

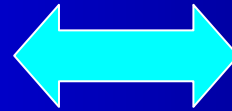
**“Gender, Migration and Re-migration:
Israeli migrants in the US and return migrants
back in Israel - compared”.**

Presented in the 11th International Metropolis Conference, 2-4 October 2006,
Lisboa Portugal

By Dr. Lilach Lev Ari

**Oranim, Academic College of Education and Bar
Ilan University, Israel**

Will they return?
Will they emigrate again?



Research Focus

This paper examines the role of gender in the explanation of re-migration tendency among two groups of Israeli migrants:

1. Those who live in the United States (1998-2000)
2. Those who have recently returned to Israel (2005)

The main argument is that emigrants do not constitute a homogeneous group and that gender plays a significant part in the explanation of re-migration (as it does regarding migration in general).

The Samples

The present analysis is based on two samples of Jewish Israeli migrants:

The first, are Israeli born, registered at the Israeli consulates in Los Angeles, (over half) Philadelphia, and Miami (N=500).

The second sample is comprised of former Israeli migrants who returned to Israel between 1999-2003 mostly from the US (56%), another third from Europe, and the rest resided in other continents (N=501).

The Sample (continued)

The two samples comprised an equal number of men and women.

The average age was 42 among Israeli emigrants and 40 among those who returned.

In both samples, participants have high educational attainment

The theoretical approach, termed “transnationalism”, views migration as a process with many facets: - demography, politics, economics, culture, and family – involving several aspects in addition to the act of transition from one country to another (Gold, 1992; 2002).

- The transnational theory holds that migrants with a more articulated system of social, cultural, and economic ties will manage to avoid many of the obstacles typical of international migration (Light and Bonacich, 1988; Piore, 1979).

Migration is not fixed and everlasting; a return to the country of origin is possible, and indeed quite frequent (Basch et al. 1994; Dinerstein et al. 1990; Tilly, 1990).



Women's motives for migration are at least as numerous as those of men (United Nations, 1995; 2006), although the structure of work opportunities in the country of origin is sometimes different for women and men (Lim, 1995).

Women tend to respond to “push” factors in country of origin: family, unemployment, etc. (United Nations 2006)



Return tendency to the country of origin among migrants, is connected with emigration tendency. In each stream of migration there is also a stream of re-migration to the country of origin.

The return of migrants to their homeland is a possible stage in the migration process, and it attests to the degree at which the purposes of their migration have been accomplished (DellaPergola, 1986; Goldscheider, 1971; United Nations, 1995).

The main motives of return for women are familial and related to marriage or divorce (United Nations, 1995; 2006).

Lim (1995) maintains that other motives for returning have to do with the male and female migrants' different perceptions of the change that has occurred in their status as a consequence of their migration and their expectations of it, and of its impact on their possible return to the country of origin.

This paper examines the role of gender in the explanation of re-migration tendency among Israelis who live in the United States and those who returned to Israel.

The findings from both surveys can be utilized by policy makers, such as the Ministry of Absorption

Findings-US sample

The main findings, in the present research, indicate that Israeli immigrants can be defined as “permanent sojourners”, in that about half of them expressed the desire to go back to Israel even though most of them were not willing to commit to a definite date of return.



Although analyzing the intention to return to Israel is problematic and speculative, since it did not happen yet, the present research will attempt to find a pattern of gender differences in this last migration aspect as connected to previous ones, as part of a complete migration experience.

