SOCIAL DOMINANCE, FAMILY SYSTEM AND DEVIANCE AMONG IMMIGRANT YOUTH IN ISRAEL

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ABSTRACT

Two different migration waves entered Israel since the 1980s; the bigger one, from the former Soviet Union (FSU), and the lesser one from Ethiopia. These two ethnic groups differ from each other both with regard to their relative size within Israeli society and to the cultural perception and nature of the society from which they came. An examination of the characteristics of these two most recent mass migration groups in Israel, in relation to the Israeli society indicates a three-tier social hierarchy: the dominant group - native Israelis, the middle group – immigrants from the FSU, and the bottom group - immigrants from Ethiopia. The basis for this assumption can be found in the characteristics unique to the entire immigrant population as well as in the different social perceptions with regard to these two migration groups. The article examines this state of affairs, while analyzing the characteristics of each migration wave, the absorbing population’s policy and to the influences of these two factors on the immigrating youth.

INTRODUCTION

As a country of immigrants, Israel is an example of a pluralistic state significantly characterized by ethnic complexity (Leshem & Shuval, 1998; Smooha, 1978). Its cultural and social pluralism creates a complex meeting of different ethnic groups, which sometimes involves social tensions that affect the way new immigrants adapt. The fear of anything or anyone foreign, the potential threat of diminishing resources and the fear of cultural erosion together constitute fertile ground for exclusion (discrimination) of those ethnic groups.

With regard to Israel, the term “migration” has a special connotation. One does not immigrate to or emigrate from Israel; rather one “ascends to” and “descends from” Israel. These terms reflect the set of values attached to the act of immigrating to Israel. Both ideologically and practically immigration to Israel justifies the State’s existence and
constitutes a primary national value anchored in the Law of Return, which grants all Jews anywhere the right to immigrate to Israel.

Although Israel is perceived as a shelter and homeland for every Jew, immigrants to Israel encounter problems similar to those faced by immigrants in general, and are required to cope with economic, cultural and social problems (Shechory & Ben David, 2010). Massive waves of immigration that followed the establishment of the State in 1948 created ethnic tensions, primarily between immigrants from Europe and America (Western ethnic groups) and those from Islamic countries (Oriental ethnic groups) (Schwarzwald & Amir, 1984; Smooha & Kraus, 1985). These were based mainly on cultural and educational differences.

Although tensions still exist between these two ethnic groups they have become less intense over time. However, a new source of social tension has emerged with two more recent waves of mass immigration, one from the Former Soviet Union (FSU) and the other from Ethiopia (Schwarzwald & Tur-Kaspa, 1997). As the integration and adjustment problems these two groups faced were both economic and cultural in nature they constituted a heavy burden on the absorbing population, resulting in tensions between the new immigrants and the absorbing populations (Shechory & Ben David, 2010).

Justification for social discrimination and for the domination of the strong over the weak for the purpose of preserving the existing culture may be explained by Social Dominance Theory (SDT) (Sidanius, Devereux, & Pratto, 1992), which views prejudices as a way of justifying a cultural advantage and of preserving the social control of the dominant group.

According to this view, every complex society can be characterized by the existence of a group-based hierarchy in which at least one group dominates another, or others, and enjoys a disproportionate share of privilege, and at least one group occupies a subordinate position. The theory’s major focus is an attempt to explain the mechanisms by which these group-based hierarchies are established and maintained (Sidanius & Pratto, 1994). SDT postulates that in-group bias can be regarded as a default condition of inter-group interaction (Mullen, Brown, & Smith, 1992). The theory makes the further assumption that evaluations of and behaviors toward out-groups are also driven by one’s level of social dominance orientation.

Social dominance orientation refers to the basic desire to have one’s own primary in-group considered better than, superior to, and dominant over relevant out-groups (Sidanius, 1993). It not only affects in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination, but also a corpus of other behaviors toward out-groups and their members. These include negative stereotyping and active discrimination and willingness to use violence against out-group members. Research has supported these assumptions, revealing that social dominance orientation is related to a host of social attitudes such as racism, sexism, opposition to interracial marriage and ethnic status regarding real groups in the real world, (Sidanius & Pratto, 1993).

