

PATTERNS OF IDENTIFICATION AND INTEGRATION WITH JEWISH AMERICANS AMONG ISRAELI IMMIGRANTS IN CHICAGO: VARIATIONS ACROSS STATUS AND GENERATION

Natan Uriely
Ben Gurion University
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This article examines the relationship of one set of newcomer immigrants to their potential "proximal host group" in the United States. Specifically, the relationship of recent higher status and lower status Israeli immigrants in Chicago and their children to Jewish Americans is examined. Field work, including in-depth interviews with Israeli immigrants and their children and participant observation, indicates that lower status Israeli immigrants seek to identify with Jewish Americans and to integrate into the Jewish American community. In this regard, they differ from both their higher status counterparts and the second generation offspring of both status groups who reject such identification and integration.

One recent focus of the study of ethnic relations in the United States is on the relationships between newcomer immigrants and their potential co-ethnics in the host society. Rumbaut and Portes (1990) suggest that the nature of these relationships can affect the future of well established and developing ethnic identities in the United States. Nevertheless, much of the sociological analysis regarding the relationships between newcomer immigrants and their potential co-ethnics has been focussed on the former's adaptation in the host society (Waters 1991; Mittelberg and Waters 1992; Gold 1992, 1994). In this context, special attention has been given to the factors that might affect the newcomers' orientation towards their possible identification with well established ethnic groups in American society. Apparently, the willingness of newcomer immigrants to identify with their potential co-ethnics is due to both structural and cultural circumstances in the immigrants' homeland and in their host society.

Mittelberg and Waters (1992) offer what they call the "proximal host model" to describe a process of possible identity formation following migration. The model suggests that the identity of recent immigrants in the host country can be determined by the existence of a proximal host group, i.e., the ethnic group in which the newcomers

are assigned to by natives of the host country. Recent immigrant groups might reject their identification with the "proximal host" group or alternatively, integrate into American society through a process of assimilation into the "proximal host" group.

These alternative possibilities were discussed by Waters (1991), who analyzes and compares ethnic identity of professional and working class West Indian immigrants and their children. Her findings indicate that the children of middle class West Indian immigrants in the United States reject their racial identification with African Americans and distinguish themselves from other Americans on an ethnic or national origins basis. By contrast, the children of working class West Indian immigrants are assimilated to American society through identification with African Americans. Thus, adaptation to the host society through identification with the "proximal host" group is seen as an option taken by some newcomers and rejected by others. Thus, the question, addressed in this study, arises as to what factors might reinforce or discourage such ethnic choices. Waters' (1991) findings suggest that the socio-economic background of the newcomers and the social status of the "proximal host" group are relevant factors. More specifically, Waters (1990, 1991) suggests that one's optional identification with ethnic groups is related to one's perception of the relative social rankings of the ethnic groups themselves. Thus, the willingness of newcomer immigrants to identify with their "proximal host" group is determined by the former's perception regarding the social status of the latter in the receiving country.

Rumbaut and Portes's (1990) study of the possible emergence of supranational ethnic minorities in the United States also examines the cross ethnic identification among potential co-ethnics. Specifically, they refer to the creation of the Hispanic and the Asian ethnic minorities in the United States. The formation of these supranational ethnic minorities originates in the host country through the unified ethnic labeling of immigrants from different countries in Latin America and the Far East. However, the formation of these new ethnic minorities also requires the willingness of the newcomer immigrants themselves to identify with their Hispanic or Asian co-ethnics. It is yet to be determined if recent Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto Rican immigrants in the United States will identify themselves as members of the Hispanic community, or if recent Koreans, Filipinos and Vietnamese immigrants will identify as Asians (Lieberson and Waters 1988; Rumbaut and Portes 1990).

In any case, for Israeli immigrants in the United States, the "proximal host" group is the Jewish American community. Thus, analysis, undertaken in this study, of their relationship with Jewish Americans may facilitate the understanding of the relationship of newcomer immigrants to their potential co-ethnics. The analysis of these relationships is also relevant to more general recent developments in the formation of ethnic communities in the United States.

ISRAELI IMMIGRANTS AND JEWISH AMERICANS

Studies of Israeli immigrants in the United States have indicated that although Israeli immigrants stress national origin or Israeli sources of identity, they also express strong attachment to their Jewishness and perceive themselves as part of the Jewish people (Elizur 1980). A recent study indicates that Israeli entrepreneurs in Los Angeles are oriented towards and involved in the local Jewish economic enclave Gold (1992, 1994). Moreover, several studies have reported that Israeli immigrants in America become more Jewish, in terms of identity and religious attachment, in the host country than they were in the homeland (Kimhi 1990; Mittelberg and Waters 1992).

