# *Socioeconomic Dualism: The Case Of Israeli-born Immigrants In The United States*[1]

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Relying on the 1980 U. S. Census of Foreign-Born Population and the 1979 INS Public Use File, this article compares Israeli-born Americans (including Arabs) to both the United States and Israeli populations with respect to age, marital status, unemployment, education, industry, occupation and income as of 1979-80. Some of the results, mainly those pertaining to the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of Israeli immigrants as compared to their society of origin, corroborate previous research. Thus, Israeli-born immigrants in the United States held top white-collar jobs and were less likely to be unemployed than the rest of the Israeli labor force. Once in America, however, it seems that not all Israeli-born Americans are as successful as portrayed by past research. In fact, the Census data reveal occupational and economic dualism among the population of Israeli-born Americans. The reasons for this dualism are discussed.

Israelis are not one of the largest immigrant groups in the United States. However, they comprise the largest group of Israelis living outside Israel. Few countries outside the Americas send as high a percentage of their populations to the United States as does Israel. Between 1970 and 1979, Israeli immigrants who were admitted as residents comprised 0.9 percent of the Israeli population in 1970. Only Taiwan, the Philippines, Korea, Vietnam, Greece and Portugal sent similar proportions of their populations to the United States. Other African, European and Asian countries sent less than one-third of one percent (0.3%) of their populations to the United States during the 1970s (Borjas, 1987). The total Israeli population

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in the United States in the early 1980s is an issue upon which there is little agreement. Depending upon the writer, scholarly estimates range from as low as 100,000 (Herman and LaFontaine, 1983; Ritterband, 1986) to as high as 350,000 (Kass and Lipset, 1982).

Given these figures and that large-scale emigration is inconsistent with Zionism, the dominant ideology in Israel, it is not surprising that Israeli emigration to the United States has been studied extensively in recent years (*e.g.*, Eisenbach, forthcoming; Ritterband, 1986; Sobel, 1986 Shokeid, 1988; Cohen, forthcoming).

Some of these studies have attempted to provide a demographic and socioeconomic description of these Israeli immigrants. However, because complete lists of Israelis in the United States are not readily available, and because some of these studies have focused on specific groups (*e.g.*, students, scientists), most previous research has relied on relatively small, nonrepresentative samples of Israelis in major United States cities to describe Israeli immigrants (Elizur, 1980; Fein, 1978; Kass and Lipset, 1982; Korazim, 1983; Freedman and Korazim, 1986; Ritterband, 1978, 1986; Sobel, 1986; Shokeid, 1988).

The purpose of the present study is to provide a more systematic description of the Israeli population in the United States as of 1980, in comparison to the Israeli and American populations of the same year. Based primarily upon the 1980 U.S. Census of Foreign-Born Population (henceforth "Census") and, to a lesser extent, on the 1979 U.S. Naturalization and Immigration Service Public Use File (henceforth "INS"), the comparisons focus on demographic (age, sex, marital status) and socioeconomic (education, occupation, industrial classification, unemployment, and income) characteristics.

## *DATA*

The 1980 U.S. Census of Population includes information on the foreign-born population living in the United States. This information is available in microfiche form for more than 200 countries, including Israel (U.S., 1985). The data include raw tables reporting all information by sex, age group and period of arrival. Thus, it is possible to distinguish between Israeli-born immigrants who arrived in the United States between 1975 and 1979 (henceforth "Recent" immigrants or "Recent" Israeli-born Americans)[2] and those who arrived earlier.

The Census data contain information on all Israeli-born residents in the United States in 1980 regardless of their legal status — including citizens, permanent residents, officials, students, as well as illegal aliens. In total,

[2] To be sure, some of the native Israelis who arrived in the United States as late as 1979 and returned to Israel within a short period of time are neither "Americans" nor "immigrants". However, in the interest of brevity, I use these terms throughout the paper.

the Census tables include information on 66,961 Israeli-born Americans based on information obtained from a representative sample of about 13,000 actual persons during 1980. (*See,* U.S. 1985a).

These data have one major disadvantage: they are confined to Israeli-born immigrants and therefore exclude the tens of thousands of Israeli immigrants in the U.S. who were not born in Israel. Thus, the Census population cannot be used to estimate the number of Israeli immigrants in the U.S. Nor can the data be compared to the entire Israeli population, but only to the Israeli-born population of Israel. Since the share of those born in Israel among all Israeli immigrants in the United States is steadily growing (Herman and LaFontaine, 1983), this limitation is not prohibitive, as both theoretical and public-policy interest in these relatively younger Israeli-born immigrants is high. The reader is warned, however, that making generalizations about the entire Israeli population in the United States from the Census results can be problematic.

It is important to note that not all of the reported Israeli-born immigrants in the Census data are Jews. Three Palestinian subgroups are also classified as Israeli-born immigrants: 1) Israeli Arabs; 2) Pre-1948 Palestinian immigrants and refugees of the 1948 war who were born within the 1949 borders of Israel (i.e., excluding the West Bank, Golan Heights and Gaza Strip), and 3) Palestinians who were born in the West Bank or Gaza Strip and reported "Palestine" to be their country of birth.

