

# Transition to Jewish Adulthood: Education, Marriage and Fertility

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The period following the completion of high school is of critical importance for most young adults. Many key decisions are made during these years, including those about continuing education in colleges and universities, about first jobs and careers, and about marriage and the beginning of family formation. These decisions are often made jointly, since each has implications for the others. Decisions about educational attainment have a powerful impact on the jobs and careers young people can achieve; and continuing in school or not normally affects the timing of marriage and family building, often with longer term effects that unfold over the life course.

Jews in the United States follow a distinctive transition to adulthood. Both young men and women combine high educational expectations and career goals with later marriage and delayed family formation. However, because of the absence of longitudinal data, the interrelationships of education, marriage, and fertility in the life course of Jewish young adults in the United States have been largely inferred from cross-sectional distributions or superimposed on a model of the total U.S. population, with adjustments made for the extraordinary levels of education and socioeconomic status of Jews. We have not so far been able to disentangle the variety of family, educational, and career processes as they unfold during the early years subsequent to high school.

High educational attainment normally leads to delayed marriage and parenthood. This delay makes assessing and interpreting data on period and cohort fertility particularly problematic. Fertility patterns are of central concern for Jewish continuity in the United States in an era of social integration, high economic achievement, and growing intermarriage. Fertility rates of 1.6 have been estimated for American Jews in the 1980s, rates which assume low fertility for the homogamously married and even lower fertility for the intermarried, and these have been incorporated in widely cited projections of the American Jewish population published annually in the American Jewish Yearbook. They predict a rapid assimilation of the American Jewish population *through demographic processes*.

However, no national data on Jewish fertility have been available for the United States since the National Jewish Population Study of 1971, which covered completed fertility only for couples bearing children during the baby boom. Our understanding of Jewish fertility trends in the United States since that time, when dramatic declines in family size characterized most Western countries, has been drawn either from local community studies of varying quality and representativeness or from period data collected in neighboring countries. In some cases these studies provide support for

estimating low cohort fertility (Schmelz and DellaPergola, 1988); in others they do not (Goldscheider, 1986; Ritterband and Cohen, 1984).

Until new national data are available in the 1990s covering fertility between 1971 and 1991, this gap will remain open. However, the data we present fill part of it. They suggest that at least some cohorts of young Jews in the United States coming to adulthood in the 1970s and 1980s, who were marrying and bearing children in the 1980s, will attain family sizes well in excess of 1.6 children, approaching or even exceeding replacement fertility.

In this paper we present a systematic analysis of the relationships among educational attainment, marriage, intermarriage, and fertility, comparing Jews and non-Jews in the High School Class of 1972. These marriage and fertility patterns are analyzed in the context of the extraordinary educational attainment of Jewish young adults in the United States. They demonstrate the continuation of Jewish distinctiveness into the fourth generation of young adults, with differences in education as well as in the relationships between education and family processes; and they demonstrate as well Jewish demographic continuity in the United States.

## **Background and Data**

In 1985, at the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies, we presented analyses of a unique body of data, a longitudinal study of young men and women, Jews and non-Jews, of the High School Class of 1972, who had been observed over the seven years since they finished high school while they began completing their education and embarked on career and family building between 1972 and 1979 (Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1989). These young people finished high school with above-replacement fertility expectations. Young Jews expected 2.2 children, more than those with no religious affiliation (1.9), about the same number as Protestants (2.1) and nearly as many as Catholics (2.4). But by 1979, the last interview year available to us, all groups had lowered their expectations, with only Catholics continuing to expect greater than replacement levels, although each of the other groups remained close to 2.0. They had entered their 20s during the trough of the baby bust, and were reassessing their family size goals in the light of the new realities of school, work, and the sex role revolution. In this paper, we extend our view of their lives another seven years. We examine data from the latest reinterview round completed in 1986 and compare these patterns with the data from previous interviews. During this second period of seven years, these young people had to grapple with actually beginning their careers, finding mates, and raising families. They are still in their very early 30s, and the wives of the young men of this cohort are likely to be even younger, so there remains a considerable number of years left of exposure to the probability of childbearing. Nevertheless, it is not too soon to ask: How have their expectations about family size fared? Are they being realized and are they likely to be?

Although there is a debate among social scientists about the value of data on fertility expectations (see the review in Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1989; and the articles in Hendershot and Placek, 1981; Freedman et al., 1980; Morgan, 1982, 1985; O'Connell and Rogers, 1983), there is a consensus that such data can be of

substantial help in the interpretation of fertility patterns as they unfold. However, they are particularly useful when the tempo of childbearing is changing and hence when cross-sectional, period measures are most likely to be misleading (Campbell, 1981). People adjust their timing plans more easily than they do their completed family size goals, a fact which is reflected in the greater stability of cohort compared with period fertility rates (Campbell, 1981; Westoff, 1981).

