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## Gender and American Jews

Harriet Hartman, Moshe Hartman, Sylvia Barack Fishman

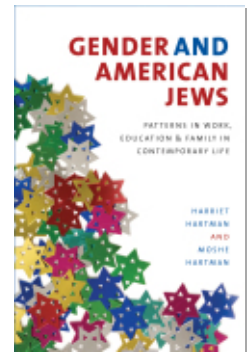
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## CHAPTER 3

# Family Patterns of American Jews

This chapter explores the distinctiveness of American Jewish family patterns and analyzes the gender differences within them. As mentioned earlier, historically Jews have demonstrated two contradictory tendencies, which make this an interesting case. On the one hand, the family is central to Jewish life and values, and much of Jewish life takes place within the family. Children are highly valued and not only are central to the transmission of Jewish identity, but also are related to heightened Jewish practice and communal involvement. The family's importance was strengthened by the diaspora experience, as in many settings the family was the only intact Jewish institution. In the United States today, however, the family institution may be seen as weakened, with a declining rate of marriage, a higher rate of divorce, and a decreasing size of families (Coltrane and Collins, 2001, ch. 5). At issue is the extent to which American Jews have been affected by declining familism in the broader society. Furthermore, Jewish integration into U.S. society may also have diminished the need for family centrality, as institutions of formal and informal Jewish socialization, such as supplementary and day schools, summer camps, and youth trips to Israel, flourish (Cohen, 2004). As immigrants to the United States, Jews relied heavily on the family to perpetuate Judaism (Heschel, 2004; Prell, 2007b), but with a majority of American Jews now being at least third generation, the immigrant experience may have less influence, and with this, the family's centrality may diminish.

Their traditional familistic orientation contradicts a second tendency among American Jews: their relatively high educational and occupational achievement, factors that are usually associated with smaller families and low fertility. High educational and occupational achievement also undermines traditional gender roles based on the centrality of women's domestic role. Although Jewish women have a long history of providing or helping to provide for the family's economic needs, their primary focus has been the

good of the family rather than self-actualization (Fishman, 2005). In contemporary U.S. society, individualistic motivations predominate (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swindler, and Tipton, 1985/1996; Fishman, 2005), which may further undermine familistic motivations for secular achievement. The norm of small families might easily be reconciled with strong individualistic secular ambitions. Therefore, traditional Jewish familism may be further undermined by contemporary patterns of secular achievement and their ramifications in family life. This chapter examines contemporary American Jewish family behavior to determine how distinctive it is from the broader U.S. society, focusing particularly on comparing American Jewish men and women with those in the broader society who share similar educational characteristics. The chapter also lays the foundation for examining how family behavior is related to the secular achievement of men, women, and couples, which we address in subsequent chapters.

The distinctiveness of American Jewish families has not gone unnoticed in previous research. Based on the General Social Survey compiled from 1972 to 2000, Smith's (2005) "statistical portrait" of the distinctiveness of American Jews provides evidence of the traditional familistic tendencies of American Jews, as well as the smaller family size. In comparison with the national sample of the broader U.S. population, American Jews have a higher rate of marriage, a lower rate of divorce, and a higher proportion of individuals growing up in intact families. At the same time, American Jews have smaller families than the broader population. Although American Jews remain distinctive in these respects, because the number of children among the broader population has been decreasing at an even faster rate than among American Jews, the differences are narrowing. The initial report on the 2000–01 National Jewish Population Survey (United Jewish Communities, 2003c) suggested that the overall percentage of American Jewish men and women ever married was comparable to the percentage of those who had ever been married in the broader U.S. population (based on data from the 2000 U.S. Population Census), although American Jews delay marriage and therefore have much lower rates of marriage until around age 45 for men and age 35 for women (see also Xu, Hudspeth, and Bartkowski, 2005). In this respect, distinctive American Jewish familism appears to have waned. American Jewish women continue to have fewer children than do women in the broader U.S. population, partially owing to delayed childbearing (the gap narrows with age). However, in every age group, a significantly higher proportion of American Jewish women appear to remain childless than among women in the broader U.S. population (United Jewish Communities, 2003c). Hurst and Mott (2003) suggest that many of the differences in fertility between American Jews and the broader

population can be explained by education. Fishman (2005), however, notes that education interacts with intended fertility in a different way among Jews than in the broader population. Our analysis addresses the extent to which education explains differences in family behavior between American Jews and the broader U.S. population.

Of particular interest among American Jews, as a highly educated subgroup, is how education is related to family behavior. A number of researchers have noted a recent trend whereby the highly educated are more likely to marry, albeit after some delay, and to have more children once they begin childbearing than are less educated women who delay childbearing. Thus, Goldstein and Kenney (2001) found higher marriage rates among college-educated women; Martin (2000) found that college-educated women who had postponed childbearing until after age 30 had increased their fertility from the 1970s to the 1990s, in contrast to the fertility of less educated women who had postponed childbearing and childrearing. The proportion of highly educated women with two or more children had also increased. Similarly, Weeden, Abrams, Green, and Sabini (2006) did not find a negative relationship between education and fertility, despite expectations to this effect. Thus, there is ample evidence that marriage and childbearing are becoming increasingly compatible with women's higher educational training and presumably labor force participation. This chapter addresses where American Jews fit into these trends.