Taken together, the three Palestinian subgroups probably account for 15-20 percent of the Israeli-born immigrants in the Census.[3] Though they were rarely represented in previous research, Israeli Arabs are an important part of Israeli migration to the U.S., and therefore their inclusion in the study poses no special difficulty. Unfortunately, it is impossible to know the precise number of Israeli Arabs as opposed to other Palestinians coded as Israeli-born. Based on Israeli emigration statistics, however, it is likely that Israeli Arabs account for five to ten percent of Israeli-born in the Census, while the remaining five to ten percent non-Jews belong to the second and, in particular, the third Palestinian subgroup.[4]

Thus in evaluating the results based on the Census data, it is important to bear in mind that about 15 to 20 percent of the reported 67,000

[3] Using the ancestry question posed by the 1980 Census, Ritterband (1986) reports that 8% of the 18,000 Israeli-born residents in the New York City area are non-Jews (*i.e.,* Israeli Arabs and other Palestinians). This is most likely an underestimate of the proportion of non-Jews among Israeli- born immigrants across the entire United States. Israeli- born Jews are overrepresented in the New York City area, while Palestinian immigrants concentrate in other cities (San Francisco, Chicago, Detroit). Hence my estimate of 15-20% Palestinians in the Census data.

[4] Israeli Arabs comprised 7% of the 352,000 Israelis who emigrated from Israel (to all destinations) during the years 1948-79 (Israel, 1985). Assuming that similar proportions of Jewish and Arab Israeli-born emigrants chose the United States as their country of destination, 7% of Israeli-born immigrants in the Census sample are Israeli Arabs.

Israeli-born Americans are Palestinian Arabs, half of which have never been citizens of the State of Israel. Notwithstanding the inclusion of Palestinians, the Census data are still the best source available for describing the Israeli-born population of the United States as of 1979-80. The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service annually records information on all immigrants granted residency in the United States. The present study uses a subset of the 1979 Public Use File which contains information on all 4,832 "Israeli" immigrants (Israeli citizens, Israeli-born, or immigrants whose last country of residence was Israel) who were granted this status in the fiscal year 1979. It analyzes the information regarding these Israelis, excluding 445 cases identified as non-citizen Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Thus, the analyses are based on 388 Israelis. These include all 2,265 Israelis who physically entered the United States in 1979 with an immigrant visa obtained in Israel (henceforth "Immigrants")[5], and all 2,123 Israelis who entered the U.S. previously, but adjusted their status to become permanent residents in the fiscal year 1979 (henceforth "Adjusters").

This data set contains information about the population, rather than a sample, of Israeli Immigrants and Adjusters (both Israeli and foreign-born) in the fiscal year 1979. This population is not a representative sample of Israeli immigrants in the United States in 1979, as it includes immigrants of previous years (Adjusters) and excludes the thousands of Israelis who entered the United States in 1979 and stayed long enough (legally or illegally) to be considered immigrants, but who were not granted residency in that year (some would adjust their status in the future, others would not). Moreover, since the INS data contain only 1979 immigrants, it will be hazardous to generalize the results to Israeli Immigrants and Adjusters from other years.

The INS file includes information obtained from the documents completed by Immigrants and Adjusters at the time they applied for permanent residency in the United States. Consequently, data values for occupation and unemployment describe Immigrants in Israel before they emigrated, while data values for the same variables for Adjusters refer to their experiences in the U.S. labor market.

Because the Census data are limited to native Israelis already living in America, two features of the INS data are significant for the purpose of this study. First, the INS data includes Israeli immigrants who were born outside of Israel (both Immigrants and Adjusters). This enables us to examine whether there are major differences between Israeli-born im-

[5] Note the difference in this article between "immigrants" and "Immigrants". The former is used as it is normally used in the English language, while the latter refers only to those immigrants who entered the U.S. with an immigrant visa.

migrants and those who were not. Second, the INS data includes information about Immigrants before they emigrated. Comparing the occupational distribution of Immigrants to the Israeli occupational structure (the INS does not include information on education and income) helps in evaluating the notion advanced by previous research, namely, that Israeli immigrants in the United States are disproportionately from the advantageous strata of their society of origin.

The Census data are undoubtedly superior to the INS data with regard to availability of information, coverage and representativeness of the Israeli (born) population in the United States. Therefore, Census data rather than INS data is utilized when comparing Israeli-born immigrants to other Americans. In the case of income, Israeli-born Americans are compared to European-born Americans rather than to all other Americans. This is done in order to evaluate the prevalent notion that Israeli Americans are an economic success story. Thus, the comparison of Israeli-born immigrants to other Americans illuminates the location of Israelis in the American occupational, educational and industrial structures, as well as their income distribution in comparison to that of their European counterparts.

## *RESULTS*

### *Age and Sex*

Table 1 presents the age distribution of the various groups of Israelis in the United States and among the Israeli population. Though the median age of the Israeli population and those who were admitted to residency in the United States is similar, the two groups are distributed differently. About one-third of the Immigrants and nearly half of the Adjusters (columns 5-8) are between the ages of 25 and 34; the respective age group in Israel is less than one-sixth of the population. The median age of Israeli-born Americans (column 3) is 26.5, and not surprisingly, the distribution is more similar to that of other Israeli immigrants (i.e., recent Israeli-born Americans, Immigrants, and Adjusters) than to that of the Israeli population.

Since more than half of the native population of Israel is under 15 years of age, and very young persons are less likely to emigrate, Table 2 presents the same distributions for persons above the age of 15. The same story emerges. Persons 25 to 34 years old comprise about a one-half of Recent immigrants (including Immigrants and Adjusters), while less than one-third of the Israeli population is within this age group. Among the older groups, the number of immigrants is proportional to the size of their age group in the Israeli population.