Birth expectation data have been found to be most useful for subpopulations who plan the size and spacing of their children efficiently. Longitudinal studies have shown that the fertility expectations among the more educated and among Jews are the most likely to accurately reflect reproductive behavior (Bumpass and Westoff, 1970; Westoff, 1981; Hendershot and Placek, 1981). Our previous analysis of the data from the 1973, 1976, and 1979 interview waves showed much greater stability in fertility expectations for Jewish young adults than for those of other religious groups (Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1989). Hence, we shall continue to focus on the birth expectations of this cohort, but we shall present them in the context of actual educational, marital, and fertility behavior, allowing us to assess their value further, given the distinctive patterns young Jews in the United States have followed in their transition to adulthood.

The data which we analyze are drawn from the National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972 (NLS72), a large scale survey supported by the National Center for Educational Statistics in the United States. The survey was designed to provide statistical profiles on a nationally representative sample of students as they moved out of high school into the critical years of early adulthood. The base year of the survey was 1972. We examine data from the 1986 interview round and compare these data with the 1973 and 1979 results, the first and last of the prior interviews that included questions on expected family size.<sup>1</sup> The data analysis compares Jews with those who are non-Black and non-Hispanic.<sup>2</sup>

Young adults were asked at the 1972 interview: "What religion were you brought up in?" We used this to construct the following religious categories: Jews, Protestants (with whom we combined the small number of other religions), Catholics, and those of no religion. The question on expected family size was: "How many children altogether do you eventually expect to have?" with pre-coded responses from 0 to "4 or more" in 1973 and 1979 but with responses that allowed more precision at the upper levels in 1986.

In the 1986 reinterview we were also able to examine the religion of the spouse (of those in their first marriage only). The question asked was, "What is (was) the religion of your spouse?"<sup>3</sup> Combining this information with the 1972 data on religious origins of the respondent allowed us to construct four categories of marriages: (1) Jews married to Jews; (2) Jews married to non-Jews; (3) Non-Jews married to Jews; (4) Non-Jews married to non-Jews.

These data are problematic for the study of intermarriage for several reasons. Although religious identification may have changed over the 14-year period, no data are available to indicate change in the religious self-identification of the respondent or the intensity of religious identification. Nor can we tell the basis of the respondent's identification of his or her spouse: no data are available on formal or informal religious conversions or the current religious self-identification of the

spouse. However, although these limitations preclude the use of these data to study intermarriage, they provide a valuable, nationally representative approximation of the fertility expectations and behavior of the religiously intermarried in this cohort of young adults.

Other variables that we use in the analysis are straightforward. We shall examine progress in marital status, as young adults move from being single (never married), to married, separated and divorced. In 1986, a new category for those "cohabiting" was added. We included cohabiting persons with the never married after detailed analysis showed that their patterns were most like the single and most unlike the married. Since the sampling frame of the High School Class of 1972 was stratified by the racial and socioeconomic characteristics of the schools, a weighting system was used to obtain representative units (Tourangeau, et al., 1987). All the data presented are therefore weighted; however, the number of cases listed is the actual number present in the sample.

## **Research Questions**

We shall examine these data in order to address several sets of questions about the transition to adulthood among Jews and non-Jews of the High School Class of 1972:

1. What are the fertility expectations of the High School class of 1972 as they unfolded over the 14-year period? How stable are these expectations over time? How do the fertility expectations of young Jewish adults differ from those of non-Jews? Do the levels of fertility expectations continue to be sufficient for family or population replacement, if they are realized?

2. What changes in marital status and educational attainment have occurred over the 14-year period for Jews and for non-Jews? Do the links between marriage patterns and educational attainment differ between Jews and non-Jews?

3. How have the fertility expectations of Jews and non-Jews changed as increasing proportions of this cohort have married and significant numbers have attained higher levels of education during the 14-year period? How is fertility linked to educational attainment among Jews and non-Jews?

4. How are fertility expectations and fertility behavior related to religious homogeneity in the High School Class of 1972?

## **A First Look at Family Size Expectations**

Data in Table 1 show both the distribution by size and the mean number of children expected in 1973, 1979, and 1986 for these young adults by their religion when they were growing up. A full distribution was available from the 1986 responses to calculate the mean number of children expected; for 1973 and 1979, the means are estimates since the question asked then only allowed for "four or more children" as a response. We used 4.5 for this group in order to calculate means for these two rounds of interviews, which is probably an overestimate for Jews and a slight underestimate for Catholics.

