Family Size Expectations of Young American Jewish Adults

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The survival of the Jewish community in the United States is linked to the generational replacement of its population. Indeed, below-replacement fertility has often been viewed in the broader context of the assimilation of Jews in modern society. Since the number of births affects the institutions of the community, family ties between the generations, as well as the structure and growth of the population, issues of low Jewish fertility have become central to the understanding of Jewish continuity in the United States. Total fertility rates among American Jews have been estimated for the 1980s as 1.6 and these have been incorporated in widely cited projections of the American Jewish population (Schmelz and DellaPergola, 1983). These portray demographic assimilation of the American Jewish population.

Using estimates of current fertility levels to project long term fertility trends may be distorting, particularly given the fluctuations in current fertility that have characterized the recent past (DellaPergola, 1980). What do we need to know in order to clarify the future level of Jewish fertility in America? Unfortunately, we need to know what we cannot know – the eventual completed family size of cohorts of young adults who were in the transition to adulthood in the 1970s. Measures of the fertility patterns of earlier cohorts are less helpful, if the issue has become the extent to which a decline in family size has occurred. Total fertility rates or other period measures of reproduction based on estimated cross-sections of the American Jewish population are also unhelpful.

Declines in period measures of fertility combine two processes: (a) real changes in completed family size and (b) changes in the timing of reproduction. Analysis of fertility fluctuations over the last 50 years in the United States has demonstrated that period fertility measures have varied much more than cohort completed family size (Akers, 1965). It is therefore extremely hazardous to generalize from declines in period fertility rates to smaller family size.

In period fertility rates, it is neither easy nor simple to disentangle the relative importance of changes in completed family size from changes in the timing of marriage or the tempo of childbearing. Yet, the centrality of the issue for Jewish communities in the United States requires that alternative sources of data be explored which may help in interpreting period levels of below-replacement fertility and which may provide guidelines for projecting the eventual family size of cohorts currently within the childbearing period.

We examine one such alternative source of data: the birth expectations of a cohort of American Jews who will be having children into the 21st century. These expecta-

tions data suggest strongly that there is little or no basis for expecting cohort fertility below replacement levels.

Birth Expectations: Methodological Considerations

Almost all of the research documenting the unique features of American Jewish fertility has been based on cross-sectional national surveys or samples of local communities. These have been used to analyze the fertility of the population as a whole and have examined age, marriage, and birth cohorts to reconstruct past patterns of fertility and family formation. Often the emphasis has been on changes in family size; occasionally the changing tempo of childbearing has been investigated. The focus has necessarily been on the completed childbearing of married women. Neither of these data sources has had a sufficient number of cases for an in-depth analysis of emerging patterns among younger persons.

Completed family size is an appropriate measure for older women and parity-specific measures of spacing yield estimates of the changing pace and tempo of childbearing among those in the childbearing years. To learn of the changing pace of family building is important in assessing period fertility changes and relationships to other family life cycle events. To infer eventual family size from the pace of early childbearing is problematic, however, when marriage and spacing patterns are changing. Moreover, research on the number of children ever born has tended to focus on married women. As the patterns of marriage change and the proportion married within a population varies, there is greater need to incorporate data about fertility that are useful both for the currently married population and for those who are likely to marry at some time in the future.

The challenge is to study the future fertility of the population by focusing on young persons before they marry and have children. Such research can provide important clues to changing patterns of reproduction and family formation. When added to data on actual reproductive behavior and when other processes affecting demographic size and structure are incorporated (e.g., net immigration and net changes due to intermarriage), a more comprehensive basis for population projection emerges.

Unlike previous research, we focus in this paper on a longitudinal study of young men and women, Jews and non-Jews, married and unmarried. There is no need to justify longitudinal studies of the Jews or the systematic comparison of Jews and non-Jews (see Goldscheider, 1982; Goldscheider, 1984). Since we look at a cohort before childbearing begins, our fertility measure is the number of children expected.