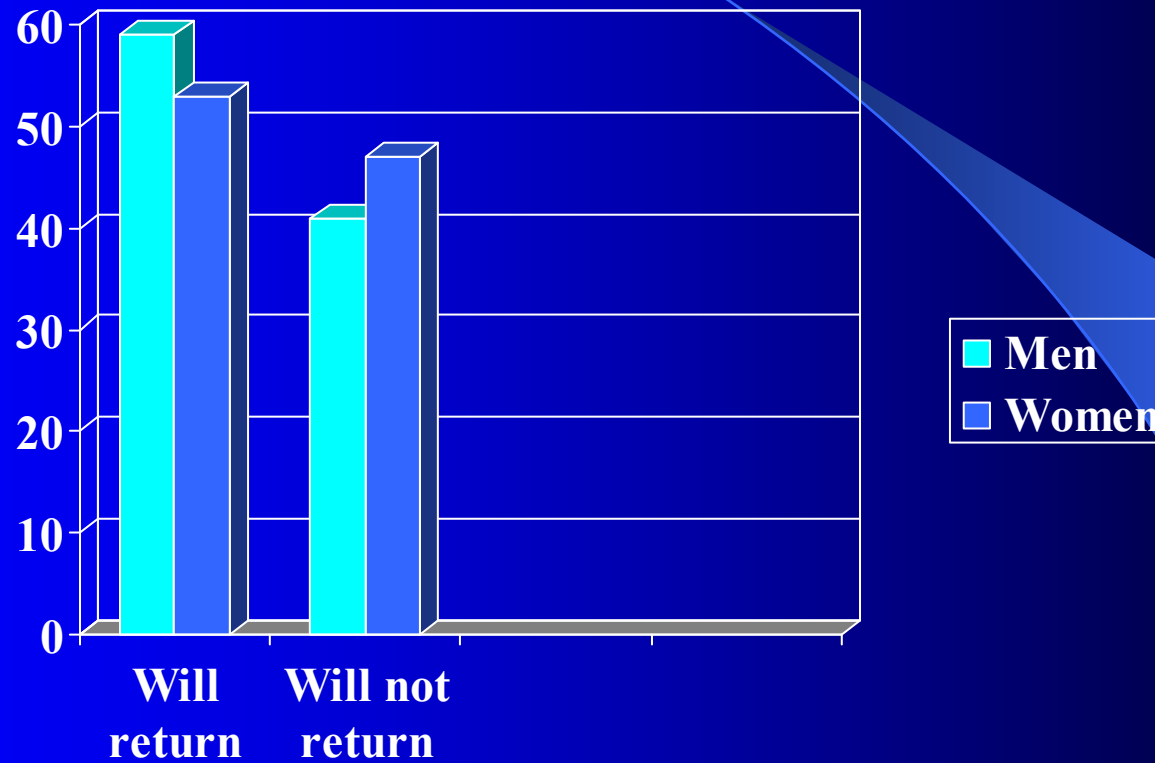
Generally, Israelis are equally divided regarding their **general intention to return to Israel**: 56% are considering re-migration and 44% do not.

When return period **was defined by a time limit**, only 20% of the Israelis reported willingness to return within a limited time (between 1 year and 5). Most of the respondents (75%) were not willing to define their return period and 6% **will never** return to Israel.

No significant gender differences were found regarding general intention to re-migrate to Israel:



Intention to return by gender



Intention to return within limited period

When respondents were asked to define their return period, a slightly more significant (sig. =0.079, Pearson Chi²=2.36) gender difference was found:

22% of the men compared with 17% of the women were willing to **define** their return period in years, (while the rest did not).

The profile of those **who tend to return** to Israel reveals emigrants with a Rhetoric (Uriely, 1994) ethnic identity; experience a dynamic procedure as sojourners and reporting weak identification with the American society.



These “return” Israeli emigrants are also characterized by a trans-national identity (Gold, 1994; 2000) which is manifested mainly by maintaining social ties with their families in Israel and speaking Hebrew with their children.

It seems that **women are less determined** than men to return to Israel.



Those who **do intend** to return to Israel and within a defined period are young students that had recently arrived to the US (between 3 years-5 years) and do not own their homes - residential flats or houses.

These Israelis are still attached to Israel and their social absorption in the US failed. “Return” Israelis tend to perceive Israel in a much more positive light than the American society and of course report lesser satisfaction from their life in the latter.

Ashkenazi women and Sepharadi men probably did not fulfill most of their aspirations are still young and perceive the American society as providing them with more opportunities for upward mobility in the future and thus, less inclined to define their period of return to Israel.



