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## Gender and American Jews

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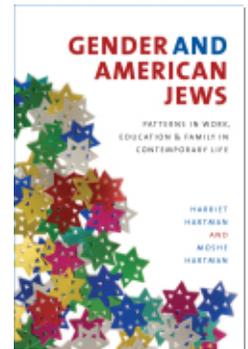
Published by Brandeis University Press

Hartman, Harriet, et al.

Gender and American Jews: Patterns in Work, Education, and Family in Contemporary Life.

Brandeis University Press, 2009.

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## CHAPTER 7

# How Jewishness is Related to Family Patterns of American Jews

**T**he relationship between Jewishness and family behavior is complex. Family serves as a metaphor for the entire Jewish people: “From the Bible forward the Jewish people is portrayed at its core as a large extended family descended from the patriarch Jacob” (Berger, 2005, p. 1). Institutionally, especially as Jews lived as minorities for most of their history, from the destruction of Solomon’s Temple in 586 B.C.E. until the modern-day founding of Israel, the family was “in many cases, the primary vehicle for preserving distinctiveness from the majority culture” (Berger, 2005, p. 1), and still is, in many respects. Marriage and family are seen as part of the “sanctification of Israel” in the rabbinic tradition, and many rabbinic rules revolve around family ritual and behavior. “Among the most important of these [family-related] commandments are that: (1) men are to marry, (2) they are to procreate . . . and (3) they are obligated to teach their children about the religious traditions of Israel. (4) Women, as conceived by rabbinic Judaism, above all, are to attend to their children” (Wertheimer, 2005c, p. 245). In modern times Jews began to assimilate themselves into their surroundings: “‘Be a Frenchman outside and a Jew at home’ became the formula for successful integration, granting the family . . . an even more central role in the preservation of Jewish identity” (Berger, 2005, p. 11).

Such an admonition may apply to either ethnic or religious identity, although the implication is that one should privatize religion while allowing ethnicity or nationality to be one’s public face. The tendency to privatize religion was thought to accompany modernization (Berger, 1967; Luckmann, 1967), which relegated it to the private sphere dominated by the family: “The private sphere may seem to be, in a macro sense, peripheral in the modern world, but it nevertheless is where a bedrock of mutually reinforcing relations between family and religion is found” (Pankhurst and Houseknecht, 2000, p. 24). The persistent and even resurgent presence of religion in public life,

even in an ostensibly secular country like the United States, challenges the notion of religious privatization, and the public functions of the family have been noted as well (Cherlin, 2005; Pankhurst and Houseknecht, 2000). So the mutually reinforcing relationship between religion and family, whether in the private or public sphere, is well established.

Edgell (2006) and Christiano (2000), among others, discuss the persisting association between religiosity and traditional familism, albeit one that is challenged by contemporary economic pressures and practices both in the broader society and in individual families. At the same time, however, Christiano (2000) notes the opposite tendencies among Jews (e.g., delayed marriage, low fertility), which are not explained by demographic and educational factors alone. Family texts routinely point to ethnic patterns of variation in familistic behavior (e.g., Benokraitis, 2002; Eshleman and Bulcroft, 2006; although Jews are rarely considered a relevant ethnic group and are not described in either of these sources). Little research is able to juxtapose religious and ethnic identity within the same group in the same way that is possible among Jews, however. By using ethnic and religious, private and public indices of Jewish identity, we seek in this chapter to sort out the relationships between family behavior and various types of Jewish identity.

In addition to the influence of Jewish religious and ethnic culture on family behavior, the norms of the broader society also have an influence on American Jewish life. The tendencies in contemporary U.S. society toward delayed marriage, high divorce rates, and small families are all evident among American Jews as well (Berger, 2005). Furthermore, the stress on individualism in the United States may well take its toll on the American Jewish family, as it has in the broader society (Bellah et. al., 1985/1996). As Cohen and Eisen (2000) found, contemporary American Jews are first and foremost motivated by a “profound individualism,” a “sovereign self,” yet their choices are often framed in the context of their family situations, which remain extremely important settings for practicing and actualizing their Jewishness.

The issues that we address in this chapter are the extent to which family behavior patterns are related to the denominational and Jewish identity patterns shown in the preceding chapter, and whether the distinctiveness of American Jewish family behavior that we saw in comparison with the broader American population is related to stronger or weaker expressions of Jewish identity and tradition. Because family patterns involve gender relations in the intimate setting, and are strongly related to both men’s and women’s secular educational and economic achievement, we see this as an important step in understanding patterns of gender equality and inequality among American Jews. We look first at denominational variation in the

family behavior of men and women, then explore the relationship between Jewish identity and family roles, and finally look at how Jewish identity interacts with denominational variation in family behavior and whether this interaction is similar for men and women in each denomination.

#### **DENOMINATION AND FAMILY BEHAVIOR**

We look first at denominational variation in family behavior (Table 7.1). A clear result is that Orthodox family behavior is different from that of the non-Orthodox. The Orthodox are more likely to marry, to marry younger, to be married (at the time of the survey), and to have had only one marriage and are less likely to ever divorce, to have children when they are younger, and to have more children than those in other denominations. Among the Orthodox, more than 80% of men and nearly 90% of women have ever married, compared with 70–75% of non-Orthodox men and 70–85% of non-Orthodox women. Less than 13% of Orthodox men and less than 10% of Orthodox women have ever divorced, compared with 15–25% of non-Orthodox men and 15–20% of non-Orthodox women. On average, Orthodox men marry about a year earlier than non-Orthodox men, and Orthodox women marry about 2 years earlier than non-Orthodox women.