However, Shokeid (1988; 1993) suggests that despite their shared Jewish identity, Israeli immigrants and Jewish Americans are separated and alienated from each other. He (Shokeid 1988, 1993) argues, such estrangement is related to the acceptance by the American Jewish community of the Zionist ideology's evaluations of emigration from Israel and immigration to Israel, respectively. That ideology values the latter and delegitimizes the former. Indeed, emigration is referred to in Israel as *yerida* or descent and emigrants as *yordim* (those who go down) in contradiction to immigrants to Israel who are termed *olim* or those who go up. Shokeid suggests that the acceptance of the Zionist ideology is also a source of feelings of alienation shared by Israelis towards Jewish Americans. He claims that, as part of their denial of the stigma associated with the status of *yordim*, Israeli immigrants to the United States distinguish themselves from Jewish Americans by refusing to be recognized as "Diaspora Jews."¹

Shokeid (1988)) also refers to religious differences as major determinants of a division between Israeli immigrants and Jewish Americans. Specifically, he mentions the difference between the religiously oriented and synagogue based ethnicity of Jewish Americans, and the secular orientation of most Israelis in the homeland (about 80 percent) including most of the Israeli immigrants to the

United States. Moreover, Shokeid (1988) argues that the antagonistic feelings that most of the secular Israelis have toward the Israeli religious establishment in particular and toward the Jewish religion in general is related to the ongoing social and political conflict between secular and orthodox Jews in Israel. In contrast, Jews in America are attached to Jewish religious tradition (albeit not in the orthodox way) and most of the Jewish community life in the United States relies on the synagogue as the center of activity (Handlin 1954; Herberg 1955, 1983; Glazer and Moynihan 1963; Mittelberg and Waters 1992).

Liebman and Cohen (1990) also point to clear differences between the conception of Judaism as a religious culture in American and Israeli society. They argue that the religious life of American Jews is characterized by personalism, voluntarism, moralism and universalism. By contrast, the Jewish religious life in Israel is described as a quite an authoritative public affair, in which Jewish ritualism and particularism are emphasized over moralism and universalism. However, Liebman and Cohen (1990) concede that conceptions of Judaism among Israelis and American Jews, respectively, are still more similar than different. Specifically, they mention the stress on a common past, the observance of the same holidays, rituals, and ceremonies, the retelling of the same myths, and similar responses to common symbols. Accordingly, they conclude there is but one Judaism in the contemporary world, not one for Israelis and one for Americans. Thus, Shokeid may have overstated the differences between the Israeli and American Judaism in order to explain the estrangement that he found between Israeli immigrants and American Jews.

METHODS

Data for the present study were obtained through in-depth interviews and participant observation. Field notes were taken over a period of three years (1990-1993). Data were collected in various sites in Chicago, such as classes in a Sunday school for children of Israeli immigrants, meetings of an Israeli scouts youth movement, and holiday events organized by public institutions or private individuals.

The interviewees were approached through snowball sample techniques, in which I used my contacts with various informants and with those already interviewed to contact new respondents. Initial contacts with many of the respondents were established in various settings where Israeli immigrants and their children were present such as the *Tzabar* Sunday school, the *Tzophim* youth movement, Hashalom

and King Solomon restaurants, and other Israeli owned shops. Other respondents were approached through contacts with Israeli faculty members and students in local academic institutions and with some members of the Israeli consular delegation. Since the interviewees were contacted through snowball sample techniques, the study population is not a random sample. However, since the respondents of each status (higher or lower, defined below) and generational (first or second generation) group are linked to each other by kin or friendship networks, I was able to obtain information about intra-ethnic divisions and networks not readily obtainable in a random sample.

In all, 66 in-depth interviews were conducted with Israeli immigrants and their children: 17 interviews with higher status immigrants; 19 interviews with lower status immigrants; 15 with the children of the former, and 15 with the children of the latter. The two groups of first generation interviewees are quite similar in terms of average age (around forty) and duration of stay in the United States (around 11 years). All of the second generation interviewees are young individuals, between the age of eighteen and twenty six, who have not yet established their own families. All but one is a college student or college graduate.

The in-depth interviews were semi-structured interviews (Bernard 1988). Interviewees were asked to respond to open-ended questions, including retrospective accounts concerning their immigrant experiences and ethnic attachments, the latter defined in terms of patterns of association and identification with common origin (Yancey, Erickson and Juliani 1976).

Interviewees were asked about the meaning and the importance they gave to each of their potential ethnic identities, Israeli, Jewish, American, Sephardi, and Ashkenazi. They were also asked about aspects of ethnic solidarity such as their attitudes toward and social ties with other Israeli immigrants, Jewish Americans, and non-Jewish Americans. In addition, questions were asked about respondent's attitudes towards the Jewish religion, ritual practices, and involvement in religious institutions as well as about participation in non-religious Israeli or Jewish institutions such as schools, youth movements, political movements and other voluntary organizations.

All of the in-depth interviews were conducted by the author in a face-to-face setting and lasted between one and two hours. In most cases, respondents were interviewed separately. The interviews were conducted in both Hebrew and English, were tape recorded and transcribed.

