Ethnic Identity in the Shadow of Perceptions of Social Discrimination: The Case of Immigrants from Ethiopia in Israel

Abstract

Migrants' perceptions of intergroup relations and ethnic group status in the host society are believed to be central to identity reconstruction (Giles and Johnson, 1987). Previous research validates this position in the case of immigrant students from Ethiopia in Israeli colleges (Golan-Cook et al., 2014), where ethnic identity increased as a function of perceptions of ethnolinguistic vitality- a measure used to measure 'group status' in the social milieu.

However, in the case at hand, the objectively low-vitality status of the Ethiopian community in Israel, coupled with perceptions of racial discrimination, creates challenges for migrants who eagerly adopt the dominant Israeli identity while striving to maintain their indigenous identity. The impact of subjective experiences of discrimination on identity reconstruction and overall well-being of migrants have been well-documented in migration research (e.g., Liebkind et al., 2004).

The migrants' perceptions of ethnic identity, subjective ethnolinguistic vitality, and need for social change were examined through Simultaneous Equations Modeling (path analysis), taking into account such demographic variables as age at migration. A "best fit" model is presented, which shows how Ethiopian Israelis who maintain their indigenous identity perceive greater group inequalities, and those amongst them with more tenure in the country express greater expectations for social change.

INTRODUCTION

From Euphoria to Disgruntlement

Israel is a country that defines itself by immigration, an open arm policy for returning Jews to the homeland. This heritage migration from Ethiopia was perceived as a return to the "promised land". For both the receiving community and the new arrivals, the dramatic story of the arrival of one of Judaism's most diverse ethnic groups, solidified Zionist narratives about rebuilding the Jewish nation. As Thomas Friedman wrote of the migration at the time: "Stories of Ethiopians arriving barefoot and ragged at Ben Gurion Airport, and immediately kneeling to kiss the tarmac, have touched even the coldest hearts" (Friedman, 1985). The inclusion of the Ethiopian population into Israeli citizenship symbolized an achievement of the Zionist vision.

Despite this welcoming ideology, challenges of integration are faced by migrants and hosts alike. In the case of the Ethiopian migration, cultural distance and racial stigma magnified the challenge of social inclusion. Years of perceived discrimination reached a boiling point after an incident on April 27, 2015 when an Israeli police officer was caught on camera assaulting an Ethiopian Israeli soldier in an act that was regarded by many as an example of police brutality that had racial underpinnings, an illustration of racism that the Ethiopian population viewed as endemic in Israeli society. Release of the video sparked violent protests from the Ethiopian community, the largest such demonstrations ever of their kind. The decision by the police not to press charges against the police officer renewed protests and public outcry. Frustration of the Ethiopian population with racial inequalities which had hitherto remained largely passive appeared to be boiling over. Images from the protests highlight a younger generation of Ethiopians, who are not content with social justice towards their community.

In view of the social context described above, migrants' perceptions of social injustice need to be addressed. This research examines the socio-cultural identity of immigrants from Ethiopia, perceptions of status as measured by subjective ethnolinguistic vitality (SEV), and desire for social change. Our primary predicting variable is age at migration. Our results show how those who arrived at a younger age, believe that Ethiopian vitality in Israel is low, and yet maintain a strong Ethiopian identity are the most likely to promote social change. Furthermore, perceptions of social justice are determined by age at migration and Ethiopian identity, regardless of whether one adopts the Israeli identity. The results highlight the growing dissatisfaction of Ethiopian Israelis who are beginning to vocalize themselves and stand up for their rights as equal citizens.

Socio-Cultural Identity in the Context of Migration and Acculturation

Cultural transition which takes place in the context of migration results in a process of acculturation, defined by Gibson (2001, p. 19) as the "cultural change and adaptation that occurs when individuals from different cultures come into contact". This process involves the intrapersonal renegotiation and reconstruction of cultural, ethnic and national allegiances on the part of the migrant (Horenczyk, 2000; Golan-Cook and Olshtain, 2011).

The construct of identity was first conceptualized by Erikson (1950, 1968) as a coherent, self-constructed organization of one's drives, abilities and personal experience - the result of the interplay between the individual and his environment. Erikson distinguished between the personal and social aspects of identity, the latter serving as the basis upon which cultural identity was later defined (Brown, 2000; Tajfel and Turner, 1986).

