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# ***GENDER, ETHNICITY, AND IMMIGRATION***

## ***Double Disadvantage and Triple Disadvantage among Recent Immigrant Women in the Israeli Labor Market***

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*This article examines whether recent immigrant women in the Israeli labor market are at a "double disadvantage"—first as immigrants and second as women—and whether and to what extent such disadvantages differ across ethnic and geocultural groups. Data were obtained from the last available population census (1983). The analysis focuses on gender differences in employment opportunities among men and women who immigrated to Israel between 1979 and 1983. Data reveal that the double disadvantage of immigrant women is evident with regard to both labor force participation and occupational attainment. Immigrant women are less likely than immigrant men to join the Israeli labor market, and they face much greater occupational loss. Data also reveal an interaction effect between gender and ethnicity. Immigrant women from the less developed countries in Asia and Africa constitute the most disadvantaged group. This group of women appears to be at a "triple disadvantage."*

**F**or many decades immigrant women were virtually invisible in the sociological literature (e.g., Morokvasic 1984; Pedraza 1991; Simon 1992). In recent years, however, more and more researchers have begun studying the economic participation of immigrant women. The growing literature on the topic has focused on

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economic activity of immigrant women in societies such as the United States, Canada, Australia, Latin America, and Western Europe (Boyd 1984; Evans 1984; Gabaccia 1992; Phizacklea 1983; Stier 1991; Stier and Tienda 1992; Sullivan 1984). These studies have arrived at three conclusions: First, immigrant women are characterized by higher rates of labor force participation than other women (Boyd 1984; Castles and Kosack 1973; Pedraza 1991; Phizacklea 1983; Simon 1992; Tyree and Donato 1986). Second, economically active immigrant women face greater hardships in the labor market when compared with immigrant men (Basavarajappa and Verma 1990; Boyd 1984; Evans 1984; Phizacklea 1983; Sullivan 1984). Third, socioeconomic disadvantages of immigrant women are likely to differ by country of origin (Boyd 1984; Phizacklea 1983; Sullivan 1984).

In the present article we intend to contribute to the comparative literature on gender-linked socioeconomic inequality by examining the impact that gender exerts on two aspects of labor market activity among recent immigrants to Israel: (1) rate of labor force participation and (2) the size of the occupational cost associated with transition from country of origin to country of destination. The research will provide estimates of "costs" in terms of employment and occupational status that recent immigrants (men and women) experience shortly after arrival to the new country<sup>1</sup> and will examine whether such costs differ by ethnic origin. In so doing, we will be in a position to contribute not only to the study of Israeli society but also to the comparative literature on gender inequality in general and the interlinked effects of gender, ethnicity, and immigration in particular.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The literature on international migration contends that immigrants often experience considerable hardships when entering the labor market of a new country. The hardships can be observed on two dimensions: ability to join the economically active labor force and ability to find suitable and rewarding jobs (Raijman and Semyonov 1995). The hardships are, to a great extent, a result of restricted access to information, limited knowledge of the labor market, and inadequate or inappropriate human capital resources (such as language proficiency and cultural orientation). Consequently, new arrivals often accept jobs of lower status and lower prestige than those they held in the country of origin. Therefore, immigrants are likely to suffer some occupational cost as a result of migration. The cost is likely to be substantial on arrival and to decline with tenure in the new country (Borjas 1982, 1983; Chiswick 1978, 1982; Portes and Rumbaut 1990; Raijman and Semyonov 1995; Semyonov forthcoming).

However, the size of the occupational cost is expected to differ across gender lines. Immigrant women are likely to experience greater hardships in comparison with immigrant men (e.g., Boyd 1984; Phizacklea 1983; Sullivan 1984). In this regard, Sullivan (1984), for example, found that immigrant women of Hispanic origin did not fare well (in the United States) when compared with Hispanic immigrant

men. The Hispanic women were less successful in converting their human resources (i.e., education) into occupational prestige. Boyd (1984) demonstrated that employers in Canada preferred immigrant men over immigrant women, especially for high-status and rewarding jobs. Kats (1982) found that Russian female immigrants (who arrived in Israel during the sixties) suffered a double disadvantage (being both female and immigrant) when competing for jobs requiring high levels of educational requirements.

