To See and Not Be Seen:
Latin American Illegal Foreign Workers in Jerusalem

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ABSTRACT

The article describes the formation and characteristics of the new evolving community of illegal Latin American foreign workers in Jerusalem while adopting the ecological perspective, which examines human development and behaviour in various contexts of their social and cultural environments.

We have looked specifically at illegal Latin American foreign workers' reasons for and process of migration, their accommodation and living conditions, allocation of employment, daily cultural and social conditions, education and health issues concerning children and families, perceptions of relations with host culture and perceptions of well-being and future expectations.

Our findings are based on the investigation of perspectives offered by the foreign workers themselves, by representatives of the various sectors of the host culture who are well acquainted with these workers, and by the researchers themselves, demonstrating how by means of triangulation these perceptions achieve extra validity or differ.

The article further explores the contribution of the case study in the investigation of acculturation stress and migrant's well-being, and emphasizes the need to study specific populations of immigrants under specific ecological conditions.

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INTRODUCTION

International migration patterns

Although international population movements are by no means a new phenom-
enon, since World War II there has been a steady acceleration in the number
of persons moving around the world, as well as major shifts in the pattern
and composition of these movements. Not only has international population
movements become a global phenomenon (Borowski, 1996), but the issue of
international migration has also gained new momentum as a result of political
upheaval in Africa, Eastern Europe and the war in former Yugoslavia
(Altzinger, 1995).

The world's population has increased rapidly during the last 30 years, from an
estimated 3 billion in 1960 to about 6 billion today. By 2022 it is expected to
reach 8 billion. The causes of migration are demonstrably linked to what we
may call maldistribution of the world's population: a very large proportion of
persons living in countries with very low per capita income and low standards
of living (Appleyard, 1991). During the early 1990s, international migration for
employment involved about 70 million persons, a majority being from developing
countries working legally or illegally in other countries (Appleyard, 1992).

Migration is generally explained in terms of "push" and "pull" factors that
influence individuals to leave their habitual places of residence to settle
elsewhere. The push factor provides the migrant with the causal motivation to
leave his home country, while the pull factor deals with his reasons for
emigration. This model relies mainly on the motives of migrants who, optimistic
about the future in a new social environment, are willing to leave their country
of origin (Bariagaber, 1995).

Appleyard (1992) identified six types of international migration: (1) permanent
(settlers), including persons admitted under family reunion schemes; (2) temp-
orary contract workers, normally semi-skilled or unskilled, who remain in
the host country for finite periods; (3) temporary professional transients,
professional or skilled workers who move from one country to another, usually
as employees of international and/or joint venture companies; (4) clandestine
or illegal workers, whose entry may or may not be sanctioned by the receiving
country's government; (5) asylum-seekers, who cross borders and appeal for
status on ground of political discrimination; and (6) refugees, as defined by the
1951 United Nations Convention relating to the status of refugees.

The employment of migrants in developed countries has received a great deal
of attention in migration literature. According to Ngo (1994), two types of
explanation of immigrants' economic role have been advanced: the human
capital hypothesis which suggests that due to lack of relevant skills, knowledge

and information about employment opportunities, immigrant workers usually suffer disadvantages in the labour market. They accept dead-end, low paid jobs at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy (Gordon, 1964; Chiswick, 1979). The second explanation is the ethnic labour market hypothesis which suggests the existence of labour sub-markets, dominated by ethnically owned and operated enterprises, which provide employment outlets and articulate immigrants into the larger economy (Kim, 1981; Nee and Sanders, 1985; Portes and Bach, 1985).

Acculturation stress and well-being

Many studies deal with the process of change due to immigration and the resulting costs for the immigrant's well-being (Berry et al., 1987; Honing et al., 1987; Grinberg and Grinberg, 1989; Mirsky and Kaushinsky, 1989). In emphasizing psychological acculturation, scholars maintain that acculturative stress, i.e., stress generated by factors associated with the immigration process, might hinder the immigrant's well-being, thus placing him at high risk for lowered mental health status (e.g., confusion, anxiety, depression, feeling of marginality and alienation, heightened psychosomatic symptoms, identity confusion).

While the issues of acculturation processes and the well-being of immigrants have received much attention in current literature, these studies rarely distinguish between various types of migration as portrayed in Appleyard's (1992) classification. The least studied are migrant workers, particularly illegal foreign workers who are difficult to recruit for research purposes since there is no formal information on their residence. They are also hesitant to share information that might later be used to identify them, and their stay is mostly temporary, making it difficult to follow up their investigation.

Foreign workers in Israel

Israel has been a country of immigration since its independence in 1948, striving to create a "homeland" for Jews from all over the world. The focus has been on "the ingathering of exiles" and the country has provided for and actively encouraged permanent migration of Jews under its Law of Return. The State has developed legislature and institutional assistance to support the new Jewish immigrants in all areas of life. While Israel continues to welcome relatively large numbers of permanent Jewish settlers (67,500 immigrants arrived in 1995-1996) in relation to its population (5.7 million) (Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 1996), only recently has it begun to acknowledge that it is a major recipient of other types of immigrants. Like many other industrialized countries, Israel has recruited temporary labour migrants to meet its manpower requirements during periods of intensive labour demand.