Schwartz et al.'s (2006) defined identity as one's subjective perception of self and the organization of self-understandings that define one's "place in the world". This definition constitutes a synthesis of three components: 1) **personal identity**, pertaining to the goals, values and beliefs held by the individual (Erikson, 1968); 2) **social identity,** referring to the group one identifies with and the extent to which this leads to favoring the "ingroup" and distancing one's self from the "outgroup" (Tajfel and Turner, 1986); and 3) **cultural identity,** which refers to a sense of solidarity with the ideals of a particular cultural group, leading to endorsement of its beliefs, attitudes and behaviors (Jensen, 2003; Roberts et al., 1999). The fusion of the latter two components defines socio-cultural identification with a particular ethnic group, and is central to the process of acculturation and identity reconstruction.

Traditionally, acculturation was viewed as a unidimensional process leading to a full and complete abandonment of the "old" identity and culture and the adoption of the "new" in its place (e.g., Nguyen et al., 1999). Assimilation models associated with a "melting pot" ideology of dominant cultures, favored cultural hegemony, down-playing the maintenance of ethnic cultures and identities (Shamai and Ilatov, 2005). In contrast, an alternative approach to acculturation defines this process in terms of two parallel dimensions: (a) adoption of the receiving culture and (b) retention of the source culture (Phinney et al., 2001). Models that adhere to this approach (e.g. Berry, 1997) conceptually allow for cultural pluralism, whereby ideals, values and behaviors of the heritage culture are preserved alongside the adoption of the new host identity. Acculturation research strongly suggests that a multi-faceted identity, incorporating a positive connection to both national and ethnic identities, is associated with higher levels of adaptation and mental health,

including positive self- esteem (e.g., Berry and Kim, 1988). Cote (2006) further posits that the internalization of a positive ethnic identity is essential to the re-construction of a positive socio-cultural identity, particularly among adolescents and emerging adults.

Several demographic, personal and social factors are believed to impact identity re-construction in the context of migration. Two such migrant-related demographic factors are **age at migration and tenure in the receiving society**. Ethnic identification has been shown to decline as a function of length of residence in the host society, while national identity is strengthened (Jasinskaya–Lahiti and Liebkind, 2000; Liebkind, 1993; Liebkind et al., 2004). At the same time, early exposure to the dominant, national culture is believed to facilitate and strengthen the development of the receiving culture identity, sometimes at the expense of ethnic identity.

Migrants' personal dispositions, including their resilience in the face of change and their openness to adoption of a new identity have also been cited as contributory factors in determining the degree to which ethnic identity is maintained and the new, national identity is embraced (Schwartz et al., 2006; Berry, 1997).

Clearly, however, migrants' acculturation choices and their renegotiation of socio-cultural identity orientations are not made in a social vacuum but rather, within the broader socio-political context of the host society (Berry, 1997; Bourhis et al., 1997). **Migrants' perceptions of intergroup relations and ethnic group status in the host social milieu** are believed to be central to identity reconstruction (Giles and Johnson, 1987). The construct of 'Ethnolinguistic Vitality' (EV), defined in terms of demographic strength (population, birth rate and geographical concentration), institutional support (media recognition and representation in education and government) and social status (economic, political and linguistic prestige), has been used to measure 'group status' in the social milieu. Giles and Johnson's (1981, 1987) Ethnolinguistic Identity Model incorporates one's subjective assessment of a group's ethnolinguistic vitality (SEV) and maintains that the more positive one's perceptions of group vitality, the stronger one's identification with the group.

Finally**, migrants' perceptions of the 'acculturation ideologies' of the host community** (e.g., host expectations of migrants and the degree of their acceptance of the immigrant group) are also believed to impact acculturation choices, and may potentially become a source for conflict and stress (Bourhis at al. 1997; Horenczyk, 2000). In communities where members of the dominant group are highly oriented towards the receiving culture, immigrants may be expected to relinquish their "cultural baggage" (Schwartz et al., 2006; Zagefka and Brown, 2002), and may experience

acculturative stress, having to shed their home culture under social duress (Shamai and Ilatov, 2005). Conversely, in cases where immigrants' desires for integration are met with resistance of inclusion by the host society, identity reconstruction may be impeded (Bourhis at al. 1997). Migrants' sense of rejection and discrimination on the part of the receiving society have been reported as major deterrents towards developing an "integrative" approach to acculturation (Jasinskaja-Lahti and Liebkind, 2001; Liebkind et al., 2004), and may even lead to marginalization (e.g., see Liebkind and Mc Alister's study of immigrants in the Finnish context, 1999).

