

A Research Report from
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**Jewish College Freshmen
An Analysis of Three Studies**

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JEWISH COLLEGE FRESHMEN

SUMMARY

Whether they entered college in 1969, 1971, or 1980 Jewish freshmen, on average, differed consistently and characteristically from non-Jewish freshmen, on average. Jews entered college younger, attended colleges farther away from home, came from more prosperous homes, and had better-educated parents. They were more active artistically and literarily, had higher academic aspirations for themselves, and held more liberal views. They also expressed higher self-esteem.

As adults (in the 1980 longitudinal study), greater proportions of Jews than others were working toward doctorates and professional degrees. More than others, Jews were engaged in medicine, law, and the arts. As to business, there were fewer differences. All the 1980 adults, including Jews, expressed at least 15 per cent more interest in business careers than they had as freshmen.

While the Jewish adults of 1980 remained more liberal in political and social outlook than their non-Jewish peers, they were less liberal than they had been as freshmen. The adults of 1980, however, resembled their political selves as freshmen (1971) more than they did the freshmen of 1980.

There has been a notable growth of academic and career expectations among Jewish women. Six times as many Jewish women planned to study for advanced degrees in 1980 as in 1969. And more Jewish women than Jewish men were lawyers in 1980.

Like all women, Jewish women are more inclined than men to want new experiences and make new friends. Like all women, they attribute less importance to financial success than do men. In social and political attitudes, Jewish women are to the left of non-Jewish women and non-Jewish and Jewish men.

Jewish men and women are considerably less pro-family than non-Jews, in both attitude and practice. In 1980 when respondents to the survey were mostly in their late 20's, three per cent of the Jewish men and six per cent of the women had one child, and none had more than one. Of non-Jews, 13 per cent of the men and 17 per cent of the women had one child, and 11 per cent of both had two or more children.

Introduction

Since 1969 the American Jewish Committee has commissioned three studies based on the American Council on Education's sample censuses of freshmen. The first two are of Jewish freshmen, in 1969 and 1980, and the third is of a 1980 follow-up of Jews who were freshmen in 1971.* David E. Drew is the only or principal author of each.

By collecting data in 1980 from the group who had been college freshmen in 1971 the Higher Education Research Institute (research arm of the American Council on Education) was able to study the attitudes and experiences of the same cohort before, during, and after college. This longitudinal study originated as a Ford Foundation project focusing on black and Hispanic students, but also included information about Jews. The percentages cited for the adults of 1980 are based on responses from 7,710 non-Jews and 292 Jews. Since no questions on religion were asked in the follow-up, only students who had identified themselves in 1971 as Jews were so categorized in 1980.

* (1) David E. Drew, A Profile of the Jewish Freshman, 1969; American Council on Education, Washington, D.C., June 1970. (2) David E. Drew, Margo R. King, and Gerald R. Richardson, A Profile of the Jewish Freshman, 1980; Higher Education Research Institute, Los Angeles, 1981. (3) David E. Drew and Melanie R. Williams, After College: A Longitudinal Study of Jewish Adults, 1980, Higher Education Research Institute, Los Angeles, 1982.

DEMOGRAPHICSReligion

Unfortunately, ACE surveys throw little light on religious beliefs and practices. Information about the religious "preference" of freshmen appears below:

TABLE 1 RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE

	<u>1969</u>				<u>1971</u>				<u>1980*</u>			
	<u>Jews</u>		<u>Others</u>		<u>Jews</u>		<u>Others</u>		<u>Jews</u>		<u>Others</u>	
	<u>M</u>	<u>W**</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>
					<u>Per cent</u>							
Parents' religion	79	81	83	87	71	67	77	82	100	100	100	100
Other	2	2	4	4	2	9	9	6	--	--	--	--
None	17	16	13	9	27	24	14	12	--	--	--	--

Jewish freshmen identify themselves with their parents' religious preference less than non-Jewish freshmen do. In 1971 a quarter of the Jewish freshmen, against an eighth of the non-Jews, said they had no religion. (However, a study sponsored by the American Jewish Committee*** found that while religiosity is weakest among Jewish students, in later life "apostate" Jews come back more than Protestants and Catholics--to the Jewish community, at any rate, if not primarily to the synagogue.)

* In 1980 the question on religion asked only for current religious preference.