While the age differences between female and male immigrants are

**TABLE 1**
AGE OF ISRAELI POPULATION AND SELECTED GROUPS OF ISRAELIS IN THE U.S., 1979-80

| | Israel | | Israelis in the U.S. | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Israeli-Born (Census) | | Immigrants (INS) | | Adjusters (INS) | |
| Groups | Total Pop. (1) | Israeli born (2) | All (3) | Recent (4) | All (5) | Israeli born (6) | All (7) | Israeli born (8) |
| N(thous.) | 3,836 | 2,385 | 67.0 | 22.8 | 2.265 | 1,476 | 2,12 | 1421 |
| Percent | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| 0-14 | 33.3 | 51.2 | 13.3 | 28.5 | 23.7 | 32.6 | 12.2 | 17.4 |
| 15-19 | 8.7 | 12.1 | 5.5 | 5.9 | 5.0 | 5.7 | 4.4 | 4.3 |
| 20-24 | 8.7 | 10.8 | 9.5 | 13.2 | 12.5 | 13.8 | 14.7 | 17.4 |
| 25-34 | 15.9 | 14.3 | 33.0 | 32.8 | 33.1 | 30.3 | 46.7 | 48.7 |
| 35-44 | 9.2 | 5.8 | 18.8 | 11.9 | 11.3 | 9.4 | 10.0 | 7.7 |
| 45+ | 24.2 | 5.8 | 19.9 | 7.7 | 14.3 | 8.2 | 8.2 | 4.6 |
| Median Age | 24.6 | 24.6 | 26.5 | 24.6 | 27.7 | 24.2 | 29.0 | 27.2 |
| % Women | 49.0 | 49.0 | 44.3 | 44.6 | 48.0 | 47.6 | 46.4 | 45.9 |

Sources: Israeli Population: The Demographic Characteristics of the Population of Israel 1979, Table 3 p. 6, Table 8, p. 16.

Israeli-born Americans: Census of Population, 1980: Foreign-born Population in the U.S. (Michrofish) prepared by the Bureau of the Census.

Immigrants and Adjusters: INS 1979 Public Use File.

minor, fewer than 45 percent of Israeli-born Americans and those admitted to residency in 1979 were female. This may not surprise Israelis, but it should be noted that during the last half century, 55 percent of all immigrants to the United States have been women and female immigrants have outnumbered male immigrants by over one million (Houstoun, Kramer and Barrett, 1984). In fact, immigration from most European countries to the United States has been predominantly female. Only Middle Eastern countries and a few other Third World countries send more men than women to the United States. Thus, with respect to sex ratios of its emigrants (both foreign-born and native-born), Israel resembles other countries in the Middle East, possibly as a result of its male-dominated Arab emigration.

## *Marital Status*

Israelis in America, especially Immigrants and Adjusters (Table 2, columns 5 and 6,) are more likely to be married than their counterparts in Israel. This is due, in part, to their age distribution. It may also be the result of sham marriages. Marriage to an American citizen automatically makes an alien legally eligible to be a permanent resident. Consequently, marrying an American has become increasingly popular among aliens seeking legal status in America. Apparently, it is more popular among Israelis than among other aliens: in 1979, 29 percent of Israelis, but only 17 percent of other aliens admitted to residency (both Adjusters and Immigrants), gained this status after petitions for family unification were filed by their American spouses. The INS estimates that about one of every three petitions filed in such cases involves marriage fraud (The New York Times, 1986). Since marriages between aliens and American spouses are normally followed by admittance to residency (if the alien is not already a permanent resident), it is not surprising that the percentage of those married among Israelis granted residency in 1979 (i.e., Immigrants and Adjusters in the INS data) is higher than among Israeli-born Americans covered by the Census. Some members of the latter group have not yet found the proper partner for marriage (be it romantic or fraudulent), while others may already have terminated a marriage of convenience.

Assuming that Israelis are no more or less honest than other aliens in the American marriage/green card market, their higher propensity to gain legal status via American spouses probably reflects structural forces. Israelis have the chance to meet, form friendships, and marry the many young American Jews who spend relatively long periods of time at Israeli universities, kibbutzim, etc. Moreover, since the rate of return migration among American Jews who immigrated to Israel is estimated at over one third (Dashefsky and Lazerwitz, 1983; Waxman, 1986), it is reasonable to expect that at least some returned to America with their new Israeli

**TABLE 2**
AGE OF ISRAELI POPULATION AND SELECTED GROUPS OF ISRAELIS IN THE U.S., 15 YEARS AND OVER, 1979-80

| | Israel | | Israelis in the U.S. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Israeli-Born (Census) | | Permanent Residents (INS)(1) | |
| Age Groups | Total Pop. (1) | Israeli born (2) | All (3) | Recent (4) | All (5) | Israeli Born (6) |
| N(thous.) | 2,560.0 | 1164.0 | 58.0 | 16.3 | 3.593 | 2.169 |
| Percent | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100,0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| 15-19 | 13.0 | 24.8 | 6.3 | 8.3 | 6.7 | 5.8 |
| 20-24 | 13.0 | 22.1 | 10.9 | 18.4 | 20.8 | 16.6 |
| 25-34 | 23.8 | 29.3 | 38.1 | 45.9 | 52.5 | 48.5 |
| 35-44 | 13.8 | 11.9 | 21.7 | 16.6 | 11.4 | 13.1 |
| 45+ | 36.3 | 11.9 | 23.0 | 10.8 | 8.6 | 16.2 |
| % married | 70.3 | 52.9 | 67.7 | 67.1 | 81.4 | 80.3 |

Note: (1) Immigrants and Adjusters.