FINDINGS

This study focuses on the relationships between members of the Israeli immigrant community and Jewish Americans in the Chicago area. Specifically, it examines the willingness and actual degree to which Israeli immigrants identify with Jewish Americans and are integrated into their community. As noted, field work was conducted among Israeli immigrants in Chicago across two discrete status groups, higher and lower, and two generations, immigrants and their children.

The distinction between higher status and lower status Israeli immigrants reflects a concrete status division which exists among Israeli immigrants in Chicago. This division is manifested in the existence of distinct informal social networks of Israeli immigrants, which in turn are highly correlated with socio-economic characteristics such as level of education, type of occupation, and ethnic origin.

The ethnic characteristics of these networks follow the distinction between Ashkenazim (Jews of European or North American origin) and Sephardim (Jews of African or Asian origin), which is the main ethnic distinction within the Jewish population of Israel. Despite being a numerical majority there, Sephardim are located in lower social positions than Ashkenazim in Israel. Their subordination is manifested in terms of income, political power, education, standard of living, and place of residence (Peres 1971; Semyonov and Lewin-Epstein 1987; Smootha and Peres 1976; Yuchtman-Yaar and Semyonov 1979). Compared to their Ashkenazic counterparts, Sephardim are less exposed to Western modernization. A greater proportion of them accept Jewish religious tradition (Liebman and Cohen 1990). Specifically, several studies have indicated that as a group, Sephardic Jews in Israel are more involved in synagogue based activities and in the practice of religious rituals than Ashkenazic Jews, and that most of them perceive Judaism as a positive and important tradition (Smootha 1978; Ben-Rafael 1982; Ben-Rafael and Sharot 1991).

The status differences among Israeli immigrants in Chicago, as revealed by the field work for this study, are similar to that which exists in Israeli society. Therefore, the terms "lower status" and "higher status" Israeli immigrants, used here, refer to well established criteria of status stratification in Israel. Moreover, with regard to level of education and occupational prestige, the distinction also complies with objective standards of status stratification in the United States.

The social networks of the lower status Israeli immigrants consist primarily of self-employed persons in blue collar and service

occupations, such as paint contractors, auto mechanics, or electricians, and owners of small businesses, such as appliance stores, restaurants, or moving companies. Most members of the lower status networks do not have a college education, and most of them are Israelis of Sephardic ethnic origin.

The social networks of the higher status Israeli immigrants consist of members who were part of the elite in Israeli society and currently belong to middle ranked, or higher, status positions in American society. The higher status networks include highly educated professionals such as academics, physicians, engineers, psychologists and musicians. In addition, most of the higher status Israeli immigrants are of Ashkenazic ethnic origin.

The second generation Israeli immigrants in this study are children of at least one Israeli parent. All of them are either American-born or arrived in the United States before they were ten years old. Most members of the second generation Israeli immigrants in Chicago are still adolescent or in their early twenties.

First Generation Israeli Immigrants: The two status groups of Israeli immigrants in Chicago relate differently toward the option of becoming Jewish Americans. Specifically, lower status Israeli immigrants are more likely to be identified and integrated with the Jewish American ethnic community than are their higher status counterparts. Moreover, the willingness of lower status Israeli immigrants to become part of the Jewish American community is a strategy of adaptation to American society. By contrast, their higher status counterparts reject the option of becoming Jewish American and distinguish themselves from Americans as Israelis. These differences between lower and higher status immigrants were revealed in such aspects of ethnic attachment as: acceptance of a Jewish ethnic identity, attachment to Judaism, and social ties with Jewish American.

Acceptance of the Jewish Source of Ethnic Identity: The interviews taken in this study indicate that the almost all of the interviewees identify themselves as "Jewish" and/or as "Israelis" rather than simply "Americans." However, the ethnic identity of the lower status Israeli immigrants relies mainly on a religiously based Jewish identity and secondarily on their national origin in Israel. In contrast, higher status Israeli immigrants express a stronger commitment to their Israeli or national origin than to their Judaic or religious identity. As noted in Table 1, when asked which of the two identities is the most important

for them, 76 percent of the higher status Israeli immigrants pointed to their Israeli identity, and none of them referred to his/her Jewish identity. In contrast, only 21 percent of the lower status Israeli immigrants pointed to their Israeli identity as their major identity, and 47 percent asserted they perceive themselves first of all as "Jewish."

Table 1. Expressions of Identity Among First and Second Generation Israelis in the United States

	High Status		Low Status		Total	
	First Gen.	Second Gen.	First Gen.	Second Gen.	First Gen.	Second Gen.
<u>I see myself first of all as:</u>						
American	0%	20%	0%	13%	0%	17%
Jewish	0%	13%	47%	33%	25%	23%
Israeli	76%	67%	21%	53%	47%	60%
Israeli & Jewish Equally	24%	0%	32%	1%	28%	0%
N	17	15	19	15	36	30

The priority that lower status Israeli immigrants give to their Jewish identity is illustrated in a statement offered by Dror:

For me, the term "Israeli" is only a political term ... to be Jewish, however, is a spiritual thing. If Israel will be in danger I will come to defend it, but I will do it as a Jew and not as an Israeli.