#### **DATA**

Family behavior indicators that we consider include the proportion of respondents currently or ever married, the proportion currently or ever divorced, age at first marriage, duration of first marriage for those whose first marriage ended in divorce, childlessness (of women), age at birth of first child (for women), and number of (live) children born (to women).

For comparison with the broader U.S. population, we use primarily the U.S. Census Bureau Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) of 2001 (original analysis and published analysis in Kreider, 2005). The SIPP data have the advantage of including detailed marital history for men and women of all ages, as well as extensive information about the characteristics of adults, their households, and those with whom they live, including data about husbands and wives currently married. We focus on non-Hispanic whites, as nearly all American Jews are white. The proportion of Jews among this broader population is estimated to be less than 2%; to the extent that Jews are included in the survey, the effect would be to reduce the differences between the two populations, but only minimally.

## **FAMILY BEHAVIOR OF AMERICAN JEWS**

At the time of the 2000–01 NJPS, 21.3% of the adult American Jewish population had never been married, 61.5% of the population was currently married, and another 1% was separated, 1.2% cohabiting,<sup>1</sup> 8.7% divorced, and 8.2% widowed.<sup>2</sup> More than three-quarters had been married at least once, and more than a third had been divorced at least once.

This distribution does not tell us much unless we introduce some comparisons. In discussing family behavior, it is important to consider these patterns separated into different age groups, for both cohort and life-cycle considerations. That is, some patterns indicate change in social norms relating to marriage and divorce, such as delayed patterns of marriage or greater acceptance of divorce (cohort effects), while some of the differences may simply have to do with the fact that the younger cohort is not old enough to marry (or divorce) or to have experienced much death or widowhood (life-cycle effects). Through the main first-marriage and childbearing ages, until about age 45, both life-cycle and cohort effects contribute to variations; after age 45, most of the differences between age groups can be attributed to birth cohort variation. We also separate men and women, because women typically marry earlier than men (see the mean age at first marriage in Table 3.1, which shows a difference of from 1 to 5 years, depending on the age group).

Looking first at the proportion currently married (Table 3.1), we see that the proportion ever married increases through the 35–44 age group, suggesting that some first marriages are still occurring in this age group, especially among men. The proportion currently married peaks in the 65 and older age group for men, but earlier for women, as women typically live longer than men, and therefore in the older age groups there is an increasing proportion of widows. In the 65 and older age group, more than 95% of both American Jewish men and women have been married at least once.

About a fifth of the population has been married more than once, and this proportion peaks for men in the 55–64 age group, among whom nearly 30% of the men have been married more than once; for women the peak is in the 45–54 age group, among whom 22.5% have been married more than once. The lower proportion of women who have been married more than once may reflect a higher proportion of both widows and divorcees who do not remarry. Among those women who have ever divorced, for example, 42% have never remarried, compared with less than a third of the men.

About 18% of the men and women have been divorced at least once. The proportion divorced peaks in the 55–64 age group for both men and women, indicating a cohort difference between those 65 and over and those 64 and younger. Close to a third of the men and women aged 55–64 have divorced at least once, compared with 17% of the men and 15% of the

**Table 3.1** Family Behavior of American Jews, by Age and Gender

Family indicator	Age						Total
	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+	
<i>Men</i>							
Currently married (%)	8.9	46.1	66.6	72.7	70.0	75.7	61.5
Ever married (%)	9.2	50.4	74.2	91.2	89.6	96.2	75.2
Mean age at first marriage	21.0	26.3	29.0	29.2	29.8	30.0	29.1
Married more than once (%)	0	1.5	15.6	26.6	29.1	21.5	21.8
Divorced (%)	0.3	3.4	6.2	13.2	14.2	5.6	7.7
Ever divorced (%)	0.3	4.2	16.4	33.3	32.2	17.2	19.0
Mean duration of first marriage before divorce (years)	na	1.0	6.3	7.9	13.8	14.4	10.4
(n, thousands) <sup>a</sup>	(163.1)	(230.0)	(247.5)	(352.8)	(204.0)	(381.0)	(1,578.3)
<i>Women</i>							
Currently married (%)	17.6	55.9	69.8	71.6	65.0	54.1	57.9
Ever married (%)	17.7	60.2	83.5	88.5	95.3	97.4	79.7
Mean age at first marriage	20.4	25.6	27.1	27.2	24.4	25.2	25.8
Married more than once (%)	0	4.7	15.3	22.5	17.6	20.3	15.9
Divorced (%)	0.2	3.5	10.1	14.0	21.2	7.1	9.6
Ever divorced (%)	0.2	6.1	20.5	28.8	31.8	14.5	18.1
Mean duration of first marriage before divorce (years)	na	4.0	6.5	9.4	13.4	13.4	10.2
Childless (%)	89.7	63.8	28.9	27.0	14.3	9.2	32.6
Mean age at birth of first child	20.0	25.0	28.0	27.0	23.0	25.0	24.5
Mean number of children	0.1	0.8	1.7	1.6	2.0	2.1	1.4
Four or more children (%)	0	5.2	9.5	6.2	9.9	10.0	7.5
(n, thousands) <sup>a</sup>	(179.7)	(237.4)	(271.3)	(363.5)	(238.7)	(461.9)	(1,752.4)

<sup>a</sup> Weighted by person-weights distributed with dataset.

women 65 and over (the lower percentage of women 65 and over may in part be a reflection of their older age, on the average, in that women live longer than men). Among those whose first marriage ended in divorce, the first marriage lasted on average 10 years; in the older cohorts (55+), this first marriage lasted on average even longer—more than 13 years.