There is a continuing debate among social scientists about the value of data on fertility expectations (see the articles in Hendershot and Placek, 1981; Freedman et al., 1980; Morgan, 1982, 1985; O'Connell and Rogers, 1983). Yet there is a consensus that data on birth expectations help in the interpretation of fertility patterns as they unfold. 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). Data on family size expectations have been more problematic for short-term than long-term forecasting. In particular, reproductive intentions are reasonable measures of completed cohort fertility, in large part because of the greater stability of cohort, as compared to period, fertility rates (Campbell, 1981; Westoff, 1981).

An evaluation of data on birth expectations cannot be made abstractly; it is necessary to consider their value for specific subpopulations and in the context of alternative measures (Campbell, 1981). For well-defined objectives such as the examination of the fertility of young cohorts in the childbearing ages, birth expectation data are more useful than any other indicator of future fertility (Long and Wetrojan, 1981). In addition, 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, Chapter 16). Nevertheless, expectations data are not a panacea for population projections. They are most useful in the development of a coherent theoretical framework of fertility behavior. Using them as models of demographic change requires an understanding of underlying assumptions and cannot replace the informed judgments of forecasters (Long and Wetrojan, 1981; Hendershot and Placek, 1981, Chapter 16).

In the case of the Jews, we have no accurate national measures of current fertility since 1971, i.e., for the period after the National Jewish Population Survey (DellaPergola, 1980). Even the severest critics of expectations data suggest that the measurement of reproductive attitudes is at least as good as conventional period indexes of fertility. In the absence of such measures for American Jews, expectations data should be explored.

Birth Expectations: Data Sources and Overall Levels

Data on birth expectations have been collected and analyzed in every nationwide and more focused fertility survey in the United States over the last 30 years, as part of special government fertility studies over the last two decades, and in the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey since 1971 (see the reviews in Oakley, 1981; Campbell, 1981; O'Connell and Rogers, 1983). In addition, birth expectations data for young unmarried persons have been regularly incorporated in Current Population Surveys since 1976 (O'Connell and Rogers, 1983), and special studies of teenagers have been undertaken (Hirsch, et al., 1981; Campbell, 1981).

Birth expectations data have also been included in local Jewish community studies and in several American national surveys that contained information on Jews (see, for example, Goldstein, 1973, 1981; Cohen and Ritterband, 1981; Ritterband and Cohen, 1980; DellaPergola, 1980; Goldscheider, 1985). These data have largely been used in a limited way, to estimate the completed fertility of ever-married persons in their childbearing years. Without exception, these expectations data show lower Jewish fertility when compared to white Protestants and Catholics and levels of fertility approximating the two-child family. U.S. data for the mid–1970s using the National Surveys of Family Growth have reaffirmed these patterns (Mosher and Goldscheider, 1984, Table 1; Mosher and Hendershot, 1984).

The latest U.S. national data (Table 1) are consistent with previous evidence on number of births expected. Drawn from the 1982 National Survey of Family Growth they show the continued lower family size expectations of Jewish women compared to Protestants and Catholics. Yet, the level of family size expectations is about 2.1

children for currently and ever-married, as well as non-married, Jewish women. Among the married, the number of children ever-born is about 1.8, very close already to the completed family size expected. These data do not, however, take us very far analytically because they are affected by differences within the Jewish population and between Jews and non-Jews in the age distribution of women aged 15–44 and the proportion who are or were married. The fertility issue for population growth is tied into the eventual proportion of Jewish women who will marry, not simply the family size of the currently married (see Goldscheider, 1985).

