has been a highly contentious topic. There are optimists in both Orthodox and Reform persuasions. The Orthodox movement sees their families multiplying at unparalleled rates, averaging six children per family. Hence, since most children tend to stay in the fold the tradition continues. The Reform movement is optimistic that intermarriage is an opportunity to recruit more people to Judaism. Conversely, there are pessimists as well. The Orthodox community is adamant about the American Jewish community being irreparably fractured. Gordon and Horowitz (2007) contend that “it appears that an extraordinary disintegration of the American Jewish community is in process. There was a time when every Jew could take it for granted that he or she would have Jewish grandchildren with whom to share ...Jewish moments” (p. 2). The Reform movement views the Orthodox movement with contempt, as they are unable (or according to Reform, unwilling) to acknowledge their reform conversions as authentic (Sarna 2004). It is interesting to note that should an American Jewish convert wish
to take up Jewish citizenship in Israel, their conversion is only considered valid through an Orthodox conversion.

To sum up, Jewish intermarriage is a conversation for all who are interested in this way of life. As American life continues to evolve, and as Jews continue to live and marry with or without Orthodox or Reform conversions, there will most likely be ample discussion between which philosophy provides for optimal stability, functionality, consistence, and continuity for the American Jewish community.

References


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1 Ba’al Teshuvah means literally “the one who found the answer,” termed by practicing Jews, usually in the Orthodox tradition.