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Policies, Practices, and Trends

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The New Immigration to Israel: Becoming a De Facto Immigration State in the 1990s

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International migration has become one of the most important features of modern Western countries in general, and of Israeli society in particular. Israel is a society of immigrants and their offspring, where at the beginning of the twenty-first century two out of three members of the Jewish majority was foreign born (40%) or of the second generation (30%) (Cohen, 2002). The high percentage of foreign-born population situates Israel at the top of the list of major traditional countries of immigration like Australia (23%), Canada (16%), and the United States (8%), and well above immigration countries in Western Europe (e.g., France, 10%, and Germany,6%) (Della Pergola, 1998).

Between 1948 (the establishment of the state) and 1995, immigration accounted for over 40% of Israel's population growth and for about 50% of the increase in the Jewish population (Della Pergola, 1998). Migration flows had an impact on the size of the Jewish population, and they shaped the social, cultural, political, and economic structure of the society. The character and composition of immigration flows and immigration policies are a key factor for understanding patterns of social and ethnic stratification in the Israeli society (see e.g., Lewin-Epstein & Semyonov, 2000; Semyonov & Lerenthal, 1991; Semyonov & Lewin-Epstein, 2003).

The beginning of the 1990s marked a turning point in the migration history of Israel for two reasons. First, the massive flows of immigrants arriving in the country throughout the 1990s were reminiscent in their intensity and suddenness of the large and formative immigration flows of the 1950s. They involved three main groups: (1) a mass exodus from the former Soviet Union (FSU); (2) Ethiopian Jews (many of them brought to Israel through two special operations); (3) massive overseas labor migration. Second, the ethnic composition of immigrants shifted from its predominantly Jewish component to an increasing number of non-Jewish (and non-Palestinian) immigrants who for the first time began arriving in sizable numbers. Currently, the number of non-Jewish migrants is estimated at approximately half a million. Paradoxically, half of them arrived under the auspicious of the Law of Return (1970 amendment) (primarily entrants from the FSU and Ethiopia) (see e.g., Al-Haj, 2004; Cohen, 2002; Lustick, 1999; Weiss, 2002) and the other half entered the country as temporary labor migrants through active recruitment (by employers and manpower agencies) and as undocumented workers (Raijman & Kemp, 2002).

For the first time Israel became a de facto immigration society in spite of its own definition as a country of aliya (Jewish immigration is designated by the Hebrew word *aliya*, meaning ascent). Israel now provides a particularly illuminating setting to examine changes in the ethnic composition of migration flows at the end of the beginning of the twenty-first century. That is because non-Jews constitute a threat not only to the social and ethnic composition of the nation but also to the Jewish character of the state. As recent public debates on reforming the citizenship and immigration laws indicate, these new patterns of immigration are likely to leave their imprint on Israel's regime of incorporation and society (see e.g., Al-Haj, 2004; Lustick, 1999; Kemp & Raijman, 2008; Shafir & Peled, 2002).

In this chapter a description of Israeli society and a brief historical outline of immigration flows is followed by an account of the Israeli incorporation regime and migration policies. Next, we describe the immigration flows since the 1990s in terms of countries of origin, sociodemographic characteristics, and modes of incorporation into the Israeli society. In the conclusion we expand on three main challenges that have emerged within the Israeli context of immigration during the last decade. These challenges bear upon the modes in which new patterns of immigration—mainly non-Jewish and black immigrants—interweave with stratification processes.

The Israeli Setting

The settlement of Jews in Palestine began at the turn of the twentieth century, and since then the history of immigration in Israel is closely intertwined with the history of nation-state building and the protracted ethnonational conflict between Jews and Palestinians (for the most recent overview of immigration patterns to Israel see Cohen, 2002). Jewish immigrants arrived in Israel in a series of waves. The first arrived at the turn of the century mainly from European countries (a detailed description of immigration flows to Israel by country of birth is presented in Table 15-1). The second wave arrived shortly after statehood (1948) in the context of incremental Jewish immigration and colonization from many countries, against the will and to the detriment of the local Arab population.

The years 1948–1951 marked what Cohen (2002) has called the "demographic transformation" of Israel. It involved two migration processes of almost equal size: the forced emigration of Palestinians (circa 760,000 who fled or were expelled from their homes in cities and villages) and immigration of Middle Eastern Jews and survivors of the Holocaust (circa 678,000). This demographic transformation secured the Jewish majority in the new state with the proportion of Jews rising from 44.7% in 1947 to 89% at the end of 1951 (Cohen, 2002, p. 37).

The most meaningful ethnic split in Israel is between Jews and Arabs (Lewin-Epstein & Semyonov, 1993). Although Arabs were granted Israeli citizenship in 1948, only since the abolition of the military administration (in 1966) have they formally enjoyed civil and political rights on an individual, liberal basis, as long as these rights do not conflict with the national goals of the Jewish majority (Shafir & Peled, 2002). Currently the Arab population constitutes approximately 20% of the citizens of Israel and they are disadvantaged relative to Jews in every aspect of social stratification, including education, occupational status, earnings, and standard of living (Lewin-Epstein & Semyonov, 1993; Semyonov, Lewin-Epstein, & Spilerman, 1996). These disadvantages can be attributed largely to socioeconomic discrimination and should also be understood within the context of the Jewish-Arab conflict (e.g., Haidar, 1990; Lewin-Epstein & Semyonov, 1993).