Israel's experience with foreign workers began with Palestinian cross-border commuters from Gaza and the West Bank. These workers, who return to their

homes daily or on weekends, have been an important source of labour in the agriculture, construction and service sectors of the Israeli economy since 1967 (Borowski, 1996). At its peak, the number of Palestinian workers in Israel reached 174,000. Prior to the "Intifada" (the uprising of the Palestinians against the occupation of territories by the Israeli army), which began in 1987, Palestinian workers comprised about 10 per cent of the workforce in Israel. During the first years of the Intifada, unpredictable and sometimes lengthy closures of the West Bank were enforced by the Israeli Defence Forces for security reasons, due to incidents of terrorism. These closures resulted in the exclusion of many Palestinian workers from the Israeli labour market. The resultant growing pressure which was created mostly by the Israeli construction and agriculture sectors, compelled the government to allow them to seek alternative, more reliable sources of labour from outside the region (Borowski, 1996). The Israeli authorities therefore granted work permits to workers from Europe (e.g., Romania, Turkey, Bulgaria) and from Far East (e.g., China, Thailand, Philippines), while overlooking the migration of illegal workers from mainly Africa and Latin America.

The presence of non-Jewish immigrants and of temporary legal and illegal workers has not been a real concern in Israel until recently. The figure 117,000 foreign workers in Israel is quoted as the lowest estimate (Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 1996), comprising 70,000 legal migrants and 47,000 illegal. A growing interest by the mass media in this population has brought the issue to the top of the public agenda. Furthermore, some accidents at work sites, reports of crimes within these groups and other tragic events, have created a public debate on possible implications of the increasing numbers of legal and illegal migrants on the State of Israel.[1] Although the media has shown interest in the issue, very little systematic research on foreign workers has been undertaken.

This article relates to the experiences of two small communities of Latin American illegal foreign workers in Israel, one in Jerusalem (the more spiritual and religion-oriented centre of the country), and the other in Tel Aviv (the biggest commercial metropolis in the country). The study adopts an ecological perspective, which examines human development and behaviour in various contexts of their social and cultural environments.

The ecological perspective

This theoretical orientation extends beyond the behaviour of individuals to encompass functional systems both between and within settings, nested structures and complex interactions between the person and the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The ecological perspective considers modes of development of the individual in light of his interaction with his immediate social environment and further social context which affect his immediate settings (Garbarino, 1982).

Based on this approach, the variables influencing human development and behaviour may be grouped into the Microsystem, which contains factors related to the individual and his immediate surroundings (e.g., the individual's gender and personal characteristics such as temperament, personality and coping styles, structure, size and accessibility of immediate family, etc.); the Mesosystem, which encompasses the relationship among factors operating in the individual's close environment (e.g., extended family, friends, education and welfare systems, etc.); the Exosystem, where factors which indirectly influence the individual operate (e.g., attitudes of agencies, stereotypic evaluation based on religious affiliation, skin colour, ethnicity, country of origin, etc.); and the Macrosystem, which contains all factors related to the State's norms, rules and regulations, history and cultural background of related communities, etc. Obviously, these factors do not operate independently of circumstances which are also a part of the ecological context.

The main objectives of this article are: (a) to present an ecological case study focusing on a specific group of illegal foreign workers, while exploring the potential contribution of the ecological perspective to the study of migration; (b) to assess the contribution of this case study to the investigation of accultura-tion stress and migrant's well-being; and (c) to compare the foreign workers' perceptions with those held by members of the host community and researchers.

RESEARCH APPROACH

Greenfield (1994) calls for a new methodological paradigm for studying minority and immigrant families based on the inclusion of methods of data collection and analysis from the fields of sociology and anthropology. Similarly, the study described in this article has been influenced by a qualitative, anthropological explorative approach that enabled the researchers to study the ecological systems that constituted the Latin American foreign workers' environment, and their interactions. This approach is characterized by the following:

  (a) Data collection being carried out in naturalistic settings, where the researchers function as the main research tool.

  (b) Special attention being given to the perceptions of all participants (immigrants, members of the host culture and researchers alike), trying to decipher the meaning attributed by each party to the studied phenomena. Greenfield (1994) emphasizes the importance of investigating the multiple perspectives of immigrants, professionals, socializing agents in the host culture as well as the researchers' own perspectives. Denzin (1989) calls for the use of multiple data sources and theories as a means of triangulation that helps overcome the biases of a single method, investigation or theory. Triangulation is used for validating data by comparing different

data sources investigated by different research methods (Sabar Ben-Yehoshua, 1995). By comparing different data sources, both agreements and disagreements emerge concerning data interpretations and perceptions of the participants. The methodology of this study aims at combining various qualitative research methods such as focus groups, in-depth interviews and participant observations. Various data sources such as the foreign workers, Israeli employers, landlords, nuns and priests, and researchers' perceptions, were compared.