Sources: Israeli Population: The Demographic Characteristics of the Population of Israel, 1979, Table 3 p. 6, Table 8, p. 16.

Israeli-born Americans: Census.

Immigrants and Adjusters: INS 1979 Public Use File.

spouses. To the extent that this is true, it is ironic that programs designed to promote Jewish immigration to Israel might actually be increasing emigration of Israelis to America.

## *Education*

Table 3 confirms one of the most important hypotheses regarding Israeli immigration to the U.S., namely, that those who emigrate from Israel have a much higher educational level than those who stayed.[6] In fact, Israeli-born men and women emigrants, of whom about one-third possesses a college degree, are generally better educated than other Americans (columns 3-4).

Since the Census does not provide information about the education of Israelis before emigration (the INS neglect education altogether), it is possible that the valuable educational credentials of Israeli-born Americans were obtained at the expense of the American rather than the Israeli taxpayer. That Recent Israeli-born Americans are almost as likely as other Israeli-born Americans to possess a college degree, however, suggests that this is unlikely to be the case. Since Recent Israeli-born Americans arrived in the United States no earlier than 1975, and many of them as late as 1977 and 1978 (it is unknown how many, as the Census groups those who arrived between 1975 and 1979 together), most of their education reported in 1980 must have been obtained in Israel.

Previous research has characterized Israeli migration to the United States in the 1960s and early 1970s as a "brain drain" (Ritterband, 1978). The high educational level of Recent Israeli-born immigrants suggests that this concept is applicable to the late 1970s as well. Israel educates its population, but the United States reaps many of the benefits.

## *Industrial Classification*

Table 4 compares the industrial classification of employed men and women in Israel and in the United States to the industrial classification of Israeli-born immigrants. The results suggest that Israeli-born men and women are distributed across the American industrial structure in accordance with the American work force rather than with the Israeli one.

In all likelihood, structural forces — the differences between the Israeli and American economies — are responsible for this. Notwithstanding their similarity, several differences between Israeli Americans and other Americans merit consideration. First, Israeli-born American men and women avoid agriculture. More importantly, Israeli men are concentrated in trade establishments. While only 20 percent of American men are in

[6] Table 3 somewhat underestimates the educational level of the Israeli population, as it includes both foreign-born and young persons still attending high school.

**TABLE 3**
YEARS OF EDUCATION OF ISRAELI POPULATION, U.S. POPULATION, AND SELECTED GROUPS OF ISRAELIS IN THE U.S. BY SEX, 1979-80

| | Israeli (1) Population | | U.S.(2) Population | | Israeli-born in the U.S. (Census) (3) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | All | | Recent | |
| Years of Education | Male (1) | Female (2) | Male (3) | Female (4) | Male (5) | Female (6) | Male (7) | Female (8) |
| N(thous.) | 1,250 | 1,280 | 11,584 | 12,614 | 30.7 | 23.6 | 8.4 | 6.5 |
| Percent | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| 0-8 | 34.6 | 40.6 | 18.7 | 18.2 | 10.0 | 14.4 | 7.7 | 13.3 |
| 9-12 | 36.9 | 42.3 | 45.8 | 54.7 | 31.8 | 38.7 | 36.4 | 39.6 |
| 13-15 | 10.0 | 11.9 | 15.4 | 13.9 | 20.2 | 21.4 | 23.9 | 22.0 |
| 16+ | 9.6 | 5.2 | 20.1 | 13.1 | 38.0 | 25.5 | 32.1 | 25.1 |

Notes: (1) 15 Years old and over

(2) 25 Years old and over

(3) 20 Years old and over

Sources: Israeli Population — Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1980; TableXXII/2, p. 579.

U.S. Population — Statistical Abstract 1981, Table 231.

Israeli-born Americans — Census of Population, 1980: Foreign-born Population in the U.S. (Microfish) prepared by the Bureau of the Census.

this economic branch, close to one-third of all Israeli-born Americans are employed in wholesale and retail trade. There is no concentration in trade, however, among Israeli-born women in the United States. Compared to other American women, Israeli-born women are overrepresented in the services, and underrepresented in manufacturing.

### *Occupation*

Tables 5 and 6 compare the occupational distribution and unemployment rates of various groups of Israeli emigrants to the Israeli and American occupational structures. Recall that the occupations and unemployment figures for Immigrants refer to their Israeli occupations, thus they should be compared to the Israeli labor force. Comparing columns 1 and 2 to columns 3 and 4 of Table 5 leads to one unequivocal conclusion: the group of Israeli Immigrants to the United States is not a random sample of the Israeli labor force, but rather a very select and advantageous occupational group. Close to half of Israeli male Immigrants, both Israeli-born and foreign-born, belonged to the top two occupational categories in Israel before emigrating: professional and technical workers, and executives and managers. Only one-fifth of the Israeli male labor force held these occupations in 1979. Table 6 shows the same is true for women. The proportion of Israeli Immigrants — both men and women — in all other occupations is lower than expected had they been randomly selected from the Israeli occupational structure.

