

# CHAPTER 1

## *Introduction*

### THE ISSUES

Inequality between men and women has undergone extensive changes in the past few decades. The allocation by gender of both social roles and rewards has changed. Questions remain about whether equality in either sense is possible to achieve, the costs and benefits of such equality, to what extent it has been achieved, and under what conditions such equality is more likely to occur.

#### *Gender Role Differentiation*

One component of gender equality is how similar are the genders in a society, or what Chafetz (1990) calls *gender differentiation*—how males and females differ in terms of the roles they perform, their preferences, aspirations, language usage, and so on. Typically, men have more extensive roles in public domains in the various arenas of social action: political, religious, economic; whereas women's roles have been concentrated in the private domain. Further, even when women participate in public roles, they very often participate in different roles than men: women are teachers, men are more commonly managers; women are secretaries, men are more commonly sales agents; women are domestic maids, men are laborers. Similarly, within the domestic or private sphere, men take out the garbage, women cook.

In the last few decades, however, extensive changes have occurred in the distribution of economic roles or in the participation in the paid labor force by American women and women in industrialized countries the world over. These increases have been facilitated by a reduction in family roles. Delayed marriage and childbearing and a lowering of fertility have reduced the conflict between women's family roles and their participation in the paid labor force. Changes in the marriage patterns are also brought about by women's changes in labor force patterns: marriage and childbearing are postponed because of women's ambitions to train for and get ahead in a career before they get involved in family roles and mothering. Changes in the extent of women's roles in both the family and the economy have made the "dual earner" family prevalent among today's couples.

Nevertheless, role differentiation persists. Gender scholars have increasingly become aware that “doing” gender<sup>1</sup>—the actual practice of gender roles—is strongly affected by cultural contexts (West and Zimmerman, 1991), and there is increasing sensitivity to the differences in the context of gender relations among blacks, Hispanics, Catholics—and Jews—within the United States (Almquist, 1987; Fenstermaker, West, and Zimmerman, 1991). Further, the normative compatibility of familial roles and responsibilities with nonfamilial economic roles varies by culture and class (Lewis, 1992; Weller, 1969). In this book we consider how gender differentiation in economic roles is influenced by the American Jewish context, and what it is about the American Jewish context that is related to gender differentiation.

### *Differential Allocation of Rewards by Gender*

Differential role allocation does not in itself imply that either gender is more or less highly valued on any particular dimension. Societies differ in the extent to which they value different roles and traits, and these roles and traits may be distributed differentially between the genders. This differential distribution may result in similar or different evaluation of men and women. Further, men and women may not be allocated the same *rewards* for performing the same roles. Such rewards (of scarce and valued resources) include material goods (such as money), access to services provided by others, leisure, power (the ability to influence other’s actions or to control one’s own), opportunities for psychic enrichment and gratification, and prestige (what others think about or how they evaluate what one does) (see also Chafetz, 1990).<sup>2</sup>

Men and women may have equal access to rewards for performance of different roles. Women in some societies are highly valued because of their role as mothers, but men receive less prestige for being fathers. Men, on the other hand, often receive social prestige for performing “breadwinning” roles rather than familial roles. This is, then, an example of similar rewards for different behaviors or roles performed. In our current American society, a higher value is generally placed on economic roles than on domestic roles—the occupation of housewife is not even considered “work” by most economic standards. To the extent that women are confined or concentrated in domestic roles, they are allocated into roles less valued by our society, even without any overt discrimination. By the same standards, men gain status and power within the family when they are sole “breadwinners”; and as they join in the economic contributions to the family, women’s domestic power rises.

Rewards are not always allocated equally for similar behaviors of men and women, however. By law men and women should receive equal

monetary pay for performing the same role; the whole issue of "comparable worth" addresses inequities in allocating social rewards (usually money) for performance of similar roles. But it has often been pointed out that authoritative women performing a managerial role, for instance, are evaluated differently by their subordinates than authoritative men. This is an example of unequal rewards for similar behaviors.

In the last several decades extensive research has established certain factors involved in role differentiation and stratification.<sup>3</sup> Gender differentiation has been related especially to norms about the differential ability or nature of men and women; norms about appropriate gender roles, which bring about differential socialization to fulfill these normative expectations; as well as differential access to training and formal preparation for the assumption of various roles. Although men and women do not generally perform the same occupational roles, they may have equal opportunity to perform these roles and for some other reason (possibly because of differential rewards associated with men and women performing these roles) not actualize this potential. Selective mating processes reinforce traditional gender differences as well. On the other hand, some roles in society are not open to men, or vice versa, not open to women: men for instance cannot (yet) give birth, and thus do not have equal access to the role of reproduction that women have. To the extent that women and men are considered to have inherently different natures, it may not be possible to allocate equal roles or rewards to them.

### *Variation in Gender Roles and Rewards*

Research has shown that the allocation of rewards by gender varies within a society at least by social class and possibly by race, ethnicity, or religion (Almquist, 1987; Blumberg, 1984).