In contrast, A typical account concerning the meaning of being Jewish was offered by Chagay, a higher status interviewee:

Yes, I identify myself as a Jew, but that is more an integrated part of my Israeli identity than a religious identity. For me Judaism is a part of Israeli culture. Therefore, I feel different than Jewish Americans, although we are all Jews.

Most of the lower status interviewees asserted that their commitment to their Jewish identity was increased during their stay in America. However, in terms of identity formation, such increase is not the only change that is manifested by members of the lower status group. Since most of them are of Sephardic origin, their emigration from Israel also consists of a departure from a stigmatized and subordinated ethnic

minority. As mentioned earlier, Sephardic Jews in Israel are located in lower social, economic, and political positions than are Ashkenazic Israelis. However, a Sephardic ethnic identity, which was both negative and salient in Israel, became almost insignificant and "costless" in America as shown in the following account offered by Shaul:

I am of Kurdish origin, and in Israel the Polish elite treated us as trash. They acted as if they are better than us. Being Sephardic was associated with being primitive or a being *Chah-Chah* [riff-raff].² When I came to Chicago I left all of this behind. Nobody treated me as an inferior Sephardic. Here I see Polish people who are lower than me. I see a different reality, and it makes me angry about what I went through in Israel.

The Sephardic Israeli immigrants continue to perceive themselves as Sephardic. However, their Sephardic identity in America is less salient than it was in Israel. The commitment of the Sephardic Israeli immigrants to their Sephardic ethnicity is mainly expressed in symbolic activities such as the annual celebration of the *Mimnah*, and a fondness for traditional Sephardic food.³ The only organizational manifestation of a commitment to a Sephardic identity is the Sephardic Israeli immigrants' affiliation with Sephardic synagogues. Fifty-eight percent of lower status interviewees are members of a synagogue; 82 percent of the synagogue members are affiliated with one of the two Sephardic congregations in Chicago. These congregations are characterized by Sephardic styles of prayers, hymns, and traditional meals.

The process of identity formation just noted, in which the salience of the Sephardic identity is reduced and the importance of the Jewish identity is elevated, is further illustrated in a statement made by Shoshana:

I am a little confused concerning my identity. In Israel, I felt that I was discriminated against and patronized as a *Frenk*⁴ ... Even at the present, when I meet Israelis, sometimes I feel that I am Iraqi. Since I came to America, things have changed. I feel closer to the American Jews than to the Israeli Ashkenazic in Israel, because they are not prejudiced against Sephardic Jews. However, I also do not feel that I completely belong in America. When I came to America I felt that I was different from most Americans ... I felt Israeli. However, over the years my Jewish identity became stronger than all of my other ethnic identities.

Attachment to the Jewish Religion: Higher status Israeli immigrants do not perceive their Jewishness as a religious identity, but as part of a secular Israeli national identity. Their secular orientation towards Judaism is also indicated by their choice to send their children to secular American schools. Most of the higher status interviewees said they did not send their children to Jewish schools because of the strong religious orientation of these schools. Moreover, expressions of alienation from the Jewish religion were made by some higher status interviewees who referred to the cultural and political conflict between secular and religious Jews in Israel. For example, Shula commented:

I do not have a problem with Judaism as a tradition ... I even like it ... but I hate the political aspects of it, or in other words

I do not like the Rabbinical establishment.

The secularism of the higher status Israeli immigrants is apparently transmitted from the homeland and is one of the major factors that distinguishes them as Israelis and inhibits their identification with American Jews.

Unlike their higher status counterparts, lower status Israeli immigrants express only positive views about the Jewish religion. Their religious attachment is manifested both in the way they perceive the Jewish religion and in their actual involvement in Jewish religious institutions and ritual practice. Moreover, while the religious attachment of lower status Israeli immigrants may be contrasted with the secularism of the higher status immigrants, it is somewhat similar to the Jewish American attachment to Judaism. Therefore, their religious attachment could be seen as another determinant of their willingness to be integrated in the Jewish American community and of their adaptation to the wider society.

Most lower status Israeli immigrants interviewed do not define themselves as "Orthodox Jews." Instead, they refer to themselves as "traditional Jews," to indicate they are more religious than secular Jews but less religious than Orthodox Jews.⁵ In contrast to the ambivalent attitudes toward the Jewish religion expressed by their higher status counterparts, lower status interviewees viewed Judaism positively. They perceived Judaism as part their family life, as a source of general guidance in life, and as a source of relief from everyday life difficulties. For example, Zion, one of the lower status interviewees, observed:

For me, the Jewish religion is kind of a therapy to the soul.

