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Encouraging Jewish Choices & A Welcoming Jewish Community

What We Learned from the Fifth Annual December Holidays Survey

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Abstract

One of the most significant flashpoints in intermarriages between Jews and Christians is the so-called "December dilemma," the confluence of Hanukkah and Christmas. In October 2008, we conducted our fifth annual December Holidays Survey to determine how people in interfaith relationships deal with the competing demands of Hanukkah and Christmas.

Of the 1,229 respondents, we focused on the 346 who were in interfaith relationships and raising children exclusively Jewish.

The overwhelming majority of these respondents participate in Hanukkah and Christmas celebrations. The vast majority plan on participating in Hanukkah celebrations at home, while less than half plan on celebrating Christmas at home. Their Hanukkah celebrations are much "denser," in terms of rituals, than their Christmas celebrations, and they report that they see Hanukkah as more religious than Christmas.

These results suggest that interfaith families raising Jewish children make clear distinctions between the holidays and are giving clear priority to Hanukkah over Christmas, as both a family celebration and a religious holiday.

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Introduction

One of the most significant flashpoints in intermarriages between Jews and Christians is the so-called “December dilemma,” the confluence of Hanukkah and Christmas. In October 2008, we conducted our fifth annual December Holidays Survey to determine how people in interfaith relationships deal with the competing demands of Hanukkah and Christmas.

The survey attracted 1,229 responses, nearly 50% more than the number of responses received in 2007. Of all respondents, 728 reported being in interfaith relationships (as the Jewish partner or with a Jewish partner). Of those 728 respondents, 517 said they had raised or were raising children, and of those respondents, 346, or 67%, said they had raised or were raising their children exclusively as Jews. Nationally, 33 to 39% of interfaith couples are raising their children solely in the Jewish religion, according to the 2000-01 National Jewish Population Study--so the survey is not a representative sample of all interfaith families.

As in past years, this report focuses on the responses of the ***346 survey participants who are in interfaith relationships and raising their children exclusively in the Jewish religion***. The report does not reflect the behaviors of interfaith couples in general, or the behaviors of all interfaith couples with children.

We chose to focus on this population for several reasons:

1. One of the goals of our organization is to empower interfaith families to make Jewish choices. We therefore want to know more about the exact dynamics of how the process of raising children as Jewish in interfaith families works, especially during potential periods of conflict, such as the December holiday season.
2. Jewish community policy-makers are focusing increasing attention on engaging interfaith families with the Jewish community with the end goal of the families deciding to raise their children Jewish.
3. In the introduction to last year's study, we said, "Many studies of intermarriage have looked at intermarried Jews as an undifferentiated group and failed to make the important distinction between those intermarried couples that have chosen to create a Jewish home and those who have not. This report is one of the few to date that has looked at the behaviors of those interfaith families who are raising their children Jewish." Within the last year, two reports have made this distinction but arrived at vastly different conclusions. Boston's Jewish federation and Steven M. Cohen, one of the most noted sociologists of Jewish life, have offered competing interpretations of the behaviors of intermarried families raising Jewish children. In the federation's analysis¹ of its 2005 study, it found that intermarried families raising Jewish children had similar levels of Jewish attachment to inmarried

¹ Katherine N. Gan, Patty Jacobson, Gil Preuss and Barry Shrage, *The 2005 Greater Boston Community Study: Intermarried Families and Their Children, A Report of Combined Jewish Philanthropies* (Combined Jewish Philanthropies, 2008).

Reform Jewish families, while Cohen² has disagreed. This report attempts to add some more insight to the debate.

Because we collected a fair amount of data about Jewish people not in interfaith relationships, we were also able to make some fruitful comparisons between the intermarried raising Jewish children and the inmarried with children. We received responses from 501 people not in interfaith relationships, including 217 inmarried Jews with children.

² Steven M. Cohen. *Seeking a Third Way to Respond to the Challenge of Intermarriage*. Delivered at the Central Conference of American Rabbis convention, Cincinnati, March 31, 2008.

The Report

Please note: Throughout the report, the authors make clear distinctions between the populations they are analyzing. Unless otherwise noted, any use of the term "cohort" or "respondents" refers to interfaith families raising Jewish children. This is not a report on all interfaith couples, or all interfaith couples with children.

Almost all of the intermarried respondents who are raising Jewish children³ expect to participate in Hanukkah celebrations and Christmas celebrations this year: 99% plan to participate in Hanukkah celebrations while 88% plan to participate in Christmas celebrations. There are telling differences in where they plan to celebrate each holiday, however.