TABLE 1. NUMBER OF CHILDREN EXPECTED IN 1973, 1979, 1986, BY RELIGION - HIGH SCHOOL COHORT OF 1972

| Religion           | Number of Children |    |    |    |    | N     | Mean* |
|--------------------|--------------------|----|----|----|----|-------|-------|
|                    | 0                  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4+ |       |       |
| <b>Jews</b>        |                    |    |    |    |    |       |       |
| 1973               | 9                  | 4  | 59 | 21 | 8  | 388   | 2.20  |
| 1979               | 13                 | 7  | 57 | 18 | 4  | 339   | 1.96  |
| 1986               | 16                 | 8  | 53 | 18 | 6  | 265   | 1.93  |
| <b>Protestants</b> |                    |    |    |    |    |       |       |
| 1973               | 11                 | 5  | 56 | 19 | 9  | 5,495 | 2.13  |
| 1979               | 13                 | 11 | 55 | 16 | 7  | 5,182 | 1.96  |
| 1986               | 15                 | 12 | 45 | 18 | 9  | 5,690 | 1.94  |
| <b>Catholics</b>   |                    |    |    |    |    |       |       |
| 1973               | 10                 | 4  | 43 | 26 | 17 | 2,801 | 2.43  |
| 1979               | 12                 | 7  | 50 | 22 | 10 | 2,498 | 2.14  |
| 1986               | 15                 | 10 | 44 | 22 | 9  | 2,758 | 1.98  |
| <b>No religion</b> |                    |    |    |    |    |       |       |
| 1973               | 21                 | 6  | 51 | 13 | 10 | 429   | 1.89  |
| 1979               | 20                 | 11 | 53 | 12 | 5  | 386   | 1.74  |
| 1986               | 17                 | 14 | 41 | 18 | 11 | 405   | 1.89  |

a. Based on a full distribution for 1986 and on an estimate of 4.5 for the "4+ category" in 1973 and 1979. Weighted numbers were used to calculate both the distributions and the means.

Source for all tables: Re-interviews of High School Class of 1972.

The new data show stability in family size expectations. The decline between 1973 and 1979 from 2.2 to 1.9 did not continue in the second seven-year period, so that in 1986, the Jews of the High School Class of 1972 still expected 1.9 children. The increase in the proportion expecting to be childless between 1973 and 1979 (from 9% to 13%) did continue to a certain extent, reaching 16 percent in 1986. Stability in average family size expectations between 1979 and 1986 was generally characteristic of the other religious groups, although Catholics, who decreased their expectations most between 1973 and 1979, continued to decline, reaching 2.0 in 1986 as a result of sharp increases in the proportion expecting no children or only one child, and a sharp decrease in proportion expecting four or more children. (Part of the final decrease in the second period may reflect the exclusion of Hispanic Catholics in the calculations for the 1986 round.)

Thus, there was a clear convergence in the level of fertility expectations between Jews and non-Jews by 1986. (For comparable findings see Goldscheider and Mosher, 1988.) In 1986, there are no significant differences in the average family size expectations of Jews, Protestants, Catholics, and those of no religion. Some differences remain in the detailed parity-specific patterns of family size expectations: Jews continue to be more likely to expect two children than others and fewer Jews expect either four or more children or only one child.

How can these similarities occur? Completed fertility has traditionally been lower among Jews than for either of these two Christian groups, reflecting higher Jewish levels of education, as well as many other differences among these groups. Have these groups also converged in their educational patterns? And are Jews likely to be marrying later than others, which should reduce their fertility expectations? Are these

similarities the result of continued wishful thinking of Jews who are still never-married in their 30s?

### Marital and Educational Levels

In order to evaluate religious differences in marriage and educational patterns and to assess their links with fertility, we examine patterns of marriage and education for these religious groups in 1986. Data in Table 2 show clearly the significantly higher level of nonmarriage among Jews of this cohort. Among men, fully 38% of the Jews had not married 14 years after graduating from high school, compared with 18% of Protestants and 27% of both Catholics and those who indicated no religious affiliation. And although more women have married, their patterns are otherwise quite similar. About 30% of the Jews had never married, compared with 15% of the Protestants, 19% of the Catholics, and 26% of those with no religious affiliation. And while the divorce level for Jewish men is significantly lower than others (2% are formerly married), the proportion of Jewish women who were formerly married is similar to the level among others.

The high level of nonmarriage among Jews poses problems for the analysis of fertility, since it can mean either children deferred or children never to be born. However, these marital patterns are consistent with the amazing differences in this cohort between Jews and others in the level of education attained by 1986. We compare Jews here only with others who reached their senior year in high school (i.e., eliminating those who dropped out of high school before their senior year); and we

