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Why Are the Self-Isolated Ultra-Orthodox Happier?

Shlomo Black

Abstract: Despite their modest financial standing, a significant majority of the ultra-Orthodox in Israel report high levels of life satisfaction — higher than any other group. Yet, the research at the center of this article reveals that the more individuals with a strong ultra-Orthodox identity integrate into general Israeli society, the lower their rate of satisfaction with life. This article presents the research findings and analyzes the reasons for this correlation between isolation and life satisfaction.

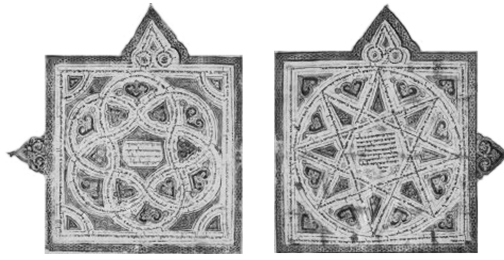
Key Words: Self-Isolated, Ultra-Orthodox, Happiness

Introduction

According to the latest estimate by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), people who identify as ultra-Orthodox (Haredim) in Israel's general population number 1.2 million, or 16.5% of the Jewish population. The average secular Jewish-Israeli woman will give birth, on average, to 1.9 children, while an ultra-Orthodox woman will give birth to 6.6 children, the highest rate in the OECD.^①

The growth rate for the ultra-Orthodox population is four percent a year. Fifty-eight percent of the ultra-Orthodox population consists of youth under the age of 19. According to CBS estimates, about one in three of Israel's

① "Family Database," OECD, May 21, 2017, <http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>.



population will be ultra-Orthodox by 2065.^① Since employment and military enlistment rates are significantly lower amongst ultra-Orthodox than that in the general Jewish population, coupled with especially high poverty rates, these demographic trends may have grave implications for Israeli society.

In the past decade, Israel's governments, through governmental and non-governmental offices, have tried to increase the integration of the ultra-Orthodox into the Israeli economy and society. Initiatives have included workforce participation incentives, including in the high-tech sector, as well as incentives for studying in higher education institutes and developing programs to encourage military enlistment. However, it is broadly agreed that these initiatives are far from achieving their goals, and the degree of ultra-Orthodox integration remains limited.^②

This article examines the relationship between the isolation of the ultra-Orthodox and their life satisfaction rates. The article is based on research the author conducted with a sample size of 315 ultra-Orthodox individuals. The study found that ultra-Orthodox individuals who strongly identify as ultra-Orthodox, and acquire an additional Israeli identity (integrate), are less satisfied with their lives compared to ultra-Orthodox individuals who strongly identify as ultra-Orthodox and who maintain their isolation by not acquiring an Israeli identity.

Erich Fromm argues that in order to understand the individual, we must understand the environment in which he or she lives.^③ This article is divided into three parts. The first discusses the unique characteristics of the ultra-Orthodox community. Research data are presented in the second part, and the framework for understanding the data is presented in the third part.

^① Israel Shlezinger, "One in Three will be a Haredi by 2065," *Israel Hayom*, June 27, 2018, <https://www.israelhayom.co.il/article/567065>.

^② Shlomo Black, Tomer Fadlon, and Meir Elran, "Integrating the Ultra-Orthodox into the Labor Market," *The Institute for National Security Studies*, August 15, 2021, <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/orthodox-jews-labor-force/>.

^③ Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1941), 6.

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I. The Ultra-Orthodox: Between Self-Isolation and Integration

On the one hand, the ultra-Orthodox population feels a sense of discrimination;^① on the other hand, its life satisfaction rates are high, higher than any other group in Israel.^② The ultra-Orthodox city of BneiBrak, a symbol of the self-isolated ultra-Orthodox city, is consistently among the cities with the highest life expectancy and life satisfaction rates in Israel.^③

The history and sociology of the ultra-Orthodox community explain this apparent contradiction.