The overwhelming majority (97%) plan on celebrating Hanukkah at home while less than half (45%) plan on celebrating Christmas at home. Conversely, two-thirds plan on celebrating Christmas at the home of relatives (64%)--more than the number that plan on celebrating Hanukkah at the home of relatives (40%). Five times as many plan on participating in Hanukkah celebrations at synagogue (60%) as plan on going to church for Christmas (14%) (see Table 15. Public Christmas Behaviors, Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children, p. 19).

Table 1. Location of Hanukkah and Christmas Celebrations, Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children

Where will you be participating in Hanukkah celebrations? Please check all that apply.	% (n = 346)	Where will you be participating in Christmas celebrations? Please check all that apply.	% (n = 346)
Own home	97	Own home	45
Home of relatives	40	Home of relatives	64
Home of friends	32	Home of friends	20
Workplace/off-site work party	7	Workplace/off-site work party	23
Temple or synagogue	60	Public activity (such as tree lighting or going to see a Christmas movie)	17
Jewish Community Center	11		

The majority of these respondents plan on doing multiple activities relating to the celebration of Hanukkah in their own home. Ninety-eight percent plan on lighting the menorah, 94% plan on giving gifts and 85% plan on making or eating Hanukkah foods. The smaller number of people that are planning to celebrate Hanukkah with friends or relatives plan on doing a similarly high level of Hanukkah activities.

³ Respondents were only considered Jewish if they reported that they were Jewish and no other religion, and respondents' children were only considered as being raised Jewish if they were reported as being raised Jewish and no other religion.

Table 2. Hanukkah Behaviors in Various Locations, Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children (n = 346)

Which of the following are you planning on doing in the following places:	Own home (%)	Home of relatives (%)	Home of friends (%)	Workplace/ off-site work party (%)	Temple or synagogue (%)	Jewish Community Center (%)
Light menorah	98	40	32	5	46	9
Give gifts	94	43	20	2	4	1
Put up Hanukkah decorations	68	9	4	4	11	3
Sing/play Hanukkah music and songs	69	21	17	3	50	9
Eat/make Hanukkah foods	85	38	28	4	43	7
Watch Hanukkah movies	15	1	1	1	3	1
Tell the Hanukkah story	54	9	8	2	43	6
Play dreidel	74	22	18	3	25	4

The picture is somewhat reversed for Christmas activities. Sixty-four percent plan to give gifts at the home of relatives (vs. 50% giving gifts at their own home) and 51% plan on eating and/or preparing Christmas foods at the home of relatives (vs. 25% planning on eating/preparing Christmas foods at home). Overall, 60% plan on putting up or decorating a Christmas tree at home or another location. In contrast to these more secular activities, few participate in the more religious behavior of telling the Christmas story.

Table 3. Christmas Behaviors at Various Locations, Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children (n = 346)

Which of the following are you planning on doing in the following places:	Own home (%)	Home of relatives (%)	Home of friends (%)	Workplace/ off-site work party (%)
Decorate a Christmas tree	41	21	6	3
Put up a Christmas tree	40	12	2	1
Hang stockings	36	20	1	0
Give gifts	50	64	19	14
Put up other Christmas decorations	29	12	1	3
Sing/play Christmas music and songs	33	26	10	8
Eat/prepare Christmas foods	25	51	20	17
Drink egg nog	16	11	5	2
Watch Christmas movie(s)	27	12	2	0
Tell the Christmas story	3	3	0	0

The lack of religious content in the respondents' celebration of Christmas can also be seen by their low level of attendance of Christmas religious services (14%), which was the same percentage reported last year (see Table 15. Public Christmas Behaviors, Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children, p. 19).

This lack of religious Christmas activity aligns with the respondents' views of the religious nature of their holiday celebrations. Only 5% of respondents participating in Christmas see their Christmas celebrations as religious, compared to 23% of respondents participating in Hanukkah who see their Hanukkah celebrations as religious. Eighty-seven percent of those participating in Christmas celebrations see their Christmas celebrations as secular in nature, whereas only 30% of those participating in Hanukkah celebrations see their Hanukkah celebrations as secular in nature. (See Table 16. Level of Religiosity of Hanukkah vs. Christmas, *Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children*, p. 19.)

While some in the Jewish community are concerned about religious syncretism—the blending of two religious traditions—these respondents are not blending Hanukkah and Christmas. Eighty-three percent say they will keep the holidays separate or mostly separate. (See Table 17. Level of “Blending” of Hanukkah and Christmas, *Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children*, p. 19.)