When I go to the synagogue, I forget my business and

everything else ... I take my boys with me and when I return I usually feel much better.

In terms of affiliation with religious institutions, lower status Israeli immigrants are much more active than the higher status Israeli immigrants. As shown in Table 2, while the difference in the rate of synagogue memberships in the two groups is not statistically significant, lower status immigrants are more likely, to a statistically significant extent, to attend High Holidays services and to keep a kosher kitchen at home. However, most lower status immigrants engage in traditional religious rituals selectively. For example, many

Table 2. Religious Practices of First Generation

	High Status	Low status	Total
<u>Synagogue membership</u>			
Yes	35 %	58 %	47 %
No	65 %	42 %	53 %
N	17	19	36

$$\chi^2 = 1.04 \quad df=1 \quad NS$$

Synagogue Attendance During the High Holidays

Yes	29 %	79 %	55 %
No	71 %	21 %	45 %
N	17	19	36

$$\chi^2 = 8.18 \quad df=1 \quad p < .005$$

Keeping a Kosher kitchen at home

Yes	0 %	53 %	28 %
No	100 %	47 %	72 %
N	17	19	36

$$\chi^2 = 9.90 \quad df=1 \quad p < .005$$

of them eat pork outside home even though they keep a kosher kitchen at home.

In sum, compared to their higher status counterparts, lower status Israeli immigrants are more likely to be involved in traditional Jewish religious practices. Moreover, their involvement is similar to that common among Jewish Americans. Studies of third and later generations of Jewish Americans indicate that American Judaism is

characterized by a non-traditional form of Jewish religiosity (Cohen 1983; Herberg 1955, 1983; Waxman 1983; Liebman and Cohen 1990). In this modified form, Orthodoxy has declined, most traditional religious rituals are omitted, and synagogue based activities are often more socially oriented than concerned with ritual or liturgy. Cohen (1983), for example, points to the erosion of certain "traditional" ritual practices and the stabilization of more "modern" observances among the later generations of American Jews.

The similarities between the religious involvements of Jewish Americans and lower status Israeli immigrants may facilitate the latter's assimilation into the Jewish American community. Moreover, since American Judaism is perceived as a form of religious attachment that facilitates both Jewish solidarity and Americanization, the form of religious involvement adopted by lower status Israeli immigrants may well allow their integration in American society as well.

As noted, lower status Israeli immigrants are more attached to the Jewish religion than are the higher status Israeli immigrants. However, it is likely that these differences between members of the two status groups were transmitted from their nation of origin, Israel, and did not emerge in the United States, their host country. Significantly, studies of ethnicity in Israel indicate that Sephardic Jews are more attached to Judaism than are Ashkenazic Jews (Smootha 1978; Ben-Rafael 1982; Ben-Rafael and Sharot 1991). The tendency of lower status Israeli immigrants to identify themselves as "traditional Jews," their involvement in synagogue based activities, and their positive outlook towards the Jewish religion as part of their family life are also characteristic of Sephardic Jews in Israel.

Social Ties With Jewish Americans: Higher status and the lower status Israeli immigrants differ with respect to their social integration with American Jews. While higher status immigrants are reluctant to integrate with American Jews, lower status immigrants tend to establish familial and economic ties with them. However, neither status group is segregated into their own ethnic neighborhoods and each is moderately integrated residentially with American Jews. Nevertheless, there are clear differences between the status groups in terms of occupational and social integration with Jewish Americans.

Higher status Israeli immigrants are much less oriented towards the local Jewish economic enclave than their lower status counterparts. As professionals, most higher status immigrants are hired by such local American institutions as universities, hospitals, and high-tech

companies. By contrast, most of the lower status Israeli immigrants are self-employed; their economic activity is clearly oriented to the Jewish economic enclave.

Many of the Israeli owned businesses in Chicago are located in quasi-Jewish neighborhoods such as Rogers Park and Skokie. Most of the self-employed interviewees stated that they sell products and services to Jewish American consumers. Most stated they were involved in Jewish owned businesses as laborers or as partners at least once during their occupations careers in America. In general, they attach positive values to their economic relationships with Jewish Americans. They tend to evaluate Jewish Americans as good businessmen, and to perceive the Jewish enclave as an important resource for business. For example, Itzhak, an auto-parts retailer, and his wife, Iris, comment:

Itzhak: The Jews here are really nice people. I do not have a lot of Jewish friends, but I do business with them ...

Iris (his wife): ... Yes, they are nice, but they always want to get more than they pay for ... it's not easy to work with them.

Itzhak: What do you want ... the Jews and the Israelis are the same when it comes to business. We, Jews and Israelis, always demand a lot and that is why we do well in business.