The group of women that consider the Israeli social structure as more equal for women than that of the American one is the group **that is more inclined to return to Israel within a specific period.**

Sepharadi women are more willing to commit to a definite time limit for their return, as compared to Ashkenazi women.



Women who fulfilled their economic and social ambitions through emigration to the US to a mediocre extent are willing to return within a specific period, whereas women who fulfilled their ambitions to a large extent **are not** willing to commit to a definite return period to Israel.



- **Among men**, besides the ethnic origin that was mentioned earlier, social absorption is the main variable that predicts tendency to commit to a limited return period to Israel. Israeli men who report their social absorption as a failure are willing to return to Israel within a specific period, as opposed to those that report their social absorption a success and are not willing to return.

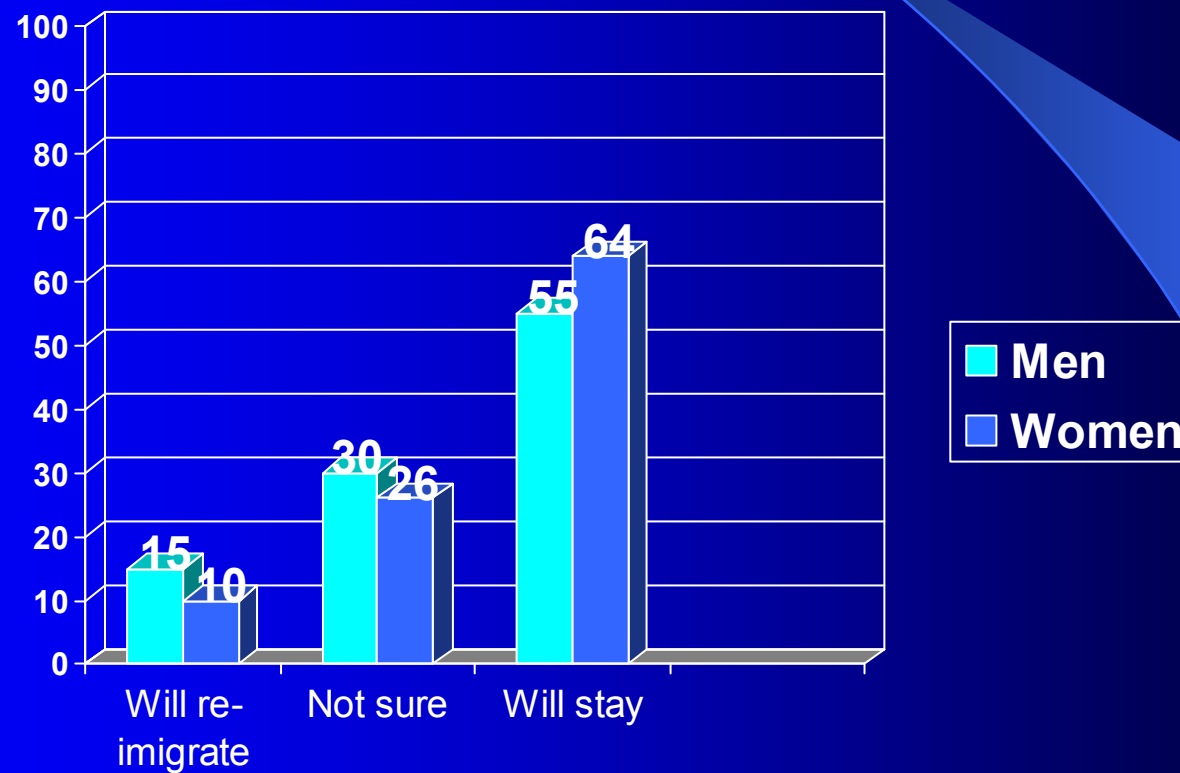


Findings-Israeli Sample

The second research question of this paper is to examine the impact of gender on intention to re-migrate from Israel.



Re-migration from Israel by Gender



It seems that returning Israelis can be categorized into two groups based on re-migration tendencies:

Those who intend to re-migrate:

Young men (between the ages of 20-34),
with lower educational attainment,
Sephardic (Asia-Africa countries of origin),
secular and who recently returned to Israel,
not satisfied with the absorption process

Those who intend to stay are:

Ashkenazi women, highly educated, in their
forties and are satisfied with the absorption
process in Israel

Summary and Discussion

The tendency to return and re-migrate are influenced by gender and other factors associated with earlier aspects of the migration process as well as the absorption process itself.