The survey respondents are not particularly concerned that participation in Christmas celebrations affects their children's Jewish identity. Seventy-three percent of the respondents who are participating in Christmas celebrations think it will not affect their children's Jewish identity. (See Table 18. Perspective on Whether Participating in Christmas Celebrations Affects Children's Identity, *Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children*, p. 19.)

Those respondents who are participating in Christmas celebrations explain their participation in Christmas celebrations to their children in a variety of ways. Nearly three-quarters (70%) cite respect for the traditions of the non-Jewish parent's extended family, 67% cite respect for the non-Jewish parent's traditions and half (51%) cite open-mindedness/tolerance. Very few (7%) say participating in Christmas celebrations is an opportunity for their children to make up their own mind about what religion to adopt.

Table 4. Explaining Participation in Christmas Celebrations to Children, Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children

If you participate in Christmas celebrations, how do you explain or talk about your participation in Christmas celebrations to your children? Please check all that apply.	% (n = 308)
Respect for the non-Jewish parent's traditions	67
Desire not to upset the non-Jewish parent	9
Respect for the traditions of the non-Jewish parent's extended family	70
Desire not to upset the non-Jewish parent's extended family	13
Open-mindedness/tolerance	51
Desire to expose your children to different faith traditions than your own	28
Opportunity for your children to make up their own mind about what religion to adopt	7

These respondents cite a variety of reasons why they are not concerned that celebrating Christmas will affect their children's identity:

I think it actually makes her more aware of her Jewish identity. We talk about "helping her grandparents celebrate Christmas."

-Respondent #1210

We do many Jewish observances all year. For instance, we get out the tablecloth and candles for Shabbat dinner every week, and attend synagogue every week. We put up a sukkah. One day of secular Christmas celebration with their Dad's family isn't going to affect my kids.

-Respondent #982

They know that they and Daddy are Jewish, so we celebrate Hanukkah and other Jewish holidays here in our home; mommy was raised with Christmas, as are most of our friends and neighbors, so we celebrate Christmas with mommy's family and other friends. Makes sense to them.

-Respondent #392

Because Christmas is simply a secular holiday for us, about food, presents and music, not about religion. Think Martha Stewart meets Mel Brooks, and you have a pretty good picture.

-Respondent #344

However, a small minority reported concerns over the impact on their child's identity of participating in Christmas celebrations:

They understand mommy is not Jewish. The older child asks questions that we answer with age appropriate information. We are concerned that at some point celebrating both religions may become confusing.

-Respondent #1002

Role of the Woman in Heterosexual Couples

Numerous studies have demonstrated that the mother’s religious background has more influence over the children’s religious behavior than the father’s religious background. Although our cohort of respondents only includes those who are raising their children exclusively Jewish, it is still instructive to compare the behaviors of heterosexual couples where the woman is Jewish with couples where the woman is not Jewish.

There are differences in Christmas behaviors, although the differences are not as pronounced as they were in last year’s survey. This year, there is no statistical difference between the percentage of Jewish-woman couples and non-Jewish-woman couples planning to celebrate Christmas (84% and 88%, respectively). Significantly more of the couples with a non-Jewish woman plan on celebrating Christmas at home vs. couples with a Jewish woman (51% to 38%). Otherwise, the percentages of the two kinds of couples planning to celebrate Christmas at the home of relatives, home of friends, workplace or off-site work party or public activity are remarkably similar.

Interestingly, Jewish-woman couples are showing higher rates of Christmas participation than last year, while non-Jewish-woman couples are showing lower rates of Christmas participation than last year. It should be noted, however, that the differences with last year's numbers are all within the range of the margin of error.

Table 5. Location of Christmas Celebrations, Heterosexual Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children Where the Woman Is Jewish vs. Where the Woman Is Not Jewish

Respondents in an Interfaith Couple Where the Woman Is Jewish		Respondents in an Interfaith Couple Where the Woman Is Not Jewish	
Where will you be participating in Christmas celebrations? Please check all that apply.	% (n = 202)	Where will you be participating in Christmas celebrations? Please check all that apply.	% (n = 146)
Own home	38	Own home	51
Home of relatives	60	Home of relatives	65
Home of friends	19	Home of friends	20
Workplace/off-site work party	23	Workplace/off-site work party	25
Public activity (such as tree-lighting or going to see a Christmas movie)	17	Public activity (such as tree-lighting or going to see a Christmas movie)	17

Christmas behaviors at home are more prevalent among non-Jewish-woman households, but the differences aren't huge. Rituals that are significantly more common among non-Jewish-woman households than Jewish-woman households include hanging stockings (45% vs. 28%), putting up other Christmas decorations (37% vs. 21%) and eating/preparing Christmas foods (36% vs. 16%). Fairly similar numbers plan on putting up or decorating a Christmas tree at home (46% vs. 38%). (See Table 19. Christmas

Behaviors at Home, Heterosexual Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children Where the Woman Is Jewish vs. Where the Woman Is Not Jewish, p. 20.)