In the second half of the 18th century, when traditional trends began spreading among Jewish communities, some community leaders feared the extinction of traditional Judaism, which they perceived as “true Judaism.”^④ This birthed the Jewish ultra-Orthodox movement as an ideological faction that opposes any compromises concerning the observance of Jewish religious commandments (*mitzvot*) and integrating non-Torah values into everyday life.^⑤

This opposition took the form of a self-isolating way of life and adopting an even stricter approach to observing religious commandments. The ultra-Orthodox identity that was formed was characterized by a commitment to *halakha* (Jewish law) and tradition, and the elevation of the importance of Torah study and of the family unit. It was also characterized by the outspoken rejection of modern norms and innovations and complete adherence to rabbinic authority (*da'at Torah*) in every aspect of life.

The rabbinical leaders of Israel's ultra-Orthodox during the country's early years of independence, headed by Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz, also

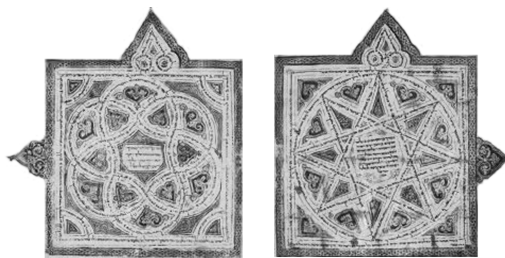
① “The Social Survey [Social Survey Generator],” Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (2022), <https://www.cbs.gov.il/he/subjects/Pages/הסקר-החברתי.aspx>.

② Ibid.

③ “Annual Health Statistics for Israel 2021,” *Israel Central Bureau of Statistics* (2021), 72, <https://www.cbs.gov.il/he/publications/pages/2021/72-בריאות-שנתון-סטטיסטי-לישראל-2021-מספר.aspx>.

④ Menachem Friedman, *Ultra-Orthodox Society: Sources, Trends and Processes* (Jerusalem: Institute for Israel Studies, 1991), 40-80. [Hebrew]

⑤ Jeffrey Blutinger, “‘So-Called Orthodoxy’: The History of an Unwanted Label,” *Modern Judaism* 27 (2007): 310-328.



known as the Chazon Ish (1878-1953), felt the need to increase the number of Torah students. This was in order to recover from the disaster of the Holocaust, which decimated the community. They decreed that the majority of ultra-Orthodox men must study the Torah for many years and postpone joining the workforce and engaging in practical life as much as possible.^①

Thus, the ultra-Orthodox Society of Learners (*Hevrat Halomdim*) was founded. The Society of Learners established a life routine that revolves entirely around the study of the Torah. Ultra-Orthodox society evolved into an “enclave society” that emphasized its moral superiority over the modern outside world.^②

Its leaders nurtured the principles (or advantages) of isolation to counter the temptations of modern society. Students in the Society of Learners were required to study the Torah while minimizing their exposure to the world outside the *beit midrash* (house of study).^③ Within ultra-Orthodox society, even those who do not attend the yeshivas (schools for studying the Torah), and do not spend their days studying the Torah, see the yeshiva instructors and students as examples and role models whose path should be followed.^④

A routine dedicated to studying the Torah requires living a materially modest lifestyle. Israeli ultra-Orthodox yeshiva students receive a scholarship equal to one-fifth of the minimum wage, while the burden of managing the household as well as providing a steady income falls on the woman’s shoulders.

While various studies show that affinity between high religiosity and life

① Jeffrey Blutinger, “‘So-Called Orthodoxy’: The History of an Unwanted Label,” 40-80.

② Emmanuel Sivan, *The Enclave Culture*, trans. Ada Paldor (Jerusalem: Alpayim, 1991), 75-76. [Hebrew]

③ Nissim Leon, “Responsibility for the Other: On the Question of the Student Society in the Tradition of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef,” in *From Survival to Consolidation: Changes in Israeli Haredi Society and Its Scholarly Study*, eds. Kimmy Kaplan and Nurit Stadler (Jerusalem: The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2012), 233-251. [Hebrew]

④ Gideon Aran, “Haredi Body: Chapters from an Ethnography in Progress,” in *Israeli Haredim: Integration Without Assimilation?*, eds. Emmanuel Sivan and Kimmy Kaplan (Jerusalem: The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2003), 99-133 [Hebrew]; Haim Soloveitchik, “Rupture and Reconstruction,” *Tradition* 28 (1994): 61-130.