This variation by religion is of particular interest, because in the 1990s many have relegated religion to a specialized compartment that has little relevance to secular aspects of social behavior in the modern world. Several decades ago it was expected that one of the consequences of modernization was a secularization, which implied the end of religious influence on secular behavior (e.g., Berger, 1967; Wilson, 1976). Remaining differences in the secular behavior of members of different religions were expected to be explained by variables outside the religious arena, such as socioeconomic status, family size, immigrant status. However, recent studies suggest that ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds still aid in the construction of social reality in the sense of setting priorities for behaviors, delimiting behavioral parameters, and reinforcing different types of achievement (e.g., Lorber and Farrell, 1991; McGuire, 1992). Further, secular achievement does not appear to come in exchange for reli-

gious commitment. Distinguishing characteristics of American Jews as well as other ethnic and religious groups lead us to reexamine the relationship between religious involvement and secular behavior. In this book we examine the relationship between involvement in the Jewish religion and other aspects of Jewish life, on the one hand, and patterns of gender equality in secular achievements, on the other.

### *Gender Differences and American Jews*

Jews are distinguished in the United States by their socioeconomic achievement and in particular their upward mobility since the early part of this century (Goldscheider and Zuckerman, 1984; Lipset, 1995). Studies of gender equality have linked higher education to greater support of gender equality (Mason and Lu, 1988) and higher achievements of women (Bianchi and Spain, 1986; McLaughlin et. al., 1988), so that the gender gap among men and women of high levels of education is narrower than in other parts of the population. One question is whether the distinctive patterns of American Jews are attributable only to their higher educational achievements or should they be related to other elements in their cultural heritage.

American Jews are also distinctive in having low fertility in comparison to other American ethnic groups (Goldstein, 1992); they were among the most successful at family planning, adopting modern contraceptive measures when they first became available. A reduction in family roles minimizes the conflict with economic roles outside the home and is associated both with higher educational achievements and career commitment. However, the negative relationship between education and fertility is not as clear from previous research on American Jews (Goldscheider, 1986), and it is not clear how much of the distinctive achievements of American women can be attributed to reduced family roles.

One of the reasons that the relationship is complex is that Jews are known to be very familistic in a number of ways, which would indicate stronger gender role differentiation. Supporting this is the finding that the labor force participation of American Jewish women appears to be particularly sensitive to having children at home, for instance (Chiswick, 1986).

Therefore, there are contradictory implications about gender equality from a number of characteristics of American Jews. In this book we question the extent to which the high educational and occupational achievements of American Jews are shared by Jewish men and women alike. More generally, we consider whether the high achievement of the Jews eradicates the traditional gender differentiation or whether more common patterns of gender differences are pushed to a higher level.

Because of the relatively high achievement of American Jews, we must consider whether the patterns of gender inequality observed among them are related to their level of achievement and thus may be shared by other populations who reach the same level of achievement and social status. At the same time, we consider whether the patterns we observe are related to more cultural aspects of the Jewish tradition and religion.

*The Allocation of Roles and Rewards  
by Gender Among American Jews*

This book addresses itself to gender differences in the roles and rewards of Jews in the United States. We focus on roles in education and the labor force and how they are related to family roles. Although family roles generally have more impact on women's nonfamilial roles than on men's, to some extent we consider the interrelationship of family roles with educational and labor force roles for both women and men and gender differences in the interrelationships.

The educational role of student is one that occupies a person for the most part until the ages of 18–24. More specialized graduate school may extend through the late twenties. With smaller families, the major child-rearing roles are often finished by the time mothers are in their forties, which has brought about another pattern of returning to school (or to work) after the children are more or less self-sufficient for most of the day. But most schooling, even among a college-educated population like American Jews, has been completed by the mid-twenties. Education may take place in different types of institutions, which lead to varying academic degrees and credentials. Our initial interest is in the length of engagement in educational roles (do Jewish men and women have the same amount of education?) and in the outcome of such education (what educational degrees are earned by Jewish men and women?).

These educational roles, completed early in the life cycle, act as gatekeepers for subsequent labor force activity and occupational achievement and are therefore of key importance even though they take place before the main ages of our analysis, the adult years starting from age 25.

The second set of roles we focus on are labor force roles or the extent to which Jewish men and women are active in the labor force. Labor force activity varies over the life cycle, and it varies differently for men and for women. Labor force activity is generally entered on a full-time basis only after education has been completed, although they may be engaged in simultaneously, mainly on a part-time basis. One of our interests is whether Jewish men and women enter the labor force at similar ages and in the same proportions. Once they are in, we consider how the labor force activity varies both in terms of whether or not they

participate and how many hours a week they work for pay.

For men, labor force participation typically remains fairly constant through the working life cycle, with some periods characterized by more intense involvement. Retirement is usually around the age of 65, but men have begun to retire earlier, making for greater variation in the age of disengagement from the labor force. How do Jewish men's patterns of labor force participation compare with the general population's? How do they compare with Jewish women's patterns of participation?