The "double disadvantage" thesis was articulated most succinctly by Boyd:

sex adds another dimension to the stratification of immigrants within the workplace and within the larger society. In addition to the status of being a migrant, immigrant women experience additional difficulties in the labor force as women . . . Overall, the position of immigrant women in the labor force can be understood as reflecting the combined impact of sex and birthplace or the "double negative" effect. (1984, 1092-3)

The disadvantages immigrant women face in the labor market, when compared with men, can result from several factors; the foremost is the limited employment opportunities available to women (Pedraza 1991; Phizacklea 1983; Sullivan 1984). A large body of sociological research has repeatedly demonstrated that because of occupational sex segregation, women are concentrated in a small number of occupational categories—mostly semiprofessional, clerical, and service-related jobs (e.g., Cohen, Bechar, and Raijman 1987; England 1981; Reskin 1993; Reskin and Roos 1990). This is a problem faced by all women regardless of origin, race, or ethnicity (England and McCreary 1987; Farley and Allen 1987; Lieberman and Waters 1990; Semyonov and Lerenthal 1991). However, the problem is especially severe for immigrant women who not only compete in a tight labor market but also compete for occupations (i.e., clerks, teachers) in which language skills and formal credentials are a prerequisite.

In addition, it is possible that constraints associated with commitment to traditional family roles and responsibilities are especially pronounced among immigrant women. Lack of social networks to support the daily care of children in the new society may restrict the labor force supply of immigrant women during the first years after their arrival (Evans 1984). Thus, recent immigrant women may face greater hardships than men when trying to join the economically active labor force.

Previous research on the status of immigrant women in the labor market has also revealed considerable ethnic variations in the disadvantages faced in the host society. For example, immigrant women from North American and Western European origin arriving in Australia and Canada were more successful than their counterparts from Third World countries at converting their resources into occupational prestige (Boyd 1984; Evans 1984). Indeed, there is a significant interaction between gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic attainment whether in Europe (Phizacklea 1983), the United States (Xu and Leffler 1992), Canada (Boyd 1984), Australia (Evans 1984), or Israel (Semyonov and Lerenthal 1991).

Following the logic embodied in the literature on the status of immigrants in general, and immigrant women in particular, we entertain the following three hypothe-

ses regarding the impact of gender on employment opportunities among recent immigrants to Israel: (1) Women are not as successful as men in rejoining the economically active labor force; (2) immigrant women, in comparison with men, are likely to experience a greater loss of occupational status in the transition from one labor market to another; and (3) immigrant women arriving from less developed countries are likely to face greater disadvantages in the labor market than their counterparts from highly industrialized societies.

### IMMIGRANTS IN ISRAEL

Israel is inhabited by Jews who immigrated from most countries of the globe.<sup>2</sup> Some immigrants arrived from highly industrialized countries like the United States, Canada, England, or Germany, while others came from less developed countries like Ethiopia, Yemen, Iran, and Iraq. The Jewish immigrants came to Israel in a sequence of waves. The first wave arrived at the turn of the 20th century mainly from Eastern European countries. Most immigrants from Asian and North African countries arrived in the second wave, shortly after statehood (1948). Immigration during the last three decades was less systematic. It was characterized by immigrants from Eastern Europe, Ethiopia, and Iran as well as immigrants from North and South America.<sup>3</sup> The analysis that follows focuses on gender/ethnic inequality among those who immigrated to Israel between 1979 and 1983 (hereafter called "recent immigrants").

During the 1979-83 period, immigration to Israel was not extensive (a total of only 101,000 immigrants). The overwhelming majority (almost 60 percent) arrived from Eastern European countries, predominantly from the Soviet Union. Because of its relatively "normal size," this immigration flow did not create unusual pressure in the Israeli labor market. The labor force increased about 0.5 percent per year, and the rate of unemployment was about 3.3 percent. An infrastructure of public housing and absorption was available for all new immigrants. In fact, immigrants were given the opportunity to spend five or six months in absorption centers, where they received intensive Hebrew instruction and assistance in finding employment. The immigrants also enjoyed interim subsistence loans and tax exemptions for cars, electrical appliances, and other household goods. In addition, the government provided a wide variety of retraining courses for immigrants whose previous training and experience were not suited to the needs of the economy.<sup>4</sup>

Despite these social policies, research on the status of immigrants in Israel has consistently revealed significant effects of country of origin on socioeconomic attainment (Boyd, Featherman, and Matras 1980; Semyonov and Lerenthal 1991; Tyree, Semyonov, and Kraus 1987). Immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East are characterized by lower status than their counterparts from Europe or America on every aspect of social stratification, including education, occupational status, income, and place of residence. The socioeconomic gaps between the geo-cultural groups have not declined over the years (Haberfeld 1993).