Less than 20% of Orthodox women are childless, compared with 26–44% of non-Orthodox women. Confining this observation to women aged 45 and over, we find that only 5% of Orthodox women have not given birth, compared with 14.7, 17.3, and 22.9% of Conservative, Reform/Reconstructionist, and unaffiliated women, respectively. Further confining our observation to women over 45 who have been married at least once, the differences are smaller but in the same direction: 4% of Orthodox women, 8.5% of Conservative women, 12.1% of Reform/Reconstructionist women, and 17.3% of unaffiliated women.

Orthodox women start having children on average 1–2 years earlier than non-Orthodox women and have an average of one or two more children than non-Orthodox women. More than a quarter of Orthodox women have four or more children, compared with less than 10% of Conservative women and less than 4% of Reform/Reconstructionist or unaffiliated women.

Another observation with regard to denomination is that the unaffiliated are less likely to be married or to have ever married, are more likely to have divorced and to be divorced (at least among men), and are more likely to have fewer children than the affiliated. It is especially striking that 25% of unaffiliated men have divorced, compared with 12–19% of the affiliated, and 11.8% of them were divorced at the time of the survey, compared with less than 7% of affiliated men. (It is interesting that unaffiliated women are similar to Reform/Reconstructionist women with regard

**Table 7.1** Family Behavior of American Jews, by Denomination and Gender

Family indicator	Orthodox	Conservative	Reform/ Reconstructionist	Unaffiliated
<i>Men</i>				
Married (%)	71.7	62.2	64.2	53.7
Ever married (%)	81.5	75.1	76.4	71.8
Median age at first marriage	25.8	26.4	26.7	26.7
Mean number of marriages	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.3
Divorced (%)	5.4	6.7	6.2	11.8
Ever divorced (%)	12.7	15.1	18.9	25.1
(n) <sup>a</sup>	(109)	(278)	(347)	(295)
<i>Women</i>				
Married (%)	62.2	62.7	55.6	50.5
Ever married (%)	89.0	84.7	79.4	71.6
Median age at first marriage	22.4	24.2	24.3	24.2
Mean number of marriages	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.2
Divorced (%)	3.9	8.6	11.1	10.4
Ever divorced (%)	9.0	15.4	20.8	20.2
Childless (%)	19.0	26.2	31.2	44.0
Mean age at birth of first child	24.0	26.1	26.4	25.4
Mean number of children	2.7	1.8	1.4	1.1
4+ children (%)	26.8	9.2	3.6	3.9
(n) <sup>a</sup>	(92)	(420)	(522)	(346)

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

to proportion divorced.) Forty-four percent of unaffiliated women are childless, compared with 19–31% of the affiliated. This may well be a clue to their lack of affiliation with the main denominations (or, conversely, may reflect the greater tendency of those with children to be affiliated with a denomination).

In order to better understand the denominational variation in family behavior, we used a multivariate regression analysis to predict age at marriage—the first step in formally creating a family of one’s own.<sup>1</sup> As mentioned earlier, Wertheimer (2005b) asks what it is about the Orthodox that accounts for their higher fertility: is the reason primarily demographic, that

is, a function of their marrying at younger ages, or do other factors explain their propensity to have more children? We start with age at marriage—attempting to explain the denominational variation in age at first marriage by conventional characteristics such as education and age cohort. Although we recognize that education may continue after marriage, for most people education takes place before marriage or signifies the respondent’s orientation to education by the time of marriage (i.e., while a newly married man or woman may be in graduate school, the intention to complete a graduate degree is usually in place at the time of marriage, especially among those marrying later),<sup>2</sup> so we use it as a dependent variable influencing age at the time of marriage (Table 7.2). We look at respondents 45 and over, most of whom have already had a first marriage, and we look at men and women separately, because the prediction of their age at marriage may differ.

Denomination is not related to men’s age at marriage, explaining less than 1% of the variance in age at marriage (model 1,  $R^2 = 0.002$ ). The only variable we control for in this analysis that is related to men’s age at marriage is their education, as can be seen in model 2. For women, however, being Orthodox (as opposed to belonging any of the other denominational groups) does explain an earlier age at marriage, even when we control for age cohort and educational level in model 2. Education is a more

**Table 7.2** Multiple Regression of Age at First Marriage of American Jews (Ages 45 and Over), by Gender<sup>a</sup>

Independent variable	Men				Women			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
Orthodox <sup>b</sup>	0.743	(.038)	0.878	(.045)	-1.476	(-.071)	-1.321	(-.063)*
Conservative <sup>b</sup>	0.498	(.035)	0.576	(.041)	-0.294	(-.024)	-0.093	(-.008)
Reform <sup>b</sup>	0.969	(.072)	0.960	(.071)	-0.319	(-.027)	-0.317	(-.027)
Unaffiliated <sup>b</sup>	0.890	(.064)	0.979	(.071)	0.534	(.295)	0.567	(.043)
Age			-0.005	(-.010)			-0.027	(-.058)*
Education			0.351	(.073)*			0.532	(.114)*
R	.040		.084		.088		.232	
R <sup>2</sup>	.002		.007		.008		.054	
(Unweighted n)	(870)						(1,196)	

<sup>a</sup>Data are unstandardized coefficients and (in parentheses) standardized coefficients,  $\beta$ .