TABLE 2. MARITAL STATUS AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN 1986, BY RELIGION AND SEX (PERCENT) - HIGH SCHOOL COHORT OF 1972

|                               | Jews | Protestants | Catholics | No religion |
|-------------------------------|------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| <b>Marital Status</b>         |      |             |           |             |
| <b>Males:</b>                 | 100  | 100         | 100       | 100         |
| Never married <sup>a</sup>    | 38   | 18          | 27        | 28          |
| Married                       | 60   | 75          | 67        | 58          |
| Formerly married              | 2    | 8           | 7         | 14          |
| <b>Females:</b>               | 100  | 100         | 100       | 100         |
| Never married <sup>a</sup>    | 31   | 15          | 19        | 26          |
| Married                       | 60   | 73          | 71        | 64          |
| Formerly married              | 9    | 12          | 10        | 10          |
| <b>Educational Attainment</b> |      |             |           |             |
| <b>Males:</b>                 | 100  | 100         | 100       | 100         |
| Some college or less          | 13   | 52          | 50        | 64          |
| College graduate              | 46   | 32          | 32        | 18          |
| Master's degree               | 14   | 10          | 10        | 16          |
| Ph.D., M.D., etc.             | 27   | 5           | 8         | 2           |
| <b>Females:</b>               | 100  | 100         | 100       | 100         |
| Some college or less          | 18   | 61          | 56        | 63          |
| College graduate              | 44   | 29          | 31        | 25          |
| Master's degree               | 30   | 9           | 11        | 10          |
| Ph.D., M.D., etc.             | 8    | 1           | 2         | 2           |

a. Includes a small number who reported themselves as "cohabiting."

did not include among non-Jews the two major minority groups in the United States that are characterized by below-average levels of educational attainment (blacks and hispanics).

Nevertheless, even in this comparison, both Jewish men and women have attained extraordinarily high levels of education. While about half the non-Jewish men and nearly 60% of non-Jewish women did not complete four years of college, fully 87% of the Jewish men and 82% of the Jewish women graduated from college. Four out of ten of both Jewish men and women from the High School Class of 1972 had obtained a post-graduate degree (masters or doctorate) by 1986. The proportion of Jewish men receiving a doctorate is five times that of Protestant men; the proportion of Jewish women achieving that level is eight times that of Protestant women. Following conventional sex role definitions, this should lead to a low level of marriage, particularly among educated Jewish women.

But is the Jews' low proportion married by 1986 the result of their higher levels of education attained? Data in Table 3 show, in fact, that more educated Jewish men and women have a lower proportion never married—reversing the relationship found among those with conventional sex role definitions. Only 10% of the men and 15% of the women with the highest levels of education had not married by 1986; the comparable figure for Jews who did not continue in school after their college graduation was 35% for men and 27% for women. This is the reverse of the pattern shown by Catholic men and women and by Protestant women, who still follow the conventional pattern; and while Protestant men also show a positive relationship between education and proportion ever married, it is much weaker than among Jews.

These differences in the relationship between education and marriage mean that Jews are most similar to Protestants and Catholics at the highest educational levels, differing only among those who did not go on beyond college. Thus Protestant and Jewish men with doctorates have the same proportion never-married (though this proportion is significantly higher than that of Catholics with the same educational level). There are also few differences by religion among those attaining a master's degree. However, large differences by religion remain in the group who attained only

TABLE 3. PROPORTION NEVER MARRIED IN 1986 BY RELIGION, SEX AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT - HIGH SCHOOL COHORT OF 1972

| Educational attainment in 1986 | Jews | Protestants | Catholics       | No religion     |
|--------------------------------|------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Both sexes:</b>             |      |             |                 |                 |
| College graduate               | 35   | 16          | 22              | 29              |
| M.A.                           | 29   | 22          | 32              | 57              |
| Ph.D., M.D., etc.              | 11   | 13          | 43              | 39              |
| <b>Males:</b>                  |      |             |                 |                 |
| College graduate               | 47   | 17          | 28              | 37              |
| M.A.                           | 31   | 21          | 25              | 32 <sup>a</sup> |
| Ph.D., M.D., etc.              | 10   | 10          | 43              | <sup>b</sup>    |
| <b>Females:</b>                |      |             |                 |                 |
| College graduate               | 27   | 14          | 20              | 38              |
| M.A.                           | 27   | 24          | 39 <sup>a</sup> | 21              |
| Ph.D., M.D., etc.              | 15   | 25          | 42              | <sup>b</sup>    |

a. Between 10 and 20 cases.

b. Less than 10 cases.

a college education.

One possible explanation for this great difference in marital status between Jews and non-Jews in the "only college" group focuses on the differences between their educational *distributions*. For non-Jews, those completing college are *near the top* of the educational distribution for this sample (and are even higher if those not reaching the senior year in high school are included). Only 15-18% of non-Jews attained more than this level of education. But for Jews, those who "only" attended college are in the bottom half of the educational distribution for their reference group of fellow Jews—family, neighbors, and friends. In the economic climate of the late 1970s and early 1980s, those without a professional degree who were attempting to attain a professional level of living before making decisions about family formation may have needed even more time, and faced greater uncertainties, than those continuing in school. But it is also likely that this group has still not reconciled their new sex role definitions with conventional approaches to family life.