At the home of relatives, non-Jewish-woman couples are more likely than Jewish-woman couples to give gifts (71% vs. 58%) and sing or play Christmas music or songs (33% vs. 20%). They plan on doing other activities--eating/preparing Christmas foods, putting up Christmas decorations, hanging stockings, etc.--in similar numbers. (See Table 21. Christmas Behaviors at Home of Relatives, Heterosexual Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children Where the Woman Is Jewish vs. Where the Woman Is Not Jewish, p. 21.)

However, the religious activity of telling the Christmas story--whether at home or anywhere else--is highly infrequent in both groups (2% vs. 12%). Further, even among non-Jewish-woman couples, less than a third (22%) attend Christmas religious services (see Table 20. Public Christmas Behaviors, Heterosexual Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children Where the Woman Is Jewish vs. Where the Woman Is Not Jewish, p. 20). This suggests that even for non-Jewish-woman couples, their Christmas celebrations are not religious in nature.

While there are some significant differences in the Christmas behaviors of the two kinds of couples, the Hanukkah behaviors of the two groups are nearly identical. Nearly all participate in Hanukkah celebrations at home, 40% participate in Hanukkah celebrations at the home of relatives and about a third participate in Hanukkah celebrations at the home of friends.

Table 6. Location of Hanukkah Celebrations, Heterosexual Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children Where the Woman Is Jewish vs. Where the Woman Is Not Jewish

Respondents in an Interfaith Couple Where the Woman Is Jewish		Respondents in an Interfaith Couple Where the Woman Is Not Jewish	
Where will you be participating in Hanukkah celebrations? Please check all that apply.	% (n = 202)	Where will you be participating in Hanukkah celebrations? Please check all that apply.	% (n = 146)
Own home	99	Own home	95
Home of relatives	40	Home of relatives	40
Home of friends	33	Home of friends	31
Workplace/off-site work party	7	Workplace/off-site work party	5
Temple or synagogue	61	Temple or synagogue	56
Jewish Community Center	11	Jewish Community Center	11

Almost all Jewish-woman and non-Jewish-woman couples reported lighting menorahs, giving gifts, eating/making Hanukkah foods, playing dreidel and putting up Hanukkah decorations at home (see Table 22. Hanukkah Behaviors at Home, Heterosexual Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children Where the Woman Is Jewish vs. Where the Woman Is Not Jewish, p. 21).

Whether they are celebrating at home, the home of friends or the home of relatives, the Hanukkah behaviors of Jewish-woman and non-Jewish-woman couples are remarkably similar. The only meaningful differences are that Jewish-woman couples are more likely to observe a variety of rituals at a synagogue.

Table 7. Hanukkah Behaviors at Temple or Synagogue, Heterosexual Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children Where the Woman Is Jewish vs. Where the Woman Is Not Jewish

Respondents in an Interfaith Couple Where the Woman Is Jewish		Respondents in an Interfaith Couple Where the Woman Is Not Jewish	
Which of the following are you planning to do in: Temple or synagogue	% (n = 202)	Which of the following are you planning to do in: Temple or synagogue	% (n = 146)
Light menorah	49	Light menorah	40
Give gifts	3	Give gifts	6
Put up Hanukkah decorations	11	Put up Hanukkah decorations	9
Sing/play Hanukkah music and songs	52	Sing/play Hanukkah music and songs	31
Eat/make Hanukkah foods	47	Eat/make Hanukkah foods	37
Watch Hanukkah movie(s)	3	Watch Hanukkah movie(s)	3
Tell the Hanukkah story	42	Tell the Hanukkah story	41
Play dreidel	27	Play dreidel	21

Christmas Behaviors of Inmarried Jewish Couples

Like last year, we continue to be surprised by the prevalence of Christmas behaviors among inmarried Jews. Even those not in interfaith relationships participated in Christmas celebrations to a surprisingly high extent. Looking at inmarried Jewish respondents with children (a cohort of 217 respondents), we find that 43% plan to participate in Christmas celebrations this year, which includes workplace parties and public events. Few plan to participate in Christmas celebrations in their own home, but a quarter of these respondents plan on celebrating at the home of relatives while 19% plan on celebrating at the workplace or at a work party.