<sup>b</sup>Using dummy variables, 0 represents “does not identify with denomination”; 1 represents “identifies with denomination.” The category “Reconstructionist” was omitted.

\*  $p < 0.05$ .

**Table 7.3** Multiple Regression of Age at Birth of First Child and Number of Children for American Jewish Women (Ages 45 and Over)<sup>a</sup>

Independent variable	Age at birth of first child				Number of children			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
Orthodox <sup>b</sup>	-1.655	(-.092)*	-0.653	(-.036)	0.672	(.157)*	0.581	(.136)*
Conservative <sup>b</sup>	0.029	(.003)	0.408	(.039)	-0.091	(-.033)	-0.127	(-.046)
Reform <sup>b</sup>	0.111	(.011)	0.260	(.025)	-0.217	(-.081)**	-0.213	(-.080)*
Unaffiliated <sup>b</sup>	0.242	(.022)	0.021	(.002)	-0.527	(-.185)*	-0.498	(-174)*
Age			-0.014	(-.034)			0.011	(.108)*
Education			0.506	(.593)*			-0.037	(-.037)
Age at marriage			0.786	(.196)*			-0.032	(-.155)*
Age at birth of first child							-0.049	(-.190)*
R	.095		.659		.240		.429	
R <sup>2</sup>	.009		.435		.058		.184	
(n)	(1,027)		(1,024)		(919)		(919)	

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.10$ .

<sup>a</sup>Data are unstandardized coefficients and (in parentheses) standardized coefficients,  $\beta$ .

<sup>b</sup>Using dummy variables, 0 represents “does not identify with denomination”; 1 represents “identifies with denomination.” The category “Reconstructionist” was omitted.

effective predictor of age at marriage (more educated women get married at an older age), as is age cohort (younger women marry at an older age). Generally, we can explain more of the variance in age at marriage for women with these variables than we can for men, but still these variables account for only 5% of the variance.

The same set of variables explains more of the variance in age at first birth and number of children (for women only) (Table 7.3). We limit our analysis to women aged 45 and over, most of whom have completed their childbearing.<sup>3</sup> When we predict age at birth of first child, there is a significant relationship between being Orthodox and (earlier) age at birth of first child, but its significance is eliminated when we control for age at marriage, education, and age. In other words, denomination is likely to affect age at birth of first child by influencing age at marriage (as we saw earlier). Education is the strongest predictor of age at birth of first child, but age at first marriage has an effect independent of education.

When we use the same variables to predict the number of children born, and add age at birth of first child as an independent variable (right half of

Table 7.3), we find the difference in the number of children between the Orthodox and non-Orthodox groups (which we saw earlier) expressed in the significant regression coefficient for being Orthodox, a more potent explanation of number of children than being Reform, which is significantly related to lower fertility. Being Reform and especially having no denominational preference are significantly associated with having fewer children, as noted earlier; being unaffiliated has the strongest correlation with number of children of all the denominational groups. Being Conservative does not have an independent relationship with how many children a woman gave birth to.

When we add to the regression analysis the woman's age cohort, age at first marriage, age at birth of first child, and level of education, the effect of denominational preference remains significant for being Orthodox, Reform, and unaffiliated. In fact, the unstandardized regression coefficients for denominational preference change relatively little from model 1 to model 2 (about 12.5% for the Orthodox, less than 2% for the Reform, and less than 7% for the unaffiliated), indicating that the correlation between denomination and fertility is not related to demographic factors such as

**Table 7.3** Multiple Regression of Age at Birth of First Child and Number of Children for American Jewish Women (Ages 45 and Over)<sup>a</sup>

Independent variable	Age at birth of first child		Number of children	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Orthodox <sup>b</sup>	-1.655 (-.092)*	-0.653 (-.036)	0.672 (.157)*	0.581 (.136)*
Conservative <sup>b</sup>	0.029 (.003)	0.408 (.039)	-0.091 (-.033)	-0.127 (-.046)
Reform <sup>b</sup>	0.111 (.011)	0.260 (.025)	-0.217 (-.081)**	-0.213 (-.080)*
Unaffiliated <sup>b</sup>	0.242 (.022)	0.021 (.002)	-0.527 (-.185)*	-0.498 (-.174)*
Age		-0.014 (-.034)		0.011 (.108)*
Education		0.506 (.593)*		-0.037 (-.037)
Age at marriage		0.786 (.196)*		-0.032 (-.155)*
Age at birth of first child				-0.049 (-.190)*
R	.095	.659	.240	.429
R <sup>2</sup>	.009	.435	.058	.184
(n)	(1,027)	(1,024)	(919)	(919)

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.10$ .

<sup>a</sup>Data are unstandardized coefficients and (in parentheses) standardized coefficients,  $\beta$ .