More than two-thirds of all the women have children, and 83.5% of those who have been married at least once have children. Up to the 35–44 age group, it is difficult to determine how much of this is temporary, that

is, whether the women will still give birth. But after age 45 it is unlikely that a woman will give birth. In the 45–54 age group, 17.5% of those ever married remain childless, compared with 11.0% of the 55–64 age group and 7.0% of the women 65 and over. This suggests a trend of increasing childlessness, even among those married.

Single mothers (mothers who are currently not married) make up 18.3% of all the American Jewish women who have given birth; less than 4% have never married. Perhaps of more relevance is the percentage of mothers who have children under 18 at home: 12.3% are currently not married, including only 2.8% who have never married. This is quite comparable to the broader U.S. population. Among single mothers who have finished college, all but 3% have also been married (Ellwood and Jencks, 2004, p. 11).

Overall, Jewish women have on average fewer than 2 children. This too varies by cohort. Among women 55 and over, the mean number of children is 2 or more, whereas in the 35–44 and 45–54 cohorts, the mean number of children is 1.7 and 1.6, respectively. (It is likely that women in younger age groups will bear children later; hence, the mean number of children may not be a final statistic.) The mean age at birth of first child peaks in the 35–44 age group at age 28, and is lower in other age groups, especially among women 65 and older. Few women in the sample had their first child after age 35 (2.5% ages 35–39 and less than 1% over age 40), so it is hard to know to what extent American Jews are part of a growing trend of late motherhood (Gregory, 2008).

### Education and Family Patterns among American Jews

Their higher educational level explains some of the distinctiveness of American Jews' family behavior, as we shall explore later in comparison with the broader population. Among Jews, level of education is also related to variation in family behavior. In Table 3.2 we focus on men and women between the ages of 35 and 64 (after most have completed their education and most childbearing has been completed, but before widowhood becomes a major factor). American Jews with higher education are more likely to be married, less likely to be divorced, and less likely to be married more than once; among women, higher education is also associated with later marriage, later birth of first child, fewer children, and especially much lower percentages of four or more children (less than 3% of those with graduate degrees compared with 22.1% of those with high school education or less). Some of this gap may narrow slightly after age 35, as women with graduate degrees also give birth to their last child later than women with less education, but as Table 3.8 shows, even when the sample is restricted to

**Table 3.2** Family Behavior of American Jews, Ages 35–64, by Education and Gender

Gender	Family indicator	Education				Total
		High school or less	Some college	B.A.	Graduate degree	
Men	Married (%)	61.4	64.5	66.8	77.6	70.6
	Ever married (%)	85.4	86.5	82.6	89.3	86.2
	Mean age at first marriage	25.1	27.3	27.3	27.1	26.9
	Married more than once (%)	35.5	23.3	27.5	19.3	24.5
	Divorced (%)	15.2	16.8	10.8	8.6	11.5
	Ever divorced (%)	39.2	33.0	27.7	22.0	27.8
	Mean duration of first marriage before divorce (years)	11.9	9.1	10.3	11.1	10.6
	( <i>n</i> , thousands) <sup>a</sup>	(98.1)	(127.5)	(253.3)	(304.0)	(782.9)
	Women	Married (%)	64.3	64.4	70.7	70.2
Ever married (%)		88.9	88.0	89.3	88.0	88.5
Mean age at first marriage (%)		22.4	22.7	25.2	26.2	24.5
Married more than once (%)		16.7	25.2	18.4	16.3	19.2
Divorced (%)		16.9	17.6	14.1	13.0	15.0
Ever divorced (%)		28.7	31.7	26.4	23.8	27.2
Mean duration of first marriage before divorce (years)		9.6	10.4	10.9	12.4	11.0
Childless (%)		20.9	24.7	24.5	26.2	24.6
Mean age at birth of first child		23.2	24.8	27.7	30.0	27.1
Mean age at last birth		29.0	30.1	32.1	33.6	31.6
Mean number of children		2.3	1.9	1.6	1.5	1.7
Four or more children (%)		22.1	11.1	5.0	2.9	8.1
( <i>n</i> , thousands) <sup>a</sup>		(103.4)	(207.1)	(270.9)	(248.4)	(830.9)

<sup>a</sup>Weighted by person-weights distributed with dataset.

women 45 and older, women with higher education have fewer children than women with less education. Our analysis reveals that, on average, the shorter the span of years of childbearing (age of last birth—age of first birth), the higher the level of the woman’s education.

On the other hand, education appears to have very little effect on the chances of ever marrying, the duration of first marriage before divorce (especially for men), or women’s likelihood of being married more than once. The last result is somewhat surprising, because there is an expectation that highly educated women will remarry at lower rates than men (Coleman, Ganong, and Fine, 2000); it does not appear to be supported by the data on American Jews, however. Women with graduate degrees are less likely to



divorce and are as likely to be remarried as women with a high school education or less. Among those who do divorce, women with graduate degrees have longer first marriages on average than those with less education.