An examination of the characteristics of the two most recent mass immigration groups in Israel, from FSU countries and Ethiopia, in relation to Israeli society indicates a three-tier social hierarchy: the dominant group - native Israelis, the middle group – immigrants from the FSU, and the bottom group - immigrants from Ethiopia. The basis for this assumption can be found in the characteristics unique to the entire immigrant population as well as in the different social perceptions with regard to these two immigration groups. This article tries to examine this assumption with regard to the characteristics of each immigration wave, to the absorbing population’s policy and to the influences of these two factors on the youth.
CHARACTERISTICS OF MASS IMMIGRATIONS FROM THE FSU AND ETHIOPIA

Mass immigration from the FSU began with the disintegration of the Soviet Union (USSR) and the collapse of the Iron Curtain at the beginning of the 1990s, when some 475,000 new immigrants came to Israel. Since then about one million immigrants from the FSU have immigrated to Israel (The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2009). This was the largest wave of immigration to Israel since 1948 and these immigrants now constitute roughly 17% of Israel’s overall Jewish population.

Although the FSU immigrants come from diverse educational, cultural and even ethnic backgrounds, the choice of Israel as an immigration destination did not derive mainly from Zionist ideology. For Most of them migrated as a consequence of the economic, social and political crisis due to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the toughening immigration policies of all western countries that feared a flood of immigration from Eastern Europe (Lissitsa & Peres, 2000). The motivation for coming to Israel was based on their wish to secure a better future for their children.

Some of the social hardships they encountered derived from the cultural and social differences between their country of origin and Israel. The Soviet educational system in which they were raised demanded total loyalty to the collective whereas Israel is characterized by a pluralistic and democratic society. For them the transition was accompanied by a sense of confusion as well as tension (Lissitsa & Peres, 2000; Lissak, 1995). Several researchers (Orchan, Palgi & Getz, 1992) described a situation of uncertainty and ethnic seclusion that resulted from the difficulties involved in adapting to the informality and the absence of sternness in Israeli society. Moreover, the integration crisis increased the immigrants’ tendency to lean on the ethnic group to which they belong (Leshem, 2003; Mirsky & Prawer, 1992).

An examination of Israel’s immigrant absorption policies with regard to FSU immigrants showed that the Israeli establishment was not sufficiently prepared to receive such a large group of immigrants. There were no specific housing or employment programs and no plans for necessary large investments. A sense of uncertainty prevailed and there were conflicting estimations regarding the potential number of immigrants and their arrival dates (Leshem & Sikron, 1998). This unique situation led to the “direct absorption” policy as a main initial integration track (Gal & Leshem, 1999). Direct absorption compelled immigrants to enter the free market immediately, mainly with regard to housing and employment, thus leaving them in their initial years in the country with no institutional and with a budget allocation that was not sufficient to cover expenses. The economic pressures created the need for immediate integration in the employment market, and despite relatively high education levels, especially among the immigrants from European (White) Russia, most of them were employed in jobs that required skills below their qualification levels. FSU-born immigrants are determined to integrate in every area of Israel’s public and professional spheres and they have sufficient flexibility to enter Western technological society. Over the years most have found employment and the unemployment rate among FSU immigrants is no higher than that of the general population in Israel.

On the other hand it is a socially rigid group intent on preserving its social and cultural identity that has created a Russian subculture (Russian press, theater, etc.). Social and cultural
segregation is still very evident and is manifested in informal social networks, the continued use of Russian as their language of communication, in cultural endeavor and consumption, and in community culture and education that preserves and nurtures their culture of origin (Leshem, 2009; Shechory & Ben David, 2010).

The characteristics of the Ethiopian group and the circumstances of their immigration to Israel are totally different. Immigration from Ethiopia was made possible by a political revolution in that country in 1979. A total of about 57,000 Ethiopian immigrants arrived in Israel in two major waves – “Operation Moses” in 1984-1985, and “Operation Solomon” in 1991 (Ben-Ezer, 1992; Schindler, 1993; Weil, 1995). The Ethiopian-Israeli community (including those born in Israel and in Ethiopia) currently numbers 120,000 individuals (CBS, 2009).

The journey undertaken by Ethiopian immigrants to their absorbing country is described as a traumatic one, especially with regards to the first wave, Operation Moses (Ben Ezer, 2007; Haklai, 2002). They suffered harsh traumatic experiences on their journey from Ethiopia to Sudan and during their stay there in refugee camps, including the loss of loved ones and exposure to murder, rape and other violent crimes (Ben Ezer, 2007; Haklai, 2002). Separation from their families that remained in Ethiopia resulted in feelings of pain and guilt, which made their absorption in Israel more difficult.