TABLE 1. MEAN NUMBER OF CHILDREN EVER BORN AND TOTAL BIRTHS EXPECTED, BY RELIGION AND MARITAL STATUS: WHITE WOMEN 15–44 YEARS OF AGE, U.S., 1982

Religion	Total	Currently married	Ever-married
	Children ever born		
Total[a]	1.27	1.86	1.84
Protestant	1.36	1.82	1.83
Catholic	1.22	2.01	1.95
Jewish	1.10	1.85	1.79
None	0.89	1.50	1.37
	Total births expected		
Total[a]	2.36	2.47	2.42
Protestant	2.29	2.39	2.37
Catholic	2.57	2.69	2.63
Jewish	2.09	2.18	2.06
None	1.95	2.18	2.02

a. Includes other religions, not shown separately.
Source: National Center for Health Statistics, National Survey of Family Growth, Cycle III.

The data which we analyze are drawn from the National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972, 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 national representative sample of students as they move out of American high schools into the critical years of early adulthood. The base year of the survey was 1972. We examine data for 1973 and 1979, the first and last interviews which included questions on expected family size.[1] The data analysis compared Jews to all non-blacks. The religious categories include Jewish, Catholic, Protestant (in which we have included a small number of those of other religions), and none. These were derived from responses to the question: "What religion were you brought up in?" 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 children. Other data on parental education, marital status (as of 1979), and community type ("Which best describes the location of the place in which you live?") are also included in the analysis. 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 (Levinsohn et al., 1978). All the data presented are therefore weighted; however, the number of cases listed is the actual number included in the sample.

We shall examine these data to address two major issues in the study of American Jewish fertility. We ask:

(a) Are American Jewish young men and women expecting families which are so small that if their expectations are realized, Jewish population size in the United States will decline? (This question focuses only on the fertility component of population growth, net of the effects of immigration and intermarriage.)

(b) Are the family size expectations of young Jewish adults particularly low relative to other ethnic and religious groups in the United States?

In part, the reproductive level of American Jews may be considered independent of other groups because of the particular demographic features of American Jews (size, structure, marriage, mortality, and immigration patterns). Yet, if Jewish fertility expectations are similar to others, then particular Jewish traits (of religion, culture, or ideology) need not be invoked to account for Jewish fertility patterns. If the matrix of socioeconomic status, community type, and related characteristics influence Jewish fertility expectations in the same way as for non-Jews, it seems unlikely that policy recommendations can affect these expectations without altering these characteristics.

Birth Expectations of Young Adults

How many children do young Jewish adults expect to have? Data in Table 2 show that a majority expect two children – 59% in 1973 and 57% in 1979. Few Jews expect no children or one child, although the proportion increased, reaching 20% by 1979. Correspondingly, the proportion expecting three or more children declined from 29% to 22%. Thus, at both time periods, young Jewish adults expected about two children on average with an almost even distribution above and below the modal two-child family.

Do family size expectations differ between Jews and non-Jews? Have changes in family size expectations been accentuated among young Jews? The data allow us to address these questions systematically by comparing Jews to Whites – Catholics, Protestants, and those who were brought up with no religious affiliation.

Jews were somewhat more likely to expect a two-child family than non-Jews in both 1973 and 1979 and were less concentrated among those expecting four or more children than any other group. In the six-year period, Jews and non-Jews shifted their family size expectations downward, converging toward the two-child family. By 1979, the proportion of young Jewish adults expecting three or more children was identical to Protestants (22.4%), lower than Catholics (31.2%), but higher than those with no religious affiliation (16.8%). Between 1973 and 1979, the relative decline in the proportion expecting three or more children was about the same for Jews and non-Jews (but higher among Catholics) and the relative increase in the expectations for less than two children was greater for Jews than non-Jews. In sum, these aggregate data show somewhat greater concentration among Jews than non-Jews in small family size expectations but no striking Jewish tendency toward childless families or the one-child family.