We can also consider the educational characteristics of Jews by their marital status. Married Jews have higher educational attainment than non-married Jews (Table 3.3). More than 60% of currently married Jews earned at least an undergraduate degree, compared with only about half of those who have never married and 55% of the divorced or separated. The lower education of the never married is partially related to their younger age, so that a relatively high proportion of them have not yet completed their education. The lower education level of the divorced or separated may be related to the greater likelihood that divorced men and women with a higher education will remarry, whereas the less educated may remain divorced (a similar pattern was found among Jews in 1990; see Hartman and Hartman, 1996a). Only 40.9% of widowed Jews have at least a bachelor's degree, which results from most of them being older than 55 and, as we noted earlier, the educational attainment of that age group is lower.

These differences based on marital status are apparent for both men and women. However, divorced women do not differ from currently married women as much as divorced men differ from currently married men. On the other hand, widowed women have much less education than women with other marital statuses, mainly because most of the widowed are older women who have a lower level of education. As a result, the largest gender gap is among the widowed, less because of their marital status

**Table 3.3** Percentage of American Jews Achieving a B.A. or Higher, by Marital Status and Gender<sup>a</sup>

Marital status	Total	Men	Women	M/F ratio
Never married	51.1 (933)	53.7 (476)	48.2 (457)	1.11
Currently married	62.9 (2,213)	68.0 (1,015)	58.1 (1,198)	1.17
Divorced, separated	55.4 (524)	57.2 (215)	54.1 (309)	1.06
Widowed	40.1 (460)	59.5 (114)	32.3 (346)	1.84
Total	57.8 (4,130)	63.2 (1,820)	53.0 (2,310)	1.19

<sup>a</sup>Unweighted *n* in parentheses; calculations performed using person-weights provided with dataset.

than because of their age. Among the other marital statuses, the proportion of men and women earning at least a bachelor's degree is much more similar. Gender differences are smallest among the divorced and separated, mainly because divorced and separated women have almost as much education as the currently married, unlike divorced or separated men.

Because the majority of those never married are in the youngest age group (18–24), some of whom have not yet completed their education, and the majority of those widowed are in the older age groups, especially 55 and older, we looked at these relationships between marital status and education for each gender within age groups (Table 3.4).

In the youngest age group, the currently married are less likely to have completed a bachelor's degree than those who have never married; this difference results primarily because married women are less likely to earn a bachelor's degree. Consequently, the gender gap in education is much greater among the young who are married (with an M/F ratio of 1.48) than among the young who are single (with an M/F ratio of 1.16). For men, in all age groups under 65, the currently married have the highest education; for women, this is true for ages 35 and older (in the 25–34 age group, apparently, some women's education is still interrupted by marriage).

Among men, those who are divorced have the lowest level of education in each of the age groups. This is probably because of the tendency of more highly educated divorced men to remarry (as shown in Table 3.2). Divorced women, however, do not generally have less education than married or single women; in fact, among the older women (55 and over), divorced women are the most highly educated. This probably reflects the tendency of highly educated divorced women not to remarry—a pattern also found in the broader population (Bramlett and Mosher, 2002; Coleman et al., 2000); interestingly, however, it is found only among the older groups in this population.

The 45–54 age group is the first in which the number of widowed in the sample is large enough to compare with the other groups. The widowed show the largest gender gap in education in each of the older age groups (45–54, 55–64, 65+), mainly because widowed women (even in the 45–54 age group) are much less likely to have earned a bachelor's degree than women with other marital statuses.

In summary, we find that married Jewish men and women tend to have higher educational attainment than the non-married, in every age group except the youngest (presumably, young married women interrupt their education when they get married). Divorced and separated men are characterized by less education in almost every age group; divorced and separated women do not have less education than other women (with the exception of the 35–44 age group). Therefore, the gender gap in education is lowest

**Table 3.4** Percentage of American Jews Achieving a B.A. or Higher, by Marital Status, Gender, and Age<sup>a</sup>

Age group	Marital status	Total	Men	Women	M/F ratio
18-24	Never married	34.2 (282)	36.7 (140)	31.7 (142)	1.16
	Currently married	29.6 (56)	35.0 (21)	26.5 (35)	1.48
	Divorced, separated	na	na	na	na
	Widowed	na	na	na	na
	Total	33.7 (338)	36.9 (161)	30.9 (177)	1.19
25-34	Never married	75.2 (266)	73.8 (141)	76.8 (125)	0.96
	Currently married	74.0 (278)	75.0 (116)	73.3 (162)	1.02
	Divorced, separated	70.6 (34)	66.7 (15)	73.7 (19)	0.91
	Widowed	na	na	na	na
	Total	74.4 (579)	74.0 (273)	74.8 (306)	.99
35-44	Never married	71.7 (165)	71.9 (91)	70.3 (74)	1.02
	Currently married	73.4 (421)	75.3 (183)	71.5 (238)	1.05
	Divorced, separated	58.5 (83)	68.8 (32)	52.0 (51)	1.32
	Widowed	na	na	na	na
	Total	70.8 (675)	72.3 (309)	66.8 (366)	1.08
45-54	Never married	67.0 (113)	70.5 (44)	64.7 (69)	1.09
	Currently married	70.4 (381)	74.0 (268)	67.4 (313)	1.10
	Divorced, separated	62.5 (170)	61.7 (82)	63.2 (88)	0.98
	Widowed	59.1 (22)	na (na)	46.2 (13)	1.68
	Total	68.2 (886)	71.2 (403)	65.7 (483)	1.08
55-64	Never married	54.4 (54)	66.7 (31)	47.8 (23)	1.40
	Currently married	54.8 (339)	77.2 (151)	53.2 (188)	1.45