The transition from Ethiopia to the Israeli reality was accompanied by huge changes. “The immigrants from Ethiopia arrived in Israel with dreams and hopes of ‘Zion Jerusalem’, of ‘righteous Black Jews’ and of ‘the part joining the whole’” (Ben-Ezer, 1992, p. 138). In Ethiopia the immigrants were called “Beta Israel”, a Jewish minority among the Gentile majority. The main goals in their educational system in Ethiopia were to impart norms of social and familial integration (establishment of the family unit, care of the elderly according to tradition), learning about the work ethic and ethical values, and maintaining Jewish values and Jewish customs. In Israel they became an Ethiopian minority among Jews, partly rejected by the country’s religious establishment. Their dark skin also contributed to their sense of alienation. They had to adapt to a more complicated and complex technological environment than the one they had left behind. In contrast to the FSU immigrants, the Ethiopians came from a third world African country considered to be culturally inferior and the majority lacked formal education and advanced technological experience. Most learned to read and write for the first time in Hebrew, for them a foreign language, without having mastered these skills in their mother tongue (Ben-Ezer, 1992; Benita & Noam, 1995).

In addition to the integration problems experienced by the individual migrant, they face many problems that are unique to the Ethiopian community as a whole (Shabtay, 2001; Ben Ezer, 2007). Due to cultural differences, fewer skills and poor human capital, special frameworks were needed and set up to facilitate their integration. However this intervention was not sufficiently considerate of the new immigrants’ needs, sensitivities and identity, which resulted in a sense of alienation. For example, a decision was taken to change the immigrants’ original names upon their arrival and give them Israeli names instead. This was done in order to facilitate both the immigrants and the absorbing population, for whom the Ethiopians’ names were foreign and difficult to pronounce. However for the immigrants it was interpreted as an indignity and an insult. Furthermore they came with no professional training and education suitable for a modern Western society, as their social and professional experience in the country of origin left them unprepared for the social and occupational processes in Israel. This made their integration in the workforce difficult, and they were
employed in positions that required very little training, i.e. menial jobs at the bottom of the social and employment ladder.

Even today, twenty years after they arrived in Israel, the Ethiopian community is one of the poorest and most segregated segments of Israeli society. Many of them do not participate in the labor force and their lack of financial, economic and social resources makes it difficult for them to compete in a modern economy (Offer, 2004, 2007). Many still reside in distressed neighborhoods, and have not moved on or advanced since the day they left the absorption centers. Many of the parents still speak Amharic. A recent comprehensive analysis of emerging trends in the Ethiopian community (indicates a high unemployment rate relative to the general population. Even though figures show improvements in this area, the unemployment gap between Ethiopian immigrants and the Israeli Jewish population is widening among men and narrowing among women, and the unemployment rate in the adult population is relatively high. The average income among these immigrants is significantly lower than average and the incidence of poverty is very high. In 2005 the poverty rate among Ethiopian families was 50% compared to 16.9% among FSU immigrants and 14.6% among veteran Israelis. The incidence of poverty among children was even higher – 65.3% compared to 15.2% among FSU immigrants and 23.4% among veteran Israelis (Habib, Halaban-Eilat & Shatz, 2010).

Despite improved education levels, especially among young people, there are still enormous gaps in this area between the general Jewish population and the Ethiopian population in the 22-64 age group. Although the school dropout rate among pupils of Ethiopian descent has dropped over the years, it is still very high. In 2007 the dropout rate of 17 year old Ethiopian pupils was high compared to that in the general Jewish population (12% compared to 7.5% respectively) (Habib, Halaban-Eilat & Shatz, 2010). It appears that feelings of alienation, rejection and discrimination in the meeting of Ethiopian immigrants with the absorbing population, together with the essential differences in family and community structure, dire living conditions and the lack of suitable education and support sources (Edelstein, 2001; Haklai, 2002; Shabtay, 2001), led to the integration problems that the community is facing today and which result in feelings of frustration, helplessness, detachment and exclusion (Shabtay, 2001; Ben Ezer, 2007).

In light of the survey it can be said that the two ethnic (immigrant) groups differ both with regard to their relative size within the Israeli society and to the cultural perception and nature of the societies from which they came. As already mentioned, contrary to the Russian immigrants, most of the Ethiopians came from a country considered to be culturally inferior, and they lacked formal education and any advanced technological experience (Ben-Ezer, 1992; Benita & Noam, 1995). Fears regarding competition for prestigious jobs hardly touched this group of immigrants, and they posed no threat to the cultural superiority of the absorbing society (Schwarzwald & Tur-Kaspa, 1997). In addition, most of them were inspired by religious and Zionist motives (Ben Ezer, 2007).