### Marriage and Fertility Expectations

What do these findings imply for the relationship between marital status and family size expectations? We divided the three interview rounds into those who were never married and those who were ever married at each date and examined family size expectations within marital status categories. These results are presented in Table 4.

For each of the religious groups, differences in family size expectations between those few who had married in 1973 and the never married were relatively small, but this difference had increased substantially by 1986. Taking Jews as an example (although the same pattern characterizes the other groups), in 1973 those who had not married expected 2.1 children while those who had married expected 2.4; by 1979 both groups had dropped to 1.9 and 2.1 but remained close to each other. However, by 1986 the gap had grown as those remaining never-married dwindled—1.3 for the never-married and 2.2 for the ever-married. Among the never-married in 1986, fully 35% of Jews expected to be childless.

These comparative data also reveal great similarity among religious groups in family size expectations when marital status is controlled. In 1986, Jews, Protestants, and Catholics expected 2.2 children on average if they had ever married and 1.3 children if they had never married. However, among both marital status groups, Jews are less likely to expect no children than those of other religious backgrounds. Among the married, this is balanced by the lower proportion of Jews who expect larger (3 or more) families. Among the never-married, this may reflect the later ages at marriage among Jews, whose marriage market remains open longer than it does among other groups.

Focusing more specifically on the relationship between marriage and birth expectations among Jews, we also see some interesting life cycle patterns. Although the period from 1973 to 1979 was one of dropping fertility expectations (and fertility) for all groups, it is likely that part of the decrease in the births expected among the ever-married between 1973 and 1979 reflected the dilution of a very traditional, early

marrying and high fertility group (few Jews marry by age 18 or 19), with more "modern" and less family-centered young Jews who were marrying at average ages. But although many have assumed that Jews who marry at older ages will have fewer children than those marrying younger, this is not evident in changes in the fertility expectations patterns of the ever-married between 1979 and 1986. The fertility expectations of the married actually increased slightly over the 1979-86 period as their ranks were swelled with those who had delayed marriage into their late 20s and early 30s. Either late marriage has not depressed their fertility expectations or the fertility expectations of the married have increased in the 1980s. This result reinforces the importance of the continued lower proportions of the never-married who expect no children among Jews, suggesting not only that many more are likely to marry, but also that these very late marriers might expect about two children, much like those who married between 1979 and 1986.

**TABLE 4. AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN EXPECTED AND PERCENT EXPECTING TO BE CHILDLESS IN 1973, 1979 AND 1986, BY MARITAL STATUS AND RELIGION - HIGH SCHOOL COHORT OF 1972**

| Marital status and religion      | Average children expected <sup>a</sup> | Percent expecting no children | Absolute number |
|----------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Never married<sup>b</sup></b> |  |                               |                 |
| 1973                             |  |                               |                 |
| Jews                             | 2.14                                   | 9.7                           | 213             |
| Protestants                      | 1.99                                   | 17.7                          | 1,466           |
| Catholics                        | 2.27                                   | 15.7                          | 858             |
| No religion                      | 1.94                                   | 28.7                          | 159             |
| 1979                             |  |                               |                 |
| Jews                             | 1.86                                   | 17.6                          | 214             |
| Protestants                      | 1.78                                   | 22.9                          | 1,554           |
| Catholics                        | 1.89                                   | 21.9                          | 892             |
| No religion                      | 1.66                                   | 26.0                          | 158             |
| 1986                             |  |                               |                 |
| Jews                             | 1.32                                   | 35.4                          | 94              |
| Protestants                      | 1.25                                   | 43.7                          | 960             |
| Catholics                        | 1.31                                   | 42.2                          | 581             |
| No religion                      | 1.41                                   | 39.1                          | 92              |
| <b>Ever-married</b>              |  |                               |                 |
| 1973                             |  |                               |                 |
| Jews                             | 2.41                                   | 4.3                           | 114             |
| Protestants                      | 2.25                                   | 6.7                           | 3,556           |
| Catholic                         | 2.55                                   | 6.2                           | 1,591           |
| No religion                      | 2.17                                   | 10.4                          | 221             |
| 1979                             |  |                               |                 |
| Jews                             | 2.11                                   | 4.9                           | 124             |
| Protestants                      | 2.05                                   | 7.8                           | 3,575           |
| Catholics                        | 2.30                                   | 5.8                           | 1,580           |
| No religion                      | 1.84                                   | 13.5                          | 224             |
| 1986                             |  |                               |                 |
| Jews                             | 2.21                                   | 5.1                           | 171             |
| Protestants                      | 2.12                                   | 13.0                          | 4,721           |
| Catholics                        | 2.24                                   | 9.8                           | 2,170           |
| No religion                      | 2.13                                   | 11.9                          | 312             |

a. See note a. to Table 1.

b. See note a. to Table 2.