Age group	Marital status	Total	Men	Women	M/F ratio
55–64 (cont'd)	Divorced, separated	58.3 (129)	76.7 (43)	63.5 (86)	1.21
	Widowed	39.1 (43)	75.0 (12)	48.4 (31)	1.55
	Total	51.1 (565)	75.6 (237)	55.1 (328)	1.37
65+	Never married	50.0 (50)	63.0 (27)	34.8 (23)	1.81
	Currently married	48.9 (528)	55.8 (271)	41.1 (247)	1.36
	Divorced, separated	46.0 (101)	50.0 (40)	43.3 (61)	1.15
	Widowed	37.2 (381)	53.5 (89)	32.3 (292)	1.66
	Total	44.4 (1,050)	55.2 (427)	37.0 (623)	1.49

Note: “na” indicates fewer than 10 cases in the sub-sample.

<sup>a</sup>Unweighted *n* in parentheses; calculations performed using person-weights provided with dataset.

among the divorced and separated. On the other hand, the difference between widowed men and women in terms of education is the highest of any marital status.

### Educational Homogamy among American Jews

Education is also related to whom one marries, which may reinforce certain family patterns. Educational homogamy refers to marriages in which spouses have achieved the same level of education. Educational homogamy may be intentional, that is, potential marriage partners seek out spouses of a certain level of education; it may also happen by chance, because of patterns of association. Because both American Jewish men and women continue on to college in such large proportions, the likelihood of meeting a marriage partner with at least some college education is heightened.

Using six educational groups (less than high school, high school, some college, undergraduate degree, master’s degree, doctoral degree, or professional degree), we find that 38.2% of American Jews have the same educational attainment as their spouse; another 46.8% are within one educational group of their spouse. When spouses’ educational levels are not equal, it is

**Table 3.5** Comparisons of Husband's and Wife's Education, by Age Group

Age group	Husband's > wife's education (%)	Husband's = wife's education (%)	Wife's > husband's education (%)	Total (%)	( <i>n</i> , thousands) <sup>a</sup>
25–34	25.1	44.2	30.7	100.0	(39.1)
35–44	39.5	34.9	25.6	100.0	(219.6)
45–54	40.3	35.3	24.4	100.0	(329.8)
55–64	44.0	35.9	20.1	100.0	(476.2)
65+	40.0	41.3	18.7	100.0	(277.8)
Total	38.6	38.3	23.1	100.0	(1,822.1)

<sup>a</sup>Weighted by person-weights provided in dataset.

more common for husbands to have received a higher education than their wives: in 38.6% of the cases, husbands have a higher education level than their wives; in 23.2%, wives have a higher education level than their husbands.

Educational homogamy is more common among young American Jews (under 35) and older Jews (65 and over). Homogamy among the young reflects increasing equality between men and women in their high educational attainment; among the old, it reflects the higher proportion of those with lower educational attainment. The traditional pattern of husbands having a higher education than their wives is not as common among those under 35—only 25.1% those aged 25–34 demonstrate this pattern, compared with more than 40% of those 45 and older. Similarly, it is more common to find wives with a higher level of education than their husbands among the young than the old (Table 3.5).

Compared with 1990, there is somewhat more educational homogamy and fewer “traditional” differences in which husbands have received more education than their wives. In 1990, in 31.6 of couples, husbands and wives had a similar educational attainment, compared with 38.3% in 2000–01; in 41% of couples, wives had more education than their husbands in 1990 (Hartman and Hartman, 1996a, pp. 176–77), compared with 38.3% in 2000–01. These trends toward homogamy and less traditional marriages mirror trends in the broader society, as we shall see later.

#### **COMPARISON WITH THE BROADER U.S. POPULATION**

Some of these patterns are similar to those seen in the broader population. Comparing the proportion of American Jews who have ever been married with the proportion among the broader, non-Hispanic, white U.S. population, we can see the effect of delayed marriage among American Jews, with

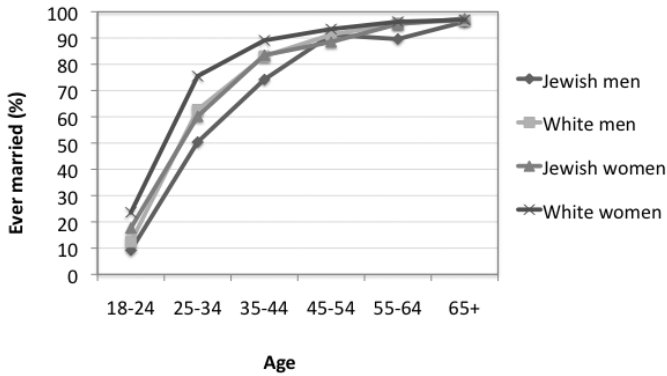


Figure 3.1. Percentage ever married, by age, of American Jews and non-Hispanic whites, 2000–01. *Data sources:* NJPS, 2000–01; SIPP, 2001 (Wave 2).

the gap between the Jewish and broader population of non-Hispanic whites larger through age 44 but virtually absent by age 65+ (Figure 3.1). (The data on which Figures 3.1 to 3.4 are based can be found in Table 3.6.)

