

“The Things that Make Me Different Are the Things that Make Me Me”: Cultural Identity and Ethnicity and Their Impact on Youth Workers’ Job Perception

Simcha Getahun^{1,2}

¹Faculty of Education, The Kibbutzim Seminar, Tel-Aviv, Israel

²College of Management Academic Studies, Rishon LeZion, Israel

Email: mamar.simcha@gmail.com

How to cite this paper: Getahun, S. (2022). “The Things that Make Me Different Are the Things that Make Me Me”: Cultural Identity and Ethnicity and Their Impact on Youth Workers’ Job Perception. *Advances in Applied Sociology*, 12, 657-673. <https://doi.org/10.4236/aasoci.2022.1210046>

Received: September 4, 2022

Accepted: October 28, 2022

Published: October 31, 2022

Copyright © 2022 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

The study examines the association between ethnic-cultural identity and role perception among youth workers (YW) who work with at-risk adolescents in Israel of three minority groups—Arabs, immigrants from the CIS, and immigrants from Ethiopia. The four acculturation strategies—assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization, manifest in an individual’s identity and emphasize the preservation of culture and the willingness to adapt components of the majority culture. Minority-group YWs working with adolescents of their ethnic group are expected to be agents of change, directing the adolescents to act by the rules and customs of the majority society. This expectation baffles YWs since they are torn between universal professional values and minority group norms. Their belongingness to the ethnic groups hinders neutral, non-aligned action, and they struggle to identify with the message they are expected to deliver to their clients on behalf of their employers. The research hypothesis assumed that minority-group YWs would experience more significant role conflict than their majority-group peers since their job does not include intercultural mediation. However, the findings are counter-intuitive, as they indicated that role conflict is not associated with the YW’s origin or group’s values but with the work climate within the YW group. This conclusion suggests the importance of organizational culture and its effect on the role-conflict experience. The paper also explores the findings regarding acculturation strategies and the three minority groups, presenting essential components of each group’s conflicting role.

Keywords

Youth Workers, Ethnic-Cultural Identity, Role Perception, At-Risk Youth,

1. Introduction

Youth workers are a part of youth development. The fundamental purpose of youth work is to enable young people to develop holistically, namely, mentoring, guiding, and supporting them through developing their physical, emotional, intellectual, and social skills as they become adults.

1.1. Youth Workers

Youth workers (YW) are employed in youth-case services in out-of-home, community, and residential school settings. They accompany adolescents individually, in groups, and in the community and maintain direct, ongoing, and strong contact with them (Bar-On Cohen, 2007).

Adolescents can identify with YWs, who are significant adult figures, and the personal relationship between them plays a primary role in the adolescent's life. Ideologically motivated, YWs view themselves as society's messengers and mediators between young people's inner world and society, as their roles include rehabilitation and mediation. Rehabilitation focuses on the adolescent's inner world and is at the center of educational activities, aiming to direct adolescents and point them toward the path of regular development. Mediation bridges the adolescent and the demands of the surrounding system, for example, against addictive, affective-emotional, and sexual behavior (Bar-On Cohen, 2007; Jaszchinski, 2014).

1.2. Target Audience—Youth at Risk

The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (State of Israel, 1989) defines children and adolescents at risk and in distress as children whose living conditions, in their family or surroundings, prevent them from realizing their rights. These conditions include economic hardship, family crises (parents' severe illness or death, separation), immigration, belonging to a minority group, and disability. Other conditions are learning disabilities, moving between settings, and life in a poor or dangerous environment.

Addressing different ethnic-cultural backgrounds is part of living in a heterogeneous society such as the Israeli one. In the Schmidt (2006) Report on children and adolescents at risk, the definition of a minority group's risk was based on financial and behavioral parameters, integration, victimization, removal from home, and situations requiring psychiatric help. Special emphasis was given to children and adolescents (and their families) who are forced to experience intercultural transitions, based on the idea they are more likely to suffer distress and risk situations than other social groups.

The Israel National Council for the Child (2019) reported that at the begin-

ning of 2017, the Israeli population included some 250,000 immigrant children (those born abroad or born to parents who immigrated to Israel after 1990) about 9.8% of all children in Israel. However, their school dropout rate was 27%, compared with the national rate of 1.4%. At the beginning of 2016, 24.4% of immigrant children were poor, a rate lower than the 31.2% overall national rate but higher than that of Jewish children (21.2%). In 2019, the police charged 25,381 minors, 35% of whom non-Jewish. Although constituting 28% of the 12-18-year-old population, non-Jewish minors held 33% - 37% of new police records in 2015-2020 (Ethiel, 2020).

1.3. Minority-Group Youth Workers

Using minority-group YWs to work with adolescents of their own group is one way of dealing with at-risk youth (Schmidt, 2006). The adolescents are members of different sectors of Israeli society, with the Jewish sector including religious, Haredi, and secular adolescents, as well as immigrants from Ethiopia and the CIS; the non-Jewish populations include Arabs (Muslim and Christian), Bedouin, and Druze (Shemesh, 2003). Youth enhancement services have been employing workers from all these sectors, with the expectation, in Israel and worldwide, that these YWs would become agents of change, directing adolescents from immigrant cultures to manage within the rules and customs in the majority host society (Roffman, Suarez-Orozco, & Rhodes, 2005). In Israel, the tendency is to recruit youth workers from minority groups to work with detached or at-risk adolescents from the same minority groups. YWs from minority groups, who interface with the host culture and the culture of origin, are the means to help adolescents bridge the cultural difference between their minority group and that of the host society.