The differences between them were also reflected in the way Israeli society related to them, the way they related to Israeli society, and in the interrelationship between them. Studies showed that although immigrants from Ethiopia were considered friendly, warm, and pleasant, veteran Israelis still shunned them either because of their color or because of certain qualities and customs associated with them (Ben-Ezer, 1992; Noam, Benita & Wolfson, 1997). They are regarded by both veteran Israelis and by FSU immigrants as primitive and
uneducated, and willingness to establish social relationships with them is relatively low (Shechory, 2006).

Studies also point to stereotyping of FSU immigrants, and although they are not a homogenous group they were viewed as being well-educated, demanding, and critical. It is true that some studies attributed responsibility to this group for the introduction of prostitution and the rise of crime in Israel (Bizman & Yinon, 2001; Har Even, 1992; Schwarzwald & Tur-Kaspa, 1997; Shechory, 2006). But, it appears that the positive self-perception of most of these immigrants helped them to rebuff these claims. Those born in the FSU perceive their relative social status as higher than that of the Ethiopians and they believe that the culture they belong to is superior even to the local Israeli culture (Schwartzwald & Tur-Kaspa, 1997). Based on the above, the examination of the characteristics of the two migration groups – FSU immigrants and Ethiopian immigrants – positions them on different levels in the social hierarchy. Whereas the FSU immigrants position themselves as superior even to the absorbing society and make every effort to preserve their original culture, the Ethiopian immigrants feel a sense of frustration and humiliation, and their status is inferior to that of the absorbing society. As a result, from the standpoint of both the Israeli absorbing society and of the two immigrant groups, it seems that the three groups created an hierarchical construct in which the dominant group consists of native Israelis, the middle group of FSU immigrants, while immigrants from Ethiopia are found on the lowest rung of the social hierarchy.

These social status differences and the unique characteristics of each immigration wave have a differential effect on the youth, among whom the characteristics of adolescence join forces with adjustment difficulties and delinquent behavior.

**ADOLESCENCE**

Adolescence is a period of biological, psychological and social changes the nature of which requires readjustment. It is a period in which the adolescent constantly needs to cope with rapid age-related changes (Rueger, Malecki & Demaray, 2008) which require the adolescent to formulate and organize many areas in his/her life. The “identity versus identity confusion” stage (Erikson, 1950) is a critical one in which the adolescent needs to formulate a sense of personal identity and to avoid the risks of no identity development and identity confusion (see also: Montgomery, 2005). Personal identity formation is the adolescent’s primary mission, and it is structured through continued and dynamic interaction between self and others with the aim of feeling a sense of belonging and developing a positive self- and group image.

The adolescent’s success in achieving this goal depends to a large extent on his access to a social support network, which in this stage of the adolescent’s life consists primarily of family and peers (Sarason et al, 1987; Cohen, 1988; Walsh, Harel-Fisch, Grinvald-Fogel, 2010). These support groups are especially important for immigrant acculturation and integration in the absorbing society. The adolescent’s ability to cope better with the challenges of immigration is associated with a strong parent-child relationship and family-parental support. Adolescents need parental stability and support and the knowledge that he/she can depend on them. A family that functions as a supportive unit provides the adolescent with a
“security net” when he is required to cope with life’s tasks. For example, family support together with a family value system and clear-cut boundaries are the best preventive protection against the onset of drug and alcohol abuse and other unwanted behaviors (Groh, et. al, 2007). Parental supervision and support is found to be negatively associated with various forms of at-risk behaviors (Barnes, Reifman, Farrell & Dintcheff, 2000). Peer groups also play a significant role as they provide adolescents with support and a sense of belonging (Siyes, 2008). However, association with peers involved in at-risk behaviors raises the risk of the adolescent’s involvement in the same behavior and was found to predict risk that significantly exceeds parental influence (Wills, Resko, Ainette & Mendoza, 2004). An imbalance between parental support and social support among peers may be critical for the adolescent when he is faced with a relationship with friends that is damaging as well as a defective parental-child relationship (DuBois, Bull, Sherman, & Roberts, 1998).

**Adolescence and the Family System in the Immigration Process**

Migrant adolescents are one of the population sectors found to be at high risk of developing distress. The process itself is enough to undermine one’s sense of personal security and intensify the sense of social alienation, both of which may lead to at-risk behaviors. The pressures of immigration are liable to tip the adolescent’s emotional balance, which is fragile in any case (Mirsky, 1995; Mirsky & Prawer, 1992), especially if they find themselves in situations with no parental support, no peer group to which they belong, and having to cope with a new, unfamiliar culture. Actually family interaction is a key factor affecting the adjustment of immigrants (Jasinska-Lahti & Liebkind, 2001; Slonim-Nevo, Mirsky, Rubinstein & Nauck, 2009) and it has an effect even on the second generation (Portes & Zhou, 1993).