(c) The qualitative, explorative approach also aims at analysing data in an inductive manner, i.e., the study is not designed to test hypotheses but rather to propose a theory based on the data accumulated. Dilworth-Anderson et al. (1993), propose that cross-cultural studies are hindered both by methodology and by researchers' own values and assumptions, which influence their approach to the population studied. In order to overcome this potential flaw, they recommend the use of the "grounded theory" (Strauss, 1987), a method applied in the analysis of qualitative data which enables systematic screening and isolation of concepts and relationships concealed among the variables.

Data sources

a) *Foreign workers.* Because the illegal, non-Jewish community of foreign workers of Latin American origin residing in Israel is undocumented, it is difficult to estimate its size and characteristics. Through our contact with the community and others working with it, we estimate that about 500 individuals and families live in Jerusalem and about 2,000 live in Tel Aviv.

The current article focuses on data obtained on Latin American foreign workers residing in Jerusalem. Parents who sought tutorial help in Arabic, Maths and English for their children granted the senior author and her students access to the community. Some students volunteered for this mission and formed contacts with families. A snowball strategy was applied to locate informants, five of whom helped the researchers make contact with fellow foreign workers and different organizations related to various aspects of their life in Israel, such as health, education, welfare, etc.

Eighty adult Latin American foreign workers' were approached. Each had been living in Israel for between two to four years after emigrating from different countries in South America, mainly Chile, Colombia and Peru. Each respondent had come to Israel when over 18 years of age and during the course of the research were aged between 21 to 35 years of age.

Seventy-five respondents had at least one family member in Israel at the time of the study. Fifty per cent had at least one child living with them in Israel.

Ninety per cent regarded themselves as Christians and 10 per cent as atheists. Most of the foreign workers, especially those who had families, resided in neighbourhoods where rents were low, although others rented apartments in more expensive locations and shared household expenses with co-habitants.

All respondents had achieved formal primary school education. Thirty per cent had high school education and 10 per cent additional education. Most of the Latin American foreign workers had working-class jobs prior to immigrating and all were illegal residents at the time of the study.

b) *Host culture representatives.* These included members of the host culture involved in various aspects of the foreign worker's daily life in Israel, including health, education and welfare. Priests and nuns as well as landlords and employers were interviewed (30 interviews).

c) *Researchers.* The research team comprised the first author, a senior researcher who spoke both Hebrew and Spanish and specialized in cross-cultural family and immigration studies, three social work students from the Hebrew University and two students of David Yallins' Seminar for Teachers. All students had participated in courses on immigration and were trained to conduct culturally sensitive interviews.

Data collection-research methods

Most of the research was based on focus groups, in-depth interviews and participants' observations (Sabar Ben-Yehoshua, 1995). The lives of five foreign workers and their families were followed closely and documented throughout the study over four years. The senior researcher conducted most of the focus groups, interviewed the foreign workers and made observations. She participated in social and community events such as weddings, birthdays and "fiestas" (parties) related to holidays such as Christmas and New Year. Students also visited the Latin American foreign workers and documented church related activities, education sites, etc., and also interviewed landlords and employers.

During the third year of the study, a research group was formed to analyse the findings. Protocols were coded and data from various sources were triangulated. These group discussions were highly valuable for minimizing the biases of a single viewpoint. At several stages of the study the informants were presented with preliminary findings and asked for their opinions.

The main issues investigated within ecological context of the migrant worker's life in Israel were, the reasons for and process of migration, accommodation and living conditions, allocation of employment, daily cultural and social conditions, education and health issues concerning children and families,

perceptions of relations with the host culture, and perceptions of well-being and future expectations.

FINDINGS

Reasons for and process of migration

Most Latin American foreign workers came to Israel to find jobs and send money back to their families. The "pull" factor was the job opportunities they had heard were available in Israel. One interviewee said that "A job is the main factor in deciding where to live. I had no choice. I had to find a job and there were no jobs in my country so I had to leave my home and family and come to live here for a while... I heard that in Israel it was easy to find a job and save money." The first foreign workers came to Israel as "au pairs". Israeli families, mostly of Latin American origin, provided them with airline tickets. The foreign workers resided initially with the host families and were obligated to work in return for the paid trip and lodgings. They later left the families and found other jobs and accommodation. Many kept sending earnings to their families abroad. Some sent airline tickets to friends or family members. Since their migration was illegal, the foreign workers had to find a way to help their families enter the country without being caught by the authorities and subsequently deported. They sent money to their families back home and special tapes with instructions. These tapes instructed families who arrived carrying regular tourist visas about what to say and how to act upon entering the country.

Accommodation and living conditions

During the first few days or weeks the foreign workers generally shared accommodation with friends or relatives. Once a job had been obtained, finding and moving to separate accommodation became a major objective. In Jerusalem, low-rent apartments are found mainly in areas where the Arab population resides and so many of the migrant families live in Arab neighbourhoods. In the last few years of the study some workers moved to Jewish neighbourhoods, an indication of improved living conditions and the prospect of a prolonged stay.

Allocation of employment

In many cases, veteran illegal foreign workers arrange jobs for newcomers. Those who had sent for their family members usually tried to find jobs for them prior to their arrival. Churches in Jerusalem provided additional assistance with job allocation. A Spanish-speaking nun from one of the Orders told us that she sometimes connects foreign workers with Jewish families who are looking for

employees. Most of the jobs held by this community are household jobs for men and women, and industry and construction work for men. Language barriers encourage illegal foreign workers to work initially for Spanish-speaking families. Later on, with some knowledge of Hebrew, they work for Hebrew speaking employers.