The difference between higher status and lower status Israeli immigrants with respect to their integration with American Jews is also illustrated in terms of familial and friendship ties. Compared to their higher status counterparts, lower status Israeli immigrants have more social ties with Jewish Americans. Moreover, they tend to view these ties more positively than higher status immigrants.

Marriages between an Israeli immigrant and an American represent, of course, the closest ties between them. There are only two such marriages among higher status respondents in this study. However, about a third (32 percent) of lower status respondents are or were married to a Jewish American. Obviously, Israeli immigrants who are involved in these such marriages establish more ties with Jewish Americans than other Israeli immigrants. Such ties are established mainly through their spouses' extended family and friends. However, the relationships between members of the lower status group and Jewish Americans are also established outside of family ties.

In particular, lower status Israeli immigrants have contacts with American Jews in synagogues. As suggested above, lower status Israeli immigrants are more involved in the synagogue based Jewish community life than are members of the higher status group. Israeli

members in the "Sephardic Congregation" and the "Shaarey Mizrach" congregation in Chicago told me that they were welcomed by the Jewish American members of the congregation as illustrated in Shoshana's words:

The Jews that we know here are very warm to us, and we feel that we are part of the community. I remember that when we came to the synagogue for the first time, they let my husband do the *Kiddush* [blessing] as a sign of respect. This gesture meant a lot to us, and it represents their openness to Israelis who attend the synagogue.

Unlike lower status interviewees, most of the higher status interviewees stressed the social estrangement between them and Jewish Americans. Most of them proclaim that the absence of social ties between Israelis and Jewish Americans is due to cultural differences between the groups. A typical statement is that offered by Lilach, a higher status immigrant:

Although we are Jews, we do not have much in common. There is a huge gap between our mentality and theirs. When Israelis interact with Jewish Americans, there is no chemistry. What can I tell you ... "us" and "them." It never works.

On several occasions I witnessed Israeli immigrants of the higher status group express antagonistic attitudes toward the Jewish American community. One of these occasions was a meeting of an Israeli consul with parents of the *Tzabar* Sunday school. One of the parents requested the consul to distinguish between the local Israeli community and the Jewish American community in his address. The parent supported his argument that Jewish Americans are an unreliable out-group with the following remarks:

I am going to tell you a story that when I heard it my hair stood on end. One of the Jewish American teachers in Shechter (Jewish Day School) was collecting donations at school for the civilians that suffer from the war at the Persian Gulf. That teacher emphasized that the donation should also help the Iraqi civilians that suffer from the war, and that it is a Jewish value to show mercy even to one's enemy. When one of the school's Israeli teachers suggested to that teacher that she may have gone too far, the Jewish teacher told her "This is America ... not Israel, and you'd better get used to it." This is just one example that shows us that we Israelis cannot count on the American Jewish community when it comes to the political interests of Israel.

Excuse me for the language, but we cannot trust them with their f...ing Jewish values.

This story inspired other speakers who expressed a similar attitude toward the American Jewish community. Moreover, the story exemplifies the cultural differences between the particularistic conception of the Jewish culture among Israeli and the universalistic and moralistic version common to Jewish Americans (Liebman and Cohen 1990). It should also be noted that many higher status immigrants believe Jewish Americans dislike them. Thus, they tend to blame the latter for the estrangement between the two groups. For example, I was told by Rina:

Many of them [Jewish Americans] are hostile to us. They like Israelis who live in Israel, but not Israelis who live here. They treat us as if we deserted their shelter. They think that it is O.K. for them to live here but not for us.

Second Generation Israeli Immigrants: The differences between higher status and lower status Israeli immigrants noted above have dramatically lessened among members of the second generation. Specifically, children of Israeli immigrants of both status groups prefer to identify as Israeli American rather than as Jewish Americans. The diminution of such differences is likely related to the demographic and socio-economic profile of second generation respondents in this study. Unlike their parents, the children of Israeli immigrants belong to the same demographic and socioeconomic category. In terms of American standards of stratification, virtually all middle class "college kids."

The majority of the second generation interviewees expressed a negative view of Jewish Americans. Many of them stated that Jewish Americans, mainly of their own age, are materialistic, self-centered, and over-protected by their parents. For example, Shiri, a second generation interviewee noted:

There is something that I don't like in American Jews. They are so ... "JAP" [Jewish American Princess]. They have money and that is very important for them. They are spoiled kids who think about themselves most of the time.

The option of being identified as Jewish American was obviously undesirable for Shiri and other second generation interviewees who held a similar view of Jewish Americans. Most of the second generation interviewees emphasized how they were different from Jewish Americans. For example, I was told by another second generation interviewee, Revi:

American Jews are loaded with attitudes, and it's *yakhi* [unpleasant] to be around them. They are loaded with money, and all of them live under the assumption that they are going to be doctors, lawyers or something like that. In short, they are "JAPs"... I like to think that I am different from them. I am not a JAP, and I hope that I will never become one.