There was no single and uniform pattern here rather several patterns according to subgroups; included gender, socio-economic status, measure of successful absorption in various areas, and perception of push and pull factors regarding the Israeli society versus the other societies as yielding adequate opportunities for upward mobility.

Will Israeli Women Return?

Israeli migrant women in the US comprise a diverse group in relation to their intention to return to Israel. Insofar as they have succeeded in their economic and social absorption, they are not interested in returning to Israel, as the opportunity structure in Israel will not provide them with the same basis for social mobility as in America.



Will Israeli Women Return? (continued)

Only if women migrants are persuaded that Israeli society surpasses American society in its opportunity structure will they consider returning to Israel.

On the other hand, women who have done less well, economically and socially in the US, will be more predisposed towards returning to Israel. A further factor likely to encourage women to return to Israel is their desire to live close to their parents; this element was less pronounced among the men.

Will Former Israeli Migrant Women Re-migrate from Israel?

Among those who returned to Israel it was the women with the **highest** socio-economic achievements who expressed the **highest** satisfaction from all aspects of the absorption process, namely social, economic and their children's absorption.



Will Former Israeli Migrant Women Re-migrate from Israel? (continued)

These former Israeli migrant women also feel that Israel provides them with a better opportunity structure and that they can fulfill themselves in Israel, and are thus less predisposed to re-migrate.

Policy Implications

In general, Israelis succeed economically abroad, more than they will in Israel.

What can Israel offer them?

Israelis interested in returning to Israel in fact clustered at the two extremes of the economic spectrum. **On the one hand**, there were Ashkenazi men who had fulfilled the “American Dream”

On the other hand, there were Sephardic women who had still not fully accomplished most of their ambitions; moreover, some of these had migrated on account of their husbands' ambitions.

Motives to Emigrate

As migration motives were more defined and material - for example, higher education in the US, professional fulfillment, and improvement of living standards - so was the decision to return to Israel more concrete.

As the motives for migration were hazier - for example, family reasons, husband's aspirations, tourist interests, etc.- so was the decision to return more vague.

Why They Return?

Returning Israeli migrants did succeed economically abroad. However their social absorption was not so successful and thus, those who returned did so because of social communal and familial reasons.

Why Stay in Israel?

In order to encourage Israelis to remain in Israel efforts should be made upon all of them, but those who are more inclined to re-migrate should be the focus, particularly young Sephardic secular men with lower socio-economic status.



In addition...

- Returning Israelis do not maintain transnational economic connections, they all work in Israel. Their Social connections, however, remain transnational.
- For those former migrant women, Israel is the place that fulfilled most of their aspirations and they felt empowered here (they are content with the Ministry of Absorption, from their mobility opportunities, their family absorption, etc)

Women are a significant socialization agent in regard to absorption in the country of origin. If they are persuaded that this country enables them with equal opportunities, in addition to a warm and welcoming host society for them and their families they could be those that policy makers can address in future efforts to attract migrants to return.

Length of Time

- The chances of re-migration to country of origin declined still more as time passed.
- As seniority in target country grew longer, and as the sense of belonging to its society and the Jewish community there became reinforced – the tendency of returning to Israel decreased.



- Men and women who perhaps wished to return to Israel for family reasons found themselves wavering between the two worlds. This was well expressed by an Israeli living in Los Angeles: *“When you live in the United States you constantly miss Israel and the family, and feel loneliness in the essentials of life. But when you go back to Israel you begin to long for the ‘flesh pots’ and you recall how good it was in the United States and what a marvelous standard of living we lived on”.*



And Finally..

The issues for further research and for future possible applications that arise from this study strengthen the main argument, namely that treatment of gender is essential in a consideration of any kind of policy implication regarding migration, namely, the migration of Israelis to the United States.

Thank You!