The combination of (1) the massive and heterogeneous immigration (from Eastern European countries and Middle Eastern countries and North Africa), and (2) the scarcity of resources in the post-Independence war period (1948–1951) had a detrimental effect on the socioeconomic achievements of the Jewish immigrants arriving during this critical period, and its imprint is evident in the stratification system to this date (Cohen & Haberfeld, 1998; Semyonov & Lewin-Epstein, 2003). The Jewish majority is divided into two major groups of distinct ethnic origin, Jews of European and American origin (Ashkenazim) and Jews of Asian and African origin (Middle East and North Africa: (Mizrahim). The latter group

Table 15-1. Percent Distribution of Immigrants by Country of Birth and Period of Arrival*

Period of Immigration	1919–48	1948–51	1952–67	1968–88	1989–00	2001–05	1948–2005
Country							
Total Asia	**8.4**	**34.6**	**11.5**	**10.7**	**1.4**	**1.9**	**12.7**
Iran	0.7	3.2	4.9	4.4	0.2	0.6	2.6
Iraq	0.0	18.0	0.7	0.4	0.0	0.1	4.3
Turkey	1.7	5.0	2.3	2.0	0.1	0.3	2.0
Yemen	3.3	7.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.7
Syria	0.0	0.4	0.8	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.4
India-Pakistan	0.0	0.3	1.9	2.2	0.1	0.4	0.9
Other Asia	2.7	0.7	0.6	1.0	0.9	0.5	0.8
Total Africa	**0.8**	**13.6**	**47.4**	**13.6**	**5.2**	**14.3**	**17.4**
Morocco	0.2	4.1	35.7	4.6	0.3	0.9	8.9
Algeria	0.0	0.6	1.8	1.4	0.2	0.7	0.8
Tunisia	0.0	1.9	5.6	1.2	0.2	0.7	1.8
Libya	0.2	4.5	0.6	0.3	0.0	0.0	1.2
Ethiopia	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.7	4.0	11.4	2.4
South-Africa	0.1	0.1	0.4	2.1	0.3	0.5	0.6
Egypt-Sudan	0.0	1.3	3.3	0.4	0.0	0.1	1.0
Other Africa	0.4	1.1	0.1	1.0	0.2	0.0	0.5
Total Europe	**78.2**	**48.5**	**36.2**	**54.4**	**89.5**	**68.0**	**62.5**
USSR/FSU	10.8	1.2	4.0	32.2	85.1	59.3	39.3
Poland	35.3	15.5	8.0	2.5	0.3	0.4	5.7
France	0.3	0.4	0.6	3.8	1.1	4.8	1.5
Romania	8.5	17.2	18.5	5.8	0.7	0.5	8.9
Hungary	2.1	2.1	2.0	0.4	0.2	0.3	1.0
Bulgaria	1.5	5.4	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.2	1.5
Czechoslovakia	3.5	2.7	0.4	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.8
Germany	10.9	1.6	0.6	1.3	0.2	0.4	0.8
UK	0.3	0.3	0.6	2.7	0.5	1.0	0.9
Other Europe	5.0	2.1	1.0	5.2	0.8	1.1	1.9
Total America	**1.6**	**0.6**	**3.8**	**21.0**	**3.9**	**15.7**	**6.7**
Argentina	0.0	0.1	1.7	5.1	1.1	6.5	2.0
USA	1.4	0.2	0.9	10.5	1.7	4.9	2.9
Brazil-Uruguay-Chile	0.0	0.1	0.7	2.5	0.4	1.9	0.8
Oceania	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.6	0.1	0.2	0.2
Other America	0.1	0.1	0.4	2.3	0.5	2.2	0.8
Unknown	**11.0**	**2.8**	**0.1**	**0.3**	**0.1**	**0.1**	**0.7**
TOTAL	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

* These figures relate to immigrants arriving under the Law of Return (labor migrants are not included)

Source: Table 2-1. Cohen (2002), Table 2-1, p. 40. Central Bureau of Statistics (2007), Table 4-2, pp. 228–229.

were characterized by a traditional orientation, by limited education and occupational skills, and by large families. These immigrants were lower than European-American immigrants in every aspect of socioeconomic status (education, occupation, and income) (e.g., Semyonov & Lerenthal, 1991). Although over time Jews of Asian-African origin improved their socioeconomic attainment, the gaps between ethnic groups (Mizrahim and Ashkenazim) did not narrow (Semyonov & Lewin-Epstein, 2003) even in the second generation (Cohen, 1998; Haberfeld, 1993).

Immigration in the three decades after the establishment of the state (1960s to 1980s) was more sporadic and less systematic. It was

characterized by a slow but constant stream of immigrants from North and South America as well as immigrants from South Africa, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union, Ethiopia, and Iran. By then, a broad infrastructure of public housing and support was available for all new immigrants. Research indicates that with increasing time in the country most of the immigrants of the 1970s and the 1980s became fully integrated and achieved higher levels of socioeconomic attainment (Cohen, 2002, p. 46; Raijman & Semyonov, 1995, 1997; Semyonov & Lerenthal, 1991). As noted, since the beginning of the 1990s Israel has witnessed a renewal of massive immigration flows. These comprise migrants and family members arriving under the Law of Return, mainly from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia, and non-Jewish labor migration.

Jewish Migration

The winter of 1989 was a turning point in the Jewish immigration flow to Israel, reversing the declining trend manifested during the previous decade. Following the downfall of the former Soviet Union a mass of immigrants had begun exiting the Soviet republics to settle in Israel. Between 1989 and 2005 Israel—a country of only 4.5 million residents at the beginning of the 1990s—took in over 960,000 immigrants from the former Soviet Union (400,000 of whom arrived between 1989 and 1991).

By virtue of the Law of Return these immigrants were granted citizenship immediately on arrival and their process of incorporation was intensively supported by the state (Lerner & Menahem, 2003; Raijman & Semyonov, 1998). Their presence was deeply felt in the social, economic, and political spheres as their proportion in the total population increased from 3.8% in 1990 to 21% in 2005 (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2006, Table 2-23). Together with substantial influx of Soviet Jews of the 1970s, the 1990s FSU immigrants—"Russians" as they are called in Israel—constitute the largest ethnic group to have immigrated to the Israeli state.

At the other end of the the socioeconomic spectrum are Ethiopian Jewish immigrants, known as Beta Israel or "Falashas." In the 1980s, Ethiopians—a forgotten community of Jews in Africa—became a target for Israeli government and the Jewish Agency officials, who were sent to Ethiopia to prepare a massive and secret migration (Herzog, 1999). The Ethiopian immigrants arrived in Israel in three major waves. The first (1980–1990, including Operation Moses: November 1984–January 1985) numbered 8,000 immigrants. The second, including Operation Solomon in 1991, comprised about 20,000 persons. The third wave is still ongoing, amid a major public debate in Israeli society over the inclusion since the 1990s of the converted *Falas Mura.* These Ethiopians are not considered Jews according to the *halakhah* (Jewish religious law). Many of them languish in transit camps in Addis Ababa, waiting to come to Israel under the terms of the Law of Return. By 2005 the number of Ethiopians living in Israel was estimated at 102,900; one third of them were Israeli born (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2006). The transition of Ethiopians from a rural setting to a developed society like Israel caused numerous crises, on the individual and community level alike. The perception of Ethiopian immigrants as a vulnerable population justified the intensive involvement of the state in all aspects of their integration process. Nevertheless, the Ethiopian community in Israel constitutes one of the poorest populations in the country with almost half of all Ethiopian families depending on welfare support as the only source of income (Offer, 2004, 2007).