With regard to their Jewish and Israeli sources of ethnic identity, most of the second generation interviewees perceived their nationally based Israeli identity as more salient than their religiously oriented Jewish identity. Specifically, 67 percent of the children of higher status Israeli immigrants and 53 percent of those from the lower status Israeli immigrants presented themselves first of all as Israelis. By contrast, only 13 percent of the former and 33 percent of the latter presented themselves first of all as Americans (see Table 1).

The findings also suggest that second generation Israeli immigrants regard a commitment to the Jewish religion as the primary component of in the conventional (Jewish) identity of Jewish Americans. Their marginal attachment to a religiously oriented Jewish source of identity is, I believe, part of their attempt to distinguish themselves from Jewish Americans as indicated in the following account by Shahar:

Unlike Israelis, Jewish Americans are boring, colorless and superficial. I am different from them. *They are Americans with a Jewish religion.* I do respect the Jewish religion, and being Jewish is part of me. However, I am an Israeli first of all.

A similar view of Jewish identity was expressed by Revi:

I see myself as an Israeli American. Both identities are based on my national origin. The Jewish identity is a different thing. In America, it's mainly a religious identity. I have hard time feeling Jewish in an American sense. I don't identify with the American culture of the Jewish religion, and I feel that I am different from American Jews.

Thus, the general picture suggests that second generation interviewees prefer an identity, based on their national origins, as Israelis, rather than a religiously oriented, Jewish, identity. It should be stressed, however, that the Israeli identity is not perceived similarly by the first and the second generation Israeli immigrants. Most of the parents (first generation) do not challenge the notion common in Israel that their residence outside of Israel contradicts their attempt to remain full members of Israeli society. By contrast, their children (second generation Americans) do not recognize the tension between their residence in the United States and their Israeli identity. Their self-

perception as Israelis does not rely on their place of residence, but (mainly) on their family's national background or their place of birth. When I asked second generation interviewees on what grounds they identify themselves as Israelis, the most common answers were: "because I was born there"; or "because I have an Israeli family." In other words, most of them base their Israeli identity on the national background of the family. Most of them hold the position that it is possible to be an Israeli in the Diaspora. Accordingly, it seems that the meaning given by second generation Israeli Americans to their Israeli identity is mainly influenced by American standards of ethnic identity and not by the standards of the collective identity in Israel. From the former perspective, being an Israeli American is no more paradoxical than being an Irish American, or an Italian American.

CONCLUSIONS

This study indicates that the adaptation of lower status Israeli immigrants to American society takes the form of identification and integration with the Jewish American ethnic community. In this regard, they differ from their higher status counterparts, as well as from the second generation offspring of both status groups, who reject the option of identifying and integrating with Jewish Americans.

These findings bear on the nature of the relationships between newcomer immigrants and their potential co-ethnics in the host country. As mentioned earlier, Mittelberg and Waters (1992) suggest that newcomer immigrants can be integrated into the host country through identification with their "proximal host" group, the ethnic group to which the newcomers are assigned in the host country. However, they also suggest that newcomer immigrants might reject identification with potential co-ethnics in the host country. In other words, integration in the host society through the "proximal host" group is an option that can be accepted or rejected by newcomer immigrants. Accordingly, it is important to identify the factors that influence the actual pattern of adaptation to the host society.

The findings of this study suggest that identification of newcomer immigrants with the "proximal host" group may be due to cultural attributes originating in the homeland. That is, the differences between the ethno-religious Jewish orientation of lower status Israeli immigrants and the secularized and nationally based Jewish orientation of their higher status counterparts may stem from values transmitted from Israel rather than from any developed by the immigrants in the United States.

Specifically, they reflect cultural differences between Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews in Israel. The religious differences between secular Israeli immigrants of Ashkenazic origin and Jewish Americans are major determinants for the estrangement between them. However, the religious background of Sephardic Israelis is a benefit, rather than a barrier, to their integration with Jewish Americans.

At the same time, this study suggests that structural circumstances, such as patterns of economic and social adaptation to the host country, and processes of social mobility, are major determinants of integration with the "proximal host" group. Specifically, newcomer immigrants are more likely to identify and integrate with their "proximal host" group when such assimilation facilitates their adaptation in the host country, and/or when they perceive it as a means to advance their social status.

In sum, the integration of the lower status immigrants with Jewish Americans is part of a respective strategy of social and economic adaptation to the host country. In particular, they appear to consider their identification with Jewish Americans as an improvement regarding their social status. On the other hand, the absence of a need to improve their social status among higher status immigrants and among second generation Israeli immigrants explains their reluctance to be assimilated to the Jewish American community.

In terms of family ties, this study indicates that about one-third of lower status interviewees compared to but one of the higher status, married a Jewish American after arrival in the host country. These immigrants received American citizenship or the status of Permanent Resident in the United States through their marriage to an American citizen. This is not to say that those who married an American did so for instrumental reasons. Rather, marriage to an American citizen eased the process of admission as a Permanent Resident and of naturalization as American citizens. In contrast, higher status immigrants acquired their legal immigration status on the basis of their occupational skills and through the organizations that employed them.