Empirical studies suggest, however, that perceptions of social injustice and discrimination are mitigated by emphasizing commonalities between groups, thus distracting members of the marginalized ethnicity from noticing differences in power (Saguy et al., 2009). Moreover, positive intergroup contact was associated with less support for social change by members of disadvantaged groups (Saguy et al., 2009; Saguy and Chernyak-Hai, 2012). Conversely, in keeping with this line of thought, strong feelings of affiliation with the ethnic group, which is seen at a disadvantage, may magnify feelings of social injustice towards that group and increase beliefs in the need for social change.

The Case of Immigrants from Ethiopia in Israel

Ethiopian Israelis, known as **Beta Israel,** constitute only about 1.5% of the Israeli population.[1] Following the 1973 recognition of their Jewish status, emigration of the Jewish community began - first as a trickle, followed by several waves of immigration: 'Operation Moses' (1984) rescued Jewish refugees from Sudanese camps, 'Operation Solomon' (1991) airlifted Jews from Addis Ababa, and there has been an ongoing immigration of the Falash Mura (Christian converts) since the mid-1990s.

Transition from a poor rural environment to a modern, western society was however burdened by limited economic, educational and social resources, as well as by deep cultural differences. To date, institutional representation of this immigrant community and its participation in Israeli culture, the media and public institutions are also limited (Dobiner, 2012). As such, this immigrant community may be defined as a "low-vitality" group on the Israeli social landscape.

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[1] 119,700 in 2012 according to Brookdale 2012, out of approximately 7.5 million Israelis recorded that same year according to CBS 2010.

Studies show that this migrant population tends towards an integrational style of acculturation (Shabtay, 1995), their underlying motivations governed by the need to be similar to everyone else, alongside a strong need to retain valued aspects of their ethnic identity (Shabtay, 2000). Racial differences, however, visibly distinguish these immigrants from the host group, creating an additional barrier towards social inclusion.

Growing cultural gaps and immigrants' dark skin color have been identified as major obstacles to full inclusion (Ben-David and Tirosh Ben-Ari, 1997), and a "black" identity is reportedly evolving among young Ethiopian Jews as a result of their encounter with Israeli society (Ben-Eliezer, 2004). Perceptions of exclusion, discrimination and racism on the part of the host society (Offer, 2007) have triggered the creation of an 'African Israeli' identity (Goldblatt and Rosenblum, 2007). A tendency exists to attribute integration challenges and all encounters with mainstream Israeli society as racial "different- ness" and discrimination (Ben-David and Tirosh Ben-Ari, 1997). Perceptions of exclusion are also reflected in Hilbron's (2008) revealing study, which examined the manner in which Ethiopian immigrants defined themselves as Jews, Israelis and Ethiopians, as opposed to their perceptions of how Israeli veterans viewed them. In that study only 20% of the migrants surveyed believed that Israelis viewed them as fellow Israelis. Moreover, in contrast to their own definition of themselves as Jews, few Ethiopian immigrants believed that other Israelis Jews perceived them as such.

Further research (Mizrachi and Zadawe, 2012) defines two polar identity types adopted by Ethiopian immigrants in their attempt to construct their identity in the local, as opposed to the global context. The **local approach** seeks to focus on the common Jewish identity binding this community to mainstream Israel. As one participant in this study expressed himself: "I am a black, Jewish man, progeny of the people of Israel. I have my own beliefs, religion, and culture all of which are the product of my Jewish heritage. I intend to raise my black children in the spirit of justice and their Jewish and Israeli heritage and not in comparison to other black people in the world" (pp. 437). This view was reportedly more representative of lower to middle class migrants. Conversely, the **global approach** expresses pride and identification with black leaders and culture- choosing to be distinguished from the local population. In this study, the latter narrative was primarily representative of a small number of highly educated middle-class individuals, those who had access to broader social networks. However, the global approach is also reminiscent of that of marginalized Ethiopian immigrant youth, who have turned to 'black culture' in response to feelings of alienation from the local culture (Edelstein, 1999; Shabtay, 2003).

These empirical findings should be seen in the context of a certain ambivalence shown by Israeli society towards Ethiopian immigrants- as reflected in the messages portrayed in the local media: research shows that Israeli journalism has tended, on one hand, to include the immigrants within the ancient Jewish collective, while at the same time, treating them as being culturally ignorant (Mengistu and Avraham, 2015).