Table 8. Location of Christmas Celebrations, Inmarried Jewish Families Raising Children

Where will you be participating in Christmas celebrations? Please check all that apply.	% (n = 217)
Own home	5
Home of relatives	25
Home of friends	15
Workplace/off-site work party	19
Public activity (such as tree lighting or going to see a Christmas movie)	7

Some of this can be explained by the fact that a third of the inmarried respondents are converts or in a relationship with a convert. Sixty-six percent of conversionary inmarried families with children plan to participate in Christmas celebrations, compared to 35% of non-conversionary inmarried families with children. Conversionary families tend to participate in Christmas at the home of relatives (47%). This suggests that conversionary families don't abandon the Christian side of their families, while rarely celebrating Christmas (10%) in their own home. As might be expected, among non-conversionary inmarried families, the Christmas celebrations that do take place happen most often at the home of friends (15%) and work functions (17%).

Table 9. Location of Christmas Behaviors, Conversionary Inmarried Families with Children vs. Non-conversionary Inmarried Families with Children

Respondents in a Conversionary Inmarried Couple		Respondents in a Non-conversionary Inmarried Couple	
Where will you be participating in Christmas celebrations? Please check all that apply.	% (n = 72)	Where will you be participating in Christmas celebrations? Please check all that apply.	% (n = 145)
Own home	10	Own home	3
Home of relatives	47	Home of relatives	14
Home of friends	14	Home of friends	15
Workplace/off-site work party	25	Workplace/off-site work party	17
Public activity (such as tree-lighting or going to see a Christmas movie)	13	Public activity (such as tree-lighting or going to see a Christmas movie)	4

Economic Conditions

This year, for the first time in the five-year history of our survey, we asked respondents about how the economic climate was going to affect their holiday spending. If anything, the numbers from the survey probably underestimate the respondents' anticipated behaviors, because the survey was conducted during the second half of October--before the full economic fallout from the credit crisis was apparent.

Because of a design flaw in the survey, we did not ask respondents who were not celebrating Christmas how their holiday spending would change. However, it is still quite instructive to see how those respondents who are celebrating both holidays plan to alter their holiday spending.

Roughly half of those celebrating both holidays plan on spending the same on Hanukkah this year as last year, while only 37% plan on spending the same on Christmas this year. More than half plan to spend less on Christmas this year than last. Unsurprisingly, very few plan on spending more on gifts this year for either Hanukkah (1%) or Christmas (0%).

Table 10. Plans for Holiday Spending, Hanukkah vs. Christmas, Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children

Given the current economic condition, will your spending on any of the following items change from last year:			
Buying Hanukkah gifts	% (n = 303)	Buying Christmas gifts	% (n = 303)
Spend less	46	Spend less	58
Spend the same	53	Spend the same	37
Spend more	1	Spend more	0
Not applicable	1	Not applicable	5

Since most families spend most of their money on gifts on their children, and typically, most holiday gift-giving happens at home, one might expect to see different responses from those celebrating the different holidays at home. It could be possible that, in a difficult economic climate, families would spend less on relatives, friends and coworkers, but continue to spend the same on their own children. Since 97% of our cohort plans on celebrating Hanukkah at home, the sample sizes are too disproportionate to compare those planning to celebrate Hanukkah at home with those who are not. However, it may be useful to compare those who plan on celebrating Christmas at home (45%) with those who are not (56%).

Interestingly, we find that those respondents celebrating Christmas at home are actually *more likely* to reduce their spending on Christmas gifts than those who are celebrating Christmas elsewhere (65% of those celebrating Christmas at home say they will spend less on Christmas gifts vs. 51% of those celebrating Christmas elsewhere). (For details of this analysis, see

Table 23. Plans for Holiday Spending, Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children, Those Celebrating Christmas at Home vs. Those Who Are Celebrating Christmas Elsewhere, p. 22.) There are numerous possible explanations for this surprising result.

First, our respondents generally may spend more on Christmas gifts than Hanukkah gifts, so there is more leeway for reducing Christmas spending than there is for Hanukkah spending. Second, for families raising Jewish children, it may be more important to keep Hanukkah celebrations consistent from year-to-year than it is to keep Christmas celebrations consistent from year-to-year. Third, since significantly more of our respondents plan on celebrating Christmas with co-workers (23%) than Hanukkah with co-workers (7%), gift-buying for coworkers may be viewed as more of a luxury than gift-buying for children and family members. It is also simply possible that those celebrating Christmas in places other than home may be financially better-off than those celebrating Christmas at home.