Labor force participation has been one of the major areas of change among women in the United States in the last few decades. Women's labor force activity, unlike men's, is less stable and more variable in terms of how many hours per week are invested. It has been related to such factors as the woman's personal qualifications, her family situation, and cultural norms about when women should work outside the home. The educational qualifications of Jewish women and their small family size, on the average, seem to encourage high levels of labor force activity; but the familistic orientation of Jewish tradition, would seem to mitigate against this tendency. How do Jewish women combine family and economic roles? How is this related to their level of education? When they have the same educational qualifications as Jewish men, is their pattern of labor force activity similar?

In the labor force, the roles women and men traditionally have assumed are quite distinct. With their high educational background, and with some earlier discrimination against the entrance of Jews into certain types of firms and industries combined with cultural preferences, Jewish men have been characterized by a certain occupational concentration. Do Jewish women follow the same pattern?

As women have increasingly entered the labor force, their occupational roles have also expanded, although overall there still tends to be strong gender differentiation in occupational roles. With their high educational qualifications, have Jewish women been among the pioneers into nontraditional occupations? Do the occupations of Jewish men and women more closely resemble each other than men's and women's occupations do in the wider population?

There has been some indication that certain occupations are more conducive to combination with women's family roles than others. Given the familistic orientations of the Jewish background, we consider whether Jewish women have preferences for certain occupations, and whether their occupational roles vary by the extent and type of family obligations. Following this line, we ask whether family obligations therefore increase the gender differences in occupational roles among American Jews.

We thus consider the extent of gender differences in educational, labor force, and occupational roles; how differences in education are



related to labor force and occupational differences; and how labor force differences are expressed in occupational differences as well.

The role that family obligations play in each of these areas is considered and serves to explain some of the gender differences that are found. We consider both marital roles (being married and the age at which marital roles were entered) and parenting roles (how many children there are, how young they are, and the age at which the parenting role was entered), the latter especially for women.

Gender inequality in rewards is a more difficult subject. Social rewards are considerably more difficult to measure and their sources sometimes well insulated from survey research. Many rewards come from within the family, for instance, and are not easily quantified for a survey. Some rewards, like power, are sensitive issues, and raise the question of whether the perceived power is the actual influence a person has over others. Further, the survey on which most of this book is based is limited in the personal rewards it measures. No personal income, for instance, is recorded (household income is, which lumps together the personal incomes of all household contributors).

With these limitations in the areas we are studying, we focus on the occupational prestige attached to the individual's occupation. Typically women have been excluded from both the most prestigious and the least prestigious occupations, whereas the variation in men's occupational prestige has had a wider range. Given the distinct patterns of Jewish men's and women's occupational roles, we consider gender differences in how much occupational prestige is rewarded. We then go on to consider the extent to which gender differences in prestige are related to the gender gap in educational achievement and labor force activity. In other words, is the same occupational prestige awarded to men and women given similar educational and labor force investments, or is there a gender gap in prestige that cannot be explained by their patterns of investment?

Once we have described the patterns of gender difference among Jews in these economic and educational roles and rewards, we attempt to understand their sources and explanations. Gender differences in the roles and rewards accruing from educational, labor force, and occupational activity are related to some factors distinct to American Jews (such as their strong familism), and some factors common to all Americans if not to all industrialized countries.

## AMERICAN JEWS AS AN IMMIGRANT MINORITY GROUP

American Jewish patterns of socioeconomic achievement have been traced to their earlier minority and immigrant status in the United States. The

majority of American Jews have now been in the the United States for two to three generations. Many of their ancestors immigrated from Eastern Europe. When they arrived, as a foreign minority with few material assets but with a tradition of scholarship and an urban mentality, the Jews turned to education as the major key to raise them out of their inferior social status. Without the possibility of returning to their countries of origin, from which most had fled persecution and pogroms, they became avid learners of English, the language of their new home. They took schooling very seriously, and if the first generation could not take advantage of the educational opportunities, they saw to it that their children did (see, for example, Karp, 1976).

Around the turn of the century, at the peak of Jewish immigration to the United States, educational opportunities were expanding. Free schooling was extended through high school, and gradually extended for a minimal fee to public colleges and universities. Their children increasingly entered occupations that made use of their educational investments, eventually raising the social status of Jews to its upper-middle-class average today.

But as in any immigration, the economic context of absorption had an influence on the Jewish situation as well. Assimilating the American success ideal of material wealth, the ideal for a Jewish man was transformed into becoming a secular success rather than the religious scholar of the old country. Such success was measured to some extent—among Americans in general, and among Jews as well—by being able to afford for the wife not to work. This ideal was related to the very immigration wave that many American Jews were part of: the supply of immigrant labor reduced the need for women and children in the labor force (McLaughlin et al., 1988), and social norms adjusted themselves accordingly. In fact, however, most immigrant women needed to contribute to the household economy, either in factory work or by having lodgers or selling in the family business (Baum, Hyman, and Michel, 1976; Hyman, 1991). The burdens of immigration also increased familial roles on the wife and mother (Hertzberg, 1989, Chapter 12), upon whose shoulders day-to-day adjustments were bound to fall. So the immigrant generation is renowned for its hardworking mothers as well as fathers.