In terms of economic adaptation, the study indicates that lower status Israeli immigrants are strongly oriented to the Jewish economic enclave. Most were involved in Jewish owned businesses as laborers or partners, at least at one point in their occupational careers in the United States. Moreover, many who are presently self-employed rely on Jewish clientele. This finding is consistent with the report that Israeli entrepreneurs in Los Angeles are involved in and oriented to the Jewish economic enclave (Gold 1992, 1994). By contrast, the occupational adaptation of higher status Israeli immigrants does not rely on an ethnic

enclave, but, rather, on their professional skills. Most of them are employed in institutions, such as universities, hospitals, and high-tech firms, which are not ethnically oriented. These findings suggest then that, among immigrants, entrepreneurs are more likely than professionals to rely on their "proximal host" group and, thus, more likely than the latter to identify with and be integrated with their potential co-ethnics.

The findings also point to two positive changes in social status among lower status Israeli immigrants: 1) their Jewish identity was elevated in the host country; and 2) their Sephardic ethnic identity, which was both negative and salient in Israel, becomes almost insignificant and inconsequential in the United States. Therefore, the change from being a "Sephardic Israeli" to becoming a "Jewish American" means upward mobility for lower status immigrants. On the contrary, higher status immigrants were part of the elite in Israeli society. Their emigration was not followed by any enhancement of social status.

In short, this study suggests that identification with the "proximal host" group is determined by both the immigrants' socio-economic background in the sending society and by the social status that they would acquire in the host society by identifying with their "proximal host" group. Specifically, when newcomer immigrants perceive their identification with the "proximal host" group as entailing an improvement in their social status, they will be inclined to accept such identification. Obviously, the likelihood of immigrants' identifying with the "proximal-host" group is also related to the social status of the latter in the host country. At the same time, since professional immigrants arrive as the elite of the sending countries, identification with the "proximal host" is less likely to be appealing for them than for their counterparts of lower socio-economic background.

The above conclusions regarding the determinants of identification with the "proximal host" group are also supported by the reluctance of the second generation Israeli immigrants of both status groups to identify as Jewish Americans. They may also be used to explain why differences in ethnic attachment between the lower status and the higher status immigrants are not transmitted to the next generation. The status distinction between the two groups of the first generation immigrants relates, at least in part, to the stratification system in Israel and cannot be applied to their children. By American standards, second generation Israeli Americans, regardless of their parents' status, belong to the same social class: they are middle class college students. As such, they

are well integrated into the mainstream of American society. Moreover, they take for granted their integration in American society. Therefore, they do not need to identify with Jewish Americans in order to be integrated in American society.

Finally, the findings of the present study bear on the issue of newcomer immigrants' identification with their potential co-ethnics in the receiving country. Interestingly, the findings support Waters' position (1990, 1991), that the socio-economic background of the newcomers and the social status of the "proximal-host" group in the receiving country are important influences on the identification with co-ethnics. However, the present study indicates that the identification of immigrants with their "proximal host" is also influenced by cultural and structural factors in both the sending and the host society. This study also supports the argument that the identification of newcomer immigrants with co-ethnics is related to their perception of the relative social rankings of the ethnic groups themselves (Waters 1990, 1991). More specifically, however, the present study suggests that newcomers are more likely to identify and integrate with their "proximal host" when doing so facilitates their adaptation in the host country, and/or when they perceive it as advancing their social status.

NOTES

¹ Various studies (Kass and Lipset 1982, 1984; Korazim 1983, 1985; Uriely 1994) suggest that rejection and resentment of emigration from Israel, both in Israel and in the Jewish diaspora, is a significant determinant of many central aspects of the immigrant experience of Israelis in the United States. Specifically, the denial of the *yordim* stigma is found to be related to the refusal of Israeli immigrants to accept their stay in the host country as a permanent one.

² The derogatory term, "*chah-chah*," is associated with delinquency, low education, and cheap behavior. It is usually used to refer to young males of Sephardic descent.

³ *Mimunah* is the traditional Jewish Moroccan celebration of bread at the end of Passover during which relatives and friends visit each other and taste homemade sweets. Recently, it has been recognized in Israel as a symbol of attachment to a Sephardic identity. However, the *Mimunah* party I attended in Chicago bore little resemblance to those celebrated in Israel.

⁴ A derogatory term for Sephardic Jews in Israel, comparable to "nigger" for African Americans in the United States.

⁵ Non-orthodox movements, such as Reform or Conservative Judaism, are very small in Israel. The main religious differentiation made is that among "orthodox," "traditional,"

and "secular" Jews. The term "traditional Jew" refers to a compromise position between that of the observant (orthodox) Jews and non-observant (secular) Jews.

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