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satisfaction is significantly connected to economic stability,^① Israeli ultra-Orthodox society is an exception to the rule. Despite generally difficult living conditions, 73% of ultra-Orthodox individuals in Israel reported high levels of life satisfaction.^② This rate is higher than any other life satisfaction rate in any other Israeli population.^③

However, life satisfaction rates among ultra-Orthodox Jews are not uniform. The study conducted by the author shows that within the ultra-Orthodox community, life satisfaction depends on the strength of an additional Israeli identity. The more an ultra-Orthodox individual who strongly identifies as ultra-Orthodox integrates, or adopts an Israeli identity, the lower their level of life satisfaction, and the less they integrate, the higher their level of life satisfaction.

II. The Research

This study included 315 respondents from the ultra-Orthodox community, aged between 18 and 69 ($M = 32.60$, $SD = 9.43$). Two hundred two (202) respondents were male (64.3%) and 112 female (35.7%); two participants did not report their gender identity.

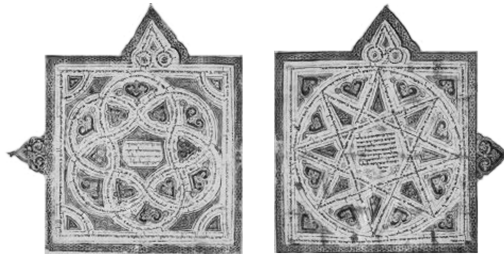
Studies have found that there is no difference between the results of questionnaires filled out online and those filled out using “pencil and paper.”^④ However, a lone study that examined this point among the ultra-Orthodox community found that there is a difference, in some items, between electronic questionnaires and “pencil and paper” questionnaires. Hence, this difference does not lie in items that refer

① Kayonda H. Ngamaba and Debbie Soni, “Are Happiness and Life Satisfaction Different Across Religious Groups? Exploring Determinants of Happiness and Life Satisfaction,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 5 (December 2018): 2118-2139.

② “The Social Survey [Social Survey Generator],” *Israel Central Bureau of Statistics* (2021), <https://www.cbs.gov.il/he/Pages/הסקר-החברתי.aspx>.

③ This compared to 50% of religious Jews, 41% of traditional religious Jews, 38% of slightly religious traditional Jews, and 41% of non-religious secular Jews.

④ Leigh W. Jerome et al., “The Coming of Age of Telecommunications in Psychological Research and Practice,” *American Psychologist* 55 (2000): 407-421.



to ultra-Orthodox integration with the Israeli population.^①

I tried recruiting participants to complete pencil and paper questionnaires among yeshiva Students of Kollels in BneiBrak and Jerusalem, but the response rate was low. Out of 65 questionnaires delivered, only 18 were completed. Therefore, I decided not to include the paper questionnaires in the reported findings.

Hence, the participants were recruited online using a “snowball sampling” method through the help of social media. Prior to filling out the questionnaire, participants signed a consent form and were guaranteed complete anonymity. This guarantee was ensured by not asking participants for personal details.

The research included the following questionnaires:

1. A single item examining identification with ultra-Orthodox culture.
2. A single item examining identification with Israeli culture.
3. A questionnaire examining life satisfaction levels — Life Satisfaction Index (LSI).

Two single items were used to examine participant identity and their identification levels with ultra-Orthodox and with Israeli cultures.^② Participants were asked to rate how strongly they identify with each specific culture on a scale of 1 (do not identify at all) to 7 (strongly identify). One question referred to identification with ultra-Orthodox culture, and another referred to identification with Israeli culture. Though it is assumed that when a variable is heterogenous, it is better to use a questionnaire consisting of numerous items,^③ some researchers claim that, in some cases, questionnaires with multiple items might obscure and even skew conclusions.^④ In recent years, we

^① Yitzhak Trachtingot, “Ultra-Orthodox Yeshiva Students and Entry into the Workforce: Reasons, Concerns, and Perceptions Regarding Employment,” *The Jerusalem Institute for Policy Studies* 1 (2014): 42-65. [Hebrew]

^② Tom Postmes, S. Alexander Haslam, and Lise Jans, “A Single-Item Measure of Social Identification: Reliability, Validity, and Utility,” *British Journal of Social Psychology* 52 (December 2013): 597-617.