The separation and individualization process that leads to the formation of a new identity in normative adolescent development is also evident among adolescents with regard to the culture they left behind and the one they immigrated to, as the intercultural transition indeed demands the formation of a new identity. Thus the migrant adolescent is forced to cope with separation and individualization on two fronts – one related to his parents and the other to the culture he was raised in (Mirsky, 1995).

The meeting with the absorbing society requires the parents to cope with a multitude of migration-related difficulties. Intercultural differences related to child education may constitute a source of misunderstandings and high tensions. They may undermine familiar and secure patterns and create tension and conflicts. The changes that take place may cause parents to lose their self-confidence as parents. This is especially true when differences exist between children and parents in the pace of acculturation. In most cases children acculturation process is faster than that of their parents. Conflicts between the communication the child receives from his parents and those that he receives from the absorbing society influence his functioning and his identity development, and it harms the family’s functioning, unity and welfare (Ben - Ezer, 1992).

The greater the difference between country of origin and the absorbing society, the more difficult it is for the immigrant. It can therefore be said that the family’s and the parent’s
ability to cope with the pressures of migration and the rate of acculturation determine whether the family constitutes a source of support or of additional tensions in the course of the migration process (Wills, Resko, Ainette & Mendoza, 2004).

An examination of the characteristics of the immigrant families by origin indicates differences between the two groups. The structure of the Ethiopian family is based almost totally on traditional values and patriarchal authority. In Ethiopia children grew up in extended, authoritarian and patriarchal families in which they had a marginal status (Edelstein, 2001). In the transition to Israel the new Ethiopian immigrants encountered difficulties that undermined the family structure and weakened traditional education and authority figures. The children, who mostly were able to acculturate to their new surroundings more rapidly than their parents, became the mediators between their parents and the new society and parents became dependent on their children, leading to a reversal of family roles. Moreover, the value gap between the external society and family values led to double loyalties and numerous parent-child conflicts. As a result many Ethiopian families no longer had the support of a familiar environment, the support of an extended family or language proficiency. All these constituted risk factors from within the family circle.

The second immigrants group, the post-Soviet family, was a complicated entity that included contradictory patterns: highly cohesive following the collapse of the communist regime alongside individualism, which encouraged the adoption of lifestyles that are not in line with family togetherness. Jewish family patterns in the Soviet era were characterized by a very strong three-generational connection, a dominant grandmother and emotional dependence of grown children on their parents. Parent-child relationships were marked by authority and sternness, and the children served the parents’ needs, mainly with regard to their educational-cultural wishes, with very little consideration for their own independence or personal desires. The “Glastnost” (liberalization of the regime) was a traumatic event that shattered the accepted value system and left the youth with orientation difficulties, with no solid values to rebel against, no authority figures, and consequently very often also very confused.

Migration-related difficulties alongside expensive housing in fact preserved the traditional family structure from the Soviet era, whereby three generations resided together in the same apartment and the grandparents continued the important task of educating and taking care of the youth (Mirsky, 1995). This situation helped to maintain the gap between the absorbing society and the FSU immigrants. Nevertheless, it may be that shared housing was in fact the contributing factor that helped to facilitate the integration of this immigrant population. The support of family in general and of an extended family in particular is important for coping with crises (Groh et al. 2007). Testimony to this can be found in a contemporary study that compared groups of second-generation immigrant youth and new immigrants in Israel (Kahan-Srawczynski, Levi & Konstantinov, 2010). Twenty years after their arrival in Israel, immigrant families from Russia are described as small families with an average of two children; most of the parents have post-high-school education; in the vast majority of families the head of the household (heads of some immigrant households are women) works; and about a quarter of the youth live in single-parent families. In contrast, Ethiopian Israelis tend to have large families, with over 6 children on average; the head of household works in 53% of the families of youth born in Ethiopia and 62% of Israeli-born youth; none of the mothers and almost none of the fathers has a post-high school education.
As already mentioned, today the Ethiopian community is one of the poorest and most segregated segments of the Israeli population. Many of them do not participate in the labor force and their lack of financial, economic and social resources makes it difficult to compete in a modern economy (Offer, 2004, 2007).