<sup>b</sup>Using dummy variables, 0 represents "does not identify with denomination"; 1 represents "identifies with denomination." The category "Reconstructionist" was omitted.

age, age at marriage, age at birth of first child, or educational level. In contrast to age at marriage and age at birth of first child, denomination has a strong independent relationship to the number of children a woman gives birth to, for the Orthodox, the Reform, and the unaffiliated (in opposite directions); the effects of these denominational preferences are comparable to those of age at marriage and age at birth of first child.

Age, age at marriage, and age at birth of first child are each associated inversely with number of children (i.e., the older the woman, the younger her age at marriage, and the younger her age at the birth of her first child, the more children she has). Education, however, does not have a significant independent effect on number of children once age, age at marriage, and age at birth of first child are controlled for.

Finally, we look at the influence of denomination on number of times married, when we control for age, education, and age at first marriage, for men and women separately (Table 7.4). When we look at the relationship between denomination and number of marriages, without controlling for any other variables (model 1), we see that for men denomination explains little variation ( $R^2 = 0.005$ , indicating that 0.5% of the variance is explained). For women, a little more variation is explained, and several of the denominational groups have statistically significant relationships with number of times married: Orthodox Jews have significantly fewer marriages, whereas Reform Jews and the unaffiliated are more likely to have multiple marriages. We doubt that the denomination actually increases the likelihood of multiple marriages; rather it seems likely that divorced or remarried people feel more comfortable among the Reform than the other denominations, which tend to be more traditionally familial in their activities and emphasis; it is even more likely that people who have divorced or remarried are less comfortable in any of the denominations and therefore probably do not express a denominational preference. Because remarriage is more likely to involve non-Jewish spouses, which may increase the lack of affiliation or preference for the denomination most tolerant of intermarriage (Reform), we control for whether or not the respondent is currently married to a Jewish spouse (in model 3) and find that the significant correlation between being Reform or unaffiliated and number of marriages disappears, as does the correlation with being Orthodox. The significant influences on marrying more than once, for both men and women, are age (older cohorts have more stable first marriages) and earlier age at marriage.

In summary, denominational preference, especially being Orthodox, has an independent influence on the family behavior of women, even after demographic factors have been controlled for, but is not related to the family

**Table 7.4** Multiple Regression of Number of Marriages for American Jewish Men and Women<sup>a</sup>

Independent variable	Men			Women		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Orthodox <sup>b</sup>	-0.038 (-.024)	-0.033 (-.020)	0.005 (.003)	-0.104 (-.066)*	-0.123 (-.078)*	-0.067(-.042)
Conservative <sup>b</sup>	0.026 (-.022)	0.027 (.022)	0.023 (.019)	0.010 (.009)	-0.002 (-.002)	0.007 (.007)
Reform <sup>b</sup>	0.009 (.008)	0.022 (.019)	-0.026 (-.023)	0.078 (.075)*	0.076 (.026)*	0.053 (.051)
Unaffiliated <sup>b</sup>	0.081 (.069)	0.093 (.080)**	0.018 (.015)	0.087 (.079)*	0.094 (.086)*	0.041 (.037)
Age		0.004 (.136)*	0.005 (.180)*		0.002 (.067)*	0.003 (.106)*
Age at marriage		-0.010 (-.114)*	-0.013 (-.143)*		-0.016 (-.185)*	-0.018(-.207)*
Education		-0.003 (-.007)	-0.002(-.006)		0.004 (.010)	0.005 (.011)
Current spouse Jewish <sup>c</sup>			-0.235 (-.204)*			-0.222 (-.195)*
R	.071	.189	.264	.114	.232	.292
R <sup>2</sup>	.005	.036	.070	.013	.054	.085
(Unweighted n)	(851)			(993)		

\*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.10.

<sup>a</sup>Data are unstandardized coefficients and (in parentheses) standardized coefficients, β.

<sup>b</sup>Using dummy variable, 0 represents "does not identify with denomination"; 1 represents "identifies with denomination." The category "Reconstructionist" was omitted.

<sup>c</sup>Using dummy variable: 0 represents "current spouse is not Jewish"; 1 represents "current spouse is Jewish."

behavior of men. This finding may be related to the stronger expressions of Jewish identity among women that we saw in the preceding chapter; their stronger identity may have a greater impact on their family (and other) behavior. Or women may be more greatly influenced by the norms associated with their denominational reference group or environment. In the following section, we explore this further by looking at the ways family behavior is related to expressions of Jewish identity.

### **JEWISH IDENTITY AND FAMILY BEHAVIOR**

When looking at the relationship between Jewish identity indices and family behavior, we expected stronger relationships between family behavior and private expressions of Jewish identity than between family behavior and public expressions of Jewish identity (since family behavior is private). We expected some relationship between familistic tendencies and commitment to Jewish religion or ritual, because Jewish commandments include those concerning marriage and having children. We also expected that stronger ethnic identity might lead to stronger family behavior as a commitment to perpetuate the Jewish people.