We also asked about how the economy would affect people's giving to religious charities. We found that the majority of our respondents (73%) said giving to Christian causes was "not applicable"--suggesting that few interfaith families raising Jewish children give to Christian charities. Meanwhile, only 21% said giving to Jewish causes was "not applicable." (See Table 24. Plans for Holiday Giving, Jewish vs. Christian Causes, Intermarried Families Raising Jewish Children, p. 22.)

"Merry Christmas"

We also investigated how our respondents felt about being wished "Merry Christmas" by strangers. We originally intended to ask all people who took the survey how they felt about the common practice, but, due to a design flaw, we only asked people who planned on celebrating Christmas.

However, it still is informative to see how those celebrating both holidays responded to the greeting, given the evidence of their commitment to keeping Hanukkah and Christmas separate and prioritizing Hanukkah at home.

Overall, a majority said they were appreciative of the holiday cheer (51%), while less than a quarter (21%) indicated they were offended (see Table 25. Feelings About "Merry Christmas," *Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children*, p. 22).

Jewish respondents were more likely to be offended than non-Jewish respondents (24% vs. 15%), but most Jewish respondents were either indifferent or appreciative of the holiday cheer. A significant majority of non-Jewish respondents (64%) said they were appreciative of the holiday cheer.

Surprisingly, given the well-documented fact that older Jewish-Americans are more sensitive to antisemitism than younger Jews, older Jewish respondents were actually *more* appreciative of "Merry Christmas" and less likely to be offended than their younger peers. Sixty-three percent of Jewish respondents aged 50-69 were appreciative of the holiday cheer (and only 11% offended), while only 41% of Jewish respondents 30-49 were appreciative of the holiday cheer and 27% were offended.

Conclusions

The great majority of interfaith couples raising their children as Jews plan on participating in celebrations of both Christmas and Hanukkah.

Some observers of intermarriage have cast a skeptical eye on this trend, arguing that interfaith families can't raise their children as Jews and celebrate Christmas, but the results of this survey suggest that they are doing so.

We found that interfaith families raising Jewish children who participate in Christmas celebrations make clear distinctions between the holidays and are giving clear priority to Hanukkah over Christmas, as both a family celebration and a religious holiday. The overwhelming majority celebrate Hanukkah at home, while less than half celebrate Christmas at home. Two-thirds celebrate Christmas at the home of relatives, suggesting that Christmas is largely centered around the extended family rather than the immediate family. Even their holiday spending reflects their choices: most of these families plan on spending the same on Hanukkah gifts this year as last year, while the majority plan on spending less on Christmas gifts this year than last year.

These families do not see Hanukkah as a deeply religious holiday, but a majority plan on celebrating the holiday in a Jewish house of worship. Meanwhile, their participation in Christmas celebrations is almost entirely secular. Very few of these families expect to tell the Christmas story or attend Christmas services at church.

The vast majority of these families plan on celebrating Hanukkah by lighting the menorah, giving gifts and eating Hanukkah foods, and most plan on singing or playing Hanukkah music, putting up Hanukkah decorations and playing dreidel. Less than half have Christmas trees at home. Only half plan to give Christmas gifts at home.

Despite the high level of participation in some kind of Christmas activity, these families feel comfortable that celebrating Christmas won't negatively impact their children's Jewish identity. For most of them, participating in Christmas is simply a matter of respect for the traditions of the non-Jewish family. Very few see participation in Christmas as an opportunity for their children to make up their own mind what religion to adopt. This suggests that these families are serious about their commitment to raise their children in one faith.

These trends are more pronounced in heterosexual interfaith families where the woman is Jewish; in heterosexual interfaith families where the woman is not Jewish, Christmas is more frequently celebrated at home. However, despite the greater frequency of Christmas behaviors among couples where the woman is not Jewish, these families participate in just as many Hanukkah activities as couples where the woman is Jewish—while simultaneously participating in very few religious Christmas activities. This suggests that while the typical non-Jewish woman in an interfaith relationship may be more committed to her religious tradition than the typical non-Jewish man in an interfaith relationship, non-Jewish women raising Jewish children are still very concerned with exposing their

children to Judaism and limiting their exposure to Christianity. Interestingly, more non-Jewish women plan on telling their children the Hanukkah story--suggesting that non-Jewish women raising their children Jewish are concerned about communicating the uniqueness of Hanukkah.

While some observers of intermarriage argue that exposure to Christmas sends a confusing message to children of intermarriage, many inmarried Jews participate in Christmas celebrations, whether it's at the home of non-Jewish relatives, at the home of non-Jewish friends or at workplace Christmas parties. Even when you separate out conversionary couples--where one partner's extended family is not Jewish--more than a third of "born Jewish" inmarried couples plan on participating in Christmas celebrations. Just because a Jewish person is inmarried doesn't mean he or she is insulated from participating in Christmas.