^③ Robert Loo and Peter Kelts, “A Caveat on Using Single-Item Measures,” *Employee Assistance Quarterly* 14 (1998): 75-80.

^④ Richard Y. Bourhis, Léna C. Moïse, Stéphane Perreault, and Sacha Sénécal, “Toward an Interactive Acculturation Model: A Social Psychological Approach,” *International Journal of Psychology* 32 (1997): 369-386.

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have witnessed an increase in single-item questionnaires in psychology studies.^①

I side with Postmes and his colleagues,^② who conducted a series of studies to measure the validity of single items to examine individual identification with the group. They found that single items are efficient and, in some cases, even preferred to standard identification questionnaires. Another consideration for using single items to examine the degree of identification was the wish to avoid creating a cognitive burden for participants while filling out the questionnaires without compromising the quality of the results.

In order to measure the participants' level of life satisfaction,^③ a Life Satisfaction Index (LSI) questionnaire was used. In it, participants were asked to rate their stances on a Lickert Scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire included five items that measured the participant's life satisfaction (e.g., "my living conditions are excellent"; "I am content with my life"). High scores indicate a high life satisfaction rate. The questionnaire was found valid in other studies,^④ and Cronbach's alpha reliability for this current study stood at 0.86.

III. Results

In the following, means, standard deviations, and simple correlations are presented (see Table 1).

① Richard W. Robins, Holly M. Hendin, and Kali H. Trzesniewski, "Measuring Global Self-Esteem: Construct Validation of a Single-Item Measure and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 2 (2001), 151.

② Tom Postmes, S. Alexander Haslam, and Lise Jans, "A Single-Item Measure of Social Identification: Reliability, Validity, and Utility."

③ Ed Diener, Robert Emmons, Randy Larsen and Sharon Griffin, "The Satisfaction With Life Scale," *Journal of Personality Assessment* 49 (1985): 71-75.

④ Dana Anaby, Tal Jarus, and Bruno D. Zumbo, "Psychometric Evaluation of the Hebrew Language Version of the Satisfaction with Life Scale," *Social Indicators Research* 96 (2010): 267-274.

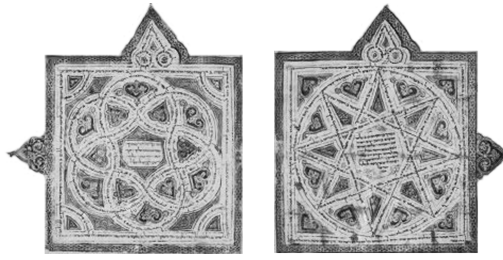


Table 1 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for Tested Variables

	Mean	Standard Deviation	1	2
Identifying as Ultra-Orthodox	5.23	1.70	-	
Identifying as Israeli	3.88	1.70	-0.21**	-
Life Satisfaction	5.22	1.36	0.27**	-0.12*

Notes: * = $P < 0.01$, ** = $P < 0.05$

There was a significant negative correlation between identification with ultra-Orthodox culture and identification with Israeli culture [$t(1, 312) = 9.084, p = 0.001$]. The CBS findings were validated,^① as a positive correlation between life satisfaction and identification with ultra-Orthodox culture was found ($r = 0.27, p < 0.001$). In contrast, a negative correlation was found between the level of identification as an Israeli and life satisfaction levels ($r = -0.12, p = 0.032$). These findings show that the more an ultra-Orthodox holds to an ultra-Orthodox identity, their life satisfaction rates increase. On the contrary, the more an ultra-Orthodox holds to an Israeli identity, their life satisfaction decreases.

Is maintaining an ultra-Orthodox identity, isolated from the Israeli one, what allows for high life satisfaction rates? In order to test this assumption, a Hayes plugin was used in the Process Command in Model 1 (see Figure 1).^②

This model tested the negative correlation between identifying as an Israeli and life satisfaction. Accordingly, the degree of identifying as an Israeli was set as the predictor variable and life satisfaction was set as the predicted variable. The degree of identification as ultra-Orthodox was set as the moderating variable (the summary of the model is presented in Table 2). The calculated model was found significant [$F(3, 309) = 10.95, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.096$]. As the table shows, a primary effect was found for the degree of identification as ultra-Orthodox. In other words, ultra-Orthodox and Israeli identities, each in their own way, affect levels of life satisfaction. Additionally, a significant

① “The Social Survey [Social Survey Generator],” *Israel Central Bureau of Statistics* (2021) <https://www.cbs.gov.il/he/Pages/מחולל-סקר-הברתי-חדש.aspx>.