But women's work was seen as a temporary necessity, and many aspired to days when their hard labor would not be needed or when their children could have an easier life. Further, the male ideal of being the "good provider" was undermined by having his wife need to work. To some extent this transformed the ideal woman from the traditional "woman of valor" contributing to the household economy, to an ideal wife-mother tending primarily to her domestic roles. Thus, gender role differentiation became an ideal, not a reality, and to the extent that the



Jewish “princesses” (the daughters) could be protected from such a hard life, the second generation and later the third were raised with aspirations for strong gender differentiation—the husbands as breadwinners and good providers, the wives as ladies of leisure and culture.

## THE JEWISH TRADITION AND MALE DOMINANCE

Gender role differentiation can also be traced to the Jewish tradition. Although men and women were considered equal in terms of their inherent nature, gender role differentiation was both explicitly and implicitly encouraged. “Men and women are considered spiritually equal before God, but the rules governing their respective life-cycles and daily concerns are clearly intended to place them in separate domains; men and women are expected to follow different routes in the pursuit of the ideal life that God has prescribed for them . . .” (Webber, 1983, p. 143).

Men are differentiated from women in halachic provisions<sup>4</sup> for biologically linked rituals, such as circumcision, or using the mikveh (ritual bath) in relation to menstruation or childbirth—what is seen as “separate but equal” provisions (Bar-Yosef and Shelach, 1970). These provisions have few implications for secular achievement. More broadly, however, an implicit recognition of differentiated gender roles is expressed in some of the *halachic* differences. Women are not explicitly prescribed a specific role or confined only to their “biological” role. Marriage and procreation are mandatory obligations of men but not of women; the “law could have made mandatory for women not only marriage and procreation but also the entire range of household duties which would have defined an exclusive role for them . . . but Jewish law does not define with any precision a ‘proper’ or ‘necessary’ role for Jewish women” (Berman, 1976, p. 121). It does, however, encourage or support exercise of the wife-mother-homemaker choice, by assuring that no legal obligation could possibly interfere with the woman’s performance of that role. Women appear to be granted privileges in that they are exempted from “time-bound” commandments—ritual activities and duties that must take place at a particular time. In many cases, however, women are not forbidden from performing the time-bound commandments, and in fact their optional performance of them is strongly commended (because optional performance of commandments is supposedly valued higher than obligatory performance) (Meiselman, 1978). However, they are not obligated to perform them.

Because the reasons for this gender differentiation are not given explicitly, the question has been raised as to whether this inequality in access to and performance of roles is simply “gender differentiation” or

should be interpreted as "gender stratification"; that is, related to inequality in access to rewards and their allocation. If it derives from a difference in the inherent nature of men and women, it would suggest that women do not have access to the same rewards as men because of an inherent inferiority. However, the perception of women's roles and access to rewards is not allocated categorically to women but rather pertains to certain life-stages or statuses (Wegner, 1988). The nature of the genders does not seem to be conceived of as inherently different.

Women are considered "other"<sup>5</sup> when they are in certain statuses, but not qua woman. Thus, women in certain statuses (e.g., married women) have limitations that men in the same statuses do not have (e.g., on initiating divorce or bequeathing property while married without their spouse's consent). This differentiation results from their being women in particular statuses in terms of the life-cycle and their relation to others (particularly husbands and fathers).

However, women at other stages of life are not differentiated from men in the same way. Further, women are equal to men in such diverse areas as having the right to acquire, inherit, and bequeath property and in having the duty to observe all religious proscriptions (the so-called "positive" commandments). Hence, the inherent nature of men and women does not seem to be considered different.

The exclusion from obligatory time-bound commandments, however, made women ineligible for major leadership positions in the religion, such as leading prayers for congregations including men or bearing witness in a religious court. Not having access to the same religious roles as men resulted in an inequality in access to roles and the societal rewards (such as social prestige and power) accruing from them. The significance of this role differentiation became particularly acute in the Eastern and Central European Diaspora, where learning and teaching Torah became central to the community as the primary means of collective survival and transmission of culture. Internal political power was often linked to religious status, also excluding women because of their limited access to communal religious roles. Despite isolated role models in Jewish history (such as the biblical Deborah) and the contemporary Golda Meir, women did not generally assume communal leadership roles. To the extent that no other communal roles developed that gave similar social prestige and power for roles women did have access to, gender stratification in the religion resulted.