Daily social and cultural conditions

The most striking finding of the study is the formulation of Latin American migrant workers' community life, quite invisible to the Israeli public and authorities. The community in Jerusalem is strongly affected by religious organizations which play an important role in its formation and daily life.

For the workers, mostly Christians, Jerusalem holds a special spiritual meaning. One of the informants stated: "I think Jerusalem is a very special city... not like other cities in Israel such as Tel Aviv... in Jerusalem the human race evolved spiritually, and I find it to be a unique spiritual experience living here...". We discovered that although many foreign workers had very little to do with religion in their country of origin, in Israel they celebrate all the Christian holidays and go to church on a regular basis. Another interviewee testified, "...here we celebrate the holidays more than at home... at home we barely went to church but here we go to church not only on Christmas or for weddings, but also every Sunday for mass... at church we meet other Latin Americans that work here...". The nun we interviewed added that many members of the Latin American community visit the church regularly on Sundays and on Holy Days. She told us of several different celebrations that took place at her Order by members of the migrant community.

Family, social and community life

Illegal labour migration can create several difficulties for family life. As noted above, many workers arrived without their families and remained on their own until they had saved enough to send for their relatives. Some were separated from their spouses and their children for long periods. Those individuals who were unable to bring their family to Israel felt lonely and some had relationships with other foreign workers of the opposite sex.

Illegal status (and the continuous threat of being discovered), language barriers and socio-cultural differences combined to create a solidarity which encouraged the community to develop self-support systems. Members of this community had become organized to assist each other. When a member or a child was sick, or in need of help, the others provided food, money, and medications. They also made loans to members in need. According to the interviewees, this kind of support was not common in their country of origin, and evolved only in Israel.

Most of the workers' social events were related to Christian holidays. One informant told us that on Christmas day they invited friends and family to their house, bought and decorated a tree, gave presents to each other and had a big meal. "We did it for our children because it's important for them to feel family life ... It is also nice for us to be among friends and family."

The various religious institutions not only provided assistance in matters of health and education but also arranged social gatherings and organized trips around the country, including to different sacred Christian cities and monuments. A nun told us that members of this community come regularly to Sunday mass, and for a period of time a priest, trained as a psychologist, set up special sessions of group dynamics following Sunday mass at which topics related to migration were discussed. Many foreign workers turned to her for social and emotional support, and referred to the Church, with its sisters and priests, as a warm, friendly place, where doors are always open and support could always be found.

Education and health issues concerning children and families

The high cost of treatment and/or medical care in Israel pose serious problems for illegal foreign workers who become ill or suffer an accident. Their illegal status does not allow them medical insurance since fees are deducted from salaries. Furthermore, seeking access to a doctor or to a hospital is associated with fear of being apprehended by law enforcing agencies, a fear that keeps many away from health facilities. One foreign worker said, "sometimes I find it difficult to fall asleep at night, when all I can think about is what will happen if my son needs some kind of medical treatment...where will I go? If the authorities find out about us they will send us back home... to our old lives... to the poverty... one small mistake can do that." The nun told us that she helps Latin American foreign workers by acting as a medium between those who need medical treatment and various health care facilities run by Muslim or Christian institutions. In her Order there is a Spanish-speaking physician who sees members of this community.

Education of their children is another major problem faced by illegal foreign workers. Their illegal status does not entitle them to free public education. In Jerusalem, this problem is solved partly by schools being run by Christian Orders. Young children attend kindergarten as boarders during the week and are taken home at weekends. Some parents in Tel Aviv use this alternative; most of those residing in Jerusalem pick up their children each afternoon.

School age children attend private elementary schools run by Christian organizations. The languages spoken and taught depend on the country of origin of the school and teaching staff. Arabic is spoken or taught in most schools because most of the students are Arabs. One interviewee said that he would like his

children to go to the university some day, but how will they do that unless they can get a recognized diploma? "The only schools they can go to here are those where they speak and study in the Arabic language." On the other hand, another interviewee told us that his son goes to a school where he learns five different languages, including Spanish.

Perceptions of relations with the host culture

Most foreign workers were employed shortly after arriving in Israel. Their first contact with the host culture was via their employment. Most employed women had household-related jobs and preferred to work initially with Spanish-speaking families (mostly Jews who had emigrated from South America). After a year in Israel, 75 per cent of the women who participated in this study had been employed in one or more Hebrew-speaking households. Ten per cent described their overall relations with employing families as "O.K."; 50 per cent as "very good", 40 per cent as "excellent". The employing families interviewed presented a similar picture. They regarded Latin American employees as loyal, hard workers, with "home keeping standards high above those of Israeli students or of the formerly employed elderly Israeli women", and with a pleasant personality and a sense of humor. Most employers reported involvement in their employee's life in such matters as helping with bank accounts, medical care, medications, clothes, furniture and advice. One woman who had suffered severe medical difficulties related to pregnancy had been employed by six families, all of which collected money to help pay her enormous medical bills for the private medical care she needed. All families involved stated that they would continue to employ this woman, had she had her baby, and help her in the future. The men in our study worked mainly in industry and construction and described their relations with Israeli employers as "O.K." (40 per cent) "good" (50 per cent), "very good" (10 per cent). None claimed "excellent" relations.