To relate the factors to family behavior, we correlated the scores on each factor (which range from strong Jewish identity [low] to weak Jewish identity [high]) with seven indicators of family behavior: ever married (0, no; 1, yes); age at first or only marriage; number of times married; ever divorced (0, no; 1, yes); ever gave birth (0, no; 1, yes); age at birth of first or only child; and number of children. The correlations in Table 7.5 show the direction of the relationships and whether or not they are statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$ .

Nearly 70% of the correlations between family behavior and expressions of private Jewish identity (i.e., attitudes or behaviors centered on personal or family situations) are statistically significant: believing that being Jewish is about activity in contemporary Jewish life, personal tribalistic attachment to the Jewish people, and commitment to Jewish culture (private ethnic expressions of Jewish identity) are significantly related to getting married at least once, earlier age at first marriage, marrying fewer times, less likelihood of being divorced, less likelihood of being childless, and having more children. Personal attachment to Israel is significantly related to getting married, not divorcing, and having more children. Stronger religious beliefs are related to almost all of the familistic behaviors, and commitment to personal ritual behavior is related to less divorce and more children. In contrast, less than half of the expressions of public Jewish ethnic identity are significantly related to family behavior. Commitment to collective rituals is related to almost all of the familistic behaviors; belonging to Jewish organizations is related to several of the behaviors. But believing that being Jewish is about

**Table 7.5** Pearson Correlations Between Jewish Identity Factors and Family Behavior for American Jews (Ages 45 and Over)<sup>a</sup>

Type of identity factor <sup>b</sup>	Jewish identity factor <sup>c</sup>	Ever married 0, no; 1, yes	Age at first marriage	Age at birth of first child	Number of times married	Ever divorced (0, no; 1, yes)	Childless (0, has children; 1, no children)	Number of children ever born
Priv (mixed)	Activity	-.051* (2,246)	.057* (1,914)	.033 (1,024)	.087* (2,030)	.117* (2,230)	.091* (1,285)	-.160* (1,262)
Priv R	Ritual	-.014 (2,135)	.026 (1,837)	.038 (972)	.056* (1,936)	.109* (2,123)	.055 (1,211)	-.173* (1,191)
Priv R	Belief	-.027 (2,271)	.123* (1,949)	.076* (1,046)	.066* (2,061)	.102* (2,258)	.120* (1,299)	-.176* (1,285)
Priv E	Tribalism	-.089* (2,016)	.087* (1,717)	-.022 (889)	.148* (1,817)	.173* (2,004)	.201* (1,118)	-.206* (1,107)
Priv E	Culture	-.094* (2,179)	.055* (1,861)	-.011 (985)	.084* (1,967)	.090* (2,167)	.115* (1,229)	-.169* (1,217)
Priv E	Attachment to Israel	-.048* (2,284)	-.024 (1,953)	-.017 (1,048)	.040 (2,067)	.078* (2,269)	.041 (1,308)	-.067* (1,291)

Pub (mixed)	Universal	.018 (2,246)	.014 (1,914)	-.052 (1,024)	-.012 (2,030)	-.003 (2,230)	.004 (1,285)	.001 (1,262)
Pub R	Ceremony	<b>-.104*</b> (2,135)	<b>.069*</b> (1,837)	-.052 (1,026)	<b>.107*</b> (1,936)	<b>.127*</b> (2,123)	<b>.182*</b> (1,211)	<b>-.182*</b> (1,199)
Pub E	Exceptionalism	-.013 (2,016)	<b>-.060*</b> (1,818)	<b>-.074*</b> (889)	.001 (1,817)	<b>-.047*</b> (2,004)	-.020 (1,118)	<b>.084*</b> (1,964)
Pub E	Organizations	<b>-.048*</b> (2,308)	.037 (1,970)	-.036 (1,056)	.031 (2,087)	<b>.083*</b> (2,293)	<b>.077*</b> (1,322)	<b>-.168*</b> (2,156)
Pub E	Israel's role	-.013 (2,284)	.031 (1,953)	.031 (1,048)	.042 (2,067)	<b>.047*</b> (2,269)	.048 (1,308)	<b>-.079*</b> (1,299)

<sup>a</sup> Unweighted (*n*) in parentheses.

<sup>b</sup> Pub, public; Priv, private; R, religious; E, ethnic.

<sup>c</sup> Questions with high loading on each factor presented in Appendix, Table A-4.

\**p* < .05 (two-tailed) (in bold). Nonsignificant correlations italicized.

commitment to a universal moral heritage (as opposed to a particularistic identity) is not related significantly to any of the family behavior indicators. It is interesting that believing that American Jews are characterized by exceptionalism is related to non-familistic behavior more than to familistic behavior.

Looking at the correlations from the standpoint of the family behaviors themselves, we can see that some of the behaviors seem to be more closely related to expressions of Jewish identity than are others. Remaining in a stable marriage (not divorcing) and having more children are more strongly related to Jewish identity than are the other behaviors; age at birth of first child has the weakest relationship to the Jewish identity factors.

### **JEWISH IDENTITY, DENOMINATION, AND FAMILY BEHAVIOR**

We wanted to know whether the denominations differed in family behavior even when we controlled for Jewish identity, and vice versa. That is, are denomination and Jewish identity two separate factors, or do they overlap so much that they cannot be distinguished? Note that we cannot entangle which comes first—types of Jewish identity, denominational preference, or family behavior—with the data we use.