**Characteristics of Youth from Ethiopia and the FSU**

The simultaneous occurrence of immigration- and adolescence-related crises has a significant influence on both populations mentioned above – the immigrant youth from Ethiopia and from the FSU (Shechory & Ben David, 2010), as well as the second generation youth who were born in Israel to immigrant parents, and identified as youth at risk (Darwish Murad et al., 2004; Guiliamo-Ramos et al., 2004).

Several measures underscore the fact that immigrant youth are in a high risk situation. These include socioeconomic status, dropout and truancy rates, crime rates and alcohol and drug abuse. Despite the fact that both immigrants groups suffered, and still suffer, from the effects of immigration and the encounter with the absorbing society, an examination of these measures among both immigrant groups indicates differences between those from Ethiopia and those form the FSU. Data gathered over the years describe the distress and crises experienced by the youth, integration difficulties that are reflected in social problems, involvement in criminal activities and high dropout and truancy rates (Edelstein, 2005; Flashman, 1994; Mirsky, 1995). Updated data from recent years indicates that Ethiopian youth, including second generation, tend less to integrate in Israeli society in general and in the education system in particular. They are far more distressed and at-risk than their counterparts from the FSU (e.g., Kahan-Strawczynski, Levi & Konstantinov, 2010; Shechory & Ben David, 2010).

A detailed report published by the Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption presents a harsh picture (Habib, Halaban-Eilat & Shatz, 2010). According to the report a significant gap exists between the learning achievements of Ethiopian origin pupils compared to the general Israeli population. In 2007 the school dropout rate for Ethiopian youth was 12% compared to 7.5% in the Jewish population. Furthermore, the data point to a high representation of Ethiopian youth in boarding schools and various other institutions for at-risk youth, relative to the overall youth population. For example, Kimchi and his colleagues (2007) noted that around 30% of all children in boarding facilities are from Ethiopian families, which is very high compared to 7.5% from FSU immigrant youth and exceptionally high compared to 2.9% in the overall Jewish population. In 2006, 23% of all Ethiopian pupils (primary through high school) were under the care of an attendance officer – in charge of dealing with at-risk children, approximately the same number as FSU youth (7%) (Kimchi, Ben Arie & Cohen, 2007). These figures are in line with the report by Habib and his colleagues (2010), according to which 65% of the Ethiopian population are known to the welfare services due to problems associated with marital problems, at-risk youth and dire economic distress.

Relatively high deviance and delinquency rates were also found to characterize these groups. The number of police files opened for Ethiopians multiplied by more than six fold in 1996-2005, compared to twice the number for the general population and 2.5 times the number for the FSU population. Data on the number of juvenile delinquency files show gaps
between Ethiopian immigrants and the general population. The percentage of Ethiopian minors (under 18) among all Jewish minors in prison exceeds their relative weight in the Jewish population in general. For example, in 2006 10% of minors in prison were of Ethiopian origin. This is a significantly higher percentage than the percentage of Ethiopian youth in the overall Jewish youth population, which stands at 7.1% (Kimchi, Ben Arie & Cohen, 2007). It also seems that in recent years there has been a significant rise in the use of psychoactive substances among Ethiopian Israelis (Isralowitz, Shpiegel, Reznik & Laytin, 2009).

A comprehensive study that compared immigrant pupils in the educational system not defined as at-risk youth supported findings that led to the conclusion that the state of adolescents of Ethiopian origin was far worse compared to that of adolescents from the FSU. The study was conducted on pupils from different countries of origin (Ethiopia, FSU, France and Spain). The highest learning achievements were found among pupils from the FSU while the lowest results were among pupils from Ethiopia. Against all expectations, no learning achievement differences were found between second generation Israeli-born Ethiopian children and those born in Ethiopia. Researchers attribute this to cultural differences, but it is reasonable to assume that the reasons are far more complicated. It consequently became clear that Israeli-born Ethiopians reported less close relationships with their parents and they turn to their parents less than the other groups. About half of all the pupils – and over two-thirds of those born in Ethiopia – receive learning assistance. However, while immigrants from the FSU are mostly helped by relatives and friends or by private teachers, the Ethiopian Israelis receive assistance mainly through their schools or other public programs that are implemented during or after school hours (Kahan-Strawczynski, Levi & Konstantinov, 2010).