Appendix I: Demographic Information

Of the 1,229 respondents to our survey, 346 said they are in an interfaith relationship and raising their children Jewish and no other religion. The majority (73%) identify themselves as Jewish:

Table 11. Religion of Respondents in Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children

What is your religion? Please check all that apply.	% (n = 346)
Jewish	76%
Catholic	10%
Protestant	7%
Agnostic/Atheist	3%
None	3%
Other	5%

Because respondents were able to check multiple religions, some respondents identified themselves as Jewish and something else. Excluding those who identified themselves as Jewish and something else, 73% of the respondents consider themselves exclusively Jewish.

Their partners were a mix of Jewish (35%), Catholic (25%), Protestant (16%) and other religions.

Table 12. Religion of Spouses of Respondents in Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children

What is your spouse's religion? Please check all that apply.	% (n = 346)
Jewish	32%
Catholic	25%
Protestant	15%
Agnostic/Atheist	10%
None	5%
Other	17%

The majority of respondents were female (84%) and almost 80% of the respondents raising exclusively Jewish children were between the ages of 30 and 49.

Table 13. Age of Respondents in Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children

What is your age?	% (n = 346)
20-29	3%
30-39	44%
40-49	32%
50-59	16%
60-69	5%
70 and over	1%

Eighty six percent of the respondents have one (34%) or two (52%) children, and almost half of the families have children 3 or younger.

Table 14. Age of Children in Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children

What is the age of your children? Please check all that apply.	% (n = 285)
0-3	44%
4-5	23%
6-8	28%
9-12	21%
13-17	14%
18-30	12%
30 and over	6%

Appendix II: Additional Charts

Table 15. Public Christmas Behaviors, Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children

Which of the following public Christmas-related activities do you plan on doing? Please check all that apply.	% (n = 346)
Attend Christmas religious services	14
Attend a tree-lighting	11
Watch a Christmas parade	11
Attend a Christmas-themed concert, play or performance	14
Go to movie theater to see a Christmas movie	5
Bring kids to Santa at the mall	13

Table 16. Level of Religiosity of Hanukkah vs. Christmas, Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children

If you plan to participate in Hanukkah celebrations this year, please rate the religious nature of your celebrations.	% (n = 342)	If you plan to participate in Christmas celebrations this year, please rate the religious nature of your celebrations.	% (n = 303)
5 – deeply religious	0	5 – deeply religious	1
4 – fairly religious	23	4 – fairly religious	4
3 – half secular, half religious	45	3 – half secular, half religious	8
2 – mostly secular	27	2 – mostly secular	19
1 – entirely secular	3	1 – entirely secular	68

Table 17. Level of “Blending” of Hanukkah and Christmas, Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children

If you plan to participate in both Hanukkah and Christmas celebrations this year, will you blend your holiday celebrations, or keep them separate?	% (n = 303)
5 – keep separate	58
4 – keep mostly separate	25
3 – blend moderately	14
2 – blend significantly	1
1 – blend completely	1
Not applicable	2

Table 18. Perspective on Whether Participating in Christmas Celebrations Affects Children’s Identity, Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children

If you are participating in Christmas celebrations, do you think that your participation in Christmas celebrations affects your children’s Jewish identity?	% (n = 316)
Yes	27
No	73

Table 19. Christmas Behaviors at Home, Heterosexual Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children Where the Woman Is Jewish vs. Where the Woman Is Not Jewish

Respondents in an Interfaith Couple Where the Woman Is Jewish		Respondents in an Interfaith Couple Where the Woman Is Not Jewish	
Which of the following are you planning to do in your own home? Please check all that apply.	% (n = 202)	Which of the following are you planning to do in your own home? Please check all that apply.	% (n = 146)
Decorate a Christmas tree	36	Decorate a Christmas tree	42
Put up a Christmas tree	33	Put up a Christmas tree	44
Hang stockings	28	Hang stockings	45
Give gifts	44	Give gifts	54
Put up other Christmas decorations	21	Put up other Christmas decorations	37
Sing/play Christmas music and songs	27	Sing/play Christmas music and songs	40
Eat/prepare Christmas foods	16	Eat/prepare Christmas foods	36
Drink egg nog	12	Drink egg nog	21
Watch Christmas movie(s)	22	Watch Christmas movie(s)	30
Tell the Christmas story	0	Tell the Christmas story	6

