

# Living With Jews: A Tale of Two Countries

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In this paper we will juxtapose two research questions which in fact are different aspects of one question. The primary question is how do we account for the fact that Jews tend to live or want to live with other Jews? The derivative questions are (a) how do we account for Jewish neighborhoods and (b) how do we account for voluntary migration or aliyah to Israel. Are aliyah and moving into a Jewish neighborhood functional equivalents? Are they variant outcomes of the same underlying forces or are they significantly and perhaps even radically different? Each of these issues has generated a substantial body of research but to the best of our knowledge the questions have been treated as separate inquiries. We believe that our understanding of both phenomena will be enhanced by our dealing with both questions as sub-questions of the primary issue of Jews living with Jews.

To turn the question around can we think of Israel as a large Jewish neighborhood and can we think of Jewish neighborhoods as bits of Israel? On the individual level, do the same factors motivate American Jews (or more narrowly, based upon our data set, New York Jews) to want to live with other Jews in the same neighborhood and seriously consider migrating to Israel?

Both the question of aliyah and the question of ethnic neighborhood segregation have developed substantial bodies of literature. The aliyah literature has dealt largely with the differences between *olim* and non-*olim* drawing respondents from two populations, *olim* and general American Jewish population lists or statistics. The major finding of this body of literature is that Jewishness, variously defined and operationalized, is a, or the major factor distinguishing *olim* from the rank and file of American Jews. (For a recent review of the literature see Dashefsky and Lazerwitz, 1983.)

The question of the creation, persistence and decline of ethnic neighborhoods has been a significant item on the research agenda of American sociology at least from the time of the early Chicago school's work of the 1920s. This body of literature has been developed largely through the use of aggregated areal statistics, usually based upon census tracts. Restricted to data collected by the census, investigators have had little to work with beyond generation (through the second generation), non-English mother tongue and socioeconomic status. As a purely behavioral phenomenon it has not been possible to determine the extent to which neighborhoods reflect choice or external discrimination, though Lieberman and Carter (1982) have begun developing statistical procedures to make that distinction.

We shall be analyzing aliyah and neighborhood preferences rather than actual behavior. We shall compare these preferences with respect to aspects of Jewishness, and socialization. We shall also approximate historic time through an age cohort analysis in a later section.

## Aliyah and Jewish Neighborhood – Functional Equivalents

### The 1981 Cross-Sectional Analysis

In all, 18% of the 4,505 New York Jewish heads of households interviewed in 1981 reported that they had seriously considered aliyah. This percentage is in marked contrast with the number of American and New York Jews who actually go on aliyah (less than 1%) but it is consistent with the level of interest in aliyah among South African Jews recently reported by DellaPergola (1984). Our second major dependent variable was part of a series of questions where responding heads of households were asked “How important is each of the following factors in making a neighborhood attractive to you and to your household?” The specific item was “Having a sizeable number of Jews in the neighborhood”. Over half of the responding population said that living with a sizeable number of Jews was very important to them, with less than one in five saying that it was not at all important. Clearly, much if not most of Jewish neighborhood formation is voluntary. We are not dealing here with enforced ghettos. There is a general tendency for people to want to live with their co-ethnics and Jews are the most likely of all the ethnic groups studied to express a desire to live ‘among their own’. (See Cohen, 1974, pp. 255–257.)

Our primary independent variables consist of indicators of Jewishness. There are many ways by which we might measure Jewishness. (For a summary of this literature, see Himmelfarb, 1982.) Following Lenski (1963) we note that Jews have a cultic or sacred life and a secular life. Participation in the normatively prescribed sacred activities of the religious group Lenski terms associational involvement. Religious groups also tend to be endogamous and to serve as the basis for friendship and other expressive ties. This aspect, Lenski refers to as communal involvement. We have used household ritual performance as our indicator of associational involvement. For communal involvement, we have used friendship patterns as our indicator. Associational Jewishness ties one to the Jewish past and tradition, its hopes and aspirations. Communal Jewishness ties one to fellow Jews in the here and now.

Our associational/ritual scale consists of nine items ranging in ‘popularity’ from attending a Passover Seder to observing the Fast of Esther. The friendship question read “Of your three closest friends, how many are Jewish?” Almost three out of four said that all three of their closest friends were Jews with one in eight reporting that only one or not even one of their closest three friends were Jews. Here, as in Lenski’s work a generation earlier, Jews score much higher on the communal scale than they do on the associational scale. That is, Jews show a high level of solidarity with other Jews but show relatively low levels of commitment to traditional Jewish religious practice or piety.