The disadvantage faced by immigrants is especially pronounced during the first years after arrival. In a recent study, Rajman and Semyonov (1995) have demonstrated that immigrant men of all ethnic groups experienced substantial downward occupational mobility during the first five years after arrival. Rajman and Semyonov, however, focused only on men while ignoring the effect of gender on immigrants' labor market incorporation. This article, then, will center on gender and ethnic differences among recent immigrants in the Israeli labor market, an issue that has not yet been addressed in the literature.<sup>5</sup>

### DATA AND VARIABLES

We use data from the 1983 census of population conducted by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (the last available published census in Israel). As part of the population census, a 20 percent sample of households was interviewed in detail with regard to demographic and labor force characteristics. The respondents were asked about their current (1983) employment and occupation as well as their employment and occupation five years prior to the interview (1978). These data provide us with a unique opportunity to examine changes in employment and occupational status among recent immigrants to Israel (those who immigrated to Israel between 1979 and 1983, hence residing in Israel less than five years). The size of the sample of persons who immigrated to Israel between 1979 to 1983 ("recent immigrants") and who were between 25 to 60 years old was 3,492 men and 4,116 women.<sup>6</sup>

Changes in employment and in occupational status are estimated by comparing recent immigrants' employment and occupational status held in country of origin (1978) with those in Israel (1983). *Employment status* was measured as a dichotomous variable—whether an immigrant was in or out of the economically active labor force (employed = 1). *Occupational status* was measured using Tyree's (1981) 100-point scale of occupations in Israel.<sup>7</sup> *Occupational cost* (or gain) experienced by immigrants is estimated by subtracting current occupational status (1983) from the occupational status that an immigrant had in country of origin (1978). Positive numbers indicate occupational gain, and negative values indicate occupational loss.

Our main concern is with the employment and occupational change that recent immigrants experienced in the transition from country of origin to country of destination. To evaluate the magnitude of the change, we distinguished among five subgroups: (1) recent immigrants—immigrants who had been in Israel 5 years; (2) immigrants who lived in Israel between 5 and 10 years; (3) immigrants who lived in Israel between 10 and 20 years; (4) immigrants who lived in Israel over 20 years; (5) Israeli born or nonimmigrants.<sup>8</sup> Since country of origin was found to have a significant effect on socioeconomic achievement in Israel (e.g., Boyd, Featherman, and Matras 1980; Haberfeld 1993; Semyonov and Lerenthal 1991; Semyonov and Tyree 1981), we distinguish among three geocultural groups: (1) the less developed countries of Asia or Africa, (2) Eastern Europe, and (3) Western Europe and America.

From a theoretical point of view we are mainly interested in the impact that gender and ethnicity exert on change in employment and occupational status among recent immigrants. However, the immigration literature underscores a series of variables (e.g., education, age, language) that also affect labor market incorporation of immigrants (see Borjas 1983, 1988; Chiswick 1978, 1982; Stier and Tienda 1992). Thus, in the following analysis, we include (for control purposes) variables that were traditionally used to explain labor market incorporation and economic activity among immigrants. These control variables include the following: age (in years), marital status, education (in years of formal schooling), knowledge of the Hebrew language (do not speak = 1), and location in one of seven categories in the occupational labor market in country of origin (professional-academic, managerial, technical, clerks, sales, service, and manual).

## ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### Descriptive Overview

The demographic and social characteristics of recent immigrants classified by gender are listed in columns 2 and 5 of Table 1. For comparison purposes, we also listed the relevant social and demographic characteristics of "other immigrants"<sup>9</sup> (columns 3 and 6) and "nonimmigrants" (columns 4 and 7). The detailed distribution of these characteristics for recent immigrants classified by gender and geocultural origin is reported in the appendix.

The data suggest that recent immigrants, whether men or women, are younger than other immigrants but older than the Israeli born. They are less likely to be married, they have fewer children, and they are characterized by higher levels of formal education. Among recent immigrants, there are substantial differences with regard to education and occupational status across geocultural groups. Specifically, Asians and Africans are characterized by lower levels of education and larger families than recent immigrants from Western Europe, the Americas, or Eastern Europe (for further details, see appendix).

The data reveal considerable differences between the female and male recent immigrants. Recent immigrant men are slightly younger than immigrant women but are more likely to be married. Immigrant women are more likely than men to be divorced or widowed. Men, on the average, possess higher levels of formal education and are more likely to use the Hebrew language. Time of arrival and geocultural origin are similarly distributed across the two groups.