Table 20. Public Christmas Behaviors, Heterosexual Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children Where the Woman Is Jewish vs. Where the Woman Is Not Jewish

Respondents in an Interfaith Couple Where the Woman Is Jewish		Respondents in an Interfaith Couple Where the Woman Is Not Jewish	
Which of the following public Christmas-related activities do you plan on doing? Please check all that apply.	% (n = 202)	Which of the following public Christmas-related activities do you plan on doing? Please check all that apply.	% (n = 146)
Attend Christmas religious services	8	Attend Christmas religious services	22
Attend a tree-lighting	9	Attend a tree-lighting	14
Watch a Christmas parade	9	Watch a Christmas parade	13
Attend a Christmas-themed concert, play or performance	14	Attend a Christmas-themed concert, play or performance	14
Go to movie theater to see a Christmas movie	5	Go to movie theater to see a Christmas movie	4
Bring kids to Santa at the mall	9	Bring kids to Santa at the mall	18

Table 21. Christmas Behaviors at Home of Relatives, Heterosexual Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children Where the Woman Is Jewish vs. Where the Woman Is Not Jewish

Respondents in an Interfaith Couple Where the Woman Is Jewish		Respondents in an Interfaith Couple Where the Woman Is Not Jewish	
Which of the following are you planning to do in: Home of relatives	% (n = 202)	Which of the following are you planning to do in: Home of relatives	% (n = 146)
Decorate a Christmas tree	16	Decorate a Christmas tree	25
Put up a Christmas tree	10	Put up a Christmas tree	16
Hang stockings	18	Hang stockings	22
Give gifts	58	Give gifts	71
Put up other Christmas decorations	10	Put up other Christmas decorations	15
Sing/play Christmas music and songs	20	Sing/play Christmas music and songs	33
Eat/prepare Christmas foods	46	Eat/prepare Christmas foods	53
Drink egg nog	9	Drink egg nog	14
Watch Christmas movie(s)	8	Watch Christmas movie(s)	15
Tell the Christmas story	0	Tell the Christmas story	6

Table 22. Hanukkah Behaviors at Home, Heterosexual Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children Where the Woman Is Jewish vs. Where the Woman Is Not Jewish

Respondents in an Interfaith Couple Where the Woman Is Jewish		Respondents in an Interfaith Couple Where the Woman Is Not Jewish	
Which of the following are you planning to do in: own home	% (n = 202)	Which of the following are you planning to do in: own home	% (n = 146)
Light menorah	98	Light menorah	97
Give gifts	94	Give gifts	92
Put up Hanukkah decorations	68	Put up Hanukkah decorations	69
Sing/play Hanukkah music and songs	69	Sing/play Hanukkah music and songs	68
Eat/make Hanukkah foods	85	Eat/make Hanukkah foods	83
Watch Hanukkah movie(s)	15	Watch Hanukkah movie(s)	18
Tell the Hanukkah story	48	Tell the Hanukkah story	58
Play dreidel	73	Play dreidel	75

Table 23. Plans for Holiday Spending, Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children, Those Celebrating Christmas at Home vs. Those Who Are Celebrating Christmas Elsewhere

Respondents celebrating Christmas at home				Respondents not celebrating Christmas at home			
Given the current economic condition, will your spending on any of the following items change from last year:				Given the current economic condition, will your spending on any of the following items change from last year:			
Buying Hanukkah gifts	% (n = 155)	Buying Christmas gifts	% (n = 155)	Buying Hanukkah gifts	% (n = 148)	Buying Christmas gifts	% (n = 148)
Spend less	52	Spend less	65	Spend less	39	Spend less	51
Spend the same	48	Spend the same	33	Spend the same	57	Spend the same	41
Spend more	0	Spend more	0	Spend more	2	Spend more	0
Not applicable	0	Not applicable	2	Not applicable	1	Not applicable	7

Table 24. Plans for Holiday Giving, Jewish vs. Christian Causes, Intermarried Families Raising Jewish Children

Given the current economic condition, will your spending on any of the following items change from last year:			
Giving to Jewish causes	% (n = 303)	Giving to Christian causes	% (n = 303)
Spend less	24	Spend less	11
Spend the same	53	Spend the same	16
Spend more	2	Spend more	0
Not applicable	21	Not applicable	73

Table 25. Feelings About "Merry Christmas," Interfaith Families Raising Jewish Children

How do you feel when someone you do not know wishes you a "Merry Christmas"? I am:	% (n = 303)
Appreciative of the holiday cheer	51
Indifferent	27
Somewhat offended	19
Very offended	2
N/A	1