The marriage delay results in a higher average age of marriage for Jews than for those in the broader white population, in the total and in every age group for both men and women, especially noticeable up to age 45, after which the gap narrows (Figure 3.2). Up to age 55, in fact, Jewish women marry even later than do men in the broader population, on the average. And even in the older age groups, Jewish men and women marry later than their white counterparts in the broader population.

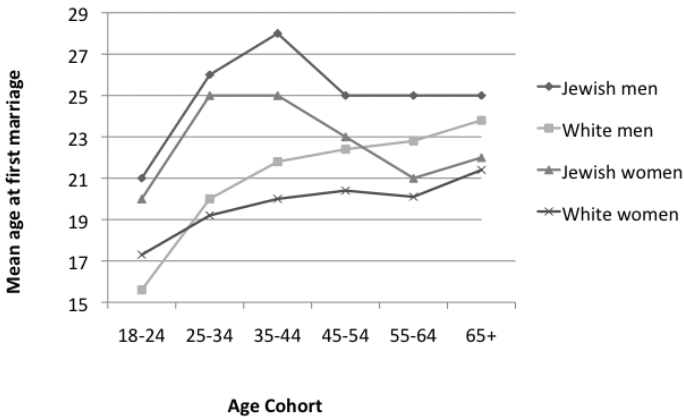


Figure 3.2. Mean age at first marriage, by age and gender, of American Jews and non-Hispanic whites, 2000–01. *Data sources:* NJPS, 2000–01; SIPP, 2001 (Wave 2).

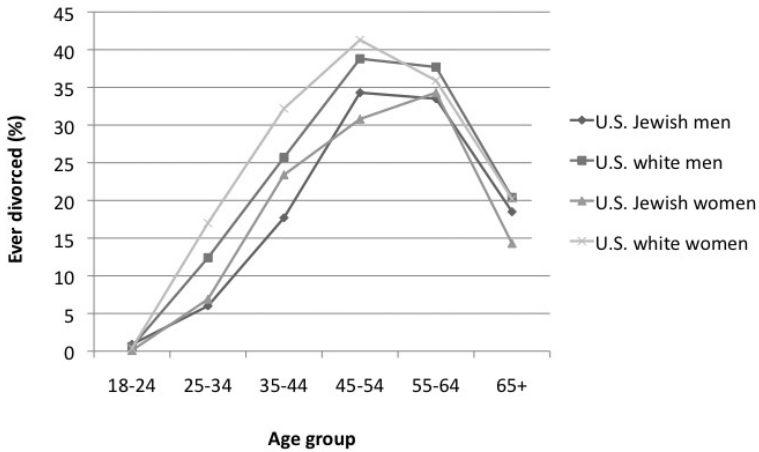


Figure 3.3. Percentage ever divorced for American Jews and non-Hispanic whites, by age and gender, 2000–01. *Data sources:* NJPS, 2000–01; SIPP, 2001 (Wave 2).

The proportion of Jewish men and women who are divorced is lower than that of men and women in the broader population in nearly every age group, although the differences are small for those 55 and over (Figure 3.3). When first marriages end in divorce, they are likely to have lasted longer among Jews, with a mean duration of more than 10 years, compared with around 8 years for the broader white population. A higher proportion of Jewish women remain childless, with differences especially notable through age 54 (Figure 3.4). Jewish women also wait longer to have their first child and have fewer children than women in the broader white population, in the

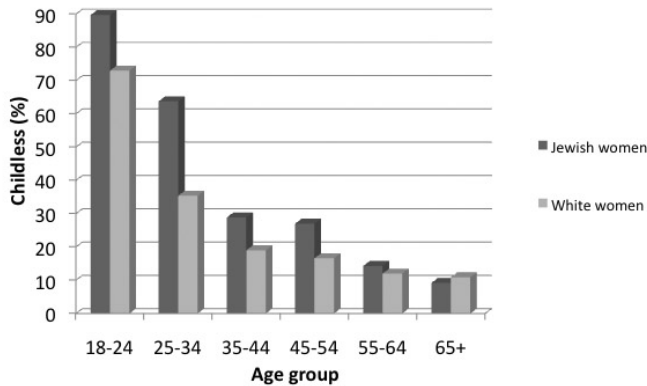


Figure 3.4. Percentage of women childless, for American Jews and non-Hispanic whites, by age, 2000–01. *Data sources:* NJPS, 2000–01; SIPP, 2001 (Wave 2).