The data reveal that recent immigrants also differ from other immigrants and from nonimmigrants in their labor force characteristics. While Israeli-born and other immigrants have increased rates of participation between 1978 and 1983, recent immigrants' rate of participation had declined considerably. Furthermore, recent immigrants lost considerable occupational status in the transition from country of origin to Israel; the other groups enjoyed occupational gain. Apparently, during the

**TABLE 1: Sociodemographic and Labor Force Characteristics: Means (and Standard Deviations) and Percentage Distribution of Recent Immigrants, Other Immigrants, and the Israeli Born by Gender (Jews, Aged 25-60 Years)**

Variables	Men			Women		
	Recent Immigrants	Other Immigrants	Israeli Born	Recent Immigrants	Other Immigrants	Israeli Born
Age	38.9 (10.0)	43.6 (9.8)	35.0 (8.2)	39.4 (10.7)	44.0 (10.0)	35.2 (8.3)
Marital status						
Percentage married	81.6	90.7	82.7	77.6	84.9	83.3
Percentage single	14.2	6.2	14.8	9.5	4.4	10.5
Percentage widowed/divorced	4.2	3.1	2.5	12.9	10.7	6.2
Number of children <sup>a</sup>	—	—	—	2.2	3.2	2.5
				(1.7)	(2.2)	(1.2)
Tenure in the country	2.8	27.3	—	2.9	26.7	—
	(1.3)	(9.8)		(1.2)	(10.0)	
Years of schooling	13.8	11.1	12.5	12.9	10.6	12.5
	(4.4)	(3.7)	(3.3)	(3.8)	(3.5)	(3.0)
Hebrew proficiency						
Percentage does not speak	30.2	3.8	0.5	36.6	6.7	0.5
Geocultural groups						
Asia-Africa	21.6	55.6	36.3	21.1	52.8	36.2
Western Europe /						
North America	24.9	7.5	8.8	24.8	8.2	7.7
Eastern Europe	44.8	33.9	41.8	45.9	35.9	41.6
Latin America	8.7	3.0	0.2	8.2	3.1	0.2
Israel	—	—	12.9	—	—	14.3
Percentage in the labor force						
1978	85.7	86.0	82.8	62.0	47.4	59.1
1983	82.8	89.7	89.7	57.0	51.7	67.5



Percentage not in the labor force (of those employed in 1978)						
Socioeconomic status <sup>b</sup>						
1978	13.5	3.8	2.9	27.4	11.7	11.5
	54.1	44.2	47.8	54.2	41.7	49.6
	(23.2)	(18.9)	(19.2)	(20.0)	(19.9)	(17.9)
1983	50.0	45.4	49.9	47.8	42.1	50.3
	(23.4)	(19.3)	(19.5)	(21.0)	(20.1)	(18.1)
Occupational cost <sup>c</sup>	-4.1	1.2	2.1	-6.4	0.4	0.7
	(16.6)	(9.8)	(12.2)	(15.4)	(8.5)	(10.2)
N	3,074	73,031	46,912	3,463	76,612	48,156

a. Data available only for nonsingle women.

b. Based on Tyree's (1981) socioeconomic index of occupations for Israel.

c. Occupational cost was estimated by subtracting the detailed occupational status in country of origin (1978) from their current occupational status (1983).

process of immigration, recent immigrants, men as well as women, experienced difficulties in finding suitable and rewarding employment.

The data also underscore considerable differences between women and men in labor force activity. As expected, the rate of labor force participation is substantially lower among women than among men (both in country of origin and in Israel). More specifically, in 1978 before immigrating to Israel, 85.7 percent of the men as compared with 62 percent of women were economically active. However, most striking is the sharp decline in rate of labor force participation among women after their arrival in Israel. That is, of those who were economically active in their country of origin, the number of women who were not in the Israeli labor force was twice the number of men (27.4 percent among women vs. 13.5 percent among men). Apparently, economically active immigrant women were less successful than men in rejoining the labor market and finding gainful employment. This result suggests that recent immigrant women face greater difficulties in finding employment than any other group in the Israeli labor market.

Gender differences among recent immigrants are also apparent with regard to occupational shifts and occupational costs associated with immigration. On average, the size of the cost was greater among women (6.4 status points) than among men (4.1 status points). That is, while both men and women lost occupational status in the process of immigration, the loss experienced by women was considerably greater than the loss experienced by men.

The data in the appendix reveal meaningful differences across geocultural groups with regard to changes in employment status. Most meaningful is that among recent immigrants, women from Asia and Africa were least likely to enter the Israeli labor force. Similarly, women from Asia and Africa (followed by women from Eastern Europe) experienced the highest downward occupational mobility (as compared with women from Western Europe and America). Among men, the lowest cost was observed for recent immigrants from Western Europe and America, and the highest cost was observed for Eastern European immigrants. Indeed, the descriptive data reveal a meaningful interaction between gender and geocultural origin with regard to labor market incorporation in the new country.