TABLE 2. EXPECTED NUMBER OF CHILDREN, BY RELIGION AND SEX: HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1972, INTERVIEWED IN 1973 AND 1979

Sex and religion	Expected number of children					
	0	1	2	3	4+	N
			1973			
Both sexes						
Total	11.3	4.8	51.7	21.0	11.2	9,113
Protestant	8.8	3.6	58.5	21.1	8.1	388
Catholic	10.2	3.9	43.2	26.2	16.5	2,801
Jewish	11.2	5.3	56.1	18.8	8.6	5,495
None	20.8	5.5	51.4	12.8	9.5	429
Males						
Total	14.5	4.5	51.5	19.9	9.5	4,459
Protestant	10.0	4.9	61.2	16.7	7.2	191
Catholic	12.6	3.9	43.8	26.3	13.4	1,371
Jewish	14.8	4.8	55.1	17.5	7.8	2,644
None	24.2	4.9	53.2	10.5	7.3	253
Females						
Total	8.0	5.1	52.0	22.0	12.9	4,654
Protestant	7.6	2.3	55.8	25.4	8.9	197
Catholic	7.9	3.8	42.7	26.1	19.5	1,430
Jewish	7.7	5.9	57.0	20.0	9.5	2,851
None	15.3	6.3	48.7	16.7	13.1	176
			1979			
Both sexes						
Total	12.8	9.4	52.9	17.6	7.3	8,405
Protestant	12.9	7.3	57.3	18.0	4.4	339
Catholic	12.0	7.2	49.6	21.7	9.5	2,498
Jewish	12.6	10.5	54.5	15.9	6.5	5,182
None	19.7	10.9	52.6	11.5	5.3	386
Males						
Total	14.4	7.6	53.1	17.7	7.3	4,202
Protestant	11.9	9.0	56.4	18.0	4.7	172
Catholic	13.5	5.3	50.6	21.8	8.8	1,254
Jewish	14.2	8.5	54.0	16.3	7.0	2,546
None	21.3	9.5	54.6	11.1	3.5	230
Females						
Total	11.2	11.2	52.8	17.5	7.4	4,203
Protestant	14.1	5.6	58.3	18.0	4.0	167
Catholic	10.5	9.1	48.7	21.7	10.1	1,244
Jewish	11.1	12.4	54.9	15.6	6.1	2,636
None	16.8	13.5	48.8	12.3	8.6	156

Further insights into patterns of change in family size expectations emerge when we examine differences between young men and women. In the general sample, there are few large differences between the family size expectations of young men and women with some tendency toward convergence in 1979. Thus, the proportion expecting two children was about the same for men and women in 1973 (52%) as well as in 1979 (53%). The tendency toward somewhat larger family size expectations among young women in 1973 (13% expected four or more children and 35% expected three or more children, compared to 10% and 29%, respectively, of the males) are eliminated

by 1979 when 7% of both young men and women expected four or more children and 25% expected three or more children.

Jewish young adults follow a similar pattern. In 1973, expected family size was larger among Jewish women than Jewish men (34% of the women expected three or more children compared to 24% of the men; 15% of the men expected no children or one child, compared to 10% of the women). By 1979, these young Jewish men and women expected about the same number of children (22% expected three or more children, 56–58% expected two children). Over time, these converging patterns indicate increases for men and women in the proportion expecting very small families (of one child or no children). For Jewish women, unlike for men, there was a sharp reduction in family size expectations of three children and above (from 34% in 1973 to 22% in 1979).

In 1973, Jewish males were more concentrated than non-Jewish males in their expectations for the two-child family and fewer expected to be childless or to have four or more children. Decreases among Jews and increases among non-Jews in expectations for two-child families resulted in a reduction of distinctive family size expectations among Jewish males by 1979. While Jewish women retain an overall lower proportion than non-Jewish women expecting four or more children, 1973–1979, no other distinctive feature remains by 1979. About three-fourths of the Jewish women expect two-three children (the same proportion as Jewish men), only slightly higher than non-Jewish women or men (70% expect two-three children). These data indicate that the distinctive expected family size differences between Jews and non-Jews have all but disappeared as a result of changes among Jews and non-Jews.