Interestingly, both men and women Immigrants were less likely to be unemployed before emigrating than the rest of the Israeli labor force. Thus, the notion that experiencing unemployment is a major cause for emigration is not supported here.

The occupation and unemployment figures listed for Israeli-born Americans and Adjusters refer to their jobs in the United States. Hence, they should be compared to the American labor force in the same year. In contrast to the low unemployment experienced by Israelis in their country of origin, unemployment seems to be a problem among Israelis living in America. Among men, Recent immigrants (including Adjusters) have a higher rate of unemployment than the rest of the American labor force. Women Adjusters, also, suffer double the national unemployment rate, but strangely enough, Recent Israeli-born women suffer the lowest unemployment rate of all groups. Thus, while among men senior immigrants fare better than Recent immigrants, the situation among women is unclear, as the Census and the INS data largely differ in their figures.

Comparing columns 7 to 9 in Tables 5 and 6 reveals that Israeli-born Americans of both sexes are more likely than other Americans to be employed in the most prestigious and high income occupations. However, in addition to top white collar occupations, there is another occupation —

**TABLE 4**
INDUSTRIAL DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYED PERSONS BY SEX; ISRAEL, U.S. AND SELECTED GROUPS OF ISRAELIS IN THE U.S., 1979-80

| | Israel | | U.S. | | Israeli-born in the US (Census) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total Population | | Total Population | | All | | Recent | |
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| Industry(1) | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) |
| N(thous.) | 799.4 | 441.4 | 97,270 | 41,242 | 24.8 | 10.4 | 6.2 | 2.4 |
| Percent | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Agriculture | 7.0 | 3.9 | 3.6 | 1.6 | 0.5 | 0.3 | 0.8 | 0.5 |
| Manufacturing | 28.7 | 16.2 | 23.2 | 16.7 | 20.2 | 11.8 | 22.2 | 9.2 |
| Construction | 9.8 | 1.1 | 6.2 | 1.2 | 4.3 | 0.9 | 4.8 | 0.7 |
| Trade | 12.1 | 11.2 | 20.3 | 22.2 | 30.9 | 23.2 | 27.4 | 21.8 |
| Communication | 11.2 | 3.7 | 6.6 | 3.9 | 5.6 | 4.4 | 5.7 | 6.2 |
| Services | 32.3 | 63.9 | 40.2 | 54.4 | 38.0 | 59.3 | 39.0 | 61.5 |

Notes: (1) Service includes business, finance, professional, personal and public services. Manufacturing incIudes mining. Communication includes transportation.

Sources: Israeli Population: Labor Force Survey, 1979; TabIe 29, Pp. 156-157.

U.S. Population: Statistical Abstract 198l, Table 658.

Israeli-born Americans: Census of Population, 1980. Foreign-born Population in the U.S. (Microfish) prepared by the Bureau of the Census.

Immigrants and Adjustaers: INS 1979 Public Use File

## TABLE 5
## OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYED MEN; ISRAEL, U.S. AND SELECTED GROUPS OF ISRAELIS IN THE U.S., 1979-80

| | Israel | | Israelis in the U.S.A | | | | | | U.S.A. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Immigrants (INS) | | Adjusters (INS) | | Israeli-born (Census) | | |
| | Total Pop. | Israeli Born | All | Israeli born | All | Israeli born | All | Recent | Total Pop. |
| Occupation | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) |
| N(thous.) | 799.4 | 322.6 | 0.743 | 0.419 | 0.650 | 0.403 | 24.8 | 6.2 | 56,500 |
| Percent | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Prof. & Tech. | 16.9 | 17.3 | 30.0 | 27.9 | 31.2 | 29.2 | 27.7 | 29.0 | 15.5 |
| Managers | 5.6 | 5.0 | 17.1 | 18.4 | 20.0 | 20.6 | 18.7 | 14.1 | 14.4 |
| Clerical | 11.8 | 9.1 | 5.0 | 5.5 | 5.7 | 7.7 | 4.7 | 5.5 | 6.4 |
| Sales | 8.3 | 7.3 | 4.7 | 5.7. | 7.7 | 6.9 | 18.1 | 12.2 | 6.0 |
| Service | 7.4 | 6.3 | 4.0 | 2.6 | 6.2 | 6,9 | 5.1 | 8.3 | 8.8 |
| Skilled(1) | 36.9 | 38.7 | 34,5 | 34.1 | 23,2 | 22.6 | 21.8 | 26.4 | 37.8 |
| Unskilled | 6.2 | 6.7 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 5.5 | 3.5 | 2.7 | 3.7 | 7.0 |
| Famers | 6.9 | 9.6 | 3.9 | 5.0 | 5.5 | 2.7 | 0.4 | 0.8 | 4.0 |
| Percent Unemployed | 2,4 | 3,9 | 1.8 | 2,3 | 11.0 | 10.2 | 4.5 | 6,9 | 5.1 |

Notes: (1) including semiskilled workers.

Sources: Israeli population — Labor Force Survey, 1979; Table 52, Pp, 218-222, Table 60, Pp. 244-247.
Israelis in the U.S. — Same as TabIe 1.

U.S. Population — Statistical Abstract, 1981, Table 673.