To these main groups we should add a smaller but constant flow of Jewish migrants from Western and Central Europe and from North and South America that account for some 10% of all immigrants arriving since the 1990s. These are a very selected population, displaying relatively high levels of education and socioeconomic attainment but have not been a major focus of systematic research. One plausible explanation for this notable lacuna may be the ideological assumption that these immigrants are equipped with high human capital, furnished with a strong Zionist motivation, and endowed with a value system similar in many respects to that of the Westernized veteran Israeli Jews. Accordingly, they would not display significant differences from Israeli-born groups (Kemp & Elias, 2003). As stated, to these main immigration flows entering Israel under the Law of Return we should add a significant flow of

non-Jewish overseas labor migrants (documented and undocumented) arriving during the last decade.

Non-Jewish Labor Migration

The first noncitizen workers in the Israeli labor market were Palestinians from the occupied territories (in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank) who, following the 1967 Six Day War came under Israeli military rule. Noncitizen Palestinians were recruited to perform manual jobs mainly in construction, agriculture, and services. Over the years these workers—mostly daily commuters—became highly dependent on the Israeli economy for their economic needs. By the end of the 1980s they made up about 8% of the Israeli labor force. As a distinct social group they were clearly located at the bottom of the Israeli labor market and the ethnic system (Semyonov & Lewin-Epstein, 1987).

The deterioration of the political and security situation generated by the first Palestinian uprising, the *Intifada* (which began at the end of 1987), brought about a severe labor shortage in the construction and agriculture sectors of the Israeli labor market, in which Palestinian workers had been concentrated since the early 1970s. The "temporary" solution sought to overcome labor shortages was importation of overseas labor migrants. By 2006, the total number of labor migrants in the Israeli labor market was approximately 186,000. They had arrived from virtually every corner of the world; only 55% of them held work permits (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2007a). In order to understand the different modes of incorporation of the main immigrant groups arriving in Israel during the 1990s, we now present a brief overview of the Israeli regime of incorporation.

The Israeli Incorporation Regime

Migration to Israel can be characterized as a returning ethnic migration, so the Israeli state and society belong to the category of "diaspora country." Over the years, the state of Israel has been more or less unmatched in its active recruitment of Jewish immigrants (38% of the Jewish population in the world resides in Israel: *Statistical Abstract*, 2002, Table 2-3) and its overwhelmingly accommodating policy of granting them immediate full participatory citizenship upon arrival (Semyonov & Lewin Epstein, 2003).

The country relies purely on the system of jus sanguinis (law of blood) to determine the citizenship status of immigrants and their descendants. The centrality of the idea of migration as a return from the Diaspora is expressed in the Law of Return of 1950. This law creates a legal framework that grants Israeli citizenship to Jews and their children immediately on their immigration; since the 1970 reform, the "right of return" has been extended to grandchildren of Jews too, and their nuclear families (even if not Jewish). Paradoxically, this amendment created a new oxymoronic category of "non-Jewish *olim*" (Hebrew plural [m], singular *oleh* [m], *olah* [f], designating Jewish immigrant, from the Hebrew word *aliya*, literally "ascent": Weiss, 2002). As the cornerstone of Israel's immigration policy and its citizenship regime, the Law of Return accords to Jewish immigrants a status superior to that of native-born citizens in the form of rights and benefits that the latter do not enjoy (Cohen 2002; Shuval & Leshem, 1998). For example, Weiss (2002) points out the discriminatory approach of the 1970 amendment of the Law of Return, which omits Israeli Arabs and their family members, who are excluded from the dominant ethnonational definition of the state and polity.

The current migration regime is highly exclusionary regarding non-Jews (those not covered by the amendment to the Law of Return) and also removes a priori any possibility of incorporation for non-Jewish migrants (Shafir & Peled, 2002). Unwillingness to accept non-Jewish immigrants is expressed through exclusionary immigration policies (especially limitation of family reunion and refusal to secure residence status), restrictive naturalization rules, and a double standard: exclusionary model for non-Jews as against an "acceptance-encouragement" model for Jews (Raijman, Semyonov, & Schmidt, 2003). Israel may be viewed as an immigrant settler society based on an ethnonationalist structure, defined both ideologically and institutionally (Smooha, 1990). The presence of an unprecedented number of non-Jewish migrants who are also

non-Arabs elicits new questions regarding the predominantly ethnonational character of the state and of its citizenship regime. In that sense, Israel's migration policy on non-Jews reflects the state's never-ending anxiety about a changing ethnoscape that may pose a threat to its Jewish character.

Programs and Services Available to Immigrants under the Law of Return

The social and political systems of Israel, based on immigration, were constructed with the goal of bringing Jews to Israel and easing their integration in the new country. The World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency established branches across the world where Jews apply for immigration to Israel and receive assistance for the actual move itself (journey, luggage). But beyond this, as a self-defined Jewish state Israel is committed to the successful integration of its (Jewish) immigrants. They not only have privileged access to citizenship and the societal goods that this formal status provides, they also benefit from social policies such as welfare and a wide variety of integration programs.

Throughout most of its history, the centralized state of Israel was intensively involved in shaping the opportunity structure and immigration policies, playing a central role in the incorporation of co-ethnic immigrants. In effect, Israel established a "social contract" that committed the state to provide settlement assistance to new immigrants during their first years after arrival. In fact, since the 1970s immigrants were given the opportunity to spend five or six months in absorption centers, where they received intensive free Hebrew instruction, health insurance, and assistance in finding employment and grants for university students. The immigrants also enjoyed interim subsistence loans, tax exemptions for cars, electrical appliances, and other household goods. In addition, the government provided a wide variety of retraining courses for immigrants whose previous training and experience were not suited to the needs of the economy; incentives and financial support were given to employers to hire immigrants (Lerner & Menahem, 2003; Shuval & Leshem, 1998). In sum, Jewish immigrants during the first years in Israel were given substantial state support to adjust to the new country.