Familial and economic support factors have already been mentioned as significant for successful immigrant absorption (Haklai, 2002; Shamai, Moin & Sharlin, 2003). It appears that Ethiopian immigrants lack these resources to a greater degree compared to those from the FSU. In general the findings indicate clear evidence of hardship in this group, and in some cases it is even more strongly manifested among the second generation, in addition to a sense of alienation in school. This feeling is characteristic of Ethiopian children to a far greater degree that of those from the FSU (Kahan-Strawczynski, Levi & Konstantinov, 2010). The sense of alienation is also associated with social integration, a factor that is traditionally considered as a protection against maladjustment and delinquent behaviors. Failure to integrate in the host society is one of the main risk factors for delinquency among adolescents in Israel (Shechory & Ben-David, 2010).

A strong identity based on preserving identification with the culture of origin while also adopting the new culture seems to be a resilience factor associated with normative functioning, whereas assimilation in the absorbing society together with rejection of the old identity in fact increases the likelihood of delinquent behavior. Turjeman and her colleagues (2008) concluded that total rejection of the old identity in an attempt to fully adopt one oriented towards the new culture did not protect FSU immigrant adolescents from violence and delinquency. This applies even more significantly to Ethiopian youth. The ethnocentric perception of Israeli society viewed their integration process as one that was meant to lead to total adjustment and compatibility to Israeli culture (Shechory, 2006).

One of the main factors that distinguish between the two immigrant groups is drug and alcohol abuse. Data from the Israel Anti-Drug Authority (IADA) show high rates of drug and alcohol use among Ethiopian pupils, and even higher rates for pupils from the FSU.
The data also show an increase in psychoactive substances among Ethiopian youth in recent years (Isralowitz, Shpiegel, Reznik & Laytin, 2009). On the other hand, a finding that emerges in several studies and reports indicates high alcohol use among youth from the FSU. They initiate substance use at a younger age, use alcohol more often and have more alcohol-related problems, such truancy and deterioration of learning achievements, and even deal in drugs (Isralowitz & Reznik, 2007). For example, in a comprehensive study conducted on 750 youth from the FSU, 88% reported alcohol consumption. It appears that alcohol consumption is a cultural norm that characterizes adolescents from the FSU, including those learning in mainstream formal education frameworks. This assumption was supported by the positive correlation found between the degree of family cohesion and parental supervision and alcohol consumption (Edelstein & Bar-Hamburger, 2007).

It is therefore possible to assume that alcohol consumption is a culture-dependent behavior, and as such should not be connected to immigration difficulties or to the results of adjustment problems among immigrants from the FSU. At the same time one should not ignore the fact that alcohol, drug and cigarette use is a means of coping with stressful situations (Isralowitz & Slonim-Nevo, 2002), or that higher levels of substance abuse was found to occur among immigrant youth who dropped out of the school system, compared to normative youth (Edelstein & Bar-Hamburger, 2007).

At the same time, various data shows that the majority of FSU immigrant adolescents cope and adjust well, especially when compared to immigrants from Ethiopia, and only a small number exhibit signs of maladjustment, behavior problems and delinquency. However, the involvement of both immigrants adolescents the Ethiopian and those from FSU in criminal activity is considerable and exceeds their relative weight in the population (Kosher, Ben Arie & Cohen, 2009).

CONCLUSIONS

Since its inception the State of Israel has absorbed waves of immigrants from different countries and ethnic groups. Each wave created tensions and problems for both the new immigrants, veteran immigrants from previous waves and for native-born Israelis (Schwarzwald & Amir, 1984; Smooha & Kraus, 1985). Each wave brought changes to Israel’s social composition and hierarchical structure.

Although only the Ethiopian immigrants are perceived of as refugees, and the hardships they suffered on their long and difficult journey to Israel received comprehensive media coverage, it can also be claimed that FSU immigrants are refugees in certain ways. Both groups arrived in Israel almost financially destitute following significant political changes in their countries of origin. Nevertheless most immigrants from the FSU arrived with one very important asset that Ethiopian immigrants lacked – education and a culture that was relatively similar to that of the absorbing society.

The proximity of the arrival of the two immigrant groups in Israel – each with its own unique characteristics, led to a comparison between them as well as the chance to view the hierarchical structure that emerged from a survey of the research literature on the integration of the two groups in Israeli society. It can be said that these two immigrant waves created a hierarchical structure with three main tiers: veteran Israelis on the top tier, FSU immigrants on the second tier and Ethiopian immigrants on the lowest tier. Corresponding to SDT
principles (Sidanius & Pratto, 1993), the need for group dominance in Israeli society led to discrimination, stereotyping, and negative inter-group attitudes. This was reflected more intensely with regard to the minority group that was least similar to the other groups; in this case the Ethiopian immigrants.