Based on reports of both employees and employers, it appears that employers were less involved in the personal affairs of their male workers although several had assisted when asked to do so (e.g., gave loans). Only a few interviewees reported that their employers took advantage of their illegal status or that they were not treated as expected. Most were highly satisfied with the attitude and working conditions provided by the Israeli employers. Employers described the Latin American male workers as far more available and dependable compared with previously employed Arab workers.

The interviewees' relations with Israeli landlords provided a similar picture of satisfaction. Israeli Jewish landlords were initially concerned with the illegal status of the foreign workers and thus asked for an advance payment. Later on, some said they were impressed with their tenants' tactful behaviour and consideration (such as in the case of a religious landlord who appreciated his tenant for not playing loud music during the Sabbath). About 50 per cent of interviewees

report having received some aid from their landlords, such as document translation, advice, furniture and home supplies.

Most contacts with Arabs were established in the Old City of Jerusalem and in nearby Bethlehem where the Latin American foreign workers did most of their shopping and sought medical and dental care. Their reports included descriptions of friendships and hospitality. Services granted and general attitudes were reported as most satisfying. When asked about cultural differences and their effect upon relations with various members of the host culture, the interviewees distinguished six different groups: Muslim Arabs, Christian Arabs, Spanish-speaking nuns and priests, Jews of Latin-American descent and Israeli-born Jews, and foreign workers from other countries (e.g., Romania).

Social norms and differences were mentioned most frequently in relation to Muslim Arabs. In one case, where a woman was considering marrying a Muslim, she reported that once the family began to discuss traditional wedding arrangements, she realized that "the differences were too far to bridge." Men interviewed regarded other foreign workers (e.g., Romanian) as most different in their mentality, social norms and behaviours.

Israeli-born Jews were the third most culturally remote group although the differences were not as hard to bridge. Some aspects of the Israeli culture were considered desirable. Most women described the Israeli life style as being more modern and open compared with the life style they had experienced in their countries of origin. Israeli men were admired for their involvement with the upbringing of their children, for helping their wives and for not abusing alcohol. Israeli women were seen as more independent, open-minded and liberal with their children.

Overall, the great majority of foreign workers interviewed did not regard religious differences as affecting their every day relations with Israeli Jews (both religious and secular). However, in the few cases where foreign workers formed intimate relations with Jewish partners, they reported objections by the Israeli family to potential marriage, based on religious differences. The most common example offered was the fact that according to Jewish law, Judaism is penned to mother affiliation and, therefore, women were asked to convert so that potential children will be Jewish.

Perceptions of well-being and future expectations

All foreign workers interviewed were asked about their own well-being and the well-being of their migrant friends and family members. Questions posed in this context were, "How would you describe your well-being, general feeling and satisfaction with your life in Israel? Do you feel stressed? What are the things that make you feel stressed? How do you cope with these stresses?

Ninety per cent of the interviewees gave positive responses concerning well-being and 85 per cent provided positive reports concerning their friends and family members.

Where stress was reported, it related to three aspects: the political situation in Israel and fear of terrorist acts disturbing memories of the Gulf war; personal worries such as health problems, difficulties in the relationship with a specific family member or friend; and homesickness, which was especially evident where the spouse and children had been left behind. In addition to these major concerns, their illegality was a source for stress only in cases where interviewees had experienced deportation of a family member, a rare experience in Jerusalem.

Nuns and priests reported having assisted families and community members to cope with stress. Other member of the host culture (employers, landlords, co-workers, and friends) were under the impression that the foreign workers whom they knew were well and content. When asked directly to evaluate the level of stress accompanying the adaptation of Latin American foreign workers to the cultural transition, most responded that they detected relatively low levels. One Jewish employer said that they are "different from Jewish immigrants because they see this stage as transitional, they have less expectations from the government and they have the Spanish-speaking community to fall back on." Another interviewee added, "while in other countries Latin Americans may be treated as a minority and experience negative stereotyping, in Israel they enjoy the positive stereotype of South American Jewish immigrants workers. They are less pressured to integrate into the Jewish population of Jerusalem. They successfully navigate between the Jewish and Arab sectors and are accepted by both. Since they are less visible to the authorities they are rarely jailed or persecuted."

In relation to future expectations, two groups were identified: those who hoped to go back to their countries and establish themselves a future with money saved in Israel; and those who expressed a desire to stay in Israel. The latter included mainly those who had been in Israel longer, and/or those who had visited their homeland while staying in Israel and were disappointed. This group contained many who had expressed stress related to their illegal status. In one case, a family went back to their country of origin for the purpose of converting to Judaism. The process lasted a whole year, at the end of which the family legally immigrated to Israel.

Those who expressed the wish to stay in Israel were optimistic regarding future prospects. Jewish society was regarded more open than in their countries of origin and less dependent on a strict social hierarchy. Upward mobility was perceived as being relatively easy to achieve. As one interviewee said, "In this society, education is valued no less than money, my sons may climb up, many people here came from other places, you do not have to be born here to succeed."

