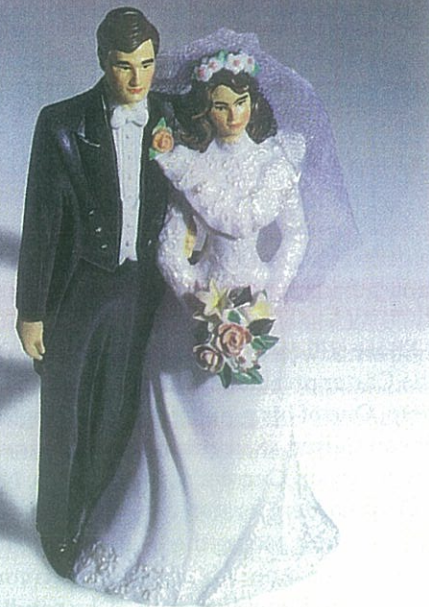


Faith

Do Interfaith Marriages Work?

New research shows high divorce rates and a surprising reason behind the problems.



BY TROY ANDERSON

DESPITE THE DRAMATIC RISE IN INTERFAITH MARRIAGES in America, many people never discuss their religious upbringings while dating or even what religion they want their children to practice. Those surprises were uncovered by Naomi Schaefer Riley as she was researching her new book, *'Til Faith Do Us Part: How Interfaith Marriage Is Transforming America*.

Many people get married in their late 20s and early 30s — a time when they're in a "single netherworld," often changing jobs, cities, apartments and romantic partners. During this period they are "away from institutional religion," says Riley. This spiritual downtime often ends once they get married, have children, and need to make decisions about what faith to bring their children up in, what religious services to attend, and how to celebrate holidays.

"One of the most striking findings of my survey is that more than half the people in interfaith marriages did not actually talk about how they wanted to raise their children before they got married, which kind of blew me away," says Riley, a *New York Post* columnist who is in an interfaith marriage.

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Author, *New York Post* columnist

As a result, Riley's research suggests that interfaith marriages are generally more unhappy than same-faith unions. Interfaith marriages are often more unstable as well, with particularly high divorce rates when certain religious combinations are involved.

Religion affects many practical aspects of life, says Riley, who was raised in a conservative Jewish home and married an ex-Jehovah's Witness who is now agnostic. They agreed to raise their three children in the Jewish faith.

"Should we go to church? Should we give money to the synagogue? Should we send our kids to a Jewish summer camp? Should we participate in activities at the mosque? These issues of how you spend your time, how you spend your money, and how you raise your children are the three things that marital counselors will tell you that couples argue about the most," says Riley.

The book, based on a national survey of 2,500 Americans in interfaith marriages, comes as the percentage of Americans in interfaith marriages has more than doubled from approximately 20 percent in the 1960s to 42 percent today. Riley attributes this phenomenon to several fac-