The combination of status, role, and culture is sensitive, with the potential for three types of collision between values of the majority culture and those of the minority culture (Goldberg, 2000). The first type is a collision between ostensibly universal and professional values and the values of the minority culture (e.g., regarding gender equality). The second is a conflict regarding the YWs' ethnic-cultural identity and preferences and the difficulty of maintaining neutrality between groups. Third, the YWs, who are part of the minority group, may find it challenging to identify with some of the messages the employers expect them to impart. These collisions can lead to conflict, ambiguity, and difficulty in the worker's role perception (Biddle, 1986).

1.4. Ethnicity and Acculturation

Ethnicity, as defined by anthropologists, refers to common ancestry, so the experience of ethnic belonging is related to descendants sharing a sense of affinity with each other (Verkuyten, 2000). Ethnic identity has a modicum of stability because it relates to previous generations and future generations. Many minorities feel committed to their ethnic identity if only to assure continuity of prior generations' traditions and pass them along to future generations (Liebkind,

1992). Therefore, ethnic identity is the individual's sense of self in terms of being a member of an ethnic group. Ethnic identity can be manifested in labels that individuals give each other and the way they present others with their group belonging, identification, shared values, and attitudes toward the ethnic group to which they biologically belong (Liebkind, 2006). Thus, the way individuals perceive their social belonging to an ethnic group is essentially subjective and combines knowledge of belonging to the group with the meaning and value they attribute to this belonging.

Hence, belonging to an ethnic group is not a detached biological fact but includes a cultural affinity. When we seek to learn about individuals' ethnic-cultural identity, we must examine the degree to which they show interest in the cultural tradition of the history of their group. We must also learn to what degree they actively participate in religious and other ceremonies and customs, whether they speak the language or have marital ties to the group (Phinney, 1992; Sharaby, 2022).

Acculturation occurs when groups or individuals from various cultures come into ongoing, immediate contact with each other, generating changes in the original patterns of one or both cultures (Berry, 2003, 2006; Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). Acculturation is how an ethnic-cultural minority adjusts to the dominant culture and changes its beliefs, values, and behaviors due to contact with the new culture and its members (Berry, 1993). It is often seen as the degree to which attributes of the host society are absorbed, and the minority-group immigrants take root in them. Acculturation can be used to describe how much the minority group absorbed from the majority culture; in this case, the minority group is traditionally rejected by society (Johnson, Bowker, & Cordell, 2004).

Acculturation also emphasizes the degree to which individuals, groups, or classes within society choose to adopt components of a different culture. This adaptation of ideas, words, values, norms, behaviors, and/or institutions is the perspective of acculturation that will be the focus of the present article (International Organization for Immigration, 2004). Berry (1970, 2003) listed four acculturation strategies that can be manifested in an individual, assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization. The strategies emphasize two main issues, cultural preservation through identity and identification with one's heritage and willingness to adopt components of the majority culture.

Berry & Sam (1997) found that minority groups worldwide clearly prefer acculturation through integration over the other three strategies. Two exceptions, perhaps due to the relationships and attitudes of the majority toward the minorities, were the Turkish minority in Germany (Piontkowski, Florack, Hölker, & Obdržálek, 2000) and Turks of low socioeconomic status in Canada (Ataca & Berry, 2002). As integration can take place only where the majority is open and willing to receive new and strange social variances, Berry (1970, 2003) suggested that mutual compatibility is needed, which must include acceptance of the minority group by the majority (multi-culturalism). Therefore, integration

can happen only in societies that meet several prerequisites, among them broad acceptance of cultural variety (positive multi-cultural ideology), relatively low levels of prejudice (limited ethnocentrism), mutual positive attitudes between the ethnocultural groups (no inter-group hate), and a sense of connectedness or identity and identification with broad society by all individuals and groups. At the same time, [Berry \(1970, 2003\)](#) maintained that separation is applicable only if the members of the ethnocultural group want to preserve the group's cultural heritage. [Berry et al. \(1989\)](#) noted other limitations when choosing acculturation strategies, but these are beyond the scope of the present paper. However, one should mention that physical characteristics can distance people from society, as was the case of Koreans who tried to integrate into Canada or Turks in Germany, where the different physical appearance increased prejudice and discrimination, creating reservations about assimilation. This limitation could be relevant to Israel regarding the possible strategies employed by Jews of Ethiopian origin, who are dark-skinned.

1.5. Ethnic-Cultural Identity and Role Perception

Role perception used in Role theory ([Biddle, 1979](#)) means that each of us carries roles and statuses, and the way we operate within these roles is an outcome of the expectations transmitted by those around us. Roles are composed of three distinct components—role definition, role perception, and role behavior. Role definition is the formal demands of the role defined by those in the role player's sphere of activity. Role perception is the individual's understanding of the role, and role behavior is the actual conduct and actions of the role player ([Biddle, 1979](#); [Biddle & Thomas, 1966](#); [Levinson, 1959](#); [Linton, 1936](#)).