DISCUSSION

A description of the illegal Latin American community in Jerusalem reveals unique ecological conditions, such as the interplay among Jewish, Arab Muslim and Christian ecological niches, which strongly influence community formation. This is especially apparent when comparing the community in Jerusalem with the one established in Tel Aviv (Roer-Strier and Olshtain, 1999). Although the distance between these two cities is only 60 kilometres, the differences in community formation, which can be related to ecological differences between these cities, are striking.

Whereas relations with the churches in the Old City are basic to the community in Jerusalem, parallel organizations do not exist in Tel Aviv, leaving the task of providing religious services and aiding newcomers in the hands of the foreign workers themselves. While in Jerusalem, community members meet on Sundays at church, in Tel Aviv they meet on Saturday mornings to play football. The Latino-American football teams and music bands, which are well known to most foreign workers in Tel Aviv, do not have counterparts in Jerusalem. Participants in the study who were asked to describe differences between the two communities seemed to see the community in Jerusalem as more religious. The existence of religious places and institutes seems to affect the Latin American foreign workers in that they find additional meaning for being in Israel beyond the financial reasons that were the initial trigger for their migration. Many of the informants who reside in Jerusalem reported that they regularly attended religious ceremonies. Although the reason for attending could be to carry favor in the eyes of the churches that help and support them, many informants reported that their spiritual lives has been enriched since their migration, and that their migration may have been directed by divine providence.

Another difference between the two communities relates to children's education. In Jerusalem most pre-school and school-age children are educated in private schools run mainly by the churches. In Tel Aviv, on the other hand, many school-age children manage to get into the municipal school system, whereas some of the younger children attend low-cost daycare (usually, a group of up to ten children watched by a Latin American mother at her own home). The language spoken by the children best portrays the differences between the two cities. The children in Jerusalem study mostly in Arabic, English or French (depending on the school's affiliation with the Anglican or the French churches). In Tel Aviv, toddlers attending daycare speak Spanish while school-age children attending the municipality schools speak Hebrew.

These examples illustrate the importance of the effect of differences in ecological context on the groups studied. When looking at the process of acculturation, which is strongly influenced by the level of exposure to the host culture, these differences in ecological background seem to play a major role. As of now, both

communities are trying to preserve parts of their Latin American culture. In Jerusalem, the support of the Christian establishment and community relations with the Arab population has resulted in making the community hardly visible to the Jewish community (except for employment relationships). In Tel Aviv, where education, health and welfare services are received from the Jewish community, the illegal Latin American community is far more exposed and in interaction with the host Jewish culture and with the Israeli authorities.

The second part of the article explores the contribution of the case study to the investigation of acculturation stress and migrants' well-being. Many studies of migrants' well-being apply translated scales of psychological measurements. Underlying this approach is the universal view of acculturation stress (Berry and Kim, 1987; Honing, Gardner and Vesin., 1987; Grinberg and Grinberg, 1989; Mirsky and Kaushinsky, 1989). When well-being is studied from an ecological perspective, and not on scales and standardized measurements, variables which otherwise skip the eyes of researchers may be detected. The findings of this study are in accord with a relativistic notion of migration and well-being held by scholars who challenge the universal view. These findings point to a variety of variables which have not been taken into consideration in most quantitative studies dealing with the correlation between the immigration process and stress. For example, Antonovsky (1979) challenges the notion of universal coping, claiming that people differ in what they perceive as factors causing stress and those which do not, and react according to their individual interpretations and coping potential. Antonovsky also notes the importance of available resources. Our findings show the differences of resources between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv which may affect acculturation stress in these two locations. Berry and Kim (1987) suggest that there are differences in the way men and women in immigrant families respond to stress. This corresponds to our findings, showing that men and women differ in their experience of relations with host culture members, especially with their employers. Other scholars emphasize the role of attitudes of the socializing agents of the host culture (Horowitz, 1989). Our data suggest that the positive attitude of host culture members has aided in lowering acculturation stress.

The findings of our study challenge the universal notion of acculturation stress. With the exception of homesickness, most stress-related events described by the participants in this study are not related to the acculturation process. Most Latin American foreign workers who participated in this study expressed overall satisfaction with their lives in Jerusalem, despite their illegal status. Although not planned before their immigration, some expressed a strong desire to stay in Israel. This overall satisfaction may be linked to the motivation for immigration, the improved status and economic conditions, the community ties and maintenance of cultural atmosphere, as well as the generally positive encounter with host culture members. In another study by Shavar and Roer-Strier (1999), Latin American Jewish students reported their perceptions

regarding positive stereotypes that Israelis have of Latin Americans: trust-worthy and giving people. Their image in Israel is far better than in the US, Canada or Europe. In Canada, the Hispanic group is confronted by a racial attitude and Latin Americans are lumped in with an alleged "black underclass" (Dei, 1993; Bernhard and Freire, 1996).