Only those who had no religious upbringing were sharply distinctive. They had a very high percent who expect no children at both observation periods: about 20% of those with no religious upbringing expect no children and 30% expect at most one child. This is clearly a very different pattern of family size expectation, relative to Jews as well as to young men and women of other religious backgrounds. In this regard, those with no religion are much less family oriented, while young Jews are more oriented toward the two-child family.

Our analysis assumes that most people have some expectation for their family size, and the data we have presented capture these family size targets. Fertility expectations are, however, moving targets, altered somewhat by life cycle experiences, including marriage and childbearing. How stable are these family size expectations among young adults over time? Are family size expectations among young Jews more or less stable than among non-Jews? These questions are fundamental if we are to use these data as a basis for assessing future family size and if they are to be considered reflections of reproductive norms. Moreover, if there are patterns of change over time, it is important to evaluate the direction of change, particularly as changes in marital status occur. Data in Table 3 are organized to maximize the longitudinal quality of the data and assess individual-level changes in attitudes.

Comparing the family size expectations of persons in the High School Class of 1972 at two points in time (1973 and 1979) shows that a majority of Jews expressed the same family size expectations at both interviews, higher than any other group. This result is consistent with previous research, reinforcing the particular value of birth expectations data for the analysis of Jewish fertility. The relative proportion of those who expressed family size expectations that were smaller in 1979 than in 1973 was

TABLE 3. PERCENTAGE CHANGING FAMILY SIZE EXPECTATIONS, 1973–1979, BY RELIGION AND MARITAL STATUS IN 1979: HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1972

Religion and marital status	Same	Increase	Decrease
Total	47.0	20.4	32.5
Jewish	55.8	16.4	27.8
Catholic	44.4	20.5	35.3
Protestant	48.9	19.9	31.1
None	42.8	24.7	32.4
Jews			
Ever married	64.2	13.2	22.7
Never married	51.6	17.5	31.0
Non-Jews			
Ever married	46.7	20.4	32.9
Never married	47.6	20.5	31.9

higher than the proportion who increased their family size expectations, with no differences between Jews and others.

A concern in the analysis of birth expectations has been the effects of changes in marital status. In particular, some may argue that many of those who are not currently married expect never to have children. The data suggest that there are some small differences in the birth expectations of Jews who have never married and those who have married. Nevertheless, 77% of the Jews who were not yet married by 1979 expected two or more children (compared to 84% among the ever-married). Comparable figures for non-Jews show similar patterns but with lower levels of concentration among those expecting a two-child family. Data not presented in tabular form show that aggregate declines in family size expectations characterize both the ever- and never-married, with somewhat larger increases in expectations for no children among those not married by 1979.

A clearer picture of the effects of changes in marital status on the relative stability of birth expectations may be observed with individual-level data (the bottom panel of Table 3). These show that Jews exhibit greater stability of family size expectations for both the ever-married and the never-married. Ever-married Jews have a very high level of stability, relative to non-Jews and relative to never-married Jews. Moreover, marrying means greater stability in family size expectations among Jews but not among non-Jews. While Jews and non-Jews who changed their family size expectations were somewhat more likely to reduce than to increase them, this was affected by changes in marital status only among Jews.

These longitudinal data on the effects of marital status on the birth expectations of Jews reinforce previous research which pointed to the importance of the timing and extent of marriage of young Jews as the critical factor affecting fertility in the 1980s (Goldscheider, 1985, Chapter 7). Seven years after graduating from high school, fully 65% of the Jews have not yet married compared to about one-third of the non-Jews. We do not know the eventual marriage patterns of this cohort. It is possible that permanent non-marriage rather than delayed marriage will characterize the Jews. If this

is the case, then the two-child family would be sufficient to replace this generation of married persons but not the population as a whole.