In the present article, role will be viewed as a continuum that begins with expectations transmitted to the role player, continues with the role player's subjective interpretation, and ends with the person's behavioral abilities and limitations. Accordingly, we may assume that the role perception of YW, who work with adolescents who are of their own ethnic origin, would be affected by: a) Expectations of their employers and their community, which may not be compatible; b) The cultural values with which they identify; c) The behavioral patterns that could be affected by their degree of identification with the culture of origin or the host culture.

[Biddle \(1986\)](#) offered a different point of view, suggesting that role perception is an outcome of social processes in five distinct dimensions, functional, organizational, symbolic-interactive, structural, and cognitive.

The functional, organizational, and symbolic-interactive dimensions are especially relevant to the present study:

- **Function:** A role serves social functions. Minority-group YWs are employed as a bridge to adolescents of their own ethnic-cultural group. Thus, they can represent the majority culture and draw the adolescents closer to it ([Roffman, Suarez-Orozco, & Rhodes, 2005](#)).
- **Organization.** The organizational dimension determines how the role's func-

tions will be materialized, and this role could contradict the ethical indications that workers bring from their cultural world to the encounter with the organization (Stone-Romero, Stone, & Salas, 2003). Thus, the organizational level could enhance functional conflicts that originated in ethical-cultural gaps. For example, the organization can establish a therapeutic routine that the group could interpret as an affront to their norms.

- Symbolism-interaction. The YWs' interaction with their surroundings is rife with expectations that shape their role expectation. This interaction can be especially complex among YWs who work with adolescents in communities where they are involved personally, socially, and through the family since the YW is on the line between the welfare organizations and their clients. Disharmony, discord, or antagonism between all those who affect role perception could lead to role conflict, a lack of clear direction as to the perception and execution of the role, and this conflict can lead to confusion and uncertainty (Levinson, 1959; Linton, 1936; Yousef, 2002).

When workers do not receive clear messages regarding expectations, role ambiguity can follow and can also be an outcome of workers misunderstanding their job description (Chiu, Lai, & Snape, 1997). In the present study, two additional variables contributing to role ambiguity are introduced, the nature of human service and multi-cultural complexity. Multi-faceted organizations often lack a strict, unequivocal guiding principle of hierarchical management (Hasenfeld, 1983), and the chances are that workers will experience role ambiguity. When unclear hierarchy meets the complexities of multi-culturalism, we could expect minority-group YWs working with adolescents from their own group to experience higher levels of role conflict and role ambiguity than YWs who are not members of a minority nor focus on minority groups.

Peterson et al. (1995) studied mid-level managers from 21 countries, looking at role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload. In all three measures, national differences were more significant than differences in personal characteristics such as gender, organizational structure, or form of ownership. Sagiv & Schwartz (2004) examined the association between the same three measures and three measures defined by Schwartz (1999): a) The degree to which individuals believe in values of assimilation into the collective or in maintaining their autonomy; b) The degree to which individuals believe that hierarchy is a social necessity or in equality and freedom of action; c) The degree to which individuals believe in their need to control the world or adapt themselves and live in harmony with events around them. The findings revealed a significant association between workers' cultural values and their stress on the job (conflict, ambiguity, and overload).

2. Research Aim and Hypotheses

2.1. Research Aim

The research proposes a predictive model of the role-conflict experience among

YWs working with at-risk youth in Israel, where the YWs are members of minority groups working with adolescents from minority groups.

2.2. Research Hypotheses

Research findings consistently indicate that people who adopt integration or assimilation strategies show better results for the measures presented in this study, and those who choose marginalization show lower results (Liebkind, 2001; Peeters & Oerlemans, 2009; Lu, Samaratunge, & Härtel, 2012). Based on analogies with these findings, two research hypotheses will be examined:

a) Youth-care workers who use acculturation strategies of integration and assimilation will report lower levels of role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload.

b) Youth-care workers who use separation and marginalization strategies will report higher levels of role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload.

3. Method

A convenience sample and snowball sample were used to recruit 247 YWs. The participants belonged to four distinct ethnic groups: Muslim and Christian Arabs ($n = 64$), immigrants from Ethiopia ($n = 60$), immigrants from the CIS ($n = 61$), and native-born Israeli Jews ($n = 62$).

The study implements quantitative research methods to achieve the research aim. It systematically investigates the phenomenon of role perception by gathering quantifiable data via questionnaires and performing statistical analysis.

3.1. Research Tools

Two research tools, Role Perception Questionnaire (Rizzo et al., 1970) and Multi group Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992), were used to measure role conflict, ambiguity, and adolescents and youth's ethnic identity. Statistical calculations were conducted using stepwise linear regression analyses. This method was chosen due to its ability to manage large amounts of potential predictor variables and select the best predictor variables from the available options. The study identified 19 variables as predictors of role conflict (depicted in the following section).

3.2. Procedure

Prior to data collection, the researcher approached directors of organizations that work with at-risk youth and asked them to distribute questionnaires among their staff. This request did not yield sufficient participants, and the researchers contacted the other participants directly and asked for their consent. Initially, the researcher approached personal acquaintances and then continued with the snowball method. Data were collected between November 2007 and March 2008. The average time for filling in a questionnaire was 45 - 50 minutes. The questionnaires were distributed individually by the researcher and a research assistant.