Participants in the present study refer also to the fact that social mobility in Israel is perceived as much more flexible than in their own country, resulting in an optimistic view for their future. These perceptions were given an additional validity, since they were supported by similar host-culture members' perceptions, when triangulating both sources.

The literature of immigration claims that children in particular are regarded as being at risk, since they experience parental stress and related pathology (Maccoby, 1980), as well as the risk of being exposed to two, sometimes conflicting, socializing systems (Honing et al., 1987). At the same time, other scholars believe that maintaining both cultures may lessen the acculturation stress and result in better adjustment and improved well-being of the immigrant (e.g., Szapocznik, Kurtines and Fernandez, 1980; Ben-David, 1993; Kelly, 1992). When referring especially to children of immigrant families, some scholars claim that bi-cultural socialization may improve the child's well-being and strengthen his sense of self-identity (Greenfield, 1994).

The case of the children of the Latin American community in Jerusalem is very interesting in this respect, since they are socialized in more than two cultures. In addition to their contact with the Latin American community that contains members from different countries in South America, they are exposed to both Muslim Arab and Christian cultures and to the influences of their European nun and priest teachers and, to some extent, to the Israeli Jewish culture. Our findings suggest that in Jerusalem, where parents experience a low level of acculturation stress, nursing their Latin American identity by their active community life enables cultural diversity and complex experiences to strengthen their children's Latin American identity, rather than cause confusion and stress.

Our sample did not include many adolescents, a fact that increases the limitation of our interpretations. There is certainly much more to be investigated regarding the life of the children of the community. A comparison with the Tel Aviv community may enable us to gain more insights into the effect of multi-cultural backgrounds on children's well-being and identity. A follow-up study, examining future contacts within the community and with the host culture, is needed to shed light on these questions.

The relatively positive picture of the Latin American community may be attributed to its relatively small size and unique ecological aspects. Other migrant communities might present a different picture. According to

Appleyard's (1992) classification, the type of the migration in the case of the Latin American community is that of clandestine or illegal workers who came to Israel for the main purpose of finding jobs and earning money to send back to their families. The "pull" factor in this case was the job opportunities they heard were available in Israel. Our findings support Appleyard's call for specifying different types of migration. Based on our case study, we argue that even within a certain category, differences related to ecological conditions could be expected. Therefore, immigration cannot be studied as a universal global phenomenon but rather should be based on a relativistic approach.

On several occasions the perceptions and interpretations of the researchers did not match those of the foreign workers. Involving participants in the process of data analysis and asking them for their opinions concerning the analysis in general, and this project in particular, provided opportunity to discover these discrepancies. For example, when viewed from the researchers' perspective, the employment behaviour of the Latino-American community seemed to match the human capital hypothesis offered by Ngo (1994). Since these foreign workers do not speak Hebrew and had limited knowledge or information about employment opportunities in Israel, they find themselves at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy, working at low paid jobs such as household work for women and industry and construction jobs for men.

Interestingly, the foreign workers themselves do not seem to share the same perception. They perceive household and cleaning jobs to be well-paid and "jobs that university students do". The foreign workers report that a day's pay at these jobs equals a month's pay in their countries. Living expenses in Jerusalem's Arab sectors are relatively low and the foreign workers manage to save and send money back home to their families. Furthermore, the foreign workers' perceptions of Israel as an open society with possible upward mobility for them and for their children prevents them from considering themselves to be at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy, or seeing this as a permanent state.

Another example is the observation that the researchers tended to view legal foreign workers as having better lives and lower levels of acculturation stress, whereas the foreign workers and some of the landlords and nuns regarded the situation of the illegal foreign workers to be better. Other studies of foreign workers in Israel suggest that legal workers are much more dependent on their employers who held their passports and who were responsible for seeing them off and back to their countries, once their contract expired. Many legal workers are thus under supervision and less free to change occupational and housing conditions, send for their families and form their support systems and communities as do illegal workers (Rosenhak and Cohen, 1997).

This article has drawn attention to the importance of overcoming the difficulties that hinder the investigation of illegal foreign workers. It emphasizes the

contribution of studying specific populations of immigrants under a specific ecological condition. In our opinion, this line of investigation should serve as a warning against over generalization based on models and theories, such as those outlined above, which concern well-being and acculturation stress. Based on our experience, we strongly recommend clearly distinguishing and classifying the immigrant populations and their specific circumstances. Appleyard's typology can be used as an important guide for such distinctions of populations that are commonly grouped together in studies in the field of immigration.

The investigation of immigrant perceptions may be viewed by some as less scientific than the use of standardized scales. Our data, however, suggest the importance of such reports and the contribution of triangulating perceptions of foreign workers and host culture members. Informants' responses to researchers' analysis and research group-discussions regarding interpretation of data, are rarely reported in the literature.

A final note is directed to Israeli policy makers. Legal immigration rules impose restraints in an attempt to keep foreign workers isolated. However, many overcome these restraints by becoming illegal, a phenomenon which is difficult to control and which keeps increasing. Since 1990, when we began collecting data on illegal Latin American immigration, Israeli immigration authorities have changed their attitude, moving from encouragement of foreign workers (legal) while ignoring illegal workers, to discouragement of legal workers and persecuting illegal ones. Our informants who have families in Tel Aviv report incidents of deportation and cases of friends who have been jailed.