## Education and Fertility Expectations

What do these data imply for the relationship between educational attainment and family size expectations? Do those with high education, who were more likely to have married, also expect to have more children? Are Jews again unique?

Data in Table 5 show the number of children expected by educational level for Jews and non-Jews of this cohort. Again, the data reveal that educational attainment is directly rather than inversely related to the fertility expectations of Jews, a pattern that has characterized the Jews for the last generation (Goldscheider, 1986). Only among Jews is there a clear pattern of higher fertility expectations and lower proportions expecting no children as education increases. Jews with doctorates expect 2.2 children and merely 11% expect to be childless; Jews with "only" college degrees expect just 1.8 children, and 21% expect to be childless. The reverse pattern characterizes those who have no religious affiliation and is somewhat characteristic of Protestants as well: those with higher levels of education have lower family size expectations. Catholics present a mixed picture with regard to the two kinds of expectations discussed.

TABLE 5. AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN EXPECTED AND PERCENT EXPECTING TO BE CHILDLESS, IN 1986, BY RELIGION AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT - HIGH SCHOOL COHORT OF 1972

| Religion and educational attainment | Average children expected | Percent expecting no children |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Jews</b>                         |                           |                               |
| Some college                        | 1.75                      | 12.2                          |
| College graduate                    | 1.84                      | 20.9                          |
| M.A.                                | 1.89                      | 10.7                          |
| Ph.D., M.D., etc.                   | 2.15                      | 10.6                          |
| <b>Protestants</b>                  |                           |                               |
| Some college                        | 1.92                      | 17.8                          |
| College graduate                    | 1.93                      | 19.4                          |
| M.A.                                | 1.93                      | 17.4                          |
| Ph.D., M.D., etc.                   | 1.73                      | 24.0                          |
| <b>Catholics</b>                    |                           |                               |
| Some college                        | 2.08                      | 13.2                          |
| College graduate                    | 1.94                      | 15.7                          |
| M.A.                                | 2.04                      | 15.1                          |
| Ph.D., M.D., etc.                   | 2.06                      | 16.1                          |
| <b>No religion</b>                  |                           |                               |
| Some college                        | 2.08                      | 10.3                          |
| College graduate                    | 1.71                      | 27.4                          |
| M.A., Ph.D., M.D., etc.             | 1.18                      | 45.8                          |

## Completed Fertility

We have dealt so far with the family size expectations of Jews and others. The higher rates of nonmarriage among Jews and the likely later age at marriage among those already married, together with the higher levels of education attained should

combine to delay the actual timing of childbearing among Jews relative to non-Jews. However, although this cohort still has a dozen more years for women and longer for men to have children, it is important to look to see how they have done so far. What about the patterns of actual childbearing 14 years after high school? Do data on actual fertility inform us about the family formation distinctiveness of Jews or shed light on the relationship between education and fertility (expectations and behavior)?

Data in Table 6 examine the proportion childless (as an indicator of a family building strategy) for Jews and others who have ever married. Again, the exceptional Jewish pattern is apparent. Of Jews who had ever married, fully 40% were still childless (39% of the men and 45% of the women). These are levels that are around one-and-a-half to two times higher than the level among non-Jews.

How do these patterns of childlessness link to the extraordinary educational levels attained by this cohort of U.S. Jews? The lower part of Table 6 reveals two important patterns. First, there is a direct relationship between educational level and the proportion childless both among Jews and non-Jews: as education increases among both Jewish men and women, the proportion with no children increases. Second, much of the exceptional pattern of *current* Jewish fertility behavior disappears when educational levels are controlled. For example, the proportion still childless among Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant women college graduates is about the same, as is the level of childlessness among Jewish and Protestant men who have the highest levels of education. Only among those with a master's degree do Jews have significantly higher levels of childlessness than non-Jews, perhaps reflecting their greater likelihood of planning to go on beyond the master's degree. Education is clearly having similar effects on the timing of fertility among these groups. And Jews' higher level of educational attainment is pushing their childbearing toward the older ages.