4. Findings

A regression analysis was conducted to predict values of role conflict. Variables with a significant relationship to the level of role conflict in one or more of the groups were added to the independent variables (e.g., coping styles and perception of work environment). Accordingly, 19 variables were entered as predictors of role conflict: 1) Number of hours of direct contact with the adolescents; 2) Acculturation strategy; 3) Individualism vs. collectivism; 4) Long-term orientation; 5) Inter-peer consolidation; 6) Supervisors' support; 7) Autonomy; 8) Task orientation; 9) Work pressure; 10) Innovation; 11) Active coping; 12) Planning; 13) Instrumental support; 14) Emotional support; 15) Re-definition and growth; 16) Turning to religion; 17) Expression and externalizing emotions; 18) Denial; 19) Behavioral detachment.

The findings yielded three essential points for discussion:

- Separation was found to be a frequent strategy in some groups. It was highest among Arabs and immigrants from the CIS. Integration was most frequent among immigrants from Ethiopia. Marginalization and assimilation were of particularly low frequency in all three groups.
- No meaningful, sweeping differences were found in the dependent variable (role perception) between the four groups.
- The three cultural measures examined (tendency toward traditionalism or modernism, long-term orientation, and individualism vs. collectivism) were found to be marginally predictive of the dependent variable. However, of the independent variables, coping styles and perception of the work environment were found to be important for their predictive abilities.

5. Discussion

The present study is an outcome of a “gut feeling” from fieldwork experience in the ELEM Association’s multi-cultural unit for youth care. ELEM is a nonprofit organization dedicated to treating and transforming the lives of troubled youth. There was an intuitive hinting at an especially strong emotional involvement among professionals from minority groups in Israeli society who work with adolescents from their own groups. Minority-group workers tend to be involved in activities enhancing and empowering the population for whom they care. However, they may also be frustrated by their encounter with the bureaucracy and the values represented by the system that employs them, perhaps even leading to fatigue and professional burnout.

Based on this gut feeling, the literature review examines professional texts about minority-group professionals working with members of their own group. The literature findings address two groups of variables, role perception and burnout. Role perception (Biddle, 1986) includes three measures, role ambiguity, role conflict, and a sense of role overload. Burnout (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) includes fatigue, client depersonalization, and a sense of injury to one’s self-fulfillment at work.

The literature also notes that the degree to which minority-group workers could experience difficulties with role perception and burnout is not only related to being members of a minority group but is also an outcome of the nature of their ethical baggage (Hofstede, 1983; Ramirez, 1991). Finally, the difficulties are related to the strategy used in the encounter between the workers' culture of origin and the majority culture; namely, the choice to adopt the majority culture, assimilation, reject it, separation, combine the two, integration, or reject both cultures, marginalization (Berry, 2003). According to Berry et al. (2006), integration yields the best outcomes in adjustment, physical health, emotional satisfaction, self-esteem, quality of work performance (Liebkind, 2001), and subjective quality of life (Zheng, Sang, & Wang, 2004).

The findings are particularly intriguing. Contrary to the intuitive expectation, they revealed that the role-conflict experience is not necessarily related to the YWs' origin or the values of their ethnic-cultural group. Contrarily it is a product of the climate formed within the groups of YWs and is indicative of the importance of organizational culture and its effect on the role-conflict experience. Diskiene & Goštautas (2013) emphasized the importance of congruence between the values of individuals and the organization. They examined how congruence affects workers' satisfaction and quality of work. The researchers discovered that while satisfaction is closely associated with congruence between individual and organizational values, no association prevails between work satisfaction and workers' level of functioning. Kumar (2012) studied individual and organizational values and their association to commitment to the organization and found that people who attributed importance to such values as openness, decency, logic, and honesty demonstrated a greater commitment to the organization. Furthermore, people who thought the organization enhanced these values showed commitment to their workplace.

In the present study, no acculturation strategy was noticeably more frequent than the others. However, as mentioned, separation was more prevalent among Arabs and immigrants from the CIS, and integration was most frequent among immigrants from Ethiopia. At the same time, the other two strategies, marginalization and assimilation, were of low frequency in all three minority groups.

Furthermore, the findings do not confirm the hypothesis that YWs who adopt an integrating or assimilating strategy will report the lowest levels of role ambiguity and conflict. Nor do the findings support the hypothesis that YWs whose strategy is marginalization will report higher levels of role conflict and role ambiguity. However, the picture changed when the research hypotheses were examined for each group separately. Thus, the following section presents the research finding for each research group.

5.1. Research Findings and Their Meaning for Each Research Group

No evidence was found for the benefits of integration or assimilation or the disadvantages of marginalization among immigrants from Ethiopia and Arabs. Nev-

ertheless, the strategies were prevalent among immigrant adolescents from the CIS. Youth workers from the CIS who used integration or assimilation had lower levels of fatigue and depersonalization than their peers from the CIS who used separation or marginalization. Although this finding confirms the research results, the data also yield a contradictory finding, in contrast to the hypotheses, YWs from the CIS who use assimilation and integration strategies also report the highest levels of role conflict.

Two issues emerge from these findings: First, why was there an association between the YWs' acculturation strategies and the dependent research variable (role perception) only among YWs from the CIS and not among Arabs and immigrants from Ethiopia? Second, why is there congruence between the findings and the hypotheses for two of the three burnout measures, and which findings contradict the research hypotheses regarding role perception?