② Andrew Hayes, *An Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Process Analysis: A Regression-Based Approach* (New York: Guilford Press, 2018).

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interaction effect was found (see Figure 1). The effect indicates that when both identities are taken into account, there is still an effect on life satisfaction levels.

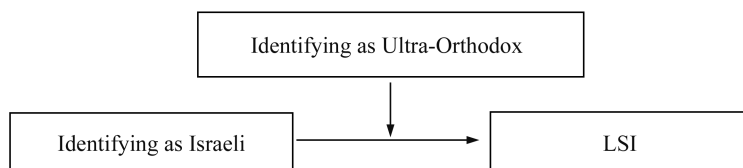


Figure 1 Test Model — The Effect of Identifying as Ultra-Orthodox on the Relationship between Identifying as an Israeli and Life Satisfaction Levels

Table 2 Summary of the Model to Test the Moderation of the Relationship between Israeli Identification (X) and Life Satisfaction (Y) by Ultra-Orthodox Identification (M)

	ΔR^2	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
Israeli Identification		0.28	0.15	1.89	0.060
Ultra-Orthodox Identification		0.47	0.12	3.94	<0.001
Interaction	0.016	-0.06	0.03	-2.34	0.020
<i>Total R</i> ²	0.096				
<i>N</i>	313				

However, the situation is even more complex. By analyzing simple effects, I divided Israeli and ultra-Orthodox identities into three levels (low, average, and high). I then tested how mixing these identities at various levels affects life satisfaction.

This analysis shows that Israeli identification has a significant negative effect when a high level of ultra-Orthodox identification is present ($b = -0.12$, $P = 0.021$). This means that life satisfaction for an individual with a high level of ultra-Orthodox identification will decrease the more they identify as Israeli. Conversely, for ultra-Orthodox individuals who have low ($b = 0.08$, $P = 0.185$) or medium ($b = -0.06$, $P = 0.134$) levels of ultra-Orthodox identification, identification as Israeli has not shown a significant effect on life satisfaction (see Figure 2). Therefore, for ultra-Orthodox individuals who do not strongly identify with their ultra-Orthodox identity, Israeli identification does not decrease their life satisfaction in a statistically significant way.

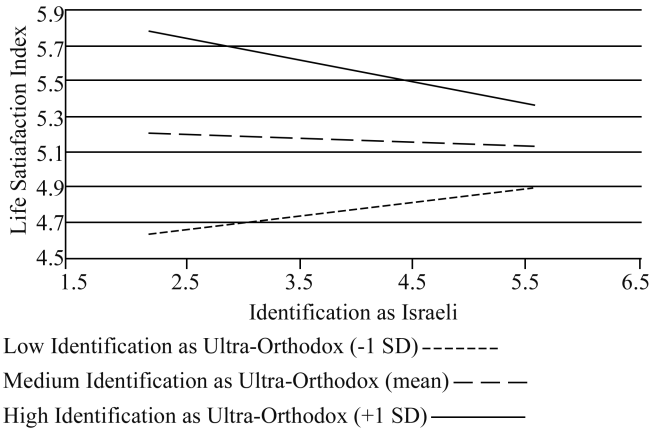
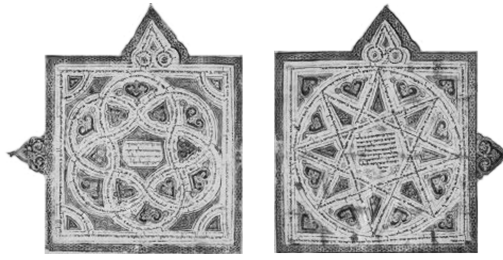


Figure 2 Interaction of Identification as Ultra-Orthodox and Identification as Israeli in Predicting Life Satisfaction

IV. The Challenge of the Acculturative Integration Assumption

Berry's Acculturation Model is one of social psychology's most cited and famous models.^① According to this model, a person who lives in a multicultural environment adopts some norms and values from both cultures. However, the level of integration between identities varies from one person to the next.