TABLE 6. PROPORTION CHILDLESS IN 1986 AMONG THE EVER-MARRIED, BY RELIGION, SEX AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT - HIGH SCHOOL COHORT OF 1972

| Sex and educational attainment | Jews | Protestants | Catholics | No religion |
|--------------------------------|------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| Total:                         | 42.3 | 23.1        | 25.8      | 26.5        |
| Males                          | 39.3 | 24.2        | 29.1      | 28.7        |
| Females                        | 44.8 | 22.0        | 21.4      | 21.1        |
| Both sexes:                    |      |             |           |             |
| Some college                   | 47.3 | 26.2        | 29.3      | 31.7        |
| College graduate               | 30.4 | 33.8        | 31.9      | 45.8        |
| M.A.                           | 53.3 | 38.5        | 35.1      | 51.9        |
| Ph.D., M.D., etc.              | 57.0 | 56.3        | 45.7      | *           |
| Males:                         |      |             |           |             |
| College graduate               | 26.4 | 32.3        | 33.3      | 41.9        |
| M.A.                           | 51.8 | 31.7        | 31.0      | 61.1        |
| Ph.D., M.D., etc.              | 52.1 | 55.8        | 41.9      | *           |
| Females:                       |      |             |           |             |
| College graduate               | 33.4 | 35.3        | 30.4      | 49.6        |
| M.A.                           | 54.0 | 46.1        | 40.3      | 43.4        |
| Ph.D., M.D., etc.              | 73.0 | 58.8        | 60.4      | *           |

a. Less than 10 cases.

Hence, the effect of education on current childlessness is the reverse of that for both fertility expectations and for marriage: although the most educated are the most likely to be married and to expect the most children, so far they have had the fewest children. This suggests that high levels of educational attainment do not result in greater postponement of marriage among Jews and are unlikely to lead to smaller family sizes. This reinforces our view that an important part of current childlessness represents a temporary postponement of childbearing among the most educated, not a shift toward less than a two-child family size. The current low fertility of this cohort, then, is unlikely to characterize them when they are interviewed four to five years later in the 1990-91 national survey. The demographic erosion of the community through the low fertility of Jewish couples seems unlikely.

### **Intermarriage and Fertility Expectations**

But in the 1970s and 1980s, it became increasingly likely that the marriages Jews made were not Jewish marriages. Intermarriage has been posited as another source of demographic erosion for Jews in the United States (DellaPergola and Schmelz, 1989). Those who marry persons of different religious backgrounds are expected to have smaller families, even if all their children are raised as Jews (an issue which these data cannot address). Another powerful feature of the longitudinal data from the High School Class of 1972 is its ability to examine the fertility patterns of the intermarried. In the past, there was some scattered evidence that the fertility of the Jewish intermarried was in fact lower than the fertility of the Jewish intramarried (DellaPergola and Schmelz, 1989; Goldstein and Goldscheider, 1968).

Table 7 shows fertility data from the High School Class of 1972 for three categories of respondents in their first marriages in 1986: (1) Both spouses Jewish; (2) One spouse Jewish; (3) Both spouses non-Jewish.<sup>4</sup> These data show clearly that the fertility expectations of the Jewish intermarried are not significantly different from those of couples where both were Jewish. The average expected family size of intramarried Jews was 2.26 compared to 2.31 among the intermarried. Within educational levels, the fertility expectations of the intra- and the inter-married are also similar. Moreover, the bottom panel of Table 7 indicates that the actual proportion childless among intermarried and intramarried Jews is the same, and that too characterizes those who have completed college and those with M.A. degrees. The only exceptional group are the small number with doctoral or professional degrees, who are the most likely to be childless of any group. (Data not presented indicate that this is particularly characteristic of Jewish men married to non-Jewish women.)

The data relating intermarriage to fertility expectations and behavior in this cohort of Jewish young adults in the United States are clearly limited by the definitions used and the details available. Nevertheless, they raise important questions about the changes that have occurred in the fertility patterns of the intermarried as the rates of intermarriage have increased and as the level of acceptance of the intermarried within the Jewish community has increased as well, with the result that they are now included as a part of the Jewish community. As

**TABLE 7. NUMBER OF CHILDREN EXPECTED, PROPORTION EXPECTING TO BE CHILDLESS AND PROPORTION CHILDLESS IN 1986, BY RELIGIOUS INTERMARRIAGE AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT - HIGH SCHOOL COHORT OF 1972 (FIRST MARRIAGES ONLY)**

| Number of children expected and educational attainment | Both spouses Jewish | One Jewish spouse | Both spouses non-Jewish |
|--|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Number of children expected (percent) <sup>a</sup>     |                     |                   |                         |
| <b>N</b>   | 97                  | 129               | 6,534                   |
| <b>Total</b>   | 100.0               | 100.0             | 100.0                   |
| 0  | 6.4                 | 5.5               | 10.4                    |
| 1  | 5.3                 | 8.1               | 12.3                    |
| 2  | 54.6                | 47.0              | 48.3                    |
| 3  | 26.2                | 30.5              | 21.0                    |
| 4+   | 7.5                 | 8.9               | 8.0                     |
| <b>Mean</b>  | 2.26                | 2.31              | 2.09                    |
| <b>Educational attainment</b>                          |                     |                   |                         |
| College graduate                                       | 2.49                | 2.56              | 2.14                    |
| M.A.   | 2.28                | 2.05              | 2.19                    |
| Ph.D., M.D., etc.                                      | 2.15                | 1.93              | 1.99                    |
| Proportion childless in 1986                           |                     |                   |                         |
| <b>Educational attainment</b>                          |                     |                   |                         |
| Total  | 35.6                | 34.2              | 22.5                    |
| College graduate                                       | 23.6                | 24.5              | 30.9                    |
| M.A.   | 49.2                | 35.1              | 37.1                    |
| Ph.D., M.D., etc.                                      | 34.9                | 76.2              | 49.2                    |

a. Indicating proportion expecting to be childless.