However, there are other more recent data showing that delayed marriage, rather than permanent non-marriage, is accounting for this pattern. A large nationwide survey in 1980 obtained data on the expected marriage patterns of a representative sample of American students completing their last year in high school. These data for Jews and those of other religions (Appendix Table A) show that only a very small proportion of Jewish male and female students expect not to marry. Indeed, Jews have the lowest proportion who do not expect to marry of any group. However, a very large proportion of Jews expect to marry later than non-Jews. Almost three-fourths of the Jewish males (compared to about half of the non-Jewish males) and over half of the Jewish females (compared to one-third of the non-Jewish females) expect to marry after age 24; fully 42% of Jewish males and 20% of Jewish females expect to marry after age 26, compared to 19% and 10% of non-Jewish males and females, respectively.

These data suggest that for young Jewish adults the issue is the timing of marriage rather than any significant expectation of non-marriage. The distinctive pattern for Jews in this regard is most clearly observed when comparisons are made with those with no religious upbringing, where a significantly high proportion expect not to marry. We note as well that the concentration of expected marriage ages among young Jewish men and women parallels data on actual average marriage patterns among young Jews in the community (cf. Goldscheider, 1985, Chapter 5).

As is the case with birth expectations, we do not know the predictive power of these marriage expectations. Yet it is clear that these data on marriage expectations cannot be interpreted as indicating anti-family or non-family attitudes. Young Jewish adults see no contradiction between expecting to marry late and having an average family size of two children. For the sample as a whole, there is some evidence that data of individual expectations of age at marriage anticipate patterns of actual behavior (Hogan, n.d.). In addition, other research has indicated that variation and change in the timing of marriage are closely tied to expectations about age at marriage (Modell, 1980).

Taken together, these data on the expected marriage and family size patterns of young American Jews lend support to the argument that American Jews will achieve fertility levels in the next several decades averaging close to two children per family, sufficient for population replacement.

The Uniqueness of Jewish Fertility

The data from the 1979 reinterview also allow us to address the question of the continued uniqueness of Jewish fertility patterns. In particular, we shall compare the effects of parental education and general community type on the fertility expectations of Jews and non-Jews and then examine a multivariate model comparing the birth expectations of Jews and non-Jews, adjusting for the effects of education, community type, sex and marital status.

Examining the birth expectations of Jews by level of father's and mother's education (Table 4) shows a systematic inverse relationship between father's educational

TABLE 4. EXPECTED NUMBER OF CHILDREN, BY RELIGION AND EDUCATION OF FATHER AND MOTHER: HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1972, INTERVIEWED IN 1979

Education and expected number of children	Religion				
	Total	Jews	Catholics	Protestants	None
Father's education					
Up to high school					
0-1	22.2	22.0	19.1	23.3	33.0
2	51.7	52.7	47.9	54.0	49.4
3+	26.0	25.2	33.1	22.6	17.6
N	4,580	111	1,493	2,766	210
Some college					
0-1	22.1	22.6	19.9	23.2	22.9
2	54.7	54.8	55.2	54.4	56.6
3+	23.1	22.6	24.9	22.4	20.6
N	1,572	76	485	946	65
College graduate					
0-1	19.7	19.6	14.4	20.7	41.1
2	56.5	59.1	53.1	58.2	50.5
3+	23.8	21.4	32.5	21.1	8.4
N	860	72	207	542	39
Post-graduate					
0-1	19.1	20.2	21.2	18.7	12.9
2	56.2	64.7	48.7	56.9	75.4
3+	24.6	15.1	30.0	24.4	11.6
N	672	64	166	408	34
Mother's education					
Up to high school					
0-1	21.7	21.5	18.2	23.3	32.3
2	52.8	56.7	49.2	54.7	55.3
3+	25.2	21.9	32.6	22.0	12.6
N	5,222	135	1,741	3,105	241
Some college					
0-1	22.0	22.5	21.6	21.7	27.9
2	53.9	58.6	52.2	54.6	50.2
3+	24.1	18.9	26.1	23.7	21.8
N	1,615	116	420	1,012	67
College graduate					
0-1	20.4	19.0	18.8	19.7	19.6
2	56.0	54.1	52.7	57.6	52.9
3+	24.5	27.0	28.5	22.7	27.6
N	859	72	188	559	40