This gender stratification in the public religious arena persists among Orthodox and some of the Conservative denomination today. However, non-Orthodox denominations in the United States today have modified this gender differentiation in religious roles considerably (Monson, 1990; Umansky, 1985). The Reform pioneered the elimination of restrictions on whether women could officiate at religious ceremonies as rabbis in the

1950s,<sup>6</sup> and the Reconstructionists followed suit in the 1970's. The Conservatives officially allowed women to enter the rabbinate in the 1980s, but there is still controversy within the movement about the extent to which women may have access to traditionally male religious roles. In Reform and many Conservative congregations, for instance, women are counted as part of the official *minyan* of 10 persons needed to hold a communal service; among the Orthodox, only males are counted. In Reform and Conservative congregations there is no segregated seating in synagogue services. The Orthodox are the only denomination to have strictly upheld the traditional customs of gender differences in religious roles, and they are a minority in the United States.

If there are expectations that the gender stratification in religious roles might spill over into secular arenas of activity, it is limited by the extent to which this gender stratification is upheld among today's American Jewry. Further, even in traditional Judaism, the gender stratification in religious roles was balanced with a different perspective on familial and economic roles, as we shall see next.

## THE JEWISH TRADITION AND FAMILISTIC VALUES

Another characteristic of Jewish tradition that might influence gender differentiation is the strong emphasis on the family. The importance of the family in Judaism is well known: many religious rituals and customs take place within the family, and the family's importance was strengthened by the Diaspora experience, where the main and most reliable channel of transmitting tradition from one generation to another became the family. Children are highly valued in the culture, as is the importance of the "Jewish mother" role. The proverbial saying that "the woman's honor faces inward" suggested internal power and respect for the woman in familial roles that was perhaps the basis for the modern-day powerful Jewish mother image. In any case, it served to compensate women for their exclusion from prestigious communal religious and leadership roles.

Men's family roles were also valued. They were supposed to satisfy their wife and discipline their children, and faced sanctions if they did not. They presided over ritual celebrations in the family and were responsible for teaching their children Torah. Although during the Torah period men were given complete power in their families, in later tradition a mutual understanding and respect in family roles was worked out (Berman, 1976). There was implicit role differentiation, but it did not seem to lead to the same type of gender stratification as could be seen in religious roles. Especially in Eastern and Central Europe, to which most American Jews trace their ancestry,

the Jewish husband and father [was] no remote tyrant. Deprived of political independence and, in most places, the right to bear arms, Jewish men denigrated physical prowess as a cultural ideal. Instead, they cultivated intellectual and spiritual pursuits. They expressed their masculinity in the synagogue and in the house of study, not on the battlefield and not through the physical oppression of their women.

This absence of the "macho mystique" freed Jewish men and women from the sharpest differentiation of gender characteristics: the strong, emotionally controlled, yet potentially violent male vs. the weak, emotional and tender female. Jewish culture "permitted" men to be gentle and emotionally expressive and women to be strong, capable and shrewd. Sex-role differentiation was strict in many areas of Jewish life, but not in the sphere of human personality characteristics. (Hyman, 1983, pp. 24-25)

Thus the type of family roles expected of both women and men influenced also the conception of gender difference among the Jews.

Women's roles were by no means confined to the family. The proverbial "woman of valor"<sup>7</sup> is praised for her economic pursuits and successes; Jewish women have been noted throughout history as solid and successful businesswomen.

[T]he Jewish working mother has a long and noble history we should make our own. The image of the *yiddishe mamma* spending all her time and energy *tsittering* over her children, cooking, scrubbing her home, and mothering her husband as well as her children, is only part of her historical role. . . . Ashkenazic women in Central and Eastern Europe, at least . . . were traditionally responsible for much of what we now describe as masculine roles. It was not uncommon, for example, for the Jewish wife to be the primary breadwinner of the family, particularly if her husband was talented enough to be able to devote himself to study. The halckic tradition even accommodated itself to the expanding economic role of women. While halckic prescriptions had traditionally prohibited a Jewish woman from being alone with any man other than her husband, that tradition was relaxed in those areas where women peddlers had to take business trips alone and enter Gentile homes to peddle their wares. In Western Germany in the eighteenth century, for example, religious authorities issued a dispensation to allow women to peddle, thus legalizing what was already accepted in practice. (Hyman, 1983, pp. 22-23)

Women were not prohibited from such economic pursuits, but on the contrary expected and encouraged to pursue them, to provide appropriately for the family. Economic roles were basically considered from a pragmatic point of view, as a means to provide for the family, and they were obligations of both the men and the women. The motivation for eco-

conomic activity was not—for men or for women—self-actualization or a divine calling, but rather a means to an end, provision for family life. At the same time, the ideal activity for men was religious study. Women, on the other hand, were given special consideration to care for children, indicating that priority was given to their domestic responsibilities and secondarily to their contribution to the family economy.

The importance of the family thus elevated the prestige of women's roles in the family, on the one hand, and on the other, enabled women—as well as men—to participate in public economic roles to help provide for the family. At the same time, gender differentiation was encouraged by giving priority to women's domestic roles and to men's religious roles.

