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Excerpt

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## 1. Introduction: the dimensions of the problem

On the 17th of June in the year 1621, Czar Michael of Russia wrote to King James I of England, saying:

Whereas about 18 years past, in the time of the Emperor and greate Duke Burris Pheodorowich of all Russia there was wnt into your Majesties Dominiones fower young gentlemen of our Kingdome . . . to trayned upp in the English and Lattin tongs and soe to be retorned againe and delivered to the Lordes of our Counsell . . . [and these young men had been] deteyned and kept in England against their wills.<sup>1</sup>

Evidently Czar Michael was not satisfied with the action taken by King James to repatriate the Russian “exchange students,” for on January 4th, 1622, the Russian ambassador to England underscored the czar’s request with a petition to the Privy Council, attributing the apparent reluctance of Russian students to return to external factors – the “long troubles in our Country of Russia.”<sup>2</sup>

These efforts were futile. Of the original four students, two had since died, one was resident in Ireland, and the fourth, though agreeing to meet with the Russian ambassador, refused repatriation. The matter then came to the attention of Sir John Merrick, the English ambassador to Russia, who expressed sympathy for the migrant. Writing the Privy Council, Merrick indicated that he felt all that might properly be done had been done, and he now “humbly besought the Kinges Majeste that he [the Russian student] might not (against the law of Naciones) be forced out of the land.”<sup>3</sup>

In the years since that correspondence, the numbers of students engaged in what is now called international educational exchange and the problem of student nonreturn have both grown enormously. Among the states of the Atlantic community alone the number of foreign students enrolled reached almost a quarter million by 1965.<sup>4</sup> Their problems, no longer handled in the discreet diplomatic correspondence that characterized an earlier time, are widely discussed in international conferences and legislatures, and are reported in the daily press. Yet,

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despite the change in volume of educational exchange and in the form and forum of discussion, the basic issues remain those raised in the Anglo-Russian correspondence: the role of foreign study as an instrument of developing human resources; the ubiquitous problem of “defection”; the attempts to impute personal or structural reasons for nonreturn; the dilemma of national interests and private rights; the misunderstanding and strain that develop between governments as a result of nonreturn; and the loss felt by the sending country.

### **The student brain drain and the new migration**

Although immigration to the United States since World War II has been far smaller than it was in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it has brought in a population of a different kind, consisting of some of the most highly trained manpower of the sending countries. In recent years, governments around the world have shown increasing concern about the loss, through migration, of many of their best educated citizens. The term *brain drain* captures this shift in character from the migration of “huddled masses yearning to be free” to one of professional and technical workers. The brain drain has been a public policy issue, debated in the halls of the United Nations, the subject of diplomatic confrontations between nations losing manpower and those gaining manpower. Underlying much of this debate has been the assumption that the United States, particularly through its science and technology programs, has been luring foreign manpower to its shores. In effect, it has been proposed that the United States has been “subsidized,” in the form of human capital, by some of the very states helped through its foreign aid programs and/or investment by American firms.

As Brinley Thomas has commented, “. . . the diffusion process of the 19th century was based on proletarian mass migration, population-sensitive capital formation and portfolio foreign investment. . . . the scene is now characterized by professional elite migration, science-based capital formation, and direct foreign investment.”<sup>5</sup> The migration of the nineteenth century consisted largely of persons in whom their home countries had invested little and who could be expected to produce little. The migrants of the post-World War II period, carrying with them a significant part of their home countries’ national wealth in the form of their compatriots’ investment in their education, elicit concern. (The legal and illegal influx of less highly trained immigrants from Mexico,

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and, to a lesser degree, other Latin American countries, does not provoke such indignation on the part of their parent countries.)

Not only has the occupational mix of the migrant population changed; there has been a shift, too, both in the source of migrants and mode of immigration. It is the latter that is the focus of this study. This shift is due in part to changes in United States immigration laws. From 1882 through the 1920s, a series of acts that increasingly restricted migration to persons from Northwestern Europe were passed. However, the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 introduced a new preference category for immigrants of high educational and occupational quality,<sup>6</sup> as a consequence of which scientists, engineers, and physicians began to migrate in important numbers from less developed countries (LDCs). In 1956, 1,769 “high-level” migrants from the LDCs entered the United States, constituting 32.9 percent of the total migration of scientists, engineers, and physicians for that year. By 1962, there were 2,383 such migrants from the LDCs in the United States – 40 percent of the migration in these categories; after the immigration law was liberalized in 1965, the number and proportion of science, engineering, and medical migrants grew to 7,913 persons, or 51.8 percent of the total.<sup>7</sup>