In Table 1 we present the relationships between communal and associational Jewishness and our measure of neighborhood preference and aliyah and other forms of Israel connectedness. Ritual behavior predicts both the desire for Jews in the neighborhood and aliyah while the pattern of Jewish friendships predicts neighborhood but does not predict aliyah. While, in the main, elements of Jewishness tend to be correlated with one another, here we have a significant instance of a lack of correlation.

What is there about aliyah that calls for a commitment to Jewish tradition yet finds

TABLE 1. THE EFFECTS OF JEWISHNESS ON NEIGHBORHOOD CHOICE AND ISRAEL CONNECTEDNESS, NEW YORK, 1981

	Associational Jewishness			Communal Jewishness		
	Religious traditionalism			No. of Jewish friends		
	Low	Medium	High	0-1	2	3
Jews in neighborhood (% very important)*	32	65	91	18	33	64
Considered aliyah (%)*	9	17	48	15	13	19
Visited Israel						
Once (%)	20	24	26	16	18	24
Twice or more (%)	8	13	42	5	9	19
Contributed to Israeli cause (%)	18	36	52	13	24	34

a. Correlation between the two dependent variables  $r = .14$ .

involvement with a circle of Jewish friends largely irrelevant? What is there about Jewish neighborhoods that makes both traditional Jewish religious behavior and friendship patterns relevant? Whichever way we pose the question it is clear that aliyah and neighborhood are in part the same and in part different. In both instances, a positive response indicates a desire to live with Jews. They are both expressions of Jewish solidarity. They both decline with each generation in America as part of the general pattern of acculturation and assimilation characteristic of ethnic groups as we shall show below. Expressing an interest in aliyah goes one step further; in addition to Jewish 'tribal' solidarity it means wanting to live in an environment which is built around Jewish culture, history and consciousness. To live among Jews in a New York neighborhood may simply mean living among the familiar and avoiding the unknown and perhaps threatening. Aliyah is more than a matter of living with Jews; it is a matter of living Jewishly.

To refine our understanding of aliyah, we have introduced two additional measures of Israel connectedness, visits to Israel and financial contributions. The visits-to-Israel variable has two response categories, 'once' and 'twice or more'. Neither of our Jewishness measures predicts a single visit to Israel. Visiting Israel once is part of the general social sophistication of New York Jews with the means to make the trip. It is much like a trip to Italy or Greece. Multiple visits, however, are another story. They reflect commitment beyond that of casual tourism. Thus, multiple visits are strongly predicted by associational Jewishness and are somewhat predicted by communal Jewishness.

The third measure of Israel connectedness deals with contributions over and above those to the UJA. Associational Jewishness predicts contributions at about the same level as it predicts aliyah and multiple visits. Communal Jewishness is a weaker predictor of contributions but is a stronger predictor of contributions than it is of the other modes of Israel connectedness.

In sum, associational Jewishness is a stronger and more consistent predictor of all modes of Israel connectedness than is communal Jewishness. However, the less direct the mode of Israel connectedness, the stronger the relationship between Israel connectedness and communal Jewishness.

### Some Effects of Childhood Socialization

The difference between aliyah and neighborhoods becomes clearer when we take a step back into the life histories of our respondents and examine the impact of their early socialization on their current concerns. The empirical question is to what extent (if any) does early socialization have an impact on considering aliyah and neighborhood choice, net of the proximate independent variables, ritual behavior and friendship patterns. We shall examine the impact of the level of religious traditionalism of the respondents' parental home and their Jewish education. Since the socialization variables and the measures of associational and communal Jewishness can be expected to be correlated with one another, we shall present the zero-order and adjusted relationships using Multiple Classification Analysis.

Table 2 presents our socialization findings. In our analysis of the effects of schooling we found that the various modes of supplemental education had much the same effect as no Jewish schooling at all. For the sake of simplicity then, we have classified our respondents as having had or not having had yeshiva or day school Jewish education. Both family and school show an effect on the dependent variables when unadjusted. When the relationships are adjusted for respondents' associational and communal Jewishness, we find that the effect of the parental home is reduced. That is, the effect of familial socialization on neighborhood choice and even more on aliyah is largely mediated by adult Jewishness. There is some interaction effect (not shown)