### THE JEWISH TRADITION AND THE VALUE OF EDUCATION FOR MEN AND WOMEN

Because of the ideal of men's involvement in religious roles, and women's involvement in domestic roles, a tradition of differentiation in educational training also developed in traditional Judaism. A religion based on law and individual responsibility for knowing and performing commandments (as opposed to mediated access to knowledge, performance, and responsibility), the Jewish tradition attached strong importance to knowledge not only for an elite but for the general Jew (Eisenstadt, 1992) and hence to formal learning of these laws and their interpretations. At first this importance was attached mainly to religious learning and to those who needed the knowledge for obligatory performance (men). There was an ambivalence regarding women's education because of the value given to knowledge, on the one hand (an incentive to educate women), but on the other hand, fear that this education would mislead women into thinking they had to or should perform religious obligations that applied only to men (an obstacle to their education). Women's formal education was therefore quite neglected in traditional Judaism.

With the Enlightenment, however, as secular education became more widespread, among many Jews (but not all) the positive value of acquiring knowledge was generalized to include all education (including secular education). Both men and women were exposed to this new trend in education, and often women were exposed to it for practical reasons even when men concentrated on religious studies. While the men were to be engaged in religious study, the women were providing the economic needs of the families; and their ability to do so was enhanced by the skills taught in secular schools, such as reading, writing, mathematics (Katz, 1973; Webber, 1983).

Therefore, we see that from the Jewish tradition there is a difference in the orientation to secular achievement for men and women. Spiritually

equal to men but not required to perform the same rituals and without access to the same rewards from these roles, women's pursuits were channeled to the domestic roles. These domestic family roles were highly valued; that is, different roles brought more social prestige or status for women than for men. But, in addition to family roles, women were expected and allowed to engage in multiple economic pursuits. This leads us to suggest a strong pattern of gender equality in secular achievement stemming from the Jewish heritage, mitigated by family roles for women that might interfere with such achievement, particularly at certain stages of life, and by devotion to religious study for men.

With the Enlightenment, some Jews broke away from the traditional way of life and began to participate more fully in the secular life of the wider society. As men and women both became more involved with their secular surroundings, they were, however, prey to the access allowed by the wider authorities. Such restrictions on full participation in the wider society coupled with outright persecution provided the main impetus for immigration to the United States.

#### THE AMERICAN SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT AND GENDER INEQUALITY

The wider American environment also provides us with some explanation for the patterns of gender differentiation that have developed among American Jews. In the last few decades, changes in the economy, in the educational opportunities, in marriage and family patterns, and in social norms all have bearing on the social environment related to gender differentiation in the United States.

In the past century changes in the industrial structure of the United States have increased the proportion of service and white-collar jobs and reduced the need for heavy manual labor. This has increased the types of jobs appropriate for an educated population like American Jews. It has also increased the kinds of jobs considered appropriate for the female labor force, and with it the demand for female labor has increased.

Dramatic changes in patterns of women's labor force participation have taken place especially since World War II, when women replaced the men who were drafted in a variety of jobs. Having shown that they were qualified as workers and responding to the economic pressures of the postwar economy, many women returned to the labor force after a brief respite following the war; and since then the female labor force has continued to grow and expand. At first, mainly older women, whose child-care responsibilities were minimal, entered the labor force; gradually mothers of younger children became the majority of the female workers.



This development was both a reflection of changing social norms about women's roles in the economy and the family and of economic pressures within the family, and a source of related social changes.

Women's labor force participation was in part enabled by changes in marriage and the family that were in the making since the beginning of the century. Increasingly dissociated from the economic and educational functions they once played, family roles play an increasingly small role in American lives, as the age of marriage is postponed, childbearing is postponed, the number of children is reduced, and the number of terminated marriages increases (Sweet and Bumpass, 1987).

American Jews have been at the forefront of these trends, with a decreasing family size of a proportion to worry the American Jewish community as to its future (DellaPergola, 1980; Goldscheider, 1986; Goldstein, 1992) and with increasingly delayed marriage and childbearing reinforced by the proportions going on to college and graduate school. This made it relatively easier for American Jewish women to take advantage of the changes in labor force and higher education norms that would characterize the United States from the 1960s.

This century has seen the expansion of both free compulsory secondary schooling and higher educational opportunities. Notable spurts in these educational developments have come from the need for Americanization of the very waves of immigration of which many American Jews were a part at the turn of the century; the compensation for education interrupted by World War II provided veterans by the GI bill; and the increasing awareness of racial and gender inequalities in education, which brought forth the Title IX Amendment of the Educational Act of 1972, ensuring equal educational opportunities for all and attempting to redress previous inadequacies.