level and the proportion expecting three or more children. At the same time, there is a clear increase in the proportion expecting two children but no increase in those expecting less than two children. Hence, for Jews there is no empirical connection between the increased level of fathers' education and expectations for less than a two-child family. Fathers' education also does not systematically affect the birth expectations of non-Jews.

A more complex pattern emerges examining the effects of mothers' education. The proportion expecting three or more children increases among Jews whose mothers at least completed college: 27% expect three or more children compared to 19% of those

whose mothers had only high school education. Again, it is clear that increasing education does not result in a decline in the proportion expecting two or more children.

American Jews have distinctive residential distribution patterns (Goldscheider, 1985, Chapter 4) and these may also affect their expected family size. Five community types were identified in the survey, with most Jews living in the suburbs of large- or medium-sized cities. Data in Table 5 show that a large proportion of Jews who live in suburban areas of large cities expect to have two children, while those in large cities tend to expect larger families of three or more children. But the distribution in large cities is bimodal, with 19% expecting no children. Comparing Jews to non-Jews in their various community types does not reveal any distinctive pattern of birth expectation among Jews.

TABLE 5. EXPECTED NUMBER OF CHILDREN BY RELIGION AND COMMUNITY TYPE: HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1972, INTERVIEWED IN 1979

Community type and expected number of children	Religion				
	Total	Jews	Catholics	Protestants	None
Small cities					
0	12.2	10.1	10.2	12.0	24.6
1	9.7	3.4	7.3	10.7	9.5
2	52.2	60.1	48.1	54.0	46.5
3	18.7	21.3	24.6	16.8	13.0
4+	7.3	5.1	9.8	6.4	6.3
N	3,504	52	592	2,657	203
Medium cities					
0	12.5	16.7	12.2	12.1	16.8
1	9.7	5.1	7.1	12.0	10.1
2	53.3	57.5	50.1	55.3	59.1
3	16.8	18.7	21.1	13.6	12.8
4+	7.7	2.1	9.6	7.0	1.2
N	1,594	53	624	840	77
Medium-city suburbs					
0	14.0	10.1	15.1	13.9	7.2
1	8.4	10.2	7.6	8.3	15.7
2	54.3	55.6	49.2	56.7	70.6
3	15.5	19.9	17.9	14.4	3.4
4+	7.8	4.2	10.1	6.7	3.2
N	1,212	71	444	641	56
Large cities					
0	17.7	19.2	16.8	16.6	32.3
1	8.0	9.2	5.5	12.5	0.0
2	42.7	37.2	41.4	45.8	41.3
3	23.2	27.3	26.9	19.4	6.7
4+	8.4	7.1	9.4	5.7	19.7
N	435	66	210	135	24
Large-city suburbs					
0	13.7	12.8	8.2	18.6	6.1
1	7.2	7.7	8.1	6.4	6.7
2	61.3	65.2	65.8	56.6	67.2
3	11.8	10.1	13.7	10.5	15.5
4+	6.0	4.3	4.2	8.0	4.5
N	535	92	186	237	20

As in the bivariate comparisons, the multivariate analysis (Table 6) shows that education, marital status, and sex significantly affect birth expectations, but community type is not statistically significant. Combining education (of fathers), community type, marital status, and sex, we can examine the effects of religious differences on birth expectations net of these variables. There are net effects of religion on birth expectations but no distinctive pattern for Jews: about the same proportion of Jews as Catholics expect two or more children and about the same proportion of Jews and Protestants expect three or more children. These data suggest that the uniquely low fertility of Jews found for previous cohorts does not characterize the fertility expectations of younger cohorts. These findings parallel conclusions of a systematic comparison of fertility expectations of Jews and non-Jews in the Boston metropolitan area (Goldscheider, 1985, Chapter 7).