intermarriage is no longer a marginal phenomenon in terms of level, it seems that this has removed much of the pressure on the intermarried to remain childless in order to reduce the discomfort of their families and the community in dealing with their children. This large and growing group of children of the intermarried poses an important challenge for the Jewish community, so that the incorporation of their intermarried parents extends also to them, and supports them in making their own transition to a Jewish adulthood.

### Concluding Remarks

This analysis has focused on two questions. How does the transition to adulthood differ between Jews and non-Jews, Protestants, Catholics, and those of no religious affiliation in the United States? And what are the implications of these patterns of transition for the timing of fertility and eventual completed fertility for this cohort of young adults marrying and bearing children in the 1970s and 1980s?

The results portray a transition to adulthood that is very different among young Jewish men and women, marked by extraordinarily high educational attainment leading to the delay of childbearing, but not the delay of marriage. Jews who are most likely to delay marriage are those with lower, not higher educational levels, and they have lower birth expectations, as well. How can we account for this pattern?

The traditional interpretation of the negative relationship between high levels of education (particularly for women) and lower levels of familism as indexed by marriage and parenthood focuses on the conflict between intensive familial and career roles. But there is increasing evidence that this "conflict" is greatly reduced among "modern" egalitarian couples, who have found it possible to reduce the economic pressures on men that frequently pose barriers to marriage by adding in the wife's income, and who reduce the time pressures on women that frequently result from combining work and family by sharing in family and household care (F. Goldscheider and Waite, forthcoming).

If so, it appears that these couples are found most frequently among Jews at the highest educational levels, and they are evidently not only forming modern marriages, but expecting to incorporate children within them. It is at lower educational levels that Jews, like others in the United States, are still continuing to struggle with the conflicting expectations posed by traditional definitions of male and female roles and the sex role revolution. The return to replacement fertility is being led by the most modern couples, not by the growth in religious traditionalism.

Thus, although some post baby boom cohorts may eventually be found not to have reached replacement fertility, these cohorts are likely to have been those whose peak years of childbearing fell in the midst of the "baby bust" of the early 1970s, who had too little time to react to the rapid changes in the definitions of the roles of women under way at that time. This phenomenon also occurred for cohorts who came of age during the depression era of the 1930s, though for different reasons. Marriage and fertility recovered, but not simply because the economy recovered. It is likely that even if the economy had not done so, the next younger cohorts would have returned to marriage and parenthood, since they would have had time to adjust their expectations to changed circumstances. This appears to be happening again, as young people again adjust their expectations to the changed educational and sex role environment of the 1980s. Families, particularly Jewish families, are resilient. Concern about Jewish continuity in the United States, then, should begin to focus less on the quantity of families formed and turn more to the quality of Jewish life in those families.

## Notes

1. Data for 1976 were also examined and convey a consistent intermediate picture. These are not presented here in tabular form.
2. In the original analysis (Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1989) we did not exclude Hispanics, who are primarily Catholics, and we included only a subsample of non-Jews. See F. Goldscheider and DaVanzo, (1985; 1989) for more details on this sampling procedure. The 1986 reinterview was performed on a subgroup of the original sampling frame, and experienced continuing attrition (about 10%), reducing the Jews available to study from 339 to 265. (For more information on this interview, see Tourangeau, et al., 1987.) As a result, we did not subsample again (and actually have slightly more non-Jews in the 1986 panel. However, we did eliminate Hispanics, sharpening the comparisons between Jews and others. This is likely to have resulted in a slight lowering of Catholic fertility.

3. We excluded the formerly married in the analysis of religious intermarriage. How birth expectations are changed in the event of divorce and how this process varies by the religious affiliation of the first spouse are interesting questions, but beyond the scope of this analysis.
4. Note again that these data are based on questions asked in 1972 about the respondent's religious origins and in 1986 about the religion of the spouse. Since the fertility expectations of the intermarried were the same whether the Jewish spouse was the respondent or the respondent's spouse, we have pooled their responses. Hence, the number of marriages with one Jewish spouse cannot be used to construct individual or couple rates of intermarriage, since these Jewish spouses only entered the sample through their marriage to non-Jews. Based on the data we have, however, it appears that 45% who married among those raised as Jews in the National Longitudinal Study panel of 1972 married non-Jews.

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