From the outset the status of this community as Jews was debated, and only in 1973, when the Sephardic Chief Rabbi recognized them as Jews, was the road paved for their immigration to Israel under the Law of Return (Ben-Ezer, 2002). Their children were initially placed in the State's religious school system, so as to prevent rapid secularization of this essentially observant community (Kaplan and Solomon, 1998). This schooling ensured that they were raised in accordance with conventional Orthodox Jewish practice. In hindsight these policies might appear to be discriminatory, but they were generally accepted by the community, in keeping with their religious orientations. This being said, channeling the children into the Israeli religious school system created a particular acculturation track for this population. As opposed to the immigrants from the Former Soviet Union (FSU), whose migration coincided temporally with that of the Ethiopian migration, the latter were not given choices. Immigrants from the FSU were presumed capable of handling life and making independent choices in a modern society and were thus provided with a **'direct migration'** aide basket which they could use as they saw fit. The Ethiopian population was perceived by the receiving society as underdeveloped and incapable of making its own choices and its absorption process was strictly controlled by absorption authorities (**'indirect migration'**), creating a total dependence on the State and its social services (Swirski and Swirski, 2002). It is suggested that these initial policy decisions later created a perception by Ethiopian ethnics of social discrimination against their community. Moreover, their acculturation track may have been molded by these early experiences.

In addition, a series of unpleasant confrontations between this immigrant community and the host society have characterized the ongoing nature of intergroup relations. One such incident was the "blood bank affair" in the mid-1990s, which involved the selective discarding of Ethiopian blood in blood banks, in fear of HIV infection. A significantly large percentage of carriers of HIV were found among the Ethiopian immigrants in comparison to the local population, causing medical experts to fear that although the blood was tested, early stages of infection were not always detected. Unfortunately, their decisions regarding the discarding of the blood were interpreted by the Ethiopian community as unwarranted discrimination. Signs at the protests included expressions, such as: "We are black, but our blood is red" and "The dream has gone to hell"

(Knight-Ridder, 1996). These first large scale protests by the Ethiopian community highlighted several sensitive issues, such as inclusion of this community in Israeli society, social acceptance and social equality. Over time the shadow of perceptions of social discrimination has caused these old wounds to fester, giving rise to new calls for social justice that deserve serious consideration.

The Current Research

This research examines the inter-relationships between the socio-cultural identity of immigrants from Ethiopia studying at Israeli higher educational institutions, their perceptions of their ethnic group's status as measured by subjective ethnolinguistic vitality (SEV), and their expressed desire for social change, taking into account the contributory impact of age at migration. In the case at hand, it is suggested that the objectively low-vitality status of the Ethiopian community in Israel, coupled with immigrants' perceptions of racial discrimination and social injustice, create challenges for migrants who eagerly adopt the dominant Israeli identity while striving to maintain indigenous roots.

In keeping with the position outlined by Giles and Johnson's Ethnolinguistic Identity Model (1987), recent research shows that among Israeli college students of Ethiopian origin, ethnic identity increased as a function of perceived ethnic vitality (Golan-Cook et al., 2014), such that more positive appraisal of ethnic status and vitality, was associated with stronger feelings of ethnic affiliation.

At the same time, Walsh and Tuval-Mashiach's (2012) qualitative study suggests that Ethiopian migrants' personal disposition, as well as their positive reconstruction of cultural and personal identities in the receiving country, tend, in turn to impact coping strategies adopted in the face of perceived discrimination. Their findings show that emerging adults who manage to establish a positive personal identity and a high sense of self-esteem alongside adoption of the dominant Israeli identity cope with racism in more active ways - as opposed to avoidance of acknowledging and confronting it.

Figure 1 outlines a tentative, explanatory model incorporating theory and findings to date, as described above. This model presumes there is a causal path by which age at migration explains the variance in SEV, identity, and need for social change, and maps out the hypothesized relations between these constructs. The causal flow of the model is based on the premise that demographic factors (i.e., age at migration) serve as antecedents to ideologies, attitudes and perceptions, which

consequently impact behavior (Cassessoves-Ferrer and Sankoff, 2003). In addition, a bi-dimensional approach to acculturation is adopted, whereby this process is examined independently with respect to the culture of origin and to the host culture (Phinney et al., 2001).

In keeping with general findings regarding the impact of early migration on identity reconstruction (Liebkind et al., 2004), as well as previous research of Ethiopian students (Golan-Cook et al., 2014), it is posited that older age at migration and more positive perceptions of ethnic group status in the host society will increase the maintenance of a strong ethnic identity.

Based on empirical findings of acculturation research that a positive, integrated socio-cultural identity is associated with higher levels of mental health and a positive self-esteem (Berry and Kim, 1988; Cote, 2006), and Walsh and Tuval-Mashiach's (2012) findings regarding the relationship between higher self-esteem and a "fighter" coping style in the face of perceived discrimination, it is further posited, that socio-cultural identity affects the responses of migrants in dealing (coping) with such perceptions. Maintenance of a positive ethnic identity alongside the adoption of a positive national identity is expected to promote a proactive approach to perceived discrimination, in the form of expression of a need for social change.