## TABLE 6
## OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYED WOMEN; ISRAEL, U.S.AND SELECTED GROUPS OF ISRAELIS IN THE U.S., 1979-80

| | Israel | | Israelis in the U.S.A | | | | | | U.S.A. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Immigrants (INS) | | Adjusters (INS) | | Israeli-born (Census) | | |
| | Total Pop. | Israeli Born | All | Israeli Born | All | Israeli Born | All | Recent | Total Pop. |
| Occupation | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) |
| N(thous.) | 441.2 | 199.0 | 0.416 | 0.473 | 0.556 | 0.540 | 10.4 | 2.4 | 40,445 |
| Percent | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Prof. & Tech. | 32.1 | 37.6 | 49.0 | 49.8 | 33.8 | 33.3 | 33.9 | 34.9 | 16.8 |
| Managers | 1.0 | 1.1 | 5.0 | 4.5 | 13.0 | 11.9 | 10.3 | 7.3 | 6.9 |
| Clerical | 29.1 | 34.5 | 26.9 | 27.3 | 26.3 | 29.7 | 22.5 | 22.1 | 35.1 |
| Sales | 6.3 | 3.8 | 2.2 | 2.9 | 4.5 | 4.6 | 14.8 | 13.4 | 6.8 |
| Service | 17.3 | 10.7 | 6.3 | 5.3 | 11.7 | 12.8 | 10.9 | 15.6 | 19.5 |
| Skilled(1) | 8.5 | 7.2 | 9.1 | 8.6 | 8.8 | 5.6 | 5.7 | 5.3 | 12.5 |
| Unskilled | 2.2 | 1.6 | 0.7 | 0.4 | 1.0 | 0.5 | 1.6 | 0.8 | 1.2 |
| Farmers | 3.4 | 3.4 | 0.7 | 1.2 | 1.0 | 1.5 | 0.3 | 0.6 | 1.2 |
| Percent Unemployed | 3.8 | 4.9 | 0.7 | 0.0 | 13.7 | 11.7 | 7.8 | 2.6 | 6.8 |

Notes: (1) Including semiskilled workers.

Sources: Israeli Population: Labor Force Survey, 1979; Table 52, Pp. 218-222, Table 60, Pp. 244-247.

Israelis in the U.S.: Census of Population, 1980: Foreign-born Population in the U.S. (Microfish) prepared by the Bureau of the Census.

U.S. Population: Statistical Abstract, 1981, Table 673.

sales — in which Israeli-born Americans are concentrated. Israeli-born men are three times as likely to be salesmen than are other American men. Among women and Recent male emigrants, the ratio is two to one. In other occupations — most notably service, clerical, farm, and blue-collar workers of various skill levels — Israeli men and women are underrepresented. Thus, the popular saying that native-born Israelis in America are either professionals or taxi drivers must be revised. The two occupations held by Israeli-born Americans in proportions much higher than expected given the American occupational structure (or for that matter, the Israeli occupational structure) are professionals, and in particular, sales workers.

This conclusion must be qualified. According to the INS data, Adjusters, both Israeli-born and All (columns 5 and 6), are not crowded in sales-related occupations. In fact, the proportion of sales workers among Adjusters (5.7%) is not only half that of Recent Israeli-born immigrants (who entered the United States during the same period as Adjusters), but also a bit less than that of the American labor force (6.4%). This difference between Adjusters (both Israeli-born and All) and Israeli-born Americans is a puzzle for which I have no conclusive interpretation. It is tempting to attribute the difference to the inclusion of illegal Israeli aliens and Palestinians in the Census data, assuming that these immigrants disproportionately find employment in sales. However, the available evidence suggests otherwise. The INS published figures for the occupations of Israeli Immigrants and Adjusters (grouped together) reveals an increase in the proportion of salespersons between 1973 and 1983. Moreover, the proportion of salespersons among Israelis who became American citizens steadily increased between 1979 and 1983 (Paltiel, 1986; Tables 2.4, 2.7). This implies that naturalized Israeli Immigrants, rather than illegals or Palestinian immigrants, are probably responsible for the Census figures. Thus, while INS reports lower percentages of Israelis in sales-related occupations than the Census for 1980, the INS longitudinal figures imply that there is a trend towards sales-related occupations among legal Israeli immigrants in the United States. The outstanding question is whether this trend reflects primarily processes of intragenerational occupational mobility among Israelis in America or a change in the first job held by Israelis who came to America during these years.

### *Income*

Table 7 presents the income distribution of Israeli-born and European-born males in America in 1979. The results presented in columns 1 and 5 support the perception that Israeli immigrants in America are economically successful. Their median annual income ($14,300) is markedly higher than that of their European counterparts ($12,300). However, as

shown in columns 3-8, the income advantage of Israeli-born Americans over European-born Americans is due mainly to the economic success of pre-1960 Israeli immigrants. Their median income ($19,500) is almost twice that of their European counterparts. Among those who came to America between 1960 and 1975, the average Israeli-born immigrant is doing slightly better than the average European-born immigrant, while Recent Israeli-born immigrants are doing much worse than their European counterparts. Less than one-third of Recent European immigrants, but more than two-fifth of Recent Israeli immigrants had an annual income of less than $7,500 in 1979.