The new wave of immigration reflects America’s new role in international education as well as the liberalization of immigration laws and procedures for a significant proportion of the new migrants who initially entered the United States as temporary visitors, usually students or trainees. In 1967, 23.9 percent of all scientific and technical immigrants had initially entered the United States as students. Thus almost a fourth of the foreign additions to America’s stock of high-level technical manpower came through the student route. This mode of migration, although insignificant for the developed countries (accounting for less than 4 percent of the total scientific migration from these countries), is a major source of the manpower from the LDCs. It accounted for 42.6 percent of their total scientific migration to the United States in fiscal 1967.<sup>8</sup>

For 1966 it was estimated that the cost to the United States of educating students from LDCs was 40 million dollars, whereas the cost to their home countries of educating students who migrated to the United States was 88 million dollars. The American educational “aid” program, then, showed a profit of 48 million dollars for that year alone.<sup>9</sup>

As a sociological theme, the new migration presents new research opportunities for social scientists. Because it involves the middle and

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upper echelons of a society, our attention must shift away from the “social problem” focus of so much migration research in the past.<sup>10</sup> We are not dealing with the “social pathologies” attendant upon, or thought to be attendant upon, the migration of huddled masses yearning to be free. If the new migrants constitute a social problem at all, it exists for their countries of origin rather than that of destination. Their home countries often perceive their migration as a loss of critical national assets. That they are considered valuable additions to their new countries is demonstrated in Chapter 6 of this monograph.

This orientation, in turn, forces a reconsideration of the issue of the brain drain and its causes. As other governments around the world have expressed their concern, in one way or another, about the migration of their best and brightest, the finger of blame has been typically pointed at the wealthy countries of the West, particularly the United States. With its enormous wealth and government-supported research programs, the United States has been seen as generating a greater demand for professional and technical workers than it could supply locally, and as subverting the very international educational exchange programs which were initiated to increase the scientific, intellectual, and administrative capacities of the LDCs. In all this discussion, relatively little thought has been given to the possibility that the student brain drain was at least in part caused by conditions and policies in the students’ home countries. In so far as the home countries were seen as part of the “problem,” the “fault” was presumed to lie in their relative poverty, which they could not alter, at least, in the short run.

It is precisely this neglected focus which is the major empirical and theoretical concern of this monograph. How, and to what extent, do home country conditions generate the student brain drain? What policies of the students’ home countries contribute to the brain drain, albeit inadvertently? What are the conditions within the students’ home countries that account for the propensity to migrate of particular classes of persons? And what are the conditions across countries that account for differences in rates of brain drain? By examining educational systems and occupational opportunity structures, we shall attempt to answer these questions.

#### **Israel and international student exchange**

This volume is devoted to a discussion and analysis of student migration in the contemporary context, with particular reference to Israelis in the

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United States in the 1960s. The choice of Israel as the sending country is based on the author's interest and concern, and the support and help of the officials and citizens of Israel in initiating, developing, and executing the study. The opportunity to work on the project was provided through the initiative of the Israel Government Bureau for Professionals in New York City, whose task it was to help to repatriate as many Israeli students as it could.

In 1956, 71 scientists, engineers, and physicians migrated to the United States from Israel. By 1963, the number of science, engineering, and medical immigrants had grown to 112, and by 1967, there were 206 migrants, of whom 71 - more than one-third - had initially come as students. The science students who became migrants were over one-fourth of the total Israeli student migration for that year.<sup>11</sup> These immigrants were a significant proportion of the new entrants into their respective fields in Israel.

Israel has been a large-scale sender and receiver of students. In 1965, 3,000 Israelis were studying abroad and over 1,000 foreigners were studying in Israeli institutions.<sup>12</sup> Foreign students in Israel were of two kinds: students from the less developed countries of Africa and Asia, and Jewish students from the United States, Western Europe, and Union of South Africa, and Oceania. The presence of students from the less developed world had resulted from an Israeli foreign policy decision to counter the attempts of Arab countries to isolate Israel from its neighbors and the world community at large. Israeli training missions had been located at one time or another in most of the Third World, and students from these countries were brought to Israel at the initiative of the Israeli foreign office.<sup>13</sup>

The decision to welcome Jewish students from the Diaspora precedes the establishment of the State of Israel. When the Hebrew University was founded in Jerusalem in 1925, its mandate included serving as a cultural center for world Jewry, and Diaspora Jewish students have always been found there. In more recent years the programs have expanded, partly in the hope that recruiting Jewish students from abroad would facilitate the migration of Jews from the prosperous countries of the West.