### **Labor Force Participation**

The first issue we address is whether and to what extent gender, tenure in the country, and ethnicity exert differential effect on odds for employment in Israel. To this end we estimate a series of logistic regressions in which labor force participation (employed = 1) is taken as a function of nine dummy variables representing the interaction between tenure in the country and gender (Israeli-born men is the omitted category) plus a set of control variables (age, marital status, education, knowledge of Hebrew, and occupation in country of origin).<sup>10</sup> The coefficients of the dummy variables represent the *net effect* of tenure in the country on likelihood of employment for men and women (controlling for all other variables in the equation).

**TABLE 2: Interaction Effects of Tenure in the Country and Gender (and Standard Errors) on Labor Force Participation for the Total Sample and for Three Geocultural Groups**

<i>Tenure in Israel by Gender</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Asia-Africa</i>	<i>Western Europe / America</i>	<i>Eastern Europe</i>
Less than 5 years				
Women	-2.6 (.06)	-3.2 (.14)	-2.9 (.12)	-2.2 (.10)
Men	-1.46 (.07)	-1.7 (.13)	-1.7 (.14)	-1.2 (.12)
5-10 years				
Women	-1.4 (.07)	-1.9 (.18)	-1.6 (.14)	-1.1 (.11)
Men	-0.09 (.11)	0.01 (.30)	-0.19 (.23)	-0.14 (.14)
10-20 years				
Women	-1.6 (.05)	-1.8 (.18)	-1.5 (.12)	-1.5 (.09)
Men	-0.13 (.07)	-0.04 (.09)	0.09 (.20)	-0.31 (.11)
More than 20 years				
Women	-1.5 (.04)	-1.4 (.06)	-1.5 (.11)	-1.7 (.08)
Men	-0.10 (.05)	-0.01 (.06)	-0.02 (.14)	-0.25 (.09)
Israeli born				
Women	-1.8 (.04)	-1.8 (.06)	-1.6 (.10)	-1.8 (.08)
Men <sup>a</sup>	—	—	—	—

NOTE: The effects were obtained from logistic equations that also include in the set of independent variables age, marital status, education, knowledge of hebrew, occupation in country of origin, and geocultural origin (only for column 2).

a. Israeli born is the omitted category.

In Table 2 we present the coefficients of the dummy variables representing the interaction between tenure in the country and gender on the likelihood of being employed. For the sake of parsimony we do not present the coefficients for all other variables included in the equations. The values in column 2 pertain to the entire sample, and the figures in columns 3-5 pertain to each of the geocultural groups.

The findings presented in Table 2 reveal rather clearly that regardless of gender and geocultural origin, recent immigrants experienced the greatest decline in labor force participation between 1978 and 1983. The data also underscore a strong and significant effect of gender on the likelihood of labor force participation. The odds of being economically active (among recent immigrants who were economically active in country of origin) are considerably greater for men than for women. In fact, even after controlling for occupation in country of origin (as well as demographic and human capital characteristics), recent immigrant women's probability

of *rejoining* the economically active labor force (in comparison with Israeli-born men) is considerably lower than the probability of recent immigrant men.<sup>11</sup>

The data in columns 3-5 of Table 2 reveal some variations in the effect of gender and tenure in the country across geocultural groups. The greatest decline in labor force participation *ceteris paribus* was among recent immigrant women from Asia or Africa. Their probability of remaining economically active was 24.5 times lower than that of Israeli-born men of Asian and African origin. Among recent immigrant women from Eastern Europe, the probability of rejoining the labor force was 9.0 (exponential 2.2) times lower in comparison with Israeli-born men from the same origin. The data also reveal that after five years in Israel, immigrants, whether men or women, have the same probability of being economically active as their Israeli-born counterparts. Likewise, the effect of ethnicity on the probability of remaining in the economically active labor force (for those who had lived in Israel more than five years) is small, if not negligible. Thus, the data suggest that with regard to labor force participation, recent immigrant women in general and recent immigrant women from Asia and Africa in particular are the most disadvantaged group in the Israeli labor market.

### Occupational Change

For the analysis of occupational cost, we estimate regression models predicting change in occupational status between 1978 and 1983. Occupational change is taken as a function of nine dummy variables representing the interaction effects of tenure in the country and gender, plus age, marital status, education, knowledge of Hebrew, and occupational status in country of origin (as controls).<sup>12</sup> The dummy coefficients represent the net effect of tenure in the country on occupational change (*vis-à-vis* Israeli-born men) for men and women. In Table 3 we present the coefficients of the dummy variables for the entire sample (column 2) and for each ethnic group, respectively (columns 3-5). The effects of the other variables in the equation are not presented for the sake of parsimony.