The differences between the three groups may explain the association between acculturation strategy and dependent variable only among CIS workers. The most distinct group is the Arabs, an educated group with training closest to the fields of education and therapy. There is a high rate of experienced workers; many work with other Arabs, and a high percentage are supervised and guided by Arab professionals. Almost half of the Arab YWs tend to "choose" separation. The data indicate that Arab YWs have worked in an Arab environment for many years. Their encounters with the Israeli majority culture are relatively limited compared to the two immigrant groups, so the question of intercultural encounters is of less importance to their work. It seems that of the three conflicts that [Goldberg \(2000\)](#) listed, values and norms, identity and preferences, and expected messages, the most problematic one for Arab YWs is the personal commitment based on acquaintances. As [Haj-Yahia, Bargal, & Guterman \(2000\)](#) noted, one of the prominent characteristics of the Arab establishment in Israel is that it is based on a system of personal ties and personal, familial, political, and even religious commitments. Because of this structure, YWs could find themselves entangled in commitments other than those focused on the client or employer. Furthermore, [Abdalla \(1988, 1991\)](#) claimed that the unique social structure of the Arab sector in Israel works in a way that increases the workers' commitment to social constructs and not to the organization's formal structure. The findings and arguments underline the explanation that there is a good probability that Arab YWs will experience greater role conflict than the immigrants.

A similar analysis should be conducted for YWs of Ethiopian descent. The central, most prominent finding is that 76.7% of these YWs reported assimilation or integration strategies, perhaps indicating that their experience of the possible difficulties arising from the conflict between identifying with the majority's messages and the minority's values is not as strong. This result could also explain why acculturation strategy was not found to be important among YWs of Ethiopian descent. A methodological explanation could also be offered: If there were 60 YWs of Ethiopian descent, and close to 77% of them ($n = 46$) used assimilation or integration, only 14 YWs were left for comparison in the other

groups, yielding small samples. This situation could lead to a Type II statistical error, where the differences examined are statistically significant, but the small samples prevent seeing this significance.

When participants were divided by acculturation strategies, partial confirmation of the research hypotheses regarding differences in the dependent variables was found for the third group, YWs who were immigrants from the CIS. [Goldberg \(2000\)](#)'s three conflicts could offer an explanation. First is the conflict between universal professional values and the norms in the minority society. In the case of the CIS, the universal values are relatively close to those of their own group. The literature indicates that in 1998 structural changes took place in CIS countries, especially Russia, which included recognition of poverty and social problems such as alcoholism. With reliance on the party and the country no longer possible after the Communist era, individuals and social organizations took over the initiation of social welfare projects ([Gurov, 1998](#)). Gurov maintained that the social and political changes indicated greater closeness to universal values and that the structural events were simultaneous with a new humanistic spirit that called for new social functions. [Templeman \(2004\)](#) claimed that these changes became the ethical foundation for developing social work, and its associated universal values, as a profession in some CIS countries.

We may assume that if these processes took place in the USSR, immigrants from the CIS in the 1990s would have understood the need for support when facing Israeli welfare and absorption policies. They would identify with the need to receive professional help and recognize social work as an aid system with humanitarian values. This assumption can be backed by the willingness of students from the CIS to choose social work studies in Israel, to improve the conditions within the community ([Spiro, 2001](#)). Additionally, [Ben-David \(1996\)](#) noted the relative social and ethical proximity shared by all European social workers, not necessarily from the CIS, with immigrants from the CIS.

[Goldberg \(2000\)](#)'s second conflict, between professional neutrality and group values, would seem less of a problem for YWs from the CIS. Israel is now home to immigrants from 15 CIS countries.¹ Thus, unlike other relatively small minorities, there is less of a chance that YWs would be personally acquainted with their clients, as happens among Arabs or other smaller groups in Israeli society. Furthermore, immigrants from the CIS had families of no more than four ([Ministry of Immigration and Absorption, 2009](#)), so the likelihood of running into relatives is small. From 1989 to 2014, 1.04 million people immigrated to Israel from the CIS ([Lan, 2020](#)), and in 2014 they numbered 1.184 million ([Schepps, 2016](#)).

[Goldberg \(2000\)](#)'s third conflict relates to the possible conflict between the degree to which the YWs relate to the messages they receive from Israeli society and their identification with the values of the culture of origin. In the present study, the rate of YWs who chose the separation strategy was particularly high,

¹Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belorussia, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldavia, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

41.7%. The rate is even higher if we add the 15% who chose marginalization or non-involvement with issues of identity. The data indicate that the encounter between the values of the culture of origin and the new values is of special meaning to this group and could have a pivotal relative impact on the YWs' role perception and even level of burnout.

5.2. Role Conflict among Users of Integration or Assimilation Strategies: Unexpected Findings

The findings contradicted the research hypothesis that people who adopt integration or assimilation strategies would experience less role conflict. Having explained why the acculturation strategy is an important variable, we must clarify this contradiction, why do those who had chosen integration and assimilation report greater role conflict?