TABLE 2. THE EFFECTS OF MAJOR SOCIALIZATION INSTITUTIONS ON NEIGHBORHOOD CHOICE AND ALIYAH, NEW YORK, 1981

	Unadjusted		Adjusted for associational and communal Jewishness	
	Jews in neighborhood (% very important)	Considered aliyah (%)	Jews in neighborhood (% very important)	Considered aliyah (%)
<b>Parental ritual observance</b>				
Low	30	12	48	18
Medium	53	15	55	16
High	80	32	63	24
<b>Yeshiva education</b>				
No	52	14	55	15
Yes	76	49	56	41

such that when parental ritual is high and respondent ritual and/or Jewish friendship are low, there is an enduring effect of parental ritual on neighborhood choice. Jews who have grown up in a traditional Jewish environment but who are no longer traditional themselves still express a strong preference to live with other Jews. They live with and act upon a diffuse, uninstitutionalized residual Jewishness.

The effect of Jewish schooling is much more targeted. Yeshiva education has no direct effect on neighborhood choice net of communal and associational Jewishness. The choice of a Jewish neighborhood is based upon sentiment rather than ideology; thus it is responsive to the more generalized, diffuse and affective socialization of the family. Yeshiva education however, has a very strong effect on aliyah considerations net of the other major variables. The Jewish day school has become a major creator of Zionist commitment. The emergence of the Jewish day school as a source of Zionist socialization and ideological commitment (albeit in altered form) is part of the changing relationship of the traditional Jewish community to Israel, to Zionism and to aliyah. This is an issue which we shall deal with in the next section along with our discussion of changes in the traditionalist community.

### **Neighborhood as Metaphor: Some Historical Changes in Aliyah Over Time**

Historically, Zionism was attacked by Orthodox Jews. The overwhelming majority of the Orthodox rabbinate and lay leadership opposed Zionism on purely theological and socio-theological grounds. Theologically, Zionism was viewed as a rebellion against the divine decree. As tradition put it, "Because of our sins, we have been exiled from our land". Most Zionists were perceived (correctly) as secular nationalists. One group of Orthodox Jews organized themselves as a religious Zionist group (*Mizrachi*) but *Agudat Yisrael*, the far larger Orthodox Jewish political movement in Europe, was opposed to Zionism as were the rank and file of rabbinic luminaries. While settlement in the Land of Israel is one of the 613 commandments given to Israel at Sinai, the majority of Orthodox Jews felt in conscience that they could not cooperate with Jewish secularists and atheists motivated by nationalism, rather than the will of God. As late as the mid-1950s an Orthodox leader pointed to practical religious problems of aliyah, over and above ideology. Among these were the difficulty of providing an adequate religious education for one's children and of studying Torah. (See Rosenheim, 1954, p. 68, cited in Laqueur, 1972). Pioneering Israel was viewed as an inappropriate Jewish 'neighborhood' by many Orthodox Jews.

For traditional Jews to function as such, certain key institutions had to be available locally. These included religious schools, appropriate synagogues, ritual baths (*mikvaot*). The question of the availability of these institutions is one of the key issues linking our two research questions. The reluctance of traditional Jews to settle in Israel was in part motivated by concern for a Jewish 'infra-structure'. There is a conservatism built into the migration and mobility calculations of traditional Jews. Their choice of an area in which to live is limited in part by the availability of key traditional Jewish institutions.

Thus it was that many Orthodox leaders of the late nineteenth century and even later opposed migration to the United States perhaps as much as they opposed aliyah

to the Land of Israel. America was a land in which “even the stones were *treyf* (impure)” declared one Orthodox rabbi. The rabbinic elite did not migrate to the United States. The *sheyne yidden*, the Jews with learning and lineage, remained in Europe rather than risk the impiety of America. Their perception of America was correct. There were few Jewish schools and no higher level yeshivoth (Schiff, 1966; Rischin, 1962). New York was a new Jewish neighborhood and as such it did not have the institutions necessary to meet the needs of the most traditional Jews; thus the most traditional Jews did not migrate to New York as they did not migrate to Israel. The Orthodox were in favor of Jewish population concentration but in the older areas of settlement. They avoided new areas whether in the golden land or in the promised land.

What we are reporting here is in fact a manifestation of a more general rule of social ecology. As individuals and groups acculturate they tend to move away from their traditional areas of settlement. The less traditional, more acculturated tend to move to new areas, whether these be countries or neighborhoods. The less acculturated tend to remain in the old areas, the areas of ethnic concentration, to live and to want to live among their own people. There are parallel implications for this general formulation. The more Jewish Jews are likely to live in Jewish neighborhoods. Second, as Israel has changed from being a pioneering new society to a stable highly institutionalized society, we would expect that the religiously traditional fraction among voluntary immigrants should increase.