The way immigrants integrate into Israeli society is reflected in the differences in distress and deviation measures (unemployment, delinquency, school dropouts, etc.) found in previous studies between the two immigrant groups and veteran Israelis. The high measures that characterize the Ethiopian youth, whether immigrants or native-born Israelis, may be explained according to SDT principles by their low status in Israeli society, integration difficulties, by the significant cultural gaps between them and veteran Israelis and by discrimination and prejudices against them.

In addition to their low social status and society’s negative attitude towards them the Ethiopian immigrant’s family structure also underwent significant changes. Studies indicated that Ethiopian immigrant youth lacked the parental support that is so significant during adolescence. The transition to Israel and transition-related difficulties undermined the family structure with regard to both parental authority and gender role distribution in the family, which resulted in highly weakened familial support. Constantly increasing distress and deviation rates are attributed to integration problems, serious economic hardships and significant changes in family structure (e.g., Slonim-Nevo, Mirsky, Rubinstein & Nauck, 2009; Walsh, Harel-Fisch & Grinvald-Fogel, 2010).

It appears that the explanations given for Ethiopian youth with regard to social status, family structure changes and the family’s integration problem do not sufficiently explain the distress and deviation rates found in studies conducted on FSU immigrants. Because of their background, it would be expected that the integration of FSU immigrants would be easier, and that distress and deviation measures would resemble those for the veteran Israeli population. Even though this population also encountered discriminatory attitudes and negative prejudices, one would expect that after twenty years in the absorbing country the integration crisis among youth would be minimal, especially in light of comprehensive data on integration and high learning achievements among the youth, strong family support, cohesion and the preservation of identity and culture of origin. However, statistical data as well as various studies do not support this assumption.

An examination of the characteristics of FSU immigrants leads to the assumption that the explanation is related mainly to the lack of distinction between the FSU immigrants’ countries of origin in most of the studies and official statistical figures. In most cases FSU immigrants were and still are regarded as a homogenous group with similar characteristics. Actually it is a very heterogeneous group. Even if the majority derived from European Russia (Edelstein and Bar-Hamburger, 2007), some of them came from countries in Central Asian Russia, from a culture that is completely different to European Russian culture, as it is to Israeli culture. This region is characterized to a large extent by low modernization and by a traditional, conservative culture that is reflected in traditional, patriarchal family patterns (OxResearch Daily Brief Service, 2011; Shamai, Moin & Sharlin, 2003).

Although these countries are relatively developed compared to Ethiopia, they are different in structure and perception from Western culture. This subgroup may be regarded as an intermediate group and placed between European FSU immigrants and Ethiopian immigrants on the social scale. Similar to Ethiopian immigrants, they are immigrants from traditional, conservative societies who came to a modern, western country. This group from
Central Asian Russia suffered high distress levels related to integration and acculturation difficulties (Shamai, Moin & Sharlin, 2003). Its patriarchal family structure was also significantly undermined, which resulted in weaker family support for all family members.

To summarize, despite the differences between the two immigration waves, it can be said the youth from both immigrant groups experienced significant migration-related crises, the marks of which are still visible today, even among the second generation. It appears that the government’s decision to learn from past mistakes and to revise its immigrant absorption policy from one that espouses re-education towards a more Israeli-oriented (the melting pot principle) to one that espouses pluralism and the preservation of the culture of origin did not achieve its goals. On the surface this approach was meant to facilitate the new immigrant’s integration in Israeli society, but most preservation programs turned out to be unrealistic, especially with regard to the Ethiopian immigrants (Ben Eliezer, 1992).

However, ideology and reality are two different things. The conflict described in every inter-group encounter, one which leads to the hierarchical structure in accordance with the characteristics of each group (Sidanius, 1993), has taken its place in Israeli society. Israel’s stated attempts to relate to all immigrant groups comparatively may in actual fact be detrimental to the Ethiopian immigrant group. Cultural gaps as well as family hardships that negatively affect the parental support that is so essential for adolescents (e.g., Slonim-Nevo, Mirsky, Rubinstein & Nauck, 2009) may explain the gaps in delinquency rates and deviant behavior among adolescents in the three groups – Israelis, FSU immigrants and Ethiopian immigrants. It may also explain criminal and deviant behavior among FSU immigrant youth, especially those from Central Asia. However, support for these assumptions required further research to examine differences in the subgroups, especially among FSU immigrants, for the purpose of gaining a more in-depth understanding of integration processes in Israel and criminal and deviation rates among immigrant youth in Israel.

REFERENCES