Moreover, in view of the findings of Saguy et al. (2009) which indicate that an emphasis on commonalities between ethnic and dominant groups can reduce support for social change, it is hypothesized that strong feelings of ethnic identity, emphasizing group differences and "other-ness" will, conversely, magnify feelings of social injustice and strengthen beliefs in the need for social change.

Figure 1: Theoretical model of factors that predict expressed desire for social change
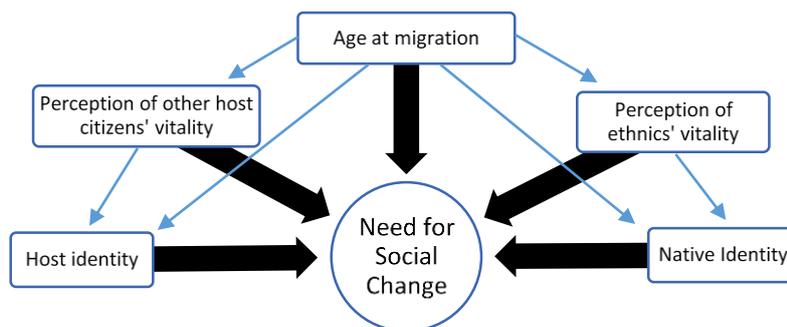
METHODOLOGY

1.   Participants

A sample of 121 students of Ethiopian origin were randomly recruited from six higher educational institutions in Israel. These colleges and universities were chosen because of the relatively large proportions of Ethiopian students enrolled in them. The age of participants ranged between 20 and 35 (mean=24.5). Sixteen percent were born in Israel and of the remaining 84% who immigrated, age at migration ranged from 1 to 24 (mean=6.3). Fifty percent did not attend any educational framework in Ethiopia, while only 12% had more than 5 years of schooling in that country. Ninety-seven percent indicated that they had studied at least 12 years in Israel, i.e. they had fully completed their secondary education - as expected of all Israeli university students. Male respondents constitute a minority of the sample (33%). Secular students are similarly a minority (18%); 37% defining themselves as "orthodox" and 43% as "conservative".

2.   Research Instrument

Paper-based self-report questionnaires developed in a previous study of Former Soviet Union (FSU) students (Olshtain and Golan Cook 2011) were adapted to the current population. As in the previous study, the questionnaire was made available in Hebrew and the respondents' home language, in this case Amharic. The questionnaire was divided into sections on the basis of the sets of variables measured: migrants' background, socio-cultural identity, SEV, and perceptions of a need for social change.

Background information was based on standard questions: current age and age at the time of immigration, as well as gender, schooling, and religious orientations.

Subjective ethnolinguistic vitality (SEV) for both ethnic and national groups was measured using Kraemer's (1990) revised version of the SEV questionnaire developed by Bourhis et al. (1981). Nine items were presented, examining perceptions of each group's socio-linguistic and economic status and representation in formal institutions (e.g., mainstream politics, education, and culture).

Socio-cultural identity was defined in terms of social group affiliation and endorsement of cultural behaviors (Phinney, 1992; Rosenthal and Hrynevich, 1985) and was measured, in part, based on scales developed by Ben-Shalom (2002). Eight identity questions were provided for

ethnic (Ethiopian) and national (Israeli) identities independently. These examined such aspects as the nature of social relations (e.g., friendships) with members of each group, cultural preferences (e.g., adherence to ethnic/Israeli traditions and customs and consumption of ethnic/Israeli literature, art and music), and pride associated with group membership.

Three questions were provided about the **need for social change** with respect to: social status of Ethiopian immigrants in Israel, representation of members of the Ethiopian community in Israeli culture, and the political influence of Ethiopian immigrants in Israel. A three-point scale was provided in which respondents were asked to assess the status of their ethnic community with respect to each of the above (its status needs to be lower than it is today; doesn't need to change, and needs to be higher than it is today).

3. Data Analysis

Statistical model building involved two steps: 1) Factor Analysis and 2) Path Analysis. Regarding the former, a Principle Components Analysis (PCA) revealed the variables that formed the best factors for Ethiopian and Israeli identity and SEV. Results were computed in the open source statistics program- R. Regarding the latter, simultaneous equations for a path analysis were computed in Lavaan, an R based statistics program (see Beaujean 2014). Path analysis was utilized for model building rather than Structural Equation Modeling, as this method provided better convergence statistics.