To judge from reports in the Israeli press and discussions with Israelis in all walks of life, Israel's participation in international educational exchange did not have full support in all quarters. The Israeli public, aware of the political character of Israel's educational commitment to Third World nations, often wondered if these efforts were adequately

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appreciated and worth the heavy expenditure of money, especially when it read of hostile votes in the United Nations. Foreign office personnel felt that they were making an investment for the long run, but the man in the street was often not convinced. By 1973, Israel's educational activities in the LDCs virtually came to an end.

As for Jewish students from abroad, many Israelis have felt that foreigners are given better conditions than Israeli students and that they take places away from Israeli students, who are then forced to study abroad. The attitude toward foreigners thus has related in part to the sense of a scarcity of places for its own student body and concern with the risks entailed in study abroad.

Many Israeli students have sensed that their studying abroad does not meet the unqualified approval of their countrymen at home. Their disquiet has been expressed in excessive justification of study abroad and through direct response to allegations made against them. One student, in a letter to the editor of the major Labor newspaper, wrote in 1966: "The public and the newspapers do us a grave injustice when they describe us as if we left Israel in order to flee from the arduous conditions of Israel, to find wealth in the U.S.A."<sup>14</sup> Another student writing from the United States complained that currently it is believed that those who are studying here (i.e., the United States) are emigrants, or that they did not succeed in Israel and are studying in a football college. Another typical response to the perception of negative sentiments insists that "it is improper to condemn study abroad as long as Israel is not able to offer higher education to all those who seek it."<sup>15</sup>

These perceptions of ambivalence about study abroad seemed to be accurate enough in the 1960s. A journalist who interviewed Israeli students abroad came away with the impression that, "In the main, the Israeli student [who goes abroad to study] feels that he is an 'oddball,' whose sojourn abroad is looked upon unsympathetically."<sup>16</sup> The Israelis who study abroad "are called 'defectors,' 'careerists,' 'money grubbers'; they are looked at with a jaundiced eye. . . ."<sup>17</sup> The complaints against Israeli students abroad were of several types. Some alleged that the Israeli students did not invest enough time presenting Israel's case in its conflict with the Arab nations; others, that "the students preclude all contact with local Jewish communities."<sup>18</sup> Many in Israel who were concerned about maintaining the solidarity of world Jewry felt that the Israeli student abroad had the obligation of maintaining ties with his fellow Jews. Reports from the United States, Switzerland, and the

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United Kingdom all indicated that Israelis preferred to stay among themselves and not mix with the local Jewish populations. The issue of this insulation from Diaspora Jewish communities was often interpreted as a reflection on the “Jewishness” of the young generation of Israelis; yet a more perceptive reporter noted that the Israeli students were under great pressure to complete their studies, and often had little money, and so had to work to support themselves. Thus, the contact that they developed with local Jewish communities tended to become instrumental relationships, as when Jewish communities engaged the Israeli students as teachers, youth leaders, etc.

But the central concern and source of criticism leveled at Israeli study abroad has been the issue of migration. Israeli attitudes toward migration are embedded in the Hebrew language. Migration *into* Israel is called *aliyah* (i.e., “going up”); migration *out of* Israel is called *yeridab* (i.e., “going down”). Migrants out of Israel are called *yordim*, a term of opprobrium and moral condemnation. Those who migrate are seen as casting a vote against the Third Jewish Commonwealth. Nonreturning students represented a serious threat to the primary moral ideal of the State of Israel. One journalist wrote, “Israel is a country of in-migration not out-migration; therefore, migration from other countries is not comparable to that which occurs from Israel.”<sup>19</sup> This is a pervasive theme in discussions of Israelis abroad. Although it may have undergone modification in recent years, it was particularly acute in the mid 1960s.

Yet, despite the heated discussion of the problem of study abroad in the Israeli press, no one actually knew very much about its dimensions.