It is possible that once these relatively young, Recent Israeli-born immigrants complete their schooling, are integrated into American society, gain some experience in the American labor force and improve their knowledge of English, they will experience a sharp increase in their incomes. However, whether they will achieve as high a relative income as senior Israeli-born immigrants is not clear. Note that length of stay in America relates positively to the incomes of Israeli immigrants, but not of Europeans. This may reflect greater income mobility among the Israelis than among the Europeans and/or a relative decline in the socioeconomic quality of Israeli immigrants over time (i.e., cohorts effects). Previous research has found that the socioeconomic quality of male European immigrants to America improved significantly between 1970 and 1980, while that of Israelis declined, though not by much. This explains the similarity in the incomes of European-born immigrants irrespective of year of immigration. Upon arrival, Recent, highly educated European immigrants earn the same as pre-1975 and 1960 low-quality European immigrants were able to attain only after many years in the United States (Borjas, 1987). To the extent that this is so, Recent Israeli immigrants cannot expect their incomes to surpass that of their European counterparts in the future.

Recent Israeli-born Americans are not the only Israeli immigrants suffering financial hardship in the United States. The bottom row of Table 7 reports the proportion of families living below the poverty line in 1979. Though Israeli males are more likely to have higher incomes than European males, their families are twice as likely to be below the poverty line (*See,* Cohen, 1988). This bimodal income distribution of Israeli-born Americans is not only a function of the success of the pre-1960 immigrants on the one hand, but of the large proportion of low income, relatively young recent immigrants on the other. This conclusion is based on the fact that the income distribution of male immigrants who arrived in the United States during the same period is also less equal among Israeli than among European-born: Israeli-born immigrants who arrived in the United States between 1960 and 1974 are almost twice as likely as their European

## TABLE 7
## MALES, 15 YEARS AND OVER WITH INCOME: INCOME DISTRIBUTIONS FOR ISRAELI-BORN AND EUROPEAN-BORN AMERICANS BY YEAR OF ARRIVAL IN THE U.S. 1979

| | Israeli-born | | | | European-born | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year of Arrival | Total (1) | 75-79 (2) | 60-74 (3) | 1959 or earlier (4) | Total (5) | 75-79 (6) | 60-74 (7) | 1959 or earlier (8) |
| N(thous.) | 29.3 | 7.6 | 14.1 | 7.7 | 1,867 | 126 | 494 | 1,247 |
| Median income($) | 14,300 | 9,500 | 14,900 | 19,500 | 12,300 | 12,300 | 14,300 | 11,400 |
| Percent | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| $50,000 or more | 5.0 | 1.3 | 5.1 | 8.5 | 3.5 | 4.5 | 3.0 | 3.6 |
| $35,000 - $49,999 | 6.3 | 2.1 | 6.1 | 10.6 | 4.4 | 4.9 | 4.7 | 4.2 |
| $25,000 - $34,999 | 11.7 | 7.1 | 11.9 | 15.8 | 9.8 | 9.1 | 10.7 | 9.4 |
| $20,000 - $24,999 | 11.8 | 7.3 | 13.2 | 13.7 | 10.3 | 8.9 | 12.11 | 9.7 |
| $15,000 - $19,999 | 12.9 | 12.0 | 13.5 | 12.9 | 13.3 | 12.3 | 16.6 | 12.1 |
| $10,000 - $14,999 | 16.2 | 18.3 | 17.6 | 11.5 | 16.4 | 19.2 | 19.1 | 15.0 |
| $7,500 - $9,999 | 7.7 | 9.9 | 7.3 | 6.3 | 9.9 | 9.7 | 8.2 | 10.6 |
| Less than $7,500 | 28.2 | 41.9 | 25.3 | 20.6 | 32.4 | 31.3 | 25.5 | 35.2 |
| Percent families below poverty | 11.8 | 21.8 | 11.0 | 5.40 | 5.2 | 10.5 | 6.5 | 4.3 |

Sources: Israeli Population: The Demographic Characteristics of the Population of Israel, 1979, Table 3 p. 6, Table 8, p. 16.
Israeli-born Americans: Census of Population, 1980: Foreign-born Population in the U.S. (Microfish) prepared by the Bureau of the Census.

Immigrants and Adjusters: INS 1979 Public Use File.

counterparts to have an annual income in excess of $50,000, but the proportions of low-income males among the two immigrant groups is similar.

## *DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS*

The above analysis attempts to accurately describe Israelis living in the United States both in comparison to the society they left and to the population in their new homeland. Some of the results, especially those pertaining to the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of immigrants in comparison to their society of origin, corroborate previous findings. Thus, Israeli-born immigrants to the United States are more likely than native Israelis to be between the ages of 25 to 34, male and married. Moreover, the INS data suggest that there are no differences in these characteristics between Israeli-born and foreign-born Israelis who were granted residency in 1979. In terms of occupation, it appears that legal Israeli immigrants to the United States constitute a select and advantageous segment of Israeli society. They are more likely than other Israelis to have had top white-collar jobs before emigration, and they are less likely to have been unemployed than others in the Israeli labor force. Although the data do not include information on the prior educational level of Israeli-born Americans, this author concludes, on the basis of their occupational structure in Israel and their high educational level after a short period of time in the United States, that Israelis who immigrate to the United States are generally more educated than other Israelis. This profile of Israeli immigrants in the United States is consistent with previous research.