The results of the analysis firmly support the thesis that recent immigrant women are at a double disadvantage. While most recent immigrants had experienced downward occupational mobility in the new country, the status loss among women is far greater than the loss experienced by men. After controlling for demographics, human capital, labor force experience, and geocultural origin, gender still exerts a significant effect on occupational change. Specifically, the net loss of occupational status experienced by recent immigrant women is 3 status points greater than the net loss experienced by men. When compared with other immigrants and nonimmigrants, it becomes evident that the most disadvantaged group is that of recent immigrant women. More specifically, when compared with Israeli-born men, recent immigrant women lost 7.6 points, whereas recent immigrant men lost "only" 4.7 points.

Examination of the results across geocultural groups reveals that ethnicity as well as gender plays a major role in immigrants' occupational attainment. Recent

**TABLE 3: Interaction Effects of Tenure in the Country and Gender (and Standard Errors) on Occupational Change for the Total Sample and for Three Geocultural Groups**

<i>Tenure in Israel by Gender</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Asia-Africa</i>	<i>Western Europe / America</i>	<i>Eastern Europe</i>
Less than 5 years				
Women	-7.6 (.25)	-8.2 (.80)	-7.2 (.54)	-7.8 (.33)
Men	-4.7 (.22)	-3.8 (.48)	-5.0 (.48)	-5.1 (.30)
5-10 years				
Women	-2.0 (.20)	-1.3 (.75)	-2.9 (.46)	-1.9 (.25)
Men	-1.1 (.18)	-1.4 (.57)	-0.89 (.45)	-1.2 (.23)
10-20 years				
Women	-2.2 (.14)	-2.1 (.23)	-3.5 (.34)	-1.8 (.21)
Men	-0.63 (.12)	-0.20 (.17)	-0.87 (.34)	-0.92 (.19)
More than 20 years				
Women	-1.6 (.05)	-1.2 (.14)	-2.2 (.29)	-1.6 (.15)
Men	-0.01 (.08)	0.09 (.11)	-0.09 (.25)	0.10 (.13)
Israeli born				
Women	-1.5 (.09)	-1.05 (.15)	-1.6 (.22)	-1.8 (.14)
Men <sup>a</sup>	—	—	—	—

NOTE: The effects were obtained from regression equations that also include in the set of independent variables age, marital status, education, knowledge of hebrew, occupational status in 1978, and geocultural origin (only for column 2).

a. Israeli born is the omitted category.

immigrant women of Asian and African origin are the most disadvantaged group. Their loss (compared with Israeli-born men of the same origin) amounts to 8.2 status points. Western European and Eastern European women have lost "only" 7.2 and 7.8 points, respectively (when compared with Israeli-born men of the same origin). Thus, this finding and the one regarding labor force participation suggest that recent immigrant women from Asia and Africa are at a triple disadvantage: first, as women, second, as recent immigrants, and third, as immigrants from less developed traditional societies. Among recent immigrant men, the loss of occupational status, although less pronounced than that observed for women, is still considerable. It amounts to 3.8 status points among Asian and African immigrants and about 5 status points among other immigrant groups.<sup>13</sup>

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The major goal of the present research was to examine the impact of gender and ethnicity on the incorporation of recent immigrants into the Israeli labor market. Data from the Israeli census of population indicate that recent immigrants, both men and women, regardless of ethnicity, experienced decline in labor force participation and suffered occupational loss. However, the data suggest that women experienced much greater loss than men in the process of transition from one labor market to another.

The findings underscore the nature of the disadvantages faced by recent immigrant women. These women suffered the most dramatic decline in rate of labor force participation after arrival in Israel. The double disadvantage of recent immigrant women is evident and rather pronounced with regard to the loss of occupational status. That is, when joining the cash economy in the new country, immigrant women do so at a greater occupational cost. It appears that immigrant women, more often than men, end up taking lower-status jobs when joining the labor market. The greater hardships experienced by immigrant women can be attributed, at least in part, to two types of constraints. The first constraint is rooted in gender-linked occupational segregation and the limited opportunity structure available for immigrant women. Women, in general, are likely to be overcrowded in a small number of female-typed occupations. Immigrant women operate in an especially tight labor market. They are denied access to many high-status female-dominated occupations (i.e., clerks, saleswomen, teachers) in which language skills are essential.<sup>14</sup> As a result, immigrant women are particularly disadvantaged since they are excluded from most of the higher-paying female-typed jobs.