TABLE 6. PERCENTAGE EXPECTING TWO OR MORE CHILDREN AND PERCENTAGE EXPECTING THREE OR MORE CHILDREN ADJUSTING FOR RELIGION, EDUCATION OF FATHER, MARITAL STATUS, SEX AND COMMUNITY TYPE: HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1972, INTERVIEWED IN 1979 (MULTIPLE CLASSIFICATION ANALYSIS)

	Expected number of children	
	Two+	Three+
Grand percent	78	25
Religion	*	*
Jews	81	24
Catholics	81	31
Protestants	76	22
None	72	17
Education (father)	*	-
HS or less	77	26
Some college	78	23
College	82	25
Postgraduate	83	27
Marital status	*	*
Ever married	82	26
Never married	71	23
Sex	*	-
Female	77	25
Male	79	25
Community	-	*
Small city	79	27
Medium city	77	24
Medium suburb	77	23
Large city	74	30
Large suburb	78	18

* Significant at .05 level
\- Not significant

One conclusion from these data, therefore, is that the search for exceptional patterns of fertility among American Jews should focus on issues of the timing of family

formation and the tempo of childbearing, rather than simply on family size per se. The pattern of delayed marriage among young Jewish men and women in the United States is associated in large part with high levels of educational attainment and career orientations. These are distinctive Jewish patterns at the group level. They deserve more systematic attention than they have received.

Data on birth expectations and new data on marriage expectations reveal that most young Jews expect to marry and have a small family. Neither delayed marriage nor changes in the timing of childbearing appear to interfere with expectations for the attainment of the two-child family for most young Jews. There may be, as there have been, changes in the timing of the childbearing and, hence, period fertility may fluctuate – often at what will appear to be below replacement levels. However, cohort fertility patterns, assuming that these expectations are accurate barometers of actual reproductive behavior, will be sufficient for population replacement. There is every reason to treat these birth expectations data as guidelines in understanding American Jewish fertility. There are no more accurate fertility indicators available to use for the projection of the future population of American Jews.

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Note

1. Data for 1976 were also examined and convey a consistent intermediate picture. These are not presented here in tabular form. A new wave of interviews of the High School Class of 1972 was conducted in 1986 and should provide interesting data.

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TABLE A. MARRIAGE EXPECTATIONS, BY RELIGION AND SEX: HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1980

Religion	Total		Do not expect to marry	Age of expected marriage:					
	N	Percent		-20	20-21	22-23	24-25	26-27	28+
				Males					
Total	12,031	100.0	9.4	3.8	15.5	22.2	30.1	10.4	8.6
Jews	284	100.0	5.3	0.2	2.0	18.0	32.7	29.3	12.4
Catholic	6,059	100.0	9.1	4.7	17.9	23.3	28.2	8.8	8.1
Protestant	4,489	100.0	8.1	2.5	12.8	22.8	33.8	11.4	8.5
Other	413	100.0	9.8	4.5	19.2	18.9	29.3	10.1	8.3
None	786	100.0	19.3	4.1	13.9	15.3	24.9	11.0	11.4
				Females					
Total	13,525	100.0	4.8	13.5	22.1	27.1	23.0	6.2	3.2
Jews	232	100.0	2.8	3.1	13.9	26.4	33.9	13.4	6.5
Catholic	7,149	100.0	4.7	16.3	23.9	26.1	20.8	5.3	2.9
Protestant	5,064	100.0	4.1	9.6	19.9	30.3	26.0	7.1	3.1
Other	508	100.0	7.1	16.2	27.0	20.9	20.9	5.0	2.8
None	572	100.0	10.3	11.8	16.9	21.6	25.1	8.3	6.1