Age at migration is the primary independent variable of our model. This variable was computed based on the respondent's age and the year in which he or she migrated to Israel. For those respondents who were born in Israel, age at migration was set to zero. Identity and SEV factors are the primary mediating variables in our model.

Need for social change is the primary dependent variable of our model. Owing to the fact that only 3% of the respondents marked a response that some aspect of social change needs to be less, results were categorized according to those who believe that all aspects of Ethiopian status need to be improved (value=3, 40%), two aspects need to be improved (value=2, 30%), and just 1 or no aspect needs improvement (value=1, 30%). Using this categorization coding, the model achieved a more robust model fit.

Our theoretical model (see Figure 1, above) presumes there is a causal path by which age at migration explains the variance in SEV, identity, and need for social change. A best fit model

was obtained by calculating a series of path analyses. This model outlines the direct and indirect effects of age at migration on perceptions of the need for social change, as it is mediated by SEV and identity. Model fit statistics are based on the Comparative Fit Index (NFI) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). All parameters were standardized to a scale of 0 to 1.

RESULTS

Description of Factors

Optimizing the factors that would be used in our final model required a filtering process to identify the variables that should be excluded. Out of the 9 SEV questions for ethnic and national groups, only one did not have a significant loading score: international status of Amharic and Hebrew language.[2] Israeli SEV is very high (9.4/10), while Amharic SEV remains quite low (4.0/10). Both factors have very high inter-reliability measures: Israeli SEV (α=.83), Ethiopian SEV (α=.84). These findings highlight the disparity between SEV for ethnic/Ethiopian and national/Israeli groups, whereby the perception of dominant, Israeli group vitality is far higher than that of the ethnic Ethiopian group.

Identity proved to be a factor with greater variance between the different measures. Results of the factor analysis discerned three variables to be excluded due to their incongruence with other variables in the factor: 'If I was born again, I would like to be born in Israel' (2.0/4); 'I adhere to Israeli traditions and customs (3.6/4)'; and 'I meet with Ethiopian friends' (3.1/4). Most of the respondents do not wish they were born in Israel, but adhere to Israeli traditions and customs and have Ethiopian friends. Furthermore, correlations between these variables with other questions about identity were insignificant. After excluding the incongruent variables, identity factors had sufficient inter-reliability measures: Israeli (α=.72), Ethiopian (α=.77). Averages were taken from the congruent variables in each factor. The respondents overall have equivalent levels of Israeli (3.2/4) and Ethiopian identity (3.2/4).

The perception of the 'need for social change' was computed based on whether respondents believe the status, cultural representation, and political influence of Ethiopians in Israel need to be improved. A factor analysis revealed high inter-reliability between all three variables (α=.86).

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[2] These variables were deemed incongruent with our factors, being exceptionally low for both national groups: Hebrew (5.1) and Amharic (3.7).

High correlations are fueled by the large group of respondents who indicated that all aspects of Ethiopian status need to be improved. Overall, respondents believe a great deal more can be done to improve their status in Israeli society (2.7/3).

Description of Path Analysis Model

The model presented below (Figure 2) shows the final, best-fit model after modifications. Israeli SEV was removed from the model, owing to the high vitality that all respondents perceive of the host nation. Age at migration proved to be a crucial predictor of identity and perceptions of social justice. The first finding that stands out is the direct negative effect of age at migration on the need for social change (β= -.29); as age of arrival in Israel increases, the perception of a need for social change decreases.

At the same time, our model reveals other causal paths, where Ethiopian ID acts as a mediator to the indirect effects of both age at arrival and SEV on perceptions of the need for social change. Ethnic identity increases as a function of being older at the time of arrival (β= .26) and as a function of higher perceptions of Ethiopian SEV (β= .22). Migrants' heightened sense of ethnic identity in turn directly strengthens perceptions of a need for social change (β= .31). In addition, age at migration decreases Israeli ID (β= -.22), but the latter has no significant effect on desire for social change.

These results indicate that older immigrants who do not maintain ethnic identity are the least likely to demand social change. Those who tend to view the social status (SEV) of the Ethiopian community in Israel in a more positive light are more likely to maintain a strong ethnic (Ethiopian) identity and hence perceive the necessity for social change, but this is not dependent on age at migration. Conversely, immigrants who were born in Israel or had come at a younger age are less likely to maintain a strong ethnic (Ethiopian) identity, but are more likely to perceive the necessity for social change. Hence, the results also indicate that those who are most likely to demand social change are younger immigrants with a high sense of ethnic identity.

Finally, the model shows the contradictory roles that Ethiopian and Israeli ID have on the need for social change. While Ethiopian ID played a significant role, Israeli ID did not. Israeli ID is stronger among immigrants who arrived at a younger age, but it does not predict the need for social change.