A possible explanation is that those who adopted separation (41.7% of the CIS-origin YW study population) came to work with a firm set of values they did not question. In contrast, those who chose other strategies, primarily the assimilators and integrators, are more exposed to the contradiction between their cultural value system and Israeli values. This reason could explain the stronger sense of conflict they report. If this explanation is correct, it is important because it attests not only to the benefits of the integration and assimilation strategies but also points to their disadvantages.

5.3. Frequency of Using the Separation Strategy among Arabs and Immigrants from the CIS

This article is based on studies (Haj-Yahia, Bargal, & Guterman, 2000; Abdalla, 1988, 1991) that claimed that the geopolitical and social confrontation between Israeli Jews and Israeli Arabs could yield a relatively higher frequency of the separation strategy among Arabs. This claim is based on studies conducted among Turks in Germany (Piontkowski, Florack, Hölker, & Obdržálek, 2000) and Turks of low socioeconomic status in Canada (Ataca & Berry, 2002). Both studies demonstrated that the Turkish minority preferred separation to other strategies. Berry (1991, 1999) suggested that because of the majority groups' relationships with the minorities and attitudes toward them, integration can happen only when the majority group is open and willing to accept and include new, foreign cultural varieties. Following Berry, it may be that many Arab participants preferred separation to integration due to negative mutual positions between the ethnocultural groups (inter-group hate) and relatively high levels of prejudice between Arabs and Jews.

However, the current findings also show that among immigrants from the CIS, there was a high rate of YWs who adopted the separation strategy. A possible explanation could derive from a survey presented on a study day devoted to immigrants from the CIS (Brandman, 2006), showing that among young people, there is a clear trend toward separation. Thus, Russian is the primary language of communication with friends and family, even for adolescents and young

adults. Only 30% of 12 - 24-year-olds reported that they speak only Hebrew or more Hebrew than Russian. The use of the Russian language increased with age – 50% of people aged 25 - 34 reported that they speak only Russian or more Russian than Hebrew. The rate went up to 64% in those aged 35 - 49 and those over 50. 80% reported speaking only Russian or more Russian than Hebrew. Focus-group discussions revealed that youth from the CIS is sensitive to stigmas in the Israeli and immigrant sectors. They describe Israelis with stereotypic language as “Jew boys, punks, fresh, reckless drivers,” and some veteran Israelis as “modest who want to evolve”. These adolescents described most immigrants from the CIS as cultured and educated, with a minority that are “criminals who drink lots of vodka and curse in Russian”. Answers to questionnaires that the focus-groups participants filled revealed that the declared emotional affinity to Israel is higher than the declared emotional affinity to the Russian-speaking community (average of 7.7 vs. 5.9, respectively), while their sense of integration into Israeli society is moderate to low (average of 6.8).

Age is a major factor in the sense of integration into Israeli society, a sense that is especially low among people 35 and older. As for affinity, 24% of the participants in the survey described themselves as not having integrated into Israeli society and do not have a sense of belonging to it. However, they also feel no sense of belonging to the immigrant community, despite clearly defining themselves as Russian. Overall, the participants have identified neither with Israeli society nor with the Jewish immigrants from the CIS, they see themselves as Russians. These may be the hard-core separatists, as revealed in the present study.

The finding that Arabs and immigrants from the CIS prefer the separation strategy is of paramount significance, as it is highly probable that the emotions and experiences of YWs are transferred, at some level, to the adolescents with whom they work. Especially if the YWs become meaningful to these adolescents. In such cases, separation could be transferred from worker to adolescent by social learning and identification. While not the focus of the present paper, this issue is important and requires the attention of the YWs’ employing organization, as it can increase the sense of alienation among adolescents of two minority groups in Israel, Arabs and immigrants from the CIS.

6. Conclusion

YWs of various ethnocultural groups use different acculturation strategies. However, despite these differences, no essential variance was found among adolescents of the various groups in their perception of their work environment and coping styles, nor were differences noted in difficulties in their role perception or the degree of burnout. At the same time, essential differences were found between native-born Israelis and the members of the minority groups in the variables examined.

The research findings are noteworthy and significant since, contrary to intuition, the results indicated that role conflict is not necessarily related to the youth

worker's origin or cultural group's values. Instead, role conflict stems from the work environment, namely, the reality and experience created among the employees. Therefore, it implies the importance of the organizational culture and its effect on role conflict.

Furthermore, the paper emphasizes value change due to interculturalism. Namely, it presents a predictive model for role conflict among youth workers who are members of minority groups and are engaged in the treatment of members of minority groups.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