To study the first direction of inquiry, we selected those Jewish identity factors that were significantly correlated with family behavior: from private expressions of Jewish identity—Activity (mixed religious and ethnic expressions of identity), Belief (religious), Tribalism (ethnic), and Culture (ethnic)—and from public expressions of Jewish identity—Ceremony (religious). We studied their relationship with age at marriage (for men and women separately) (Table 7.6), number of children (for women only) (Table 7.7),<sup>4</sup> and number of times married (for men and women separately) (Table 7.8). For each, family behavior was the dependent variable in a multiple regression, in which the identity factors, denomination (dummy variables for Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and unaffiliated denominational groups, the excluded group being Reconstructionist), age, education, and the preceding family variables (e.g., age at marriage and age at first birth) were included as independent variables predicting number of children. It should be cautioned that while age cohort and completed education usually can be understood as preceding age at first marriage (as explained earlier), denominational affiliation and Jewish identity factors may themselves be influenced by family behavior, so that we cannot draw conclusions about the direction of causality. The regression analysis provides us with an understanding of the strength and independence of relationships, but not necessarily a prediction of family behavior. We confine our analysis to American Jews aged 45 and older, by which time most first marriages have already occurred.

Looking at the multiple regression analysis of age of marriage (Table 7.6), we present two models, one in which only the selected identity factors are entered, and another in which the identity factors, denominational variables, and demographic variables are entered. We see in model 1 that the ethnic factor of personal tribalistic attachment is related to the age of marriage of men, and religious belief or spirituality is related to the age of marriage of women. This is not surprising, given that women's religious identity is stronger than men's. When we control for denominational affiliation, age, and education, we see that for men, personal tribalistic attachment to the Jewish people continues to be significantly related to age at marriage, as is education—the Jewish identity factor being somewhat more important than education in its relationship to age at marriage (seen by comparing the standardized regression coefficients: 0.107 for Tribalism and 0.080 for education). Note that the two are related in opposite directions: the stronger the tribalistic attachment to Jews, the earlier the age at marriage; the higher the level of education, the later the age at marriage. Among women, religious belief has the strongest relationship to age at marriage (the stronger the religious belief, the earlier the age at marriage); education also has a statistically significant relationship with age at marriage (the higher the level of education, the later the age at marriage). Age cohort is also related, reflecting the fact that the older cohorts of women married at a younger age. For women, being Orthodox has a weakly significant relationship ( $p = 0.064$ ) with age at marriage, independent of identity and demographic factors.

Thus, we see that expressions of private Jewish identity are related to age at marriage, independently of denominational factors or demographic factors. However, denomination is only weakly related to age at marriage once the identity factors have been controlled for, and then only for women. We also see that, for men, personal ethnic identity is related to age at marriage, whereas for women, it is their personal religious identity that is related to age at marriage.

We next consider to what extent Jewish identity and denomination explained the variation in a woman's age at the birth of her first child (Table 7.7). When we analyzed age at birth of first child earlier, using only denominational preferences as independent variables (Table 7.3), we were not able to explain much of the variation. The Jewish identity factors explain somewhat more, though still only a fraction of the variation. The two religious factors Belief and Ceremony appear to have the strongest correlation with age at marriage. When, however, we control for denomination, age, age at first marriage, and level of education (model 2, Table 7.7), the picture changes. The relationship between Belief and age at first marriage virtually disappears, while the ethnic factors of personal attachment to the Jewish people (Tribalism) and attachment to Jewish culture (Culture) have stronger

**Table 7.6** Multiple Regression of Age at First Marriage for Jewish American Men and Women (Ages 45 and Over)<sup>a</sup>

Independent variable	Men				Women			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
<i>Jewish identity</i>								
<i>factor:</i>								
Activity	-0.420	(-.068)	-0.273	(-.076)	-0.354	(-.061)	-0.345	(-.063)
Tribalism	0.487	(.077)	0.566	(.089)**	-0.015	(-.002)	-0.362	(-.057)
Belief	0.278	(.038)	0.239	(.040)	1.093	(.178)*	0.868	(.141)*
Ceremony	-0.010	(-.002)	0.084	(.014)	0.103	(.017)	0.281	(.046)
Culture	0.488	(.078)**	0.595	(.095)*	-0.315	(-.054)	-0.091	(-.016)
<i>Denominational</i>								
<i>Preference:</i>								
Orthodox <sup>b</sup>			1.441	(.080)**			-1.233	(-.059)**
Conservative <sup>b</sup>			0.726	(.052)			-0.057	(-.005)
Reform <sup>b</sup>			0.615	(.046)			-0.177	(-.015)
Unaffiliated <sup>b</sup>			0.193	(.014)			0.268	(.021)
Age			0.010	(.019)			-0.039	(-.083)
Education			0.431	(.090)*			0.433	(.093)*
R			.121	.162			.144	.206
R <sup>2</sup>	.015		.026		.021		.042	
(Unweighted n)				(774)				(994)

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.10$ .

<sup>a</sup>Data are unstandardized coefficients and (in parentheses) standardized coefficients,  $\beta$ .