** M = Men; W = Women.

*** David Caplovitz and Fred Sherrow, The Religious Drop-outs, Sage Publications: Beverly Hills and London, 1977.

By 1971 young people appeared to have reached a high in religious disaffection. This was particularly true for Jewish women. From 1969 to 1971, a mere two years, the number of Jewish women who renounced their parents' religion increased 14 per cent. It is also striking that 9 per cent of women born Jewish claimed another religion. More Jewish women had either a new religion or none than Jewish men and non-Jewish men and women.

Similarity of Jewish freshmen

The tables that follow illustrate the similarity of certain characteristics of Jewish freshmen from 1969 through 1980.

TABLE 2 AGE, PARENTS' EDUCATION, HIGH-SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENTS

	<u>1969</u>				<u>1971</u>				<u>1980</u>			
	<u>Jews</u>		<u>Others</u>		<u>Jews</u>		<u>Others</u>		<u>Jews</u>		<u>Others</u>	
	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>
<u>Age as of December 31, preceding admission</u>	<u>Per cent</u>											
16 or younger	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17	13	17	3	4	11	21	3	4	6	10	2	3
18	75	77	71	80	81	75	79	84	77	82	70	77
19 & over	11	6	27	16	8	4	18	12	17	8	28	5
<u>Father's education</u>												
College degree	20	24	16	18	23	32	20	21	26	27	20	18
Graduate or professional degree	18	18	8	9	25	38	12	15	29	34	14	13
<u>Mother's education</u>												
College degree	18	18	13	15	25	36	21	20	23	23	16	15
Graduate or professional degree	6	7	2	3	8	13	3	5	14	17	6	5
<u>High-school achievements</u>												
Edited school publication	13	17	8	15	25	21	9	20	NOT ASKED			
National Merit recognition	12	10	7	8	17	12	13	13	NOT ASKED			

Jewish freshmen entered college younger, had parents of higher educational background, and performed somewhat better in scholastic and literary activities.

Educational goals

How realistic were the educational goals Jewish freshmen set for themselves? We compare the goals of the 1971 freshmen with their accomplishments in 1980.

TABLE 3 DEGREES PLANNED AND HELD

	<u>Highest degree planned</u> <u>Freshmen 1971</u>		<u>Highest degree held</u> <u>Adults 1980</u>	
	<u>Jews</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Jews</u>	<u>Others</u>
	<u>Per cent</u>			
High-school diploma	NOT ASKED		4	13
Vocational or Associate degree	0	1	0	2
B.A. (or equivalent)	26	42	1	4
M.A. (" ")	29	32	62	67
Ph.D. (" ")	16	10	30	13
Professional degree	27	10	4	1
In 1980 some were still working toward a higher degree:				
Ph.D. (or equivalent)			14	8
Professional degree			22	8

It should be noted that respondents in the longitudinal study are graduates of four-year educational institutions, mostly with high standards. Thus we find almost two thirds of the students going on to earn a master's degree. Among Jews almost a third went on to the doctorate, more than twice as many as other students. According to these figures many more Jewish students went on to the doctorate than had expected to. About as many as had planned to get a professional degree were on their way to one.

The freshmen statistics also tell us that women have been setting their sights higher. In 1969 three per cent of Jewish women freshmen said they intended to study for advanced degrees, and in 1980 the number was over six times as many. For non-Jewish women the ratio of 1980 to 1969 was 2½ to 1.

TABLE 4 EDUCATIONAL GOALS OF MEN AND WOMEN

<u>Highest degree you intend to obtain</u>	<u>JEWS</u>						<u>ADULTS</u>	
	<u>1969</u>		<u>1971</u>		<u>1980</u>		<u>1980</u>	
	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>
	<u>Per cent</u>							
Doctorate	23	11	16	16	11	11	17	9
Advanced professional degree	21	3	42	10	29	19	30	8
TOTAL	44	14	58	26	40	30	47	17
	<u>NON-JEWS</u>							
Doctorate	13	6	13	7	8	7	9	7
Advanced professional degree	8	2	15	5	12	10	10	5
TOTAL	21	8	28	12	20	17	19	12

Self-regard

The high academic aspirations of Jewish students may be linked to a generally high self-regard. All three studies asked respondents to rate themselves in a variety of ways. From the responses we learn that Jewish freshmen on the whole had higher expectations and, in several instances, a higher regard for their capabilities than others had of theirs.