Recent studies of aliyah have reported this trend. American *olim* or potential *olim* are now more likely to be traditionally religious than are the rank and file of American Jews. Antonovsky and Katz (1979) have shown that pre-eminence of the traditionally religious among American *olim* is a recent phenomenon. They report a shift from secular Zionist to traditional religious motives for aliyah since the establishment of the State of Israel. Our data reflect the same pattern (Table 3).

Regarding the relationship between interest in aliyah and age, we find that the younger the respondent, the more likely he is to report that he has ever been interested in aliyah. The effect of age however is strong only among the traditionally religious. Age can reflect both the individual's position in the life cycle and his cohort of socialization. Our question asked whether the respondent ever seriously considered aliyah. Thus, older persons are more 'at risk' leading to a probable positive relationship between ever considering aliyah and age, other things being equal. The negative relationship in the data reflects, we believe, age as cohort rather than as life cycle. Ignoring, at this stage, the further effect of generation (see below), the data are consistent with the thesis that Zionist sentiment is a new phenomenon among traditional Jews and is found most particularly among those in the younger age cohorts. Increasingly pessimistic about the prospects of a full Jewish life in America and increasingly attracted to Jewish opportunities in Israel, the traditionalists have become the major element in American aliyah.

If we examine the natural history of Jewish neighborhoods, we find that the earliest settlers are the least traditional but as the neighborhood matures, more traditional Jews settle in the area. The less traditional do not need the institutions which require large numbers of Jews for their existence. They feel more comfortable with non-Jews than do the traditional Jews and are more likely to have non-Jewish friends. As the number of Jews begins to grow the stage is set for the in-migration of more traditional

TABLE 3. PERCENT WHO CONSIDERED ALIYAH, BY AGE AND RELIGIOUS TRADITIONALISM, NEW YORK, 1981

Religious traditionalism	Up to 24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Total	25	20	22	19	13	13
Low	10	13	16	8	5	6
Medium	33	22	20	21	16	15
High	69	64	67	49	39	35

Jews while the less traditional (or their children) begin to think of moving on to new neighborhoods. This pattern holds whether the 'neighborhood' is as small as a few square blocks in New York City or as large as the State of Israel. The early settlers moved away from a traditional way of life while the later settlers move into the neighborhood to develop or find a traditional way of life. The influx of the traditional settlers is bound to upset the earlier non-traditionalists. The very way of life which they sought to avoid by moving into the then new neighborhood springs up again before their eyes. For them, the neighborhood is changing.

### Two Summary Models

To summarize our findings, we have run regression equations on our two major dependent variables. These equations include all of the independent variables we employed as well as generation in the United States, a variable that was in our discussion by implication (Table 4). We find that aliyah is a function of religious traditionalism (= associational Jewishness), intensive Jewish education, youth and early generation in America. The modal potential *oleh* is a relatively young first or second

TABLE 4. PREDICTION EQUATION FOR NEIGHBORHOOD CHOICE AND ALIYAH, NEW YORK, 1981

	Neighborhood choice		Aliyah	
	R	Beta*	R	Beta*
Communal Jewishness (friends)	.371	.246	.058	-
Associational Jewishness (ritual)	.446	.314	.278	.185
Jewish education (yeshiva)	.148	-	.286	.180
Parental ritual	.319	.106	.149	-
Age	.131	-	-.100	-.175
Generation	-.205	-	-.159	-.150
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.265		.144	

a. p < .001.

generation Jew with a good Jewish education who is himself traditional in his religious practices.

The Jew who seeks out other Jews in choosing his neighborhood in the New York area tends to be religiously traditional, involved in a circle of Jewish friends and comes from a traditional Jewish family. The zero-order relationship with age disappears when controlled for generation and the zero-order relationship with generation disappears when controlled for parental religious traditionalism. While it appears to be the case at first blush that older Jews seek out fellow Jews, it is not age per se that matters but rather generation, which in turn is mediated by the Jewishness of the respondent and his parents.

Jewish neighborhood choice has much in common with the general pattern of ethnic neighborhood formation reported in the literature. Aliyah shares some of the characteristics of neighborhood choice but does so in a transformed fashion. For some of the traditionalists aliyah has arisen in response to a perceived decline of America as an area of Jewish settlement and its replacement by Israel.

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