

Transnational Identity of French Immigrants Employed in French speaking Companies

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Abstract

This study examined the establishment of transnational identity among French immigrants to Israel who are employed in French speaking companies (mainly call centers). We examined the effect of this employment pattern on the immigrants' sense of identity, and their feeling of belonging to Israeli society. The study was conducted in two stages, combining two research methods. In the first stage, we performed qualitative research through interviews with 31 immigrants from France. In the second stage, we conducted an internet survey that was distributed to 355 French immigrants.

Two central themes arose from the qualitative study. First, most immigrants consider their job as a source of income only, and not as a path for career or personal development. The second theme is the feeling of temporariness and flexibility that accompanies their work. These findings indicate possible consequences for the dual linkage of the immigrants to their country of origin and to Israel and present their ethnic segregation. The findings of the quantitative survey supported the findings of the qualitative interviews, and indicated the closed ethnic nature of the French immigrants in the workplace as well as in more general social parameters. The French immigrants employed in French-speaking companies lived in neighborhoods with large concentrations of French-speaking immigrants, and most of their friends were French speakers. These immigrants were not fluent in Hebrew. But despite the cultural closure of the French immigrants, the study did not find a clear difference in the sense of Israeli identity and feeling of belonging to Israeli society between those employed in French-speaking companies and those employed in Hebrew-speaking companies. In general, French immigrants feel very much at home in Israel, they are very satisfied with their lives in Israel, and they plan to stay in Israel. The paper ends in an attempt to explain these findings thru a discussion of the particular cultural identity formed by the French immigrants, an identity that combines their Francophone identity to their religious Jewish identity.

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