TABLE 5 EXPECTATIONS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

	<u>1969</u>		<u>1971</u>		<u>1980</u>	
	<u>Jews</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Jews</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Jews</u>	<u>Others</u>
<u>What is your best guess as to the chances that you will</u>			<u>Per cent</u>			
Obtain average grade of A or higher	5	3	N/A*	N/A	N/A	N/A
Make at least B average	N/A	N/A	52	28	55	41
Graduate with honors	6	4	6	6	16	12
Author or co-author published article	9	5	13	5	N/A	N/A
Be more successful than average student	14	11	11	6	N/A	N/A

TABLE 6 SELF-ASSESSMENT

	<u>1971</u>		<u>1980</u>		<u>ADULTS</u> <u>1980</u>	
	<u>Jews</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Jews</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Jews</u>	<u>Others</u>
<u>Rate yourself on each trait as you really think you are when compared to average person of your own age. (Figures given for "above average.")</u>			<u>Per cent</u>			
Athletic ability	28	36	42	40	N/A	N/A
Academic ability	N/A	N/A	62	52	88	81
Originality	54	37	57	42	N/A	N/A
Leadership ability	N/A	N/A	60	47	73	66
Popularity with opposite sex	N/A	N/A	44	34	43	41

* Not asked.

These data are not in accord with the received stereotype of Jews as self-deprecating and ridden by anxiety. Rather, the data are in accord with the contradictory received stereotype: Jewish self-confidence, if not actual brashness, resulting from the eagerness of Jewish parents--unlike, say, Irish, Italian, or black parents--to admire the remarkable qualities and achievements of their remarkable children.

Personal values

The question about personal values shows best how times changed between 1969 and 1980. Students were asked the importance of the following statements:

	<u>1969</u>		<u>1971</u>		<u>1980</u>	
	<u>Jews</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Jews</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Jews</u>	<u>Others</u>
<u>I agree that it is</u>			<u>Per cent</u>			
Very important to develop a philosophy of life	85	82	81	75	51	50
Very important to be well-off financially	44	45	28	32	72	63

The 1969 and 1971 freshmen thought that developing a philosophy of life was more important than being well-off financially. The 1980 freshmen, especially the Jews, reversed the order of importance.

The adults of 1980 were not asked about the importance of developing a philosophy of life but were asked about the importance of being well-off financially. Among all the freshmen groups and among those who were adults in 1980, women consistently put less stress on financial success than men.

Notably the freshmen of 1980 thought financial success more important than did the adults of 1980. While the 1980 adults were less scornful of being well-off than they had been as freshmen in 1971, they had not completely shed their 1971 attitudes.

Questions relating to sociability reveal a distinct difference between men and women. In 1971 and 1980 freshmen were asked to rate the statement, "A reason for going to college is to meet new and interesting people." In 1969 and 1971 they were asked how essential it was to have "friends different from me." Women always sided more than men with sociability. Additionally, and for whatever reasons, having "different" friends was more important to Jewish than to non-Jewish women.

TABLE 7 PERSONAL VALUES

	<u>JEW S</u>						<u>ADULTS</u>	
	<u>1969</u>		<u>1971</u>		<u>1980</u>		<u>1980</u>	
	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>
	<u>Per cent</u>							
Important or essential to have friends different from me	66	77	56	74	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Very important reason for going to college is to meet new and interesting people	N/A	N/A	48	71	64	80	N/A	N/A
Essential or important to develop philosophy of life	82	88	79	84	51	50	N/A	N/A
Essential or important to be well-off financially	55	32	34	22	79	64	55	47
	<u>NON-JEW S</u>							
Important or essential to have friends different from me	63	71	60	66	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Very important reason for going to college is to meet new and interesting people	N/A	N/A	36	56	46	65	N/A	N/A
Essential or important to develop philosophy of life	79	86	71	78	48	52	N/A	N/A
Essential or important to be well-off financially	54	32	43	22	69	57	47	37

Careers

Further evidence of the change in values is the change in freshmen's career preference between 1969 and 1980:

TABLE 8 PROBABLE CAREER

	<u>1969</u>				<u>1980</u>			
	<u>Jews</u>		<u>Others</u>		<u>Jews</u>		<u>Others</u>	
	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>
	<u>Per cent</u>							
Business	15	2	17	4	13	9	11	9
Teaching, elementary	1	18	1	20	1	6	1	7
Teaching, secondary	5	12	10	18	1	1	2	3
Law	13	2	5	1	12	9	5	3
Medicine (including dentist)	13	2	5	1	12	6	5	4
Art (including fine arts, performing arts, and music)	5	10	4	7	2	4	3	3
Engineering	11	0	15	0	10	1	19	3
Other	21	36	32	38	38	48	46	57
Undecided	16	18	11	11	11	16	8	11

For business there was a steep rise, for teaching a steep drop.