While the active involvement of the state was evident in all spheres of the immigrants' lives, aiming to facilitate the transition to the host society, it also created dependency which in the long run may have had detrimental effects on the immigrants' socioeconomic status. The degree of state involvement in immigrant incorporation policies and the amount of resources allocated to that purpose largely shaped the system of ethnic stratification in Israel over the years (see e.g., Semyonov & Lewin-Epstein, 2003).

Recently, because of the huge size of the immigration flows, but also as part of larger liberalization processes taking place in Israel, causing a retreat in state involvement, we have witnessed a shift to a far less centralized incorporation policy, called "direct absorption" (Leshem & Lissak, 1999). Nowadays, upon arrival immigrants receive an "absorption basket"—cash and services—and they can use it as they please (Doron & Kagar, 1993; Shuval & Leshem, 1998). The value of the absorption basket was calculated as the average of the financial support previously provided to each individual. Upon arrival, a nuclear family (parents and two children) received close to $10,000 for the first year (the minimal annual wage rate is around $5,000. This new policy was applied mainly to immigrants from the FSU (and other Western countries) who arrived in the 1990s. By contrast, the integration of Ethiopian immigrants was still highly controlled by the state. While almost all Ethiopian immigrants were sent to absorption centers to "facilitate" the integration process, nearly all immigrants from the FSU (92%) were integrated through the direct absorption policy.

Since Ethiopians were considered a vulnerable population, an "immigration of distress" an intensive state intervention in all aspects of integration was quite evident (Ben-Eliezer, 2004). Ethiopian immigrants were sent to absorption centers, mostly in the periphery, where they were totally dependent on the centers' officials and employees (Herzog, 1999). Although these centers were conceived as transit points from which immigrants were supposed to move after six months, many Ethiopians were reluctant to go.

They had got used to a situation where all needs were attended to; also, many of them did not have the economic means to move to permanent housing.

The Ethiopian immigrants were granted many more resources than any other group of immigrants (e.g., the absorption basket was offered for two years, rights to *Ulpan* (Hebrew language school) were also doubled, and mortgages were offered at much lower interest rates). Nevertheless, their lack of suitable human, social, and financial capital to integrate into the new society left them segregated in poor neighborhoods (where cheap housing was affordable to those depending on the state mortgage system) with little prospects of socioeconomic mobility (Offer, 2004, 2007; Swirski & Swirski, 2002). Furthermore, the discriminatory attitude of some of the mainstream religious institutions to these immigrants, not considering them Jews, generated a state of segregation in several socioeconomic dimensions (Ben-Eliezer, 2004).

Next we set out a socioeconomic and demographic profile of immigrants entering Israel during the 1990s. Specifically, we outline the immigrants' socioeconomic characteristics and modes of incorporation into Israeli society. Because the conditions and the legal arrangements through which Jewish immigrants enter Israel and those under which overseas labor migrants are recruited are strikingly different we present each of these immigration flows (Jewish and non-Jewish) separately.

Immigration to Israel since the 1990s

Jewish Migration: A Demographic Profile

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics the total number of immigrants arriving under the Law of Return between 1989–2005 is estimated in 1,182,841. Data in Table 15-1 reveal that two groups constituted the bulk of the Jewish migration flows during these years: immigrants from the FSU, especially the European republics (85% of the total immigration), and from Ethiopia (4.5%). The remaining 10% came from Western Europe (3.4%), Central Europe (1.3%), North America (2.5%), and South America (1.8%). The immigration flows peaked during the first years of the decade (1990–1992), and declined thereafter reaching the low figure of 19,269 in 2006 (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2007b, Table 4-2, 229).

In Table 15-2 we present basic sociodemographic characteristics of immigrants from the FSU and Ethiopia, and compare them with those of the general population of Israel in 2000. Immigrants from FSU and from Ethiopia stand in a mirror-like relationship, and point to the contrasting challenges facing Israeli society and new immigrants. The Ethiopian community displays a very young age composition compared with both FSU immigrants and the overall population of Israel. Over 40% of the Ethiopian population in Israel was aged 19 or younger, and only 7% were aged 65 and older, compared to 30% and 36% respectively among their FSU counterparts. In marked contrast to immigrants from the FSU, Ethiopians' fertility rate is higher (4.3) than the average of the FSU immigrants (1.6) and the Israeli rate (2.7). But note that fertility rates among Ethiopian women decline with time in the country, and are expected to match the rates of the veteran Jewish society in the future. The data also reveal that FSU immigrants are characterized by a high percentage of women (55%), many of whom came as heads of households (divorced and widowed). This is not a surprising finding; Israel has long attracted more female than male immigrants, perhaps, due to the supportive social policies pursued by the state (Raijman & Semyonov, 1997).

In addition, the 1990s waves included for the first time an increasing number of immigrants who were not Jewish according to *halakhah* (Jewish religious law). The percentage of non-Jews among the FSU immigrants entering under the Law of Return has risen over time. It rose from 6% in 1989 to 56.4% in 2001. This new status of non-Jewish *oleh* is likely to have substantial stratifying effects in access to the labor market and in the materialization of various social and civil rights in the context of an ethnonational state like Israel (Shafir & Peled, 2002, pp. 315–316).

The differences between the groups are most evident and pronounced with regard to educational and occupational attainment. Immigrants from the FSU display higher levels of education

Table 15-2. Select Socioeconomic Characteristics, 2000

Immigrants from the FSU and Ethiopia, and Israeli Population			
	Former Soviet Union	Ethiopians	Israeli Population
Age Distribution	100.0	100.0	100.0
Less than 20	28.2	42.5	37.0
20–44	38.3	38.5	35.0
45–64	20.6	12.0	18.0
65+	12.9	7.0	10.0
Median Age	36.3	22.8	
Fertility Rate	1.6	4.3	2.7 [a]
% Women	55.0	51.0	50.6
% Non-Jewish (non-Palestinian)	20.5	14.0	3.5
Years of schooling [b]	13.9	4.1	12.4
	(3.0)	(5.3)	(4.3)
Percent with academic degree [b]	43.0	5.8	21.7
Percent that never studied	0.4	50.8	4.4
Percent in the labor force [b]	85.9	46.3	74.0
Occupational distribution [b]	100.0	100.0	100.0
Academic and professional	11.3	0.0	14.1
Technical	14.8	4.7	16.5
Managers	1.6	0.8	9.3
Clerical and sales	25.0	24.2	35.0
Skilled occupations in industry, construction and agriculture	31.0	32.0	19.0
Unskilled occupations in industry, construction, and agriculture	16.0	38.0	5.7

[a] Jewish women only.