A large body of research on foreign students was already available at the time that this study was launched. In the 1950s, the Social Science Research Council had sponsored a series of monographs on foreign students, with the primary focus on attitude change “toward members of racial, religious, or national groups in situations of intergroup contact.”<sup>20</sup> An excellent bibliography published in 1962 listed ninety-nine doctoral dissertations and master’s essays based on research about foreign students. Of these dissertations and essays, only two dealt directly with the problem of student migration; the others were concerned with psychosocial adjustments in the United States.<sup>21</sup> (The brain drain was apparently a problem of the 1960s.) Some of the speculative literature was suggestive, but the state of empirically grounded knowledge of the issues was inadequate. The Israel Government Bureau for Professionals of the Israel Ministry of Labor, in an effort to suggest policies that the

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government might adopt to bring more students home, commissioned a study of the situation to determine the number of students in the United States, their reasons for coming here, and the factors that brought them back home or caused them to migrate. Israel felt that it needed this information to develop appropriate public policy.

**Basic sociological problems associated with the brain drain**

The public policy agenda of Israel and of the other nations involved raises a set of analytic problems that has been the subject of research and theoretical concern within sociology; these problems are the major analytic foci of this study. First is the study of migration per se. What are the determinants and consequences of migration for different populations? How do individuals decide to migrate? What are some of the social structural facts that influence their decisions? How do these facts vary from population to population? What is the differential effect of these facts among various populations?

Second, a growing body of theory and research has focused on the school systems as key agents in the allocation and distribution of life chances. These life chances, in turn, relate to questions of social and geographic mobility of the participants and reflect as well upon the social structures in which the actors perform. The study of mobility in modern societies is in large measure the study of the social sources and consequences of educational opportunity structures and of individual performance within school systems. The schools serve as “gatekeepers” for the educational system and for the larger society as well. In this study, we shall be extending that focus to that of geographic mobility in a world arena. Theoretically, then, this study is as much one of educational systems as it is of migration, and, most particularly, it is a study of the articulation of several societal subsystems and their impact on migration decisions. The empirical data come from questionnaires completed by individuals, and thus the empirical unit of analysis is the individual and aggregates of individuals. The explicandum is their migration decision; the explicans will be sought in the social structures of their nations. In effect, we are using social structure to explain migration, and using migration as a window onto social structure. Among the broad range of entities termed social structure, we are particularly interested in the educational system and in the professional opportunity structure.



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The third major question is that of social intervention. Given the constraints set by ongoing complex social systems, what are the “leverages” available for influencing behavior? Specifically, what are the policy alternatives open to the governments involved and how do we measure the effectiveness of policies that are in operation or contemplated? What are the social costs and benefits of various policy alternatives? What are the methodologies appropriate for the measurement of costs and benefits?

In the next chapter (Chapter 2), we examine the ways in which the Israeli educational system influences the students’ decisions to study in the United States. The analysis focuses on the students’ motives for study abroad and shows how these motives are shaped by success or failure in the Israeli educational system. Following that, in Chapter 3, the interrelationships of academic performance, employment opportunities in Israel, and repatriation are analyzed. A model is developed for tracing the effects of academic achievement on the Israeli professional occupational opportunity structure and the variations in major sectors of Israeli society. Chapter 4 describes Israeli and American brain-drain policies and suggests alternative policies. In Chapter 5, we generalize to other foreign student groups the model developed to account for Israelis in the United States. In the last chapter (Chapter 6), we examine some of the implications of study abroad and migration for educational and development policies of the nations involved.

## 2. Coming to America

In 1961, the Institute of International Education (IIE) reported that there were 877 Israeli students attending American colleges and universities. By 1964, the IIE census counted 1,382 Israelis, and in 1966–7 the number had grown to 1,878. There were hundreds of other Israelis enrolled in training programs in American industry, hospitals, and government.

America has been the major destination for Israelis studying abroad. French statistics for 1966–7 show that only 218 Israelis were enrolled, whereas British statistics indicate that 241 Israelis matriculated during 1967–8. The expatriate Israeli student population in the United States is a heterogeneous group. They are to be found in all the major universities in the United States, with particularly heavy representation in California and the New York–Boston “megalopolis.” They are enrolled in virtually all the disciplines represented in the American university, with substantial proportions in natural science, social science, and engineering. In terms of academic quality, one can find in their midst both scholars and dilettantes.

What is there about the United States and Israel (and most particularly, what is there about the school system of the two countries) which brings so many Israelis of such varying background and competence to the United States? One way of answering these questions is to ask students to explain their behavior in such a way that their explanations and reasons for study abroad would reflect on the constraints set by Israeli society, particularly the structure of opportunity within the Israeli educational system. Analysis of student reasons or motives for study abroad then becomes an examination of the impact of two school systems on the lives of the students. By way of introduction to the analysis of the motives of Israeli students and the educational opportunity structures, we turn briefly to a review of some findings on motives for study abroad.