**Table 3.6** Family Behavior of U.S. Non-Hispanic Whites, by Age and Gender

Gender	Family indicator	Age						Total
		18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
Men	Married (%)	11.2	54.0	68.6	72.0	79.5	77.0	61.9
	Ever married (%)	12.4	62.7	83.1	91.3	95.6	96.7	75.5
	Mean age at first marriage	15.6	20.0	21.8	22.4	22.8	23.6	22.4
	Married more than once (%)	0.8	11.3	18.9	31.3	33.8	23.1	23.4
	Divorced (%)	0.6	6.2	12.0	16.0	12.7	5.9	9.4
	Ever divorced (%)	0.6	12.4	25.7	38.8	37.7	20.4	23.3
Women	Mean number of years of first marriage ending in divorce	1.6	4.5	6.5	8.5	11.1	14.1	9.2
	(n, thousands)	(10,727.3)	(15,676.0)	(18,084.9)	(16,541.3)	(10,541.3)	(12,686.3)	(84,101.6)
	Married (%)	20.2	62.4	69.8	69.2	65.9	44.6	57.3
	Ever married (%)	23.6	75.5	89.1	93.4	96.2	96.7	82.4
	Mean age at first marriage	17.3	19.2	20.0	20.4	20.1	21.4	20.3
	Married more than once (%)	4.1	12.5	24.0	32.8	28.8	19.9	23.2
	Divorced (%)	1.4	9.3	15.0	18.0	15.6	7.2	11.6
	Ever divorced (%)	2.1	17.0	32.2	41.3	35.9	20.2	26.0
	Mean number of years of first marriage ending in divorce	2.9	4.2	6.4	8.2	10.7	12.8	8.5
	Childless (%)	73.0	35.4	19.0	16.6	12.0	10.9	25.1
	Mean age at birth of first child	19.2	23.2	25.0	24.5	23.6	Na	23.9
Mean number of children	0.4	1.3	1.9	2.0	2.4	2.6	1.8	
Four or more children (%)	0.6	4.9	10.1	10.9	22.5	29.3	13.5	
(n, thousands)	(10,349.3)	(15,432.6)	(18,379.1)	(16,964.8)	(11,248.6)	(17,401.1)	(89,775.5)	

Data source: SIPP, 2001 (Wave 2).



**Table 3.7** Number of Biological Children for American Jewish and Non-Hispanic White Women Married at Least Once, Ages 45 and Over, by Current Marital Status

Number of Children	Marital status					
	In first marriage		Now divorced		Now remarried	
	Jews	Whites	Jews	Whites	Jews	Whites
Childless (%)	9.5	13.8	22.1	17.2	12.8	11.2
1 (%)	12.9	16.3	22.4	19.2	23.1	18.7
2 (%)	47.0	34.9	30.0	31.7	39.8	34.4
3 (%)	20.1	20.4	14.8	18.5	22.3	20.5
4 or more (%)	10.6	14.6	10.9	13.4	2.0	15.2
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
( <i>n</i> , thousands) <sup>a</sup>	(513.1)	(51,504.7)	(132.5)	(10,404.3)	(124.5)	(10,436.6)

<sup>a</sup>Weighted by person-weights distributed with each dataset.

Data sources: NJPS, 2000–01; SIPP, 2001 (Wave 2).

total and in each age group (Table 3.6). As can be seen in Table 3.7, the greatest differences in the percentage of those who are childless between Jews and the broader white population stem from those women who are divorced or remarried (i.e., not in first marriages). The other very striking difference is in the percentage of those who have four or more children, especially among those currently married (there being many fewer Jews having four or more children).

#### The Role of Education in Explaining Differences between American Jews and the U.S. Population

Not all of these differences between American Jews and non-Hispanic whites in the broader population are attributable to level of education. Controlling for level of education, and comparing only the population 45 and over (to reduce the confounding effects of life cycle), we find that the proportion of those ever married among men and women is quite similar, as is the proportion of those currently married at the time of each survey, respectively (Table 3.8). At every level of education, however, Jews marry later than whites in the broader white population, and this is true for both men and women.

At every level of education, Jewish men and women are less likely to have been married more than once and are less likely to have ever divorced—although differences between Jews and the broader population are

**Table 3.8** Family Behavior of American Jews and Non-Hispanic Whites, Ages 45 and Over, by Education and Gender

Gender	Family indicator	High school or less			Some college			B.A.			M.A.+			Total
		Jews	Whites	Jews	Whites	Jews	Whites	Jews	Whites	Jews	Whites	Jews	Whites	
Men	Married (%)	71.8	73.5	71.8	74.7	72.9	77.9	77.0	82.2	73.9	75.6			
	Ever married (%)	94.8	94.7	92.9	94.2	91.2	93.5	93.1	94.6	92.8	94.4			
	Mean age at first marriage	24.6	22.3	26.5	22.7	26.9	23.6	26.7	24.1	26.4	22.8			
	Married more than once (%)	23.9	29.6	19.5	33.3	22.9	24.8	19.2	25.4	21.1	29.3			
	Divorced (%)	11.8	12.0	12.5	14.0	9.0	11.0	9.8	8.4	10.4	11.9			
Women	Ever divorced (%)	26.3	32.1	27.6	37.5	22.7	28.7	27.6	28.8	25.9	32.6			
	( <i>n</i> , thousands) <sup>a</sup>	(159.4)	(17,850.4)	(162.2)	(10,351.4)	(286.7)	(6,586.1)	(304.3)	(4,825.4)	(912.6)	(39,613.3)			
	Married (%)	53.3	55.8	61.4	60.5	68.6	68.3	64.5	61.0	62.0	59.0			
	Ever married (%)	94.5	96.5	92.1	96.5	95.6	94.0	90.3	87.4	93.2	95.5			
	Mean age at first marriage	22.3	20.1	22.6	20.8	24.6	21.6	24.8	22.3	23.5	20.6			
	Married more than once (%)	13.6	25.5	24.6	33.3	16.6	21.2	15.7	21.6	17.7	26.8			
	Divorced (%)	11.0	11.3	12.8	17.1	12.6	11.8	15.5	16.7	12.9	13.3			
	Ever divorced (%)	18.2	29.1	26.7	39.2	23.0	25.7	25.8	31.7	23.4	31.5			
	Childless (%)	12.3	10.0	18.2	12.7	15.5	17.1	22.1	30.0	16.9	13.1			
	Mean age at birth of first child	24.3	22.7	25.1	23.9	26.6	26.8	28.3	27.7	25.9	24.0			
	Mean number of children	2.1	2.6	2.0	2.2	1.8	2.0	1.7	1.6	1.9	2.3			
	Four or more children (%)	13.5	26.4	8.8	16.9	5.0	12.9	3.2	8.5	7.4	20.8			
	( <i>n</i> , thousands) <sup>a</sup>	(245.7)	24,254.4	(283.0)	12,153.2	(273.0)	5,774.0	(218.8)	3,432.8	(1,020.6)	(45,014.5)			