[b] Individuals aged 25–55.

Sources: Demographic data are based on Central Bureau of Statistics. *Statistical Abstract, 2002*; Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003, 2004. Socioeconomic data were obtained from special analyses of *Labor Force Survey 2000* done by the authors.

than the average population of Israel. By contrast, the Ethiopians have very low educational levels (less than primary schooling). A comparison of proportions of people with academic degrees indicates that in 2000 about 50% of the FSU immigrants had completed academic education, as against about 30% of Israeli-born citizens. But only 5% of the Ethiopian immigrants had done so (over 50% of them reported that they never studied, compared with less than 4% in the general Israeli population). While other immigrant societies (e.g., the United States and countries in Western Europe) are faced with flows of low-skilled immigrants, Israel has had to deal with the massive flow of high-skill immigrants.

Consequently, Israel direly needs to generate jobs for an immigrant population characterized by specific (high) human capital endowments. At the same time the challenge is to integrate the population of Ethiopians. A large part of the Jewish community in Ethiopia lived in isolated and remote districts of the country. The great majority were peasants and artisans who used traditional technologies. Their illiteracy rate was very high and most of them brought skills that were not relevant to the Israeli labor market.

Being massive, the flows of immigrants from the FSU during the first years of the 1990s resulted in unemployment among the newly arrived. The labor market was unable to offer appropriate and adequate jobs to the large supply of highly educated immigrants. Many had to compromise with low-paying jobs below their qualifications and credentials (see e.g., Flug,

Kasir, & Ofer, 1997; Raijman & Semyonov, 1998). For example, in 1991 there were 30,000 engineers in the Israeli labor market. A flow of 200,000 immigrants brought an addition of about 22,500 engineers. Similarly, 16,000 physicians and dentists were active in Israel in 1991, and the Russian immigration brought 6,500 more physicians per year, doubling the size of this occupational group. Most of these newly arrived professionals were unable to find jobs similar to those they left behind.

However, recent indications and assessments suggest that with the passage of time in the new country many of the immigrants do experience upward occupational and economic mobility. They are closing the economic gaps with the Israeli-born populations (Semyonov, Raijman & Kotsubinski, 2002). The group of young immigrants has been relatively most successful in their integration into the Israeli labor market whereas the more mature group of immigrants is the most disadvantaged. It is still unclear whether and to what extent this trend and process of integration and mobility will continue in light of the current political and economic situation of Israel.

The data in Table 15-2 reveal that FSU immigrants have succeeded in joining the labor market, and are overrepresented in the high skilled occupations, but that the lucrative and high status managerial category remains unattained by them. The immigrants are also underrepresented in sales-type occupations (where language skills are needed) and in skilled occupations as compared with other populations. As for the Ethiopian immigrants, the data indicate that only half of this group was employed, mostly in unskilled jobs in industry and construction. Their low socioeconomic achievement is the direct result of low human capital endowments. Although younger Ethiopians and more veteran immigrants have achieved higher levels of education, participate more in the labor market, and have improve their wages over time the gaps between them and the rest of Israeli society are still very wide (Offer, 2004; Swirski & Swirski, 2002).

Non-Jewish Labor Migration

As noted, overseas labor migration is a new phenomenon but it has been a contested issue in Israeli society from the start. Documented and undocumented labor migrants comprised 9.6% of the total labor force, and together with Palestinian daily commuters they made up to 13% of the total labor force in Israel in 2000. These figures place Israel at the top of the industrialized Western countries most heavily dependent on noncitizen workers (Kemp & Raijman, 2008).

The deterioration of the political and security situation generated by the first Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories (1987) brought about a severe labor shortage in the construction and agriculture sectors, in which noncitizen Palestinian workers had been concentrated (Bartram, 1998; Semyonov & Lewin-Epstein, 1987). Periodic strikes organized by the Palestinian leadership and the systematic closure of the borders imposed by the Israeli government as a reaction to terrorist attacks impeded the entry of Palestinians to work in Israel. Employers (especially in the construction and agriculture sectors) had growing demands for cheap labor, which could not be satisfied through the supply of a native labor force given that Israelis were not willing to assume the low-status and low-paying jobs in which Palestinians had been engaged. The government's unwillingness to introduce major social and economic measures of restructuration (e.g., technological changes in construction and agriculture and raising wage levels in these sectors), the increasing demand for housing due to the massive flow of immigration at the beginning of the 1990s, and the rising level of violence between Palestinians and Israelis all set the stage for the government's decision at the end of 1993 to grant permits for massive recruitment of overseas labor migrants.

The recruitment of overseas workers was consistent with the interests of both the state and the employers, as it was considered a temporary, low-cost solution to a temporary problem. But, the transformation of overseas labor migration from a negligible matter—as it was until the beginning of the 1990s—into an institutionalized and full-fledged process at the beginning of the twenty-first century has become a feature of Israeli society.