The favorite career of the adult men and women of 1980, especially Jewish women, was business. More Jewish women than Jewish men and non-Jewish men and women chose artistic careers. More men than women became doctors and engineers. In law, Jewish women now outnumbered men.

In teaching, the traditional distinctions between men and women remained. Over a tenth of the employed women but very few men were teaching in elementary schools, while more men than women were in secondary schools. Five times more Jewish men than women were on college faculties.

TABLE 9 CURRENT OCCUPATION

	<u>ADULTS 1980</u>			
	<u>Jews</u>		<u>Non-Jews</u>	
	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>
	<u>Per cent</u>			
Business	23	24	26	28
Doctor (and dentist)	10	3	2	1
Artist (fine arts, performing arts, music)	9	21	3	4
Lawyer	7	11	4	2
Teacher, secondary	6	2	4	3
Teacher, college	5	Less than 1	2	2
Engineer	3	0	9	1
Teacher, elementary	1	11	2	18
Other	36	28	47	50

Income

Men's edge over women in the professions may account for the men's edge in income. Among Jews a third of the men but a fifth of the women reported an income of \$20,000 or more. Among non-Jews the disparity in income between men and women was even more pronounced.

TABLE 10INCOME

	<u>ADULTS 1980</u>			
	<u>Jews</u>		<u>Non-Jews</u>	
	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>
	<u>Per cent</u>			
\$20,000-\$24,999	13	13	19	4
\$25,000-\$29,999	10	4	7	1
\$30,000-\$34,999	7	2	2	0
\$35,000-\$39,999	3	0	0	0

Politics

As a group, Jewish freshmen locate themselves to the left of non-Jews, but the great majority of Jews classify themselves as liberal or middle of the road rather than radical. In this they are like adult Jews. In 1971 more Jewish freshmen called themselves liberal than middle of the road. By 1980 a shift to the right had produced a reversal. Again, this parallels what seems to have happened in the adult Jewish community.

In political and social matters the attitudes and outlooks of men and women differed significantly.

TABLE 11 POLITICAL OUTLOOK

							<u>ADULTS</u>	
	<u>JEWS</u>						<u>1980</u>	
	<u>1969</u>		<u>1971</u>		<u>1980</u>		<u>M</u> <u>W</u>	
	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>
	<u>Per cent</u>							
Left	10	7	5	3	2	2	13	9
Liberal	47	45	60	58	31	34	25	44
Middle of the road	31	37	29	34	50	56	49	41
Moderate conservative	11	10	6	4	16	8	12	7
Conservative	2	0	1	0	2	0	1	0
	<u>NON-JEWS</u>							
Left	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	1
Liberal	30	27	37	35	19	17	23	26
Middle of the road	43	48	43	50	57	66	36	47
Moderate conservative	21	21	16	14	21	15	37	25
Conservative	3	2	1	0	2	1	1	0

As freshmen, Jewish men and women were close together in political outlook, moving within a few percentage points of each other from being more liberal than middle of the road in 1969 to more middle of the road than liberal in 1980. It is when we get to the adults of 1980 that Jewish women stand out. The adult median for Jewish and non-Jewish men and non-Jewish women is middle of the road. The adult median for Jewish women is liberal

Social and moral issues

The sharpest contrast between Jews and non-Jews, both men and women, is seen in the answers to questions about abortion

and divorce. In 1969 and again in 1980, Jewish freshmen favored liberalized divorce laws by over 20 per cent more than non-Jewish freshmen. In 1980 over a third more Jewish freshmen than non-Jewish freshmen favored legal abortion.

It is with respect to preferential college admission for the disadvantaged that the difference between conservative freshmen and their more liberal elders, the 1980 adults, can be seen most clearly. Among adults, the responses to the question about college admission showed the smallest excess of Jewish over non-Jewish liberalism. Among 1980 freshmen, Jewish responses to this question were, uniquely, more conservative than non-Jewish responses.

Between 1971 and 1980 all freshmen's opposition to the death penalty dropped sharply. This probably reflects a sharp rise in concern about crime.