Coming from such a select group of Israeli society with respect to its labor force characteristics (occupation, education and unemployment), one would expect Israeli immigrants to be equally as successful in the United States. Nevertheless, the results, based on the Census data for Israeli-born Americans, are somewhat at odds with this perception. While Israeli-born Americans have a higher educational level than other Americans, not all Israelis attain high-status occupations or sufficient incomes. In fact, the data reveal a duality within the population of Israeli-born Americans with respect to occupation and income. While they are twice as likely as other American workers to hold one of the top occupational categories, Israeli-born Americans have increasingly flocked to trade establishments and sales jobs. Nearly one-fifth of all Israeli-born American men in 1980 were in sales-related occupations. To be sure, part of their concentration in sales could be a by- product of the inclusion of Palestinians in the data. But, even if the majority of Palestinians in the sample were in sales (which is very unlikely), it would not account for the overrepresentation of Israeli-born Americans in sales jobs. Though this

might not surprise those familiar with the large numbers of Israelis in retail outlets along 42nd Street in Manhattan and its equivalent in Queens and Los Angeles, it is inconsistent with the high educational level of native Israelis living in the United States.

Many stories can be told to explain the crowding of Israeli-born immigrants in the occupation traditionally held by Jews in the Diaspora. One possibility is that many of the establishments employing Israeli-born salesmen are owned by former Israelis or by Jewish relatives. Unfortunately, little research has been done on this topic, and the results are inconclusive. Freedman and Korazim (1986), relying on a sample of 86 Israelis in New York City, reported that nearly three-quarters were working in establishments related to the Jewish, and, more specifically, to the Israeli community in New York. Chain migration and the use of ethnic ties, the authors conclude, are as prevalent among Israelis as among other immigrant groups. These ties have disproportionately channelled Israeli Americans to sales establishments and jobs. In contrast, an ethnographic study of some 200 Israelis in New York City did not reveal an extensive use of such ties in job search (Shokeid, 1987). Clearly, more research is necessary to evaluate the extent to which chain migration and ethnic ties facilitate Israeli migration and employment in America.

The socioeconomic duality within the population of Israeli-born Americans is also evident in their income distribution. Israeli-born males in America are more likely to have either higher or lower incomes than immigrants of European origin. Not surprisingly, the earlier an Israeli-born male arrived in the United States, the higher his income. In fact, Israelis who immigrated to the United States before 1960 are extremely successful. However, the incomes of post-1975 Israeli-born arrivals are much lower than those of their European counterparts. This is neither the sole expression of, nor the only reason for the economic dualism among Israeli-born Americans, which is also evident among Israeli-born men who arrived in America during the same period (1960-1975). Thus, while many Israeli immigrants are making a lot of money, even more are living in poverty.

Exploring the forces responsible for the socioeconomic dualism among the population of Israelis in America is a complex task. It is important to emphasize that this duality might be the result of selection processes in Israel and/or of processes of intragenerational mobility in America. In other words, either two polar types (with respect to earning power and occupations) of Israelis tend to seek their fortunes in America or the process of polarization starts in America within a relatively homogeneous group of Israeli immigrants. The results reveal a duality among Israeli-born immigrants in the United States , but not in Israel. Though they lend more support to the latter process (polarization in America) than to the

former (polarization in Israel), this author does not believe that the observed duality is entirely due to polarization in America.

First, the INS data, which suggests the relative homogeneity (in Israel) among Immigrants, is not representative of the population of Israelis in the United States, but include only a select group of those who were able to obtain an immigrant visa in 1979. Moreover, the INS sample excludes Palestinians who immigrated to the United States via an Arab country. By contrast, the Census data contain all Israeli-born Arabs and Palestinians who were born in the West-Bank and Gaza Strip, whose socioeconomic characteristic before emigration are significantly lower than those of their Jewish counterparts (Lustick, 1980; Semyonov and Lewin-Epstein, 1987).

Second, the INS data do not include income information, hence it is difficult to know whether Immigrants were as successful economically in Israel as they were occupationally. In other words, there is no evidence that the relative incomes of Israelis before they emigrated was any different than the observed pattern in America.

Finally, there are theoretical reasons to believe that the last decade, part of the polarization originated in Israel. One key determinant of the types of persons who are likely to emigrate is the extent of social and economic inequality in the country of origin relative to the country of destination. Assuming a high correlation between individual earnings in origin and destination countries, Borjas (1987) demonstrated that as income inequality in countries of origin increases, the relative welfare of persons at the upper end of the income distribution increases, hence, they have less incentive to migrate. The opposite is true with persons at the lower end of the income distribution. The higher the inequality in their country of origin, the more they gain by emigrating. Applying this model to Israel, there has been an increase in income inequality relative to the United States in the last decade. Therefore, a change in the composition of Israeli emigrants, including more lower income persons, can be expected.

If the theory were fully applicable in the Israeli case, we would be unable to explain why, during a given period, two types of Israelis — those from both ends of the Israeli income distribution — have tended to emigrate. But the answer may have to do partly with the Israeli educational system, which overproduces professionals (e.g., physicians). Although the general welfare of highly educated, high-income Israelis has been improving, there are many young Israelis with valuable educational credentials who are unable to find employment in their fields in Israel. They are more likely to emigrate than others. Thus, incorporating Borjas' hypothesis (the connection between inequality and types of immigrants) within the general hypothesis predicting emigrants to be those who believe that they have more to gain and less to lose by emigration, it is possible that the incentives to emigrate from Israel (and from the West Bank and Gaza) are

disproportionately high for certain educated groups on the one hand, and for poorer Israelis (including Arabs) on the other.

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