As Figure 15-1 clearly shows, a dramatic process of de-Palestinization of the Israeli labor

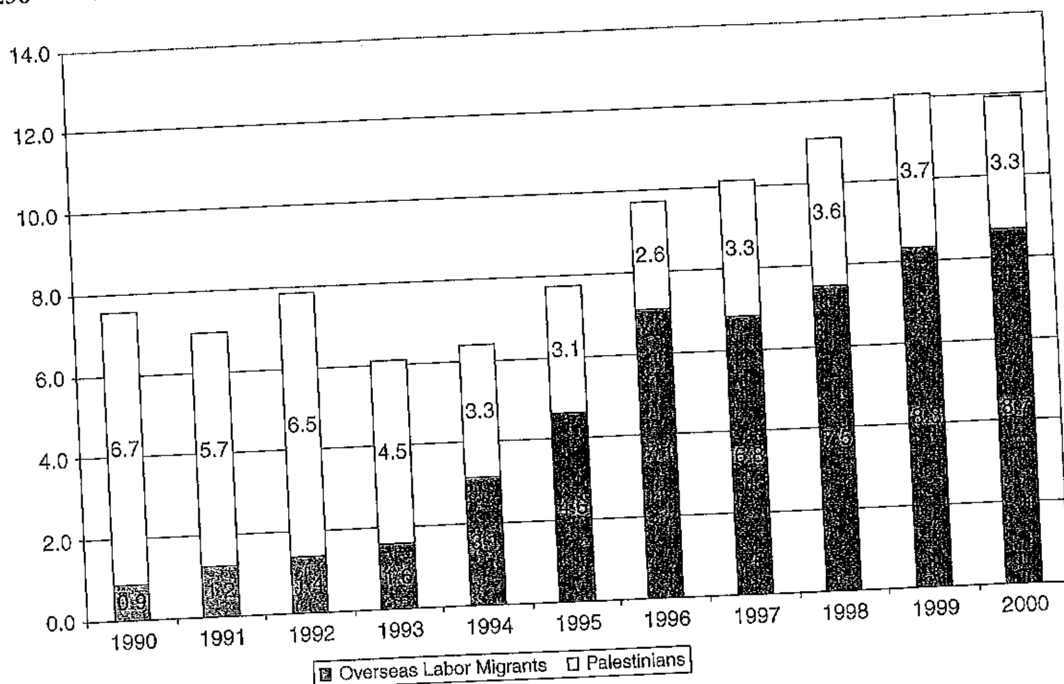

Figure 15-1. Percent of Labor Migrants and Palestinians in the Israeli Labor Force, 1990–2000

force was evinced by the decreasing number of noncitizen Palestinians, which was concomitant with the increasing number of overseas labor migrants during the 1990s. The increase in the number of labor migrants was due to a constant rise in the number of permits granted to employers, but also to a constant rise in the numbers of undocumented migrants residing in Israel (Kemp & Raijman, 2008). According to Central Bureau of Statistics, by 2007 undocumented labor migrants comprise 55% of all foreign workers in the country (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2007a).

Labor Migration Policy

Overall, Israel's labor migration policy reflects the state's continuous anxiety about a changing ethnoscape that may pose a threat to its Jewish character. State action on labor migrants is expressed as a policy of control manifested through two main pillars: indenture of legally recruited migrants, and deportation of undocumented or irregular migrants. By indenture, the state allocates and grants work permits to employers and not to employees, thus documented labor migrants become a de facto "captive labor force," with all the flagrant violations of individual and civil liberties this entails (see Workers Hotline Reports: www.kavlaoved.org.il). By this means the state seeks not only to prevent turnover of migrant workers but also to "privatize," namely delegate its regulatory functions to the hands of employers (Raijman & Kemp, 2002). As stated above, one of the main outcomes of the "binding" system, as it is called in Israel, is that legally recruited migrant workers who wish to leave their employers become automatically "illegal." Those in the latter category are dubbed "runners" in the local employers' jargon. A paradoxical situation is thus created whereby the state directly creates what it allegedly seeks to repress. The second pillar of state policy, deportation of undocumented migrant workers, has been the pursued by the Israeli authorities since the end of 1996 (Raijman & Kemp, 2002). The overall target set by the Minister of Labor was to reduce the proportion of migrant workers from 10% of the Israeli workforce to just 1%. The deportation policy emerged as a patchwork affair and entailed the violation of basic human rights (see annual reports: http://www. kavlaoved.org.il). Many

migrants were deported when they tried to demand their rights from their employers or from the National Insurance Institute (social security); hundreds were held in detention for lengthy periods under harsh conditions and without being brought to trial; families fell apart after the father was apprehended, often before the eyes of the children (for further analysis of the deportation policy, see Kemp & Raijman, 2008). Since September 2002, and upon the creation of the new Immigration Police, a quota of 50,000 undocumented migrants earmarked for deportation has been set as a target and has been by and large fulfilled (see http://www.hagira.gov.il). In 2003 the Immigration Police launched a new campaign known as "Operation Voluntary Repatriation" designed to encourage undocumented migrants to leave Israel voluntarily.

From a juridical point of view, Israel is signatory to international conventions such as that of the International Labor Organization on labor migration (1949), which the Knesset ratified in 1953, and the international convention for the protection of children. Moreover, Israel has enacted highly progressive laws on workers' rights—including a minimum wage and work hours and conditions—and on health (a patients' rights law). The territorial definition of these laws enables them to be applied without discrimination to all residents in Israel, whether they are citizens or not, and irrespective of their legal status in the country.

In practice, an immense gap exists between the provisions of these laws, which are supposed to serve migrant workers, and their implementation (see e.g., Borowoski & Yanay, 1997). What in fact underlies the violation of migrant workers' social and civil rights in Israel is not the absence of appropriate legislation but the lack of an infrastructure, compounded by the state's lack of will to enforce the laws (for a thorough analysis of the role of other state and nonstate actors in labor migration policy in Israel see: Kemp & Raijman, 2004; Raijman & Kemp, 2002).

Labor Migrants in Israel

Demographic Profile

In Table 15-3 we present information regarding countries of origin of labor migrants entering Israel with work permits by country of citizenship in 1995 and 2000. The data show that most of the migrants are young men in their mid-thirties (median age 35) coming from East Europe and Southeast Asia. The ethnic composition of the flows has changed over time, with migrants from Asia increasing their share by the end of the beginning of the twenty-first century. This is explained by the changing composition of work permits, which has reduced the number of workers in the construction and agriculture sectors (from East Europe and Thailand, respectively) and increased the number employed in nursing and geriatric care (mainly from the Philippines). Given that the majority of work permits in the latter are granted to women, the changing composition of permits by sector explains the relative increase in the share of women arriving in Israel with work permits over the last decade. Whereas the government sets quotas for foreign employment in the construction and agricultural sectors, no limits are set in the case of nursing and elder care, as it is understood that native workers would not be ready to work round the clock and for a salary well below the minimum wage.