Figure 2: Path Analysis Model for Predicting the Need for Social Change
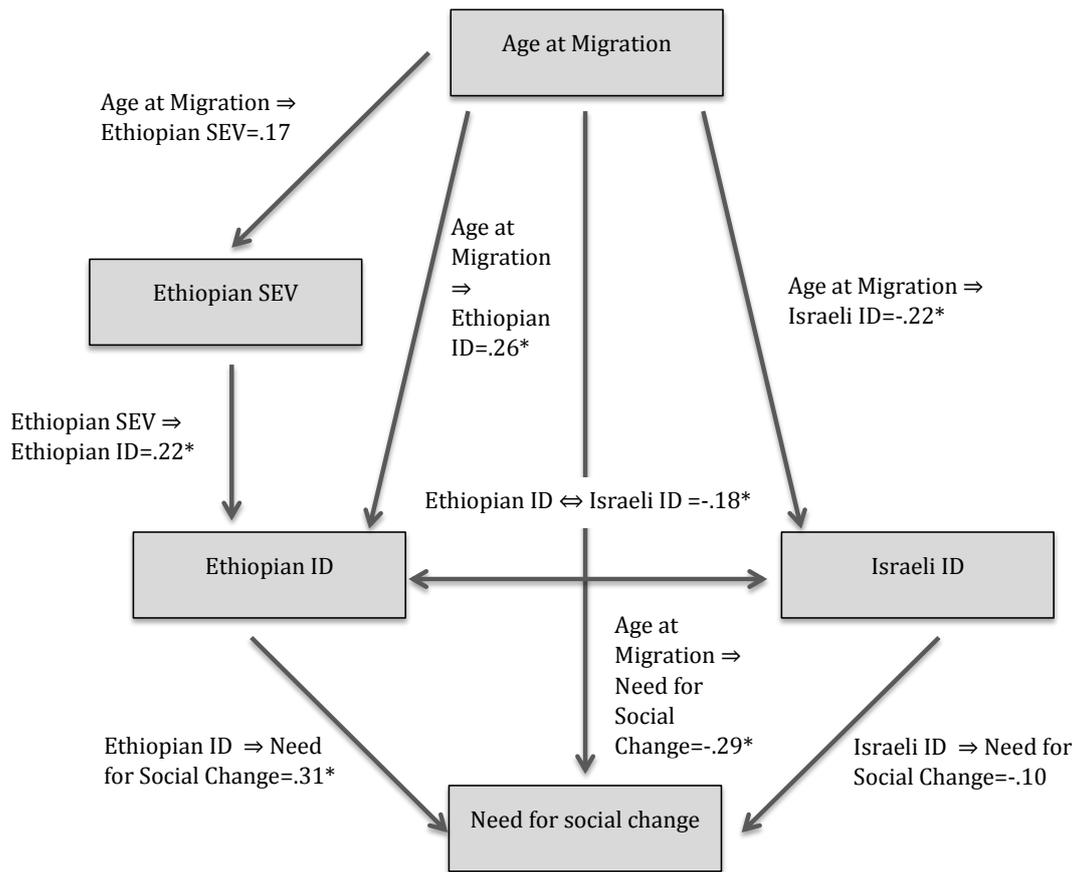
⇒ = a causal path   ⇔ = covariance of error terms   * = statistically significant parameters (p<.05)

Model Fit Statistics: X^2=2.91, DF=2, CFI=.98, RMSEA=.05

CONCLUSION

The current research examined the contributory impact of age at migration, perceptions of ethnic group status (SEV) and socio-cultural identity on the desire for social change. Path analysis was used to derive a best-fit model to describe the processes involved herein. It should be noted that the population we investigated is not representative of the general population, but rather, comprised of students of higher education. They represent the aspiring Ethiopian immigrant youth, who struggle to fight their way past perceived discrimination towards successful integration into Israeli society. Nationally, only 14% of this immigrant group met university entrance

requirements, and hence we are focusing on a unique sector of this community (CBS 2004). While this study focuses on emerging adults in higher education, future research should reveal whether these results can be generalized to the general population.

The results of our research indicate that age of migration plays an important role in shaping perceptions of social inequality and the need for social change. It appears, however that its impact is complex: On one hand, older migrants seem to endorse a status quo approach, with minimal expression of desire for social change. This approach could be explained by the tendency of older immigrants to maintain the social norms of the native culture, having been impacted by early years of socialization (Liebkind et al., 2004). Passive submission and acceptance of the social status quo adheres to Ethiopian core values (e.g., Weil, 1995; Ben-Ezer, 2006). On the other hand, younger immigrants, who were exposed to the dominant culture from a very early age, act in accordance with its norms and take on a more proactive approach. Such results highlight the integration of this population with an Israeli cultural norm that embraces criticism and vocal expression of dissatisfaction (Yair, 2011).