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TABLE 12

SOCIAL OUTLOOK

	<u>JEW</u>						<u>ADULTS</u>	
	<u>1969</u>		<u>1971</u>		<u>1980</u>		<u>1980</u>	
	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>
	<u>Per cent</u>							
Liberalize divorce laws	62	56	N/A	N/A	65	59	N/A	N/A
Legalize abortion	89	88	N/A	N/A	85	89	N/A	N/A
Abolish capital punishment	64	70	76	86	30	44	N/A	N/A
College officials have right to ban persons with extreme views from speaking on campus	18	13	7	9	23	18	19	6
The disadvantaged should receive preferential treatment in college admissions	41	41	40	37	31	31	37	45
	<u>NON-JEW</u>							
Liberalize divorce laws	40	32	N/A	N/A	47	42	N/A	N/A
Legalize abortion	75	72	N/A	N/A	49	51	N/A	N/A
Abolish capital punishment	47	55	56	66	27	40	N/A	N/A
College officials have right to ban persons with extreme views from speaking on campus	33	28	27	21	29	25	28	20
The disadvantaged should receive preferential treatment in college admissions	43	39	33	30	39	37	25	25

Marriage and family

Asked whether there was a very good chance that they would be married within a year after graduation from college, more Jewish women freshmen believed it possible than men, but in 1980 only by 5 per cent. In 1971, asked whether it was important or essential to "get married in the next five years," only 4 per cent of the Jewish men, but five times as many Jewish women and non-Jewish men and eight times as many non-Jewish women thought so.

Men and women were fairly close together in what they said about the importance of raising a family, but the Jewish adults of 1980 were less enthusiastic than they had been as freshmen. The difference between Jewish men and women was slight, both being considerably less pro-family than non-Jews.

On attitudes toward large families we have data from two of the freshmen years, 1971 and 1980. In 1971 almost 9 out of 10 Jewish men and women were strongly against large families. By 1980 the anti-baby climate had thawed somewhat, but over half of the Jewish men and over two-fifths of the Jewish women still thought that large families should be discouraged. Non-Jews disapproved of large families somewhat less.

By 1980 most of the adult respondents were in their late 20's. Of non-Jews, 56 per cent of men and 57 per cent of women were married; of Jews, 33 per cent of men and 42 per cent of women. Of non-Jews, 24 per cent of men and 28 per cent of women were parents; of Jews, only 3 per cent of men and 6 per cent of women. Of non-Jews, 11 per cent of men and women had two children or more. No Jews, men or women, had more than one child.

There is no evidence here to support the notion that Jewish young adults are experiencing a rise in enthusiasm for larger families.

In 1980 freshmen were asked two questions not previously asked: (a) "Should a couple live together for some time before deciding to get married?" (b) "If two people really like each other, is it all right for them to have sex even if they've known each other for only a very short time?" Both Jewish men and women, especially the men, expressed more permissive attitudes than non-Jews.

Although Jewish women in 1980 were to the left of Jewish men in politics and social outlook, they were less so in matters of sexual behavior. In 1980, 11 per cent fewer freshman women than men agreed that couples should live together before marriage, and 30 per cent fewer approved of instant sex. This may reflect suspicion or some wariness about sexual exploitation. Or perhaps respect for traditional precepts about correct behavior for young women has not disappeared altogether.

Afterword: unanswered questions

These studies answer many questions but not all. Two of the unanswered questions are especially intriguing. If future censuses of freshmen do not provide answers, as probably they will not or cannot, then it is to be hoped that other studies will.

The first question has to do with the varieties and intensities of the Jewish students' Jewish identification. How many come from Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, "just Jewish" homes? Who have moved toward a greater and who toward a lesser intensity of Jewish feeling and action? What home backgrounds are associated with such movement? Which students have been in Israel, and what effect has that had? We must look elsewhere.

The second question is about Jewish women. In these studies Jewish women are seen to be increasingly distinctive, differing more from Jewish men than non-Jewish women differ from non-Jewish men and also differing more from non-Jewish women than Jewish men differ from non-Jewish men. That has also been noted about the voting of Jewish women in the 1980 presidential election. Why should this be so? What does it mean? What does it portend? Obviously, such questions are of more than merely academic interest.

In the meanwhile, we must be grateful for the wealth of information and understanding provided by the three studies surveyed here.

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