The industrial distribution of migrant workers with permits residing in Israel in 2002 is presented in Table 15-4. Three main sectors concentrate the bulk of legally recruited migrant workers: about 28% of them work in the construction sector (mainly from Romania, China, Turkey, and the FSU), 27% in agriculture (mainly from Thailand); and 41% in nursing and elder care (mainly from the Philippines and to a lesser extent from Sri-Lanka, India, and Bulgaria). In addition, another 4.5% work in light industry (Romania, FSU, and South America), almost 3% in restaurants (Philippines, China, and Thailand), and 1% in hotels, especially in the tourist city of Eilat (Africa and FSU) (see www.kavlaoved.org.il). Legally recruited workers come alone, without their families, and for the most part they live and work in the same location (construction site, agricultural land, or private household) with their work conditions resembling a kind of "total institution" (Kemp et al., 2000). While the state permits provide a formal infrastructure of incorporation into the labor market, the "binding" system leaves little or no margin for migrant

Table 15-3. Arrival with Work Permits by Country of Citizenship & Gender

Country of Citizenship	1995		2000	
	%	% Men	%	% Men
Asia-total	33.1	81.0	44.1	63.0
India		86.0	1.3	78.0
Turkey	7.7	94.0	3.4	98.0
Lebanon	5.9	74.0	1.7	56.0
China	2.4	97.0	5.6	96.0
Philippines	2.9	18.0	14.6	17.0
Thailand	13.3	90.0	15.3	91.0
Other	0.5	79.0	2.1	66.0
Africa-total	0.4	75.0	1.1	51.0
Europe-total	62.3	87.0	51.1	78.0
Bulgaria	2.6	96.0	4.4	69.0
USSR (former)	3.2	85.0	8.2	66.0
Romania	52.7	89.0	31.8	86.0
Other	3.8	59.0	6.8	61.0
America-Oceania	3.0	70.0	3.3	63.0
USA	2.2	69.0	2.1	67.0
Other	0.8	71.0	1.1	55.0
Not Known	2.9	81.0	0.2	78.0
TOTAL	100.0 (78,300)	85.0	100.0 (52,200)	71.0
Mean Age	35.0		35.4	

Sources: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004, Table 4-10.

Table 15-4. Industrial Distribution of Country of Origin

Workers with Permits—2002			
Main Countries of origin	Numbers and Percentage		Industry
Thailand, China	27.0	30,000	Agriculture
Romania, Former Soviet Union, China, Turkey	28.0	32,000	Construction
Romania, Former Soviet Union, South America	4.5	5,000	Industry
Philippines, Sri Lanka, India, Bulgaria	36.0	40,000	Health and elder care
Philippines, China, Thailand	2.7	3,000	Restaurants
Africa, Former Soviet Union	0.9	1,000	Hotels (in the city of Eilat)
	100%	110,000	TOTAL

Sources: Workers Hotline. www.kavlaoved.org.il/

associational initiatives. Moreover, the development of illegal norms such as the confiscation of passports by employers further accentuates the migrants' lack of autonomy and their dependence on employers.

As for undocumented labor migrants, they arrive from almost every corner of the world—though mainly from East Europe (primarily from the former Soviet Union and Romania), South Asia (primarily from the Philippines), Africa

(primarily from Ghana and Nigeria), and South America (primarily from Colombia and Ecuador) and are employed primarily in construction and services sector (see Bar-Zuri, 2001). In contrast to their documented counterparts, undocumented migrant workers arrive haphazardly and many of them come with their families. They enter the country on a tourist visa, which forbids them to work, and become undocumented by overstaying it. Others enter the country by crossing the desert beyond Israel's border with Egypt and being smuggled across the frontier. These methods are not the only paths to illegality. An extremely common way for a worker to become undocumented is to leave the employer to whom the worker is "attached" through the "bondage" system. According to estimates, some 53% of undocumented labor migrants have become "illegal" as a direct result of the binding system (Bar-Zuri, 2001).

As noted, most undocumented labor migrants reside in the southern neighborhoods of the city of Tel Aviv. Within just a few years certain neighborhoods there, such as Neve Sha'anan, HaTikva, Shapira, and the Yemenite Quarter, became new ethnic enclaves where families of undocumented migrant workers made their homes (Kemp & Raijman, 2004; Raijman et al., 2003). As labor migrants and their families climbed to 16% of the Tel Aviv's population, it was clear that they were not only changing the composition of the labor market but reweaving the ethnic fabric of Israel's major metropolitan area (Kemp & Raijman, 2004; Schnell, 1999).

Paradoxically, the lack of state regimentation of the working and living conditions of undocumented migrant workers leaves room for the emergence of new ethnic communities and a wide array of migrants' associations. During the last decade three ethnic communities have developed in Israel among migrant workers: Black African, Latin American, and Filipino. The Latin American and African communities of migrant workers in Israel originate from all parts of the South American and African continents. Latin American labor migrants come mainly from Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Peru, and Bolivia. African migrant workers come predominantly from Nigeria, Ghana, the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), the Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Mauritius and South Africa.

Research conducted among the undocumented communities of Latin American and African workers shows that both communities are rather young, the majority aged between 22 and 45 years, with a mean age of 37 years for Africans and 34 years for Latinos. One-fifth of the Latino migrants and almost one-third of the African respondents were living in Israel with their nuclear family, whereas a third of both Latinos and Africans left their families (spouse and/or children) in their countries of origin and sent money to support them (more women than men belonged to this category). Because the latter fear that leaving the country precluded the possibility of return, the majority of Latino and African migrant workers had not seen their families for a long time. The great majority of these two communities had neither residence nor work permits.

Labor migrants in both groups display relatively high levels of human capital acquired in their countries of origin (about 12 years of study on average, with a relatively high percent holding an academic degree). About half of the migrant workers held high-status white-collar positions before moving to Israel (15% of Latin Americans and 34% of African migrants). Their skills notwithstanding, most of them (men or women) are employed in domestic service and cleaning jobs in Israel. A unique feature is that a high percentage of men (41 and 73% for Latinos and Africans respectively) work as cleaners in private homes, thus subverting traditional definitions of gender roles in both societies (African and Latin American).