One of the characteristics of Israel as an immigration country is that while encouraging Jewish people to immigrate and granting them citizenship and financial support, non-Jewish foreign workers have no prospect of ever becoming citizens. They cannot become even temporary residents, a status that would have entitled them to basic education, medical and social rights. Our study suggests that a particular ecological context of Jerusalem helps the foreign workers keep their cultural identity and protects them from acculturation stress. However, Jerusalem hosts a minority of the foreign workers. Latin Americans interviewed in Tel Aviv reported they are aware of the better conditions offered in Jerusalem, but that they also know more job possibilities are open for them in the Tel Aviv area. The Jerusalem scenario is thus a limited scene. The non-existence of pragmatic, humanistic policy towards non-Jewish foreign workers creates a potential for serious social conflicts. The formation of communities is a natural consequence of illegal migration and must be taken into account by national and municipal authorities.

According to Borowski and Yanai (1997), the universal experience with temporary labour migration is that it becomes an irreversible process in which foreign workers either send for their families under family reunion, or form new

families in the host country. In both cases, a new community is created. Rosenhak and Cohen (1997) state that it is the illegal foreign workers who are the ones that start creating a community of their own. Being more independent than their legal counterparts (who are under the responsibility of their employers), the illegal workers can and must find ways of taking care of themselves, in terms of their children's education, health, cultural and social conditions, and are more likely to form a community.

The experience with foreign workers in Europe also points to the fact that temporary labour migration inherently gives way to some permanent settlement (Zeger de Beijl, 1997). The treatment accorded foreign workers in Israel does not meet the standards laid down by international laws (e.g., International Labour Standards (ILS), U.N. Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Foreign workers and Members of Their Families). According to these recommendations (as outlined in Zeger de Beijl, 1997), the integration of foreign workers and their family members in the Israeli society requires the development of special policies. The formation of communities is irreversible; community members tend to stay permanently and have special needs. Foreign workers may eventually contribute to the ethnic diversification of a pluralistic Israeli society. However, their integration cannot be achieved by leaving them to fend for themselves.

NOTES

1. It should be noted that the Latin American migrant community in Jerusalem has not been involved in any of these events.
2. Researchers spent long periods at the research sites, observing and documenting.

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VOIR SANS ÊTRE VUS:
LES TRAVAILLEURS ILLÉGAUX LATINO-AMÉRICAINS À JÉRUSALEM

Cet article décrit les mécanismes de la formation, les caractéristiques et l'évolution de la nouvelle communauté des travailleurs latino-américains en situation illégale à Jérusalem, dans une perspective écologique qui étudie le développement et le comportement humains dans les différents contextes de leur environnement socio-culturel.

Nous nous sommes attardés tout spécialement sur les motivations de ces travailleurs étrangers et les filières de migration empruntées par eux, leurs conditions de vie et de logement, leur taux d'embauche, leurs conditions de vie culturelle et sociale au quotidien. Nous avons également abordé les volets éducationnels et sanitaires des enfants et des familles, leur perception des relations avec la culture du pays d'accueil, leur conception du bien-être et leurs espoirs pour l'avenir.

Nos conclusions s'appuient sur l'étude des perspectives offertes par les travailleurs étrangers eux-mêmes, par les représentants des différents secteurs du pays d'accueil déjà familiarisés avec ces travailleurs, et par les chercheurs eux-mêmes. Elles expliquent comment la méthode de la triangulation permet de confirmer ou d'infirmer ces différentes perceptions.

L'article examine en outre la contribution que cette étude de cas apporte à l'enquête sur le stress dû à l'acculturation et sur le bien-être des migrants. Il souligne le besoin d'étudier des groupes spécifiques d'immigrants dans des environnements donnés.

VER SIN SER VISTO:
TRABAJADORES LATINOAMERICANOS ILEGALES EN JERUSALÉN

Este artículo describe la formación y características de una nueva comunidad naciente de trabajadores extranjeros latinoamericanos ilegales en Jerusalén, adoptando una perspectiva ecológica que examina el desarrollo y comportamiento humanos en los distintos contextos de ambientes sociales y culturales.

Nos hemos ocupado concretamente de las razones por las que los trabajadores latinoamericanos ilegales inician el proceso de migración, su alojamiento y condiciones de vida, la ubicación de sus empleos, las condiciones culturales y

sociales cotidianas, las cuestiones de educación y salud de hijos y familias, sus ideas acerca de las relaciones con la cultura de acogida y qué conceptos tienen sobre el bienestar y expectativas futuras.

Nuestros hallazgos se basan en la investigación de las perspectivas que presentan los propios trabajadores extranjeros, así como las de representantes de los diversos sectores de la cultura de acogida que conocen bien a esos trabajadores y de los propios investigadores, con lo que se muestra que el procedimiento de la triangulación da a esas percepciones una mayor validez o discriminación.

El artículo explora además cómo el estudio de casos contribuye a la investigación de las tensiones propias de la culturización y del bienestar de los migrantes, y encarece la necesidad de que se estudien poblaciones concretas de inmigrantes en condiciones ecológicas específicas.