- Abdalla, I. A. (1988). Work Environment, Job Structure and Behavior Orientation as Predictors of Skill-Utilization in Kuwait: The Moderating Effect of Ability. *Genetic, Social and General Psychology Monographs*, *114*, 1973-1989.
- Abdalla, I. A. (1991). Social Support and Gender Responses to Job Stress in an Arab Culture. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, *6*, 273-288.
- Ataca, B., & Berry, J. W. (2002). Psychological, Sociocultural, and Marital Adaptation of Turkish Immigrant Couples in Canada. *International Journal of Psychology*, *37*, 13-26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207590143000135>
- Bar-On Cohen, E. (2007). The Professional Worker in Informal Education. In S. Romi, & M. Schmida (Eds.), *Informal Education in Changing Reality* (pp. 194-218). Magnes. (In Hebrew)
- Ben-David, A. (1996). Cross-Cultural Difference between Russian Immigrants and Israeli College Students: The Effect of the Family on the Sense of Coherence. *Israel Journal of Psychiatry and Related Sciences*, *33*, 13-20.
- Berry, J. W. (1970). Marginality, Stress and Ethnic Identification in an Acculturated Aboriginal Community. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *1*, 239-252. <https://doi.org/10.1177/135910457000100303>
- Berry, J. W. (1991). Managing the Process of Acculturation for Problem Prevention. In J. Westermeyer, C. L. Williams, & A. N. Nguyen (Eds.), *Mental Health Services for Refugees* (pp. 189-204). US Government Publishing House.
- Berry, J. W. (1993). Ethnic Identity in Plural Societies. In M. E. Bernal, & G. P. Knight (Eds.), *Ethnic Identity: Formation and Transmission among Hispanics and Other Minorities* (pp. 271-296). State University of New York Press.
- Berry, J. W. (1999). Intercultural Relations in Plural Societies. *Canadian Psychology*, *40*, 12-21. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0086823>
- Berry, J. W. (2003). Conceptual Approaches to Acculturation. In K. Chun, P. Balls Organista, & G. Marin (Eds.), *Acculturation: Advances in Theory, Measurement and Applied Research* (pp. 17-37). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/10472-004>
- Berry, J. W. (2006). *Immigrant Youth in Cultural Transition: Acculturation, Identity, and Adaptation across National Contexts*. Erlbaum. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780415963619>
- Berry, J. W., & Sam, D. L. (1997). Acculturation and Adaptation. In J. W. Berry, M. H. Segall, & C. Kagitcibasi (Eds.), *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology: Vol. 3. Social*

- Behavior and Applications* (2nd ed., pp. 291-326). Allyn & Bacon.
- Berry, J. W., Kim, U., Power, S., Young, M., & Bujaki, M. (1989). Acculturation Attitudes in Plural Societies. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, *38*, 185-206. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1989.tb01208.x>
- Berry, J. W., Phinney, J. S., Sam, D. L., & Vedder, P. (2006). Immigrant Youth: Acculturation, Identity, and Adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, *55*, 303-332. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.2006.00256.x>
- Biddle, B. J. (1979). *Role Theory: Expectations, Identities and Behaviors*. Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-095950-1.50008-1>
- Biddle, B. J. (1986). Recent Developments in Role Theory. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *12*, 67-92. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.12.080186.000435>
- Biddle, B. J., & Thomas, E. J. (1966). *Role Theory: Concepts and Research*. Wiley.
- Brandman, R. (2006). *Integration and Separation in the Immigrant Sector: Survey Results Presentation*. Caviar in Pita: Conference on Successful Marketing to the Russian Sector. Ramat Gan, Israel. (In Hebrew) <http://www.brandman.co.il/articles.php?artcleid=194>
- Chiu, C. K., Lai, G., & Snape, E. (1997). Differences of Job Perception: What Happens When Supervisor and Subordinate Perceptions Disagree? *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *8*, 644-659.
- Diskiėne, D., & Goštautas, V. (2013). A Fit between Individual and Organizational Values and Its Implications for Employees' Job Satisfaction and Performance. *Ekonomika*, *92*, 93-107. <https://doi.org/10.15388/Ekon.2013.0.1412>
- Ethiel, Y. (2020). Thirty-Five Percent of Adolescent Criminal Police Records Are Opened in Arab Society. *Walla News*. <https://news.walla.co.il/item/3381026>
- Goldberg, M. (2000). Conflicting Principles in Multi-Cultural Social Work. *Families in Society*, *81*, 12-21. <https://doi.org/10.1606/1044-3894.1088>
- Gurov, V. (1998). Experience of Social Work with the Family in Stavropol Krai. *Russian Education and Society*, *40*, 86-95. <https://doi.org/10.2753/RES1060-9393400286>
- Haj-Yahia, M. M., Bargal, D., & Guterman, N. B. (2000). Perception of Job Satisfaction, Service Effectiveness and Burnout among Arab Social Workers in Israel. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, *9*, 201-210. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2397.00129>
- Hasenfeld, Y. (1983). *Human Service Organizations*. Prentice-Hall.
- Hofstede, G. (1983). National Cultures in Four Dimensions: A Research-Based Theory of Cultural Differences among Nations. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, *13*, 46-74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00208825.1983.11656358>
- International Organization for Immigration (2004). *International Migration Law: Glossary on Migration*.
- Israel National Council for the Child (2019). *Immigrant Children in Israel* (7th ed.). Ministry of Immigration and Absorption. (In Hebrew)
- Jaschinski, K. (2014). *Youth Work and Inclusion in Israel*. EUROMED.
- Johnson, C. Y., Bowker, J. M., & Cordell, J. K. (2004). Ethnic Variation in Environmental Belief and Behavior. *Environment and Behavior*, *36*, 157-186. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013916503251478>
- Kumar, N. (2012). Relationship of Personal & Organizational Values with Organizational Commitment. *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, *48*, 306-314.
- Lan, S. (2020). Thirty Years Have Passed Since the Great Wave of Immigration from Russia: This Is How Israel Has Changed Beyond Recognition. *Globes*. <https://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did=1001315925>
- Levinson, D. J. (1959). Role, Personality and Social Structure in the Organizational Set-