American Jews were motivated to take full advantage of each of these advances. The immigrant situation coupled with an urban middle-class background pushed the Jews to utilize the higher education, which expanded around the turn of the century (Steinberg, 1974); the strong orientation to higher education enabled Jewish veterans to use the GI bill to finance professional training; and their value for higher education, their middle- to upper-middle-class status, and their relatively small family size made American women ready to take advantage of newly opened educational and occupational opportunities in the last two decades. Discrimination against Jews, which characterized the earlier part of the century, greatly declined in recent decades, facilitating the benefit American Jews could derive from these expanded opportunities.

It is therefore perhaps not coincidental that Jewish women have been at the forefront of the American struggle for gender equality.<sup>8</sup> Even though for many of these women their Jewishness seemed incidental to their fem-

inism (Pogrebrin, 1991; Umansky, 1985), it seems that a number of issues converged to make American women prime movers in the movement for gender equality.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, apparent conflicts between the Jewish tradition and feminist orientations raise the question as to how Jewish is the drive for gender equality and how much of the involvement of Jewish women should be attributed to other causes, such as their white, middle-class, educated status in American society (Umansky, 1985).

The struggle for gender equality is reinforced by a trend toward individualism that has accompanied the other social changes of the past century or so. The value of individualism stresses the importance and right of each person to pursue his or her own self-actualization without the need for uncompromising conformity or bending to social frameworks such as the family. This has accompanied such normative changes as an increasing selectivity of family life that is individually satisfying and a belief that women as well as men should be able to seek a personally satisfying career without being restricted because of their biological sex.

The wider American social environment thus encompasses a number of forces pushing toward gender equality in secular achievement, especially in the last few decades.

#### THE INTIMATE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND GENDER INEQUALITY

Gender differences respond not only to the wider social forces such as the wider American social environment or the Jewish tradition, but also to the more immediate family environment. Family characteristics such as socioeconomic status affect the need for wives to participate in the paid labor force, for instance. The number of children in the home affects the feasibility of the mother working outside the home. The division of labor within the couple or household unit are another of the characteristics that might intervene between the wider social forces and the individual's predispositions and qualifications.

In particular, the characteristics of the person one marries may have considerable influence on individual behavior. It has been suggested that wives who are more educated than their husbands may restrict their occupational aspirations to avoid status competition with their spouse. Wives may restrict geographic patterns of mobility to enhance their career more than their husbands. Wives who are married to husbands in their same profession show different patterns of promotion and "backstage support" than wives whose husbands are in different professions. Husbands whose wives are younger can afford to retire earlier if their wives will continue to receive an income. The educational level, labor force

activity, and occupational characteristics of the spouse influence the educational advancement, labor force activity and occupational characteristics of the partner. With traditional mate-selection patterns of age and educational heterogamy, gender differences may persevere in the immediate family environment even as men and women become more equal in the wider society.

## CHANGES IN GENDER ROLES AND REWARDS

All of these social forces have brought about changes in gender roles and the allocation of rewards to men and women in the last several decades. To some extent we look at these changes by comparing different cohorts of American Jews. We are limited by the survey on which most of the book is based in that it uses a cross-sectional sample at one point in time rather than a longitudinal study that follows the same people over several points in time. As a result, age cohorts double as our indicator of life cycle stages and birth cohort differences, which sometimes confuses the conclusions we can reach. Nevertheless, certain cohort differences are apparent, and we present them with appropriate reservations.

## CAUSAL DIRECTIONS

Social scientists are frequently plagued with the question of what comes first. We find, for instance, a relationship between family roles and roles in the economy. The debate about whether women have fewer children because they have invested more in a career and do not want to give it up or whether women who are less interested in having children look for outside involvement is an example of a chicken-and-egg situation that has not been resolved. Decisions are apparently made at several life cycle stages that affect further courses of action. But family and economic roles are not related only for women. When we find that Jewish married men have higher occupational prestige, for instance, it is difficult to determine whether Jewish men who are more successful in their careers are more likely to marry or whether they are successful because they have a family to support them in their endeavors. Or whether the connection between marriage and career success is due to a third factor, such as ability to carry responsibility. A longitudinal survey over several points in time would be more helpful in determining the appropriate direction of interpretation, as would more in-depth interviews about attitudes, goals, and aspirations. Without these added insights, we rely on our understanding of current sociological analysis to make sense of the findings.

## THE PRESENT ANALYSIS

In this book we attempt to determine the extent to which American Jews show a distinguishable pattern of gender equality. Are American Jewish women equal to Jewish men in secular achievement? And, if so, how much of it is attributable to their Jewish heritage or in spite of it or because of their particular situation as American Jews? Does Jewish involvement foster more or less gender equality? Are the patterns we find universal for all types of Jews? We approach these questions in a number of ways.

First we try to determine the distinctiveness of gender role differentiation and reward achievement in comparison with the wider American society.

Second, we try to relate different degrees and types of Jewish involvement among American Jews to their patterns of secular achievement. We conceive of "Jewish involvement" as a multifaceted concept, which encompasses what we normally consider as religiosity (ritual observance), formal and informal communal involvement and affiliation, and formal Jewish training. We consider which of these aspects of Jewishness are related to men's and women's secular achievement; whether they are related in the same way for men and for women; and how the importance of these various dimensions of Jewishness differ over cohorts.