At the same time, however age at migration seems to have the opposite effect on social attitudes when mediated by ethnic identity. Here, migrants who immigrate at an older age tend to maintain a stronger sense of identity with the ethnic group, as expected, based on the literature in this regard (Leibkind et al., 2004). In this case, however, the heightened sense of ethnic identity leads to greater desire for social change. This finding would tend to be supportive of the position put forth by Saguy et al. (2009), whereby a strong sense of ethnic identity may cause one to focus on intergroup differences, and "otherness", rather than on the shared identity with the national (Jewish, Israeli) group. This "divergent" approach has been shown empirically to lead to perceptions of discrimination and social inequality, and to the desire for social change (Saguy et al., 2009).

It should be noted, however, that as a group, those who reported high levels of Ethiopian ID tended to express equally high levels of Israeli identification – reflecting an adaptive, integrative approach to acculturation (Berry, 1997; Berry and Kim, 1988). Their proactive response to discrimination, as seen in their greater reported desire for social change may be explained by Walsh and Tuval-Mashiach's (2012) position regarding the relationship between an adaptive socio-cultural identity, which is open to adopting Israeli values and modes of behavior and a proactive, "fighting back" approach to coping with perceived discrimination.

Our finding regarding the contribution of positive perceptions of ethnolinguistic vitality (SEV) on ethnic identity are also supportive of previous research (Golan-Cook et al., 2014) and in in keeping with Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory, as posited by Giles and Johnson (1987). Moreover, the current research reconfirms the pivotal role played by ethnic identity in shaping a wide range of social attitudes and behaviors – from governing language choices and bilingual orientations (Golan-Cook and Olshtain, 2011) to altering social attitudes and perceptions, and mediating the nature of one's response to perceived discrimination and social inequality.

The Challenge of Preserving Ethnic Identity in the Context of Social Inequality

To summarize, the current research has attempted to provide a comprehensive picture of the process of socio-cultural identity reconstruction in the context of migration, as it relates to such factors as age at migration, perceptions of ethnic group status in the local social landscape, and evolving attitudes regarding social inequality and social change. The model used was based on documented theories and tested with empirical findings.

Our research highlights two competing factors. On the one hand, heightened ethnic identity, coincides with "divergence" from the dominant culture, resulting in a heightened sense of a need for change. On the other hand, age at migration heightens ethnic identity but reduces expressions of a need for social change. In view of the apparent existence of coincident paths in our model, it is suggested that elements of personal disposition and individual acculturation experiences may also be impacting ethnic SEV and identity, which in turn mediate perceptions of discrimination and social inequality, forming desire for social change.

These findings contribute to our understanding of the processes experienced by Ethiopian migrants. Such research is critical at this point in time, as some of the underlying social issues are beginning to spill over and to find expression in social tension, as seen in recent protests by this community. We believe that left unaddressed, growing perceptions of discrimination and feelings of alienation from the dominant society will result in greater social cleavages and further unrest in the future, fueled by a younger generation of Ethiopian Israelis, many of whom were born in the country, perceive themselves as Israeli, have higher expectations for equality, and demand social change. At the same time, there may be a growing urge to explore and seek renewed pride in one's ethnic roots, which according to our model will also increase desire for social justice. Moreover, it is suggested from our results that younger immigrants may be endorsing the tools and social

norms of the dominant society as a means of protesting on behalf of the older generation that does not stand up for its own rights.

      Future ethnographic research in the form of in depth interviews with Ethiopian migrants from a broader section of the population, as well as longitudinally measuring attitudes of Ethiopians and other Israelis about the Ethiopian population, is necessary to shed more light on the process of acculturation and perceptions of social discrimination. Such research would also yield more in depth knowledge regarding the necessary changes to be made by the receiving nation in areas of education, health, social services and law, so as to alleviate growing social tensions. Clearly, migrants respond to ambivalence from the host culture about their inclusion in society (Bourhis, et al, 1997). This ambivalence needs to be addressed, so that it ceases to be a catalyst for marginalization and the strengthening of "black identity" among Jewish Ethiopian immigrants. De-emphasizing the negative stigma associated with the "differences" between the host and ethnic cultures, while highlighting the Jewish connection which binds this group to the dominant society, may be one step on the road to acceptance and social change.

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