- ting. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 58, 170-180.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/h0040261>
- Liebkind, K. (2001). Acculturation. In R. Brown, & S. Gaetner (Eds.), *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Intergroup Processes* (pp. 386-406). Blackwell.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470693421.ch19>
- Liebkind, K. (2006). Ethnic Identity in Acculturation. In D. L. Sam, & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation* (pp. 78-96). Cambridge University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511489891.009>
- Liebkind, L. (1992). Refugee Mental Health and Cultural Identity. *Psychiatria Fennica*, 23, 47-58.
- Linton, R. (1936). *The Study of Man*. Appleton-Century.
- Lu, Y., Samaratunge, R., & Härtel, C. E. T. (2012). The Relationship between Acculturation Strategy and Job Satisfaction for Professional Chinese Immigrants in the Australian Workplace. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 36, 669-681.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2012.04.003>
- Maslach, C., Jackson, S. E., & Leiter, M. P. (1996). *The Maslach Burnout Inventory* (3rd ed.). Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Ministry of Immigration and Absorption (2009). (In Hebrew).
<http://www.gov.il/firstGov/topNav/Subjects/SImmigration>
- Peeters, M. C. W., & Oerlemans, W. G. M. (2009). The Relationship between Acculturation Orientations and Work-Related Well-being: Differences between Ethnic Minority and Majority Employees. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 16, 1-24.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014832>
- Peterson, M. F., Smith, P. B., Akande, A., Ayestaran, S., Bochner, S., Callan, V. et al. (1995). Role Conflict, Ambiguity, and Overload: A 21-Nation Study. *Academy of Management Journal*, 38, 429-452. <https://doi.org/10.2307/256687>
- Phinney, J. S. (1992). The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure: A Scale for Use with Adolescents and Young Adults from Diverse Groups. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 7, 156-176. <https://doi.org/10.1177/074355489272003>
- Piontkowski, U., Florack, A., Hölker, P., & Obdržálek, P. (2000). Predicting Acculturation Attitudes of Dominant and Non-Dominant Groups. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 24, 1-26. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767\(99\)00020-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767(99)00020-6)
- Ramirez, M. (1991). *Psychotherapy and Counseling with Minorities: A Cognitive Approach to Individual and Cultural Differences*. Pergamon Press.
- Redfield, R., Linton, R., & Herskovits, M. J. (1936). Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation. *American Anthropologist*, 38, 149-152.
<https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1936.38.1.02a00330>
- Rizzo, J., House, R. J., & Lirtzman, S. I. (1970). Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity in Complex Organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 15, 150-163.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2391486>
- Roffman, J. G., Suarez-Orozco, C., & Rhodes, J. E. (2005). Facilitating Positive Development in Immigrant Youth: The Role of Mentors and Community Organizations. In F. A. Villarruel, D. F. Perkins, L. M. Borden, & J. G. Keith (Eds.), *Community Youth Development: Practice, Policy, and Research* (pp. 91-116). Sage.
- Sagiv, L., & Schwarz, N. (2004). *Do Values Influence Behavior? Individual Differences and Temporary Accessibility*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Schepps, M. (2016). Selected Data on the Population of Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union, on the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Wave of Immigration. *HedHaulpanHeHadash (Echo of the New Ulpan)*, 105, 62-83. (In Hebrew)

- Schmidt, H. (2006). *Report of the Public Committee for Examining the Situation of At-Risk and Distressed Children and adolescents*. State of Israel. (In Hebrew)
- Schwartz, S. H. (1999). A Theory of Cultural Values and Some Implications for Work. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 48, 23-47. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1999.tb00047.x>
- Sharaby, R. (2022). Cultural Syncretism in Definitional Ceremonies of Iranian Immigrants. *Advances in Anthropology*, 12, 112-129. <https://doi.org/10.4236/aa.2022.123009>
- Shemesh, A. (2003). The Challenge of Multi-Culturalism in Youth Enhancement. *Menituk Leshiluv (From Detachment to Integration)*, 13, 9-48. (In Hebrew)
- Spiro, S. E. (2001). Social Work Education in Israel: Trends and Issues. *Social Work Education*, 20, 89-99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615470020028391>
- State of Israel (1989). The Convention on the Rights of the Child. *Rashumat*, 1038. (In Hebrew)
- Stone-Romero, E. F., Stone, D. L., & Salas, E. (2003). The Influence of Culture on Role Conceptions and Role Behavior in Organisations. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 52, 328-362. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1464-0597.00139>
- Templeman, S. B. (2004). Social Work in the New Russia at the Start of the Millennium. *International Social Work*, 47, 95-107. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872804039387>
- Verkuyten, M. (2000). The Benefits to Social Psychology of Studying Ethnic Minorities. *European Bulletin of Social Psychology*, 12, 5-21.
- Yousef, D. A. (2002). Job Satisfaction as a Mediator of the Relationship between Role Stressors and Organizational Commitment: A Study from an Arabic Cultural Perspective. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 17, 250-266. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940210428074>
- Zheng, X., Sang, D., & Wang, L. (2004). Acculturation and Subjective Well-Being of Chinese Students in Australia. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 5, 57-72. <https://doi.org/10.1023/B:JOHS.0000021836.43694.02>