The migrants' willingness to pay the price of downward occupational mobility is due to the large salary differentials that exist between Israel and their home countries. Back home, the average monthly salary earned by migrants was $326 for Latin Americans and $212 for Africans (with women earning only about 60% of what the men made). These low wage levels—compared with an expected average wage of $1,000–$1,500 a month for cleaning homes (based on pay of $7 an hour and according to the number of hours worked)—account for people's readiness to pay the cost, not only in type of employment, but also the social and emotional price entailed in

migration. This price includes being "illegal" and living on the margins of Israeli society (for a detailed analysis of the Latin American and African communities of labor migrants in Israel see: Kemp et al., 2000; Raijman et al., 2003; Raijman & Kemp, 2002). Although living on the fringe of Israeli society, undocumented labor migrants have created their own social spaces through the establishment of migrants' associations (e.g., social clubs, migrant churches, and sport clubs, among others). These serve as vehicles by which labor migrants become mobilized and open new platforms for participation in a highly exclusionary social environment (e.g., Kemp et al., 2000; Raijman et al. 2003; Kemp & Raijman, 2003). However, with the launching of the harsh deportation policy and the establishment of the new Immigration Police in Israel, the future of these communities is uncertain as many of the community leaders and members have been arrested and deported.

Conclusion

The new immigration to Israel is not without challenges. On the contrary, the 1990s brought new kinds of immigrants hitherto unknown in the Israel context. Due to space constraints, we shall only mention briefly the challenges posed by the new migration flows. Each one of these challenges—which in certain ways contribute to the "normalization" of the Israeli state as a de facto immigration state (as opposed to an exclusively Jewish immigration state)—is likely to become an intrinsic part of the stratification processes that will impinge upon next generations' socioeconomic mobility and cultural incorporation (Kemp & Elias, 2003).

Jewish and Non-Jewish FSU Immigrants: Assimilation or Segregation?

Immigrants entering Israel from the FSU during the 1990s were admittedly motivated much more by "push" than by "pull" factors, and arrived in massive numbers. So the question that looms large in both the academic and public debate is whether they may yet form an ethnic enclave within the larger society (Al-Haj, 2004). Researchers consistently pointed to the persistence of cultural traits of the Russian immigrants that were not compatible with streamlined notions of assimilation. The immigrants' Russian cultural orientation has not weakened, but in fact has become markedly reinforced in Israel. They enjoy a high level of cultural pride, as well as a sense of lofty cultural superiority to Israeli society (Al-Haj, 2004; Remennick, 2007). They are strongly committed to cultural continuity and have developed a rich and dense institutional organization (see e.g., Al-Haj, 2004; Leshem & Lissak, 1999). We agree with Shafir and Peled that "the integration of the FSU immigrants into the society is still very much an ongoing process .... It is difficult to predict, therefore, whether Israel's Russian-speaking population will crystallize into a distinct ethnic group, or will disperse and join existing groups along the axes of class, ethnicity, gender, religiosity, and ideology" (2002, p. 317). The question is thus pending for the second generation.

"Black Jews"

The immigration of Ethiopians and their incorporation in Israeli society is affected by three main features that position them on the margins of society (Kemp and Elias, 2003): (1) Race: Ethiopian immigration has for the first time caused the articulation of race cleavages in Israeli society, adding to existing ethnonational, class, and religious cleavages (on the main cleavages in Israeli society see Smooha, 1978). (2) Their Jewishness is questioned and only reluctantly recognized by Israel's rabbinic authorities (Ben-Eliezer, 2004). (3) Their human capital is poor in Western terms (Offer, 2004). Although the state declared a policy of assimilation toward Ethiopian Jews in practice the new arrivals were relegated to a status of marginality (Swirski and Swriski, 2002). Some have even argued that the low socioeconomic position of Ethiopian Jews in Israel is deep-rooted in new racist discourses currently evolving in the country (Ben-Eliezer, 2004, p. 246). To what extent the second generation will succeed in achieving socioeconomic mobility despite low resources and discrimination is still difficult to assess.

However, we suggest that the ethnic mosaic of the new immigration is far more complex than it

may appear at first glance, and it posits new and unforeseen challenges to the transformation of collective identities in Israel as well as to patterns of social inequality. A case in point is the non-Jewish immigrants and their family members who arrive under the Law of Return. However, many were not registered as citizens because the Ministry of Interior (under the control of Shas, the ultra-Orthodox Religious Party for most of the 1990s) refused to register them as citizens. Furthermore, even those registered as citizens had greater difficulties than usual in exercising some of their civil rights (e.g., marriage, divorce, burial, and family unification) because most issues of family law are under the jurisdiction of religious courts, which make it difficult for non-Jews to exercise some of these basic rights (see Shafir & Peled, 2002, pp. 315–316). As the possibility of a future separation between state and religion seems more or less unachievable in the near future, the chances of full legal and political equality for the new (non-Jewish) immigrant population seem slight.

Non-Jewish and Non-Palestinian Labor Migrants

Overseas labor migrants have become de facto "permanent temporary residents." The emergence of migrant workers' communities in Israel is of special interest since it challenges the basic definition of Israeli society as an ethnonational polity that encourages permanent settlement of Jewish immigrants and discourages settlement of non-Jewish migrants. In contrast to the experiences of most Jewish immigrants, foreign workers are likely to be confined at the margins of the Israeli economy and society, becoming its new "hewers of wood and drawers of water."

The manifestly Jewish ethnonational character of the nation-state renders the Israeli case especially interesting for studying the modes of incorporation of non-Jewish migrant workers and the challenges to the limits of participation posed by migrant workers for the Israeli state and society. As the number of non-Jewish migrants has continued to grow, questions about the rights of citizenship, the nature of nationality, and the viability of a multicultural society are becoming more crucial than ever before. Research conducted in Israel shows that Israelis (Jews or Arabs) are willing to benefit from the cheap labor noncitizens provide, but are reluctant to grant them equal access to social rights (Raijman & Semyonov, 2004). These exclusionary attitudes should be understood within the general context of an ethnonational state like Israel. In fact, despite similarities with European countries, the Israeli case seems more complex. The ethnic-religious nature of nationalism in Israel (and of its incorporation regime), the absence of an egalitarian notion and practice of citizenship for non-Jews, and the highly restrictive character of its naturalization policy all make Israel a de facto multicultural society with few prospects for multiculturalism.

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