<sup>b</sup>Using dummy variables, 0 represents “does not identify with denomination”; 1 represents “identifies with denomination.” The category “Reconstructionist” was omitted.

relationships; the religious factor Ceremony retains a weak relationship (significant at  $p < 0.10$ ) with age at birth of first child. Being Orthodox continues to have an independent weak relationship with age at birth of first child, and apparently it subsumes the effect of personal religiosity. The most important relationships with age at birth of first child are education (standardized coefficient of 0.602) and age at first marriage (standardized coefficient of 0.212). Thus, being Orthodox and personal religious belief have an indirect effect on age at birth of first child, through their relationship to age at first marriage (which we saw in Table 7.6), but ethnic identity factors become important in determining age at birth of first child as well.

We next considered number of children born (right side of Table 7.7). In the first model, only the Jewish identity factors are included as dependent variables. In model 2, we add to the regression model denominational

preferences, age, education, age at first marriage, and age at birth of first child. In the first regression model, three of the Jewish identity factors are related significantly to number of children born: personal tribalistic attachment to the Jewish people (Tribalism), the personal religious factor (Belief), and the public religious factor of collective ritual (Ceremony). The stronger each type of Jewish identity, the more children the woman has. This suggests that the relationship between fertility and Jewish identity is based on both religious and ethnic, private and public considerations. Controlling for denominational preference in model 2 eliminates many of the independent relationships between fertility and Jewish identity; only the religious factor Ceremony retains a significant relationship. Each of

**Table 7.7** Multiple Regression of Age at Birth of First Child and Number of Live Births for American Jewish Women (Ages 45 and Over)<sup>a</sup>

Independent variable	Age at birth of first child				Number of live births			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
<i>Jewish identity factor</i>								
Activity	0.072	(.015)	0.245	(.049)	0.001	(.000)	0.016	(.012)
Tribalism	-0.286	(-.053)	-0.612	(-.113)*	-0.143	(-.102)*	-0.067	(-.048)
Belief	0.777	(.147)*	-0.147	(-.028)	-0.130	(-.095)*	-0.011	(-.048)
Ceremony	-0.513	(-.097)*	-0.301	(-.057)**	-0.092	(-.068)**	-0.182	(-.134)*
Culture	-0.092	(-.018)	0.419	(.083)**	-0.047	(-.037)	-0.074	(-.054)
<i>Denominational preference</i>								
Orthodox <sup>b</sup>			-0.850	(-.047)**			0.531	(.125)*
Conservative <sup>b</sup>			0.237	(.022)			-0.231	(-.084)*
Reform <sup>b</sup>			0.043	(.004)			-0.236	(-.089)*
Unaffiliated <sup>b</sup>			0.224	(.020)			-0.297	(-.102)*
Age			-0.019	(-.046)**			0.012	(.111)*
Age at Marriage			0.854	(.212)*			-0.027	(-.122)*
Education			0.519	(.602)*			-0.051	(-.049)
Age at birth of first child							-0.057	(-.222)*
R	.147		.679		.236		.460	
R <sup>2</sup>	.021		.453		.056		.201	
(Unweighted n)	(919)				(919)			

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.10$ .

<sup>a</sup>Data are unstandardized coefficients and (in parentheses) standardized coefficients,  $\beta$ .

<sup>b</sup>Using dummy variables, 0 represents “does not identify with denomination”; 1 represents “identifies with denomination.” The category “Reconstructionist” was omitted.

the denominational groups has independent relationships with fertility (Orthodox women having more children than Conservative, Reform, and unaffiliated women). The strongest effect on fertility is the age at which the woman began having children. Age at first marriage also has a significant relationship to fertility, as does age cohort (older cohorts having more children). Note that the independent relationship between education and number of children is apparently eliminated when age at first marriage and age at birth of first child are controlled for.

We can conclude that women's family behavior is certainly related to the norms of their preferred denominational groups, while the identity factors are also related to age at first marriage and age at birth of first child.

**Table 7.8** Multiple Regression of Number of Times Married for American Jewish Men and Women (Ages 45 and Over)<sup>a</sup>

Independent variable	Men				Women			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
<i>Jewish identity factor</i>								
Activity	0.025	(.043)	0.019	(.034)	0.013	(.033)	0.000	(.001)
Tribalism	0.065	(.111)*	0.079	(.135)*	0.085	(.143)*	0.070	(.118)*
Belief	-0.024	(-.038)	-0.010	(-.018)	-0.016	(-.028)	-0.004	(-.007)
Ceremony	0.036	(.065)	0.039	(.071)	0.015	(.026)	0.024	(.042)
Culture	-0.021	(-.036)	-0.057	(-.012)	0.006	(.010)	-0.005	(-.004)
<i>Denominational preference</i>								
Orthodox <sup>b</sup>			0.029	(.016)			0.100	(.051)
Conservative <sup>b</sup>			0.018	(.014)			0.006	(.005)
Reform <sup>b</sup>			-0.060	(-.049)			0.064	(.057)
Unaffiliated <sup>b</sup>			-0.074	(-.058)			0.070	(.057)
Age			0.000	(.006)			-0.002	(-.038)
Education			0.015	(.035)			-0.002	(-.004)
Age at first marriage			-0.012	(-.128)*			-0.018	(-.191)*
R	.148		.205		.166		.259	
R <sup>2</sup>	.022		.042		.028		.067	
(Unweighted n)	(774)				(994)			

\* $p < 0.05$ .