<sup>a</sup>Weighted by person-weights distributed with each dataset.

Data sources: NIPES, 2000-01; SIPP, 2001, (Wave 2).

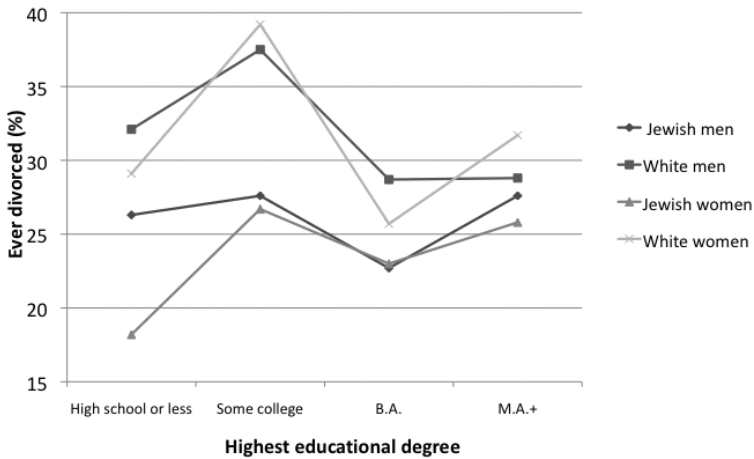


Figure 3.5. Percentage ever divorced for American Jews and non-Hispanic whites, by education and gender, 2000–01. *Data sources:* NJPS, 2000–01; SIPP, 2001 (Wave 2).

greater among the less educated than the more highly educated (Figure 3.5), especially for men.

Among the less educated (those who completed some college or less), a higher proportion of Jewish women remain childless than do women in the broader population; however, among women with college degrees, fewer Jewish women remain childless. Jewish women begin having children later in every education group, and they tend to have fewer children than women in the broader white population, except among those with graduate degrees, where there is little difference between Jewish women and white women in the broader population. Very large differences can be found at every level of education, however, among those with four or more children: the proportion of Jewish women at every level of education who have four or more children is less than half that of women in the broader white population.

Thus, we see that not all of the differences between American Jews and the broader white population can be attributed to the level of education of American Jews. Jews marry later, are less likely to divorce, are less likely to marry more than once, and have fewer children at nearly every level of education. In many cases, however, higher education reduces the differences between Jews and the broader white population.

## Comparisons of Educational Homogamy

Collapsing the college degrees into a single category to make the educational classification more similar to that used by Schwartz and Mare (2005), and restricting the sample to wives aged 18–40 as Schwartz and Mare do, we can compare the educational homogamy among American Jews with that of the broader population. In 2000–01, there was educational homogamy in 69.6% of the American Jewish couples (wives aged 18–40) compared with 55% in the broader U.S. population (Schwartz and Mare, 2005, Figure 2, p. 633). American Jews may be seen as illustrating the trend of increased educational homogamy among the highly educated sector of the population, noted by Schwartz and Mare. Among the educationally heterogeneous couples in this age group, in 50.7% of the American Jewish couples the wife had a higher education than her husband, compared with 45% of the wives in the broader U.S. population (Schwartz and Mare, 2005: 631). So there is more similarity in education among American Jews than in the broader population, and when there is dissimilarity, it is evenly divided between husbands and wives having higher education, somewhat more egalitarian than in the broader population.

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

We have shown three main ways in which the family behavior of American Jews is distinct from that of the broader white population, even when education is controlled for: they marry later, they are less likely to divorce, and they have fewer children. Note that these are not unrelated phenomena: marrying later may decrease the likelihood of divorce, owing to greater maturity and financial stability; it may also decrease the number of children, owing to the fewer number of fertile years during which the woman is married (although for the most part American Jews do not seem to take advantage of most of those fertile years during married life to bear children). This distinctive family behavior characterizes both men and women.

However, once education is controlled for, Jewish women are not more likely to remain childless than are women in the broader population. This, their lower likelihood of divorce, and their longer first marriages compared with those of women in the broader population are all indicative of the greater “familism” that has been traditional among Jews.

We have also shown that educational homogamy tends to be greater among American Jews than in the broader white population, consonant with tendencies toward greater homogamy among more educated populations. We shall see how this relates to labor force and occupational comparisons of husbands and wives in the chapters to follow.