A competing explanation of why American Jews are distinct is their minority status and immigrant roots (cf. Goldscheider, 1986). We consider this explanation in two ways. If the minority status explains the distinctiveness of American Jewish patterns of behavior, then the greater involvement in that minority group, the more "Jewish" would be the behavior. On the other hand, it is assumed from this perspective that those less involved in Jewish life will be less likely to exhibit "Jewish" patterns of behavior. The relationship between "Jewishness" and the gendered patterns of achievement are considered from this perspective.

Another aspect of the minority thesis is tested by comparing American Jews to Jews with a similar background (second generation European immigrants) who live in Israel, where they do not have a minority status. The pressures that led American Jews to stress secular attainment as a goal seem to be integrally connected to their minority status and the values of this particular wider society (the United States). What happens when the wider environment is pervasively Jewish? As the majority in their own country, Israeli Jews may exhibit patterns of behavior less influenced by a wider non-Jewish environment than would a Jewish minority in a predominantly non-Jewish country.

## THE DATA

Our analysis of American Jews is based primarily on the National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) conducted by the Council of Jewish Federations and the North American Jewish Data Bank in 1990. The survey represented 6.8 million "Jewish" individuals living in 3.2 million households with at least one Jewish member (including persons born Jewish or of Jewish parents, but not currently calling themselves Jewish). (For a fuller description of the survey, see Appendix I.)

The original sample of respondents included 2,441 interviewees who gave information about themselves and other members of their households. For our purposes, we define *Jewish respondents* as those who had the opportunity to be influenced by Jewish tradition, which influence we were studying. Therefore to be included as Jewish in our sample, respondents either (1) said they were born Jewish and are currently Jewish, (2) said they were born Jewish and raised Jewish even if they do not currently identify themselves as Jewish, or (3) said they were raised Jewish and currently identify themselves as Jewish. Our rationale was that these three types of people had exposure to Jewish norms for the greater part of their lives, and therefore we could test whether their secular behavior was related to their Jewishness. Persons who were not "Jewish" on more than one of these three questions were excluded from our analysis.

This selection process resulted in a sample size of 1,800 respondents ages 18 or over who fulfilled our criteria of being Jewish. To these 1,800 we added the other adult household members who met the same criteria of Jewishness, expanding the sample from 1,800 to 3,020.

For simple calculations, "household" weights were used that make the sample representative of the wider Jewish population with the same attributes (see Appendix I for more explanation). Unless otherwise noted, the numbers reported in tables are weighted. For analyses based on correlations or using significance tests, including factor analyses and multiple regressions, the unweighted data were used.<sup>10</sup>

For the study of couple units, we included married respondents and their spouses if either the husband or the wife met the same criteria of Jewishness. Only married respondents whose spouse was currently living with them were included; 1,414 couples met these criteria.

To put the findings in perspective, we offer two kinds of comparison. (1) A comparison was made with the wider American population of which Jews are a small part (only 2.5 percent of the white population).<sup>11</sup> The data about the general American population are taken from published governmental statistics. When possible we have narrowed these data to the white population, because almost all Jews are white, and this

constitutes the most probable reference group for American Jews. (2) A comparison was made with Israeli Jews. The Israeli data are taken from published data from the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics and from a special survey of urban married Jewish women that was conducted in 1987–88. More details about these data sources are found in Chapter 7.

### A PREVIEW OF WHAT FOLLOWS

The first part of the book describes the extent of gender inequality in education, labor force participation, and occupational attainment among American Jews. We focus first on education and training, which act as key “gatekeepers” to roles in the economy (Chapter 2). Our focus on gender differences in educational attainment is seen as a key for access to similar occupational roles and the rewards that derive from them. We then assess the gender similarity in labor force behavior and occupational attainment (Chapters 3 and 4).

We then consider the differential allocation of rewards resulting from the secular attainment of Jewish men and women. In particular, we concentrate on the allocation of occupational prestige, and the extent to which it is linked to educational training and similar labor force roles (Chapter 4).<sup>12</sup> Hence, we concentrate on the allocation of rewards from the wider society rather than from within the Jewish community itself.<sup>13</sup> We do so first for the whole population of American Jewish men and women (Chapters 2–4) and then by comparing spouses within Jewish households (Chapter 5).

In the second part of the book we consider the extent to which the characteristics and behaviors we identify in the first part of the book are shared by all types of Jews. We do so first (in Chapter 6) by differentiating American Jews by different types and extents of involvement in being Jewish and comparing the patterns of achievement of men and women of different Jewish involvement. In Chapter 7, we compare patterns of gender inequality between American Jews and Israeli Jews of similar background, to determine the effect of being a minority group in the United States. The final chapter summarizes the findings and the conclusions that can be drawn from our analysis.