<sup>a</sup>Data are unstandardized coefficients and (in parentheses) standardized coefficients,  $\beta$ .

<sup>b</sup>Using dummy variables, 0 represents "does not identify with denomination"; 1 represents "identifies with denomination." The category "Reconstructionist" was omitted.

Our inability to determine causality is even more apparent when we look at the multiple regression analysis of number of times married (Table 7.8). For both men and women, early age at marriage is a strong predictor of multiple times married. This is no surprise, as early age at marriage is associated with the likelihood of divorce. None of the denominational groups have significant relationships with number of times married. Having a strong tribalistic attachment to the Jewish people is, however, associated with fewer times married. But this may reflect weaker integration into the Jewish community of those who have remarried, particularly if the remarriage is an intermarriage. Indeed, when we enter an additional independent variable, of whether or not the current spouse is Jewish, the significant relationship with any Jewish identity factor disappears for both men and women. Therefore, number of times married does not appear to be directly related to the strength of Jewish identity or denominational grouping.

#### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

We began the chapter by asking how denomination and Jewish identity are related to family behavior among American Jewish men and women. Concentrating first on denominational differences in family behavior, we confirmed previous research and anecdotal evidence that Orthodox Jews are more familistic in their behavior (are more likely to marry, to marry at a younger age, to have children at younger ages, to have more children, and to remain in their first marriages) than are men and women in the other denominational groups and that the unaffiliated group demonstrates the least familistic behavior. In fact, this is quite a paradox. In Chapter 3, we showed 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. Yet these very characteristics that distinguish American Jewish family behavior from that of the broader white population in the United States are the opposite of the characteristics that distinguish those who are strongly identified with being Jewish from those who are not; similarly, those most traditional in terms of denominational affiliation do not share all of the characteristics that distinguish American Jews from the broader white U.S. population.

Being less likely to divorce does characterize Orthodox Jews compared with non-Orthodox Jews and those more strongly identified with both Jewish ritual behavior and Jewish ethnic identification. However, the Orthodox and those more strongly identified with being Jewish are more likely to marry younger and to have more children. In fact, Orthodox women are much more like women in the broader U.S. white population than are

women of other denominational groups in terms of age at marriage, average number of children, and proportion having four or more children.

Because the Orthodox are a minority among American Jews, their more familistic behavior does not define the distinctiveness of American Jews compared with the broader U.S. population. However, the familistic tendencies associated with strong Jewish identity explain some of the anomalies found in our comparison with the broader population. Although American Jews marry later and have smaller families, commensurate with their higher educational level, they have more stable marriages and are less likely to remain childless even when they are highly educated. Hence, the centrality of the family among American Jews persists.

A second issue that we addressed in this chapter is whether contemporary family behavior, to the extent that it is related to Jewish identity, is more closely related to ethnic or to religious expressions of Jewish identity. By using ethnic and religious, private and public indices of Jewish identity, we sought to disentangle the relationships between family behavior and various types of Jewish identity. First, we found that expressions of private Jewish identity are more closely related to family behavior than are expressions of public Jewish identity. This finding reinforces the close association persisting between family and religion in the private sphere that we mentioned earlier. An exception was the relationship between family behavior and public religious Jewish identity, much of which involves families participating in communal settings.

Second, we found that religious identity was more closely related to some family behavior of women, whereas ethnic identity was more closely related to some family behavior of men. Thus, age at first marriage was related to men's ethnic identity and women's religious identity; for women, age at birth of first child and number of children were related to both religious and ethnic identity; and number of times married was related to ethnic identity for both men and women. Fertility is also related to denominational preference (independent of expressions of Jewish identity), which we suggest is related to the norms of family size in a the woman's surrounding (Jewish) community.

We also found that some family behavior appears to influence religious identity more than the other way around. Thus, the relationship between ethnic feelings of attachment to the Jewish people appears to be weakened by multiple marriages, particularly when the spouse in the second or subsequent marriages is not Jewish. This reciprocal relationship between Jewish identity and family behavior, and between denominational preference and family behavior as well, calls for a more complex research design that can disentangle the reciprocal effects more systematically. Cohen and

Eisen's (2000) qualitative research is a step in this direction, though it was not designed specifically to disentangle the various types of religious and ethnic identity and their respective relationships to family behavior.

Just as Jewish identity and denominational preference are related to familistic behavior, age cohort and education retain similar relationships with family behavior, as they do in the broader population. So religious and ethnic influences on family behavior appear to coexist—or even compete—with other social influences, sometimes being more important, sometimes as important, and sometimes less important. Also, patterns of familistic behavior have a significant effect on subsequent familistic behavior. Thus, early marriage, which is related to Jewish identity and, for women, being Orthodox, has a strong effect on age at birth of first child, and age at birth of first child has the strongest effect on a woman's fertility. Thus, the effects of Jewish identity on family behavior are not only direct, but also indirect, through its past influences on family behavior, augmenting its importance.

An important conclusion from this analysis is the persisting influence of American Jewish religious and ethnic identity, which often overlaps with denominational preference and norms, on the family behavior of both men and women.