The second constraint is associated with women's greater commitment to traditional family roles. Research has consistently shown that women, especially mothers, tend to compromise for low-rewarding occupations and employment close to home to avoid conflict with traditional family roles (Semyonov and Lewin-Epstein 1991). Since recent immigrant populations lack social networks that provide the necessary daily care for family members, immigrant women (but not men) are likely to restrict their job search and labor force activity to avoid conflict with familial roles (Evans 1984).<sup>15</sup> Moreover, immigrant women may often forego rewarding jobs to provide the necessary support for family members in the new country. Hence, in the process of transition from one labor market to another, women's occupational cost is greater than that of men.

The data reveal some interaction between gender and ethnicity. Recent immigrant women from the less developed countries of Asia or Africa have experienced the greatest loss in terms of both employment and occupational status. By contrast, women from Europe and the Americas were relatively more successful than their Asian and African counterparts in rejoining the labor force and in translating their occupational resources to "adequate" jobs. Apparently, immigrant women from Asia or Africa who come from traditional societies to a country dominated by

modern Western practices are less able to adjust and compete in the Israeli labor market, especially during the first years after arrival. Following this finding, we can suggest that recent immigrant women from Asia or Africa are at a triple disadvantage: first, as women, second as immigrants, and third as immigrants from less developed countries.

The effect of ethnicity, however, diminishes and becomes negligible with the passage of time. In fact, after five years, ethnicity does not exert a strong effect on employment opportunities in Israel. Apparently, with the passage of time, most immigrant groups are able to close the economic gap (Semyonov forthcoming). That is, immigrants are able to attain socioeconomic rewards according to their human capital resources similar to Israeli-born populations. However, while men are able to choose from a wide spectrum of jobs, women are more likely to compete in tight labor markets. Thus, women regardless of origin, are at a disadvantage. The only persisting effect is that of gender, which remains significant and powerful among all groups. Regardless of ethnicity or tenure in Israel, women are less likely to remain employed and are more likely to experience downward occupational mobility. Indeed, the findings of this article demonstrate that gender is a powerful liability among immigrants, especially with regard to the loss of occupational status.

**APPENDIX**  
**Selected Sociodemographic Characteristics of Recent**  
**Immigrants by Gender and Geocultural Groups (Jews, Aged 25-60 Years)**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Asia-Africa</i>		<i>Western Europe/ America</i>		<i>Eastern Europe</i>	
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
Age	40.3 (10.3)	39.5 (10.3)	36.7 (9.3)	36.1 (9.4)	41.0 (9.9)	42.2 (10.9)
Marital status						
Percentage married	83.3	78.4	80.4	75.9	85.0	79.0
Percentage single	14.9	9.4	15.9	16.1	9.1	4.0
Percentage widowed/ divorced	1.8	12.2	3.7	8.0	5.9	17.0
Number of children <sup>a</sup>	—	3.2 (2.3)	—	2.1 (1.4)	—	1.9 (1.5)
Tenure in the country	2.8 (1.3)	2.9 (1.2)	2.3 (1.4)	2.4 (1.3)	3.2 (1.1)	3.3 (1.0)
Years of schooling	11.5 (4.5)	10.5 (3.6)	15.9 (3.6)	14.8 (3.1)	13.0 (4.0)	12.5 (3.8)
Hebrew proficiency						
Percentage does not speak	28.9	38.9	26.8	29.8	34.3	41.0

Percentage in the labor force						
1978	82.8	35.6	85.6	67.2	90.1	73.5
1983	76.7	32.3	83.5	60.9	87.6	68.6
Percent not in the labor force (from those employed in 1978)						
Socioeconomic status <sup>b</sup>	20.2	44.6	14.3	32.9	8.3	19.7
1978	45.0 (19.9)	46.2 (18.0)	59.4 (21.4)	52.7 (17.6)	53.9 (24.3)	54.2 (21.2)
1983	42.2 (20.6)	36.4 (17.6)	56.6 (23.0)	49.0 (19.7)	50.0 (23.6)	47.2 (22.6)
Occupational cost <sup>c</sup>	-3.8 (16.9)	-7.2 (14.4)	-3.1 (17.5)	-4.4 (16.1)	-4.5 (15.8)	-7.1 (14.9)
N	609	679	831	1,005	1,298	1,493

NOTE: Standard deviations are in parentheses.

a. Data available only for nonsingle women.

b. Based on Tyree's (1981) socioeconomic index of occupations for Israel.

c. Occupational cost was estimated by subtracting the detailed occupational status in country of origin (1978) from their current occupational status (1983).

## NOTES

1. Because of the lack of appropriate data, previous studies could not estimate size of "occupational cost" associated with transition from country of origin to country of destination. The Israeli census provides us with a unique opportunity to examine such change, however, among recent immigrants (those with less than five years in the country).

2. The analysis reported in this article pertains only to the Jewish population. Arabs, who comprise about 18 percent of Israel's population, have lived in Israel for generations. Thus, they are beyond the scope of this analysis.

3. Massive immigration from the Soviet Republics followed the downfall of the Soviet Union. The data presented in this article do not pertain to the large-scale immigration to Israel since 1989 from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia. This is the focus of another article.

4. Although universal in spirit, government policies of resource allocation to new immigrants depend on their geocultural origin, thus affecting opportunities for socioeconomic attainment by ethnicity (Spilerman and Habib 1976). To the best of our knowledge, there is no gender differentiation in the rate of support provided by the state to new immigrants. Inspection of government policies and interviews with government officials reveals no gender-biased immigration policy.

5. For readers who are interested in the status of women in Israeli economy, we note that the socioeconomic position of women in Israel resembles to a great extent the position of women in other industrialized countries. Despite the constant increase of labor force participation among Israeli women (participation rate grew from 32.1 percent in 1972 to 38.6 percent in 1983), occupational sex segregation has remained considerable and hardly declined (Cohen, Bechar, and Raijman 1987; Semyonov and Lewin-Epstein 1989). Like other societies, gender-linked occupational segregation has been recognized as a major source of socioeconomic inequality in Israel (Israeli and Gaier 1979). A series of studies have repeatedly demonstrated that economically active women are disadvantaged in the attainment of socioeconomic rewards and that the socioeconomic disadvantages of women are apparent regardless of ethnicity or immigrant status (Efroni 1980; Lewin-Epstein and Stier 1987; Semyonov and Kraus 1983; Semyonov and Lewin-Epstein 1989).

6. Israel, similar to several other countries, is characterized by female-dominated migration (e.g., Donato 1992; Israel Central Bureau of Statistics 1984; Tyree and Donato 1986; see also Table 1). It is



highly possible that single, divorced, and widowed women are especially attracted to Israel in light of the excessive support that Israel provides its new immigrants.

7. The scale was computed as the first principal component of factor analysis for average education and average income of occupation. This socioeconomic scale is highly correlated ( $r > .9$ ) with scales of occupational prestige in Israel (Kraus 1976). Although the scales were estimated for Israeli society, they are highly similar to prestige scales in other societies. As demonstrated by Treiman (1977), hierarchies of occupational prestige and the basic structure of occupational hierarchies are quite similar across societies or cultures.

8. For all subgroups, changes in employment status and occupational status are evaluated as they were for the recent immigrants. That is, status is compared in 1983 and 1978. We assume that unlike the recent immigrants, the changes for these other groups took place in Israel and not in the context of migration.

9. For the sake of parsimony, the "other immigrants" category includes all groups of immigrants living in Israel for more than five years at the time of the study.

10. This analysis is restricted to persons aged 25-60 who were economically active in 1978, five years prior to the survey, and who were not enrolled in school at the time of the survey. Number of children was not included because it was available only for nonsingle women.

11. Although recent immigrant women had experienced the most dramatic decline in rate of participation (2.6 in comparison with Israeli-born men), their relative decline (in comparison with Israeli-born women) is not as high as the relative decline of recent immigrant men (in comparison with Israeli-born men). Apparently, when considering the high rate of participation among men, their relative decline is even greater than that experienced by women.

12. Since selection into the economically active labor force may affect model parameters, the regression equations were also estimated with correction for selectivity bias (Heckman 1979). The findings are virtually similar in the two models; for the sake of parsimony we present only the first model.

13. The relatively low cost among Asian and African men can be attributed to the prevailing disadvantages of Israeli-born men of Asian and African origin in the Israeli labor market (Haberfeld 1993).

14. For example, over 30 percent of those who had clerical jobs and sales occupations in country of origin were out of the labor force in Israel (compared with 26 percent of the total female immigrants). Over 50 percent of the teachers found employment in other jobs, while 26 percent of the teachers were unemployed. By comparison only 13 percent of the professionals were out of the labor force shortly after arrival in Israel.

15. The results from the regression analysis show that married women (who were economically active in their country of origin) were more likely to stay out of the Israeli labor force, with married men more likely to join the labor force.

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