Berry suggested four different patterns of behavior that might result from an individual's migration into a multicultural environment: (a) abandon their original identity and adopt the identity of the majority (assimilation); (b) identify with the majority and with their original identity at the same time (integration); (c) ignore the majority identity and solely retain their original identity (isolation); or (d) lose the original identity while rejecting the majority identity (marginalization).

Berry and Hou^② use single items and calculate the four strategies by

^① John W. Berry, "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation," *Applied Psychology* 46 (1997): 5-68.

^② John Berry and Feng Hu, "Immigrant Acculturation and Wellbeing in Canada," *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne* 57 (2016): 254-264.

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clustering them into four dimensions. In the current study, I used only one dimension (i.e., integration). This method is used frequently.^①

Berry and his colleagues relied on the Acculturation Model when they presented the integration hypothesis. This hypothesis argues that a person who chooses to integrate will be more satisfied with their life than someone who adopts the other alternatives.^② Berry relied on studies that showed a positive correlation between the integration strategy and multiple positive characteristics and properties, including: psychological,^③ social, and health adjustability,^④ creativity, mental well-being,^⑤ pro-social behavior,^⑥ educational and professional success,^⑦ satisfaction and commitment to work, little feeling of weariness, increased salary, and more.^⑧ These results were validated across groups and cultural contexts.^⑨

The results of the research conducted for this article, which indicates the integration of the ultra-Orthodox into the broader Israeli identity as a predictor of lower life satisfaction, contradicts Berry's and his colleagues' integration

① See also: Fons Van de Vijver, John Berry, and Ozgur Celenk, "Assessment of Acculturation," in *Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology*, eds. David Sam and John Berry (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 93-114.

② John Berry, Zarina Lepshokova, MIRIPS Collaboration, and Dmitry Grigoryev, "How Shall We All Live Together? A Meta-Analytical Review of the Mutual Intercultural Relations in Plural Societies Project," *Applied Psychology* 71 (2022): 1014-1041.

③ Maria Stogianni et al., "Sample Characteristics and Country Level Indicators Influencing the Relationship Between Biculturalism and Adjustment: An Updated Meta Analysis," Unpublished manuscript (2021).

④ Eunju Yoon et al., "A Meta-Analysis of Acculturation/Enculturation and Mental Health," *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 60 (2013): 15-30.

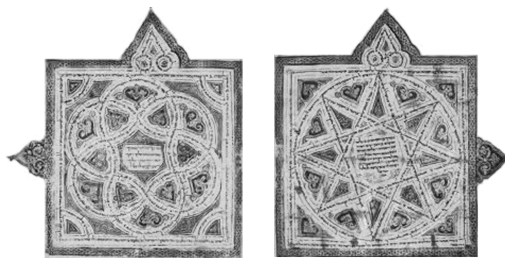
⑤ Paul Schmitz and Florian Schmitz, "Correlates of Acculturation Strategies: Personality, Coping, and Outcome," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 53 (August 2022): 875-916.

⑥ Angela-MinhTu Nguyen and Verónica Benet-Martínez, "Biculturalism and Adjustment: A Metanalysis," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 44 (2013): 122-159.

⑦ M. Dalal Safa and Adriana Umaña-Taylor, "Biculturalism and Adjustment Among U.S. Latinos: A Review of Four Decades of Empirical Findings," *Advances in Child Development and Behavior* 61 (2021): 73-127.

⑧ Marcus Valenzuela, Angela-MinhTu Nguyen, and Vasyl Taras, "A Review of Organizational Research on Acculturation from a Nonwork — Work Spillover Perspective: Content Analysis and Future Research Guidelines," *International Journal of Management Reviews* 23 (2021): 516-540.

⑨ Thuy Pham and Richard Harris, "Acculturation Strategies Among Vietnamese Americans," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 25 (2001): 279-300.



hypothesis.

The possible explanation for this contradiction lies in the characteristics of ultra-Orthodox isolation and in the possible results of its undoing.

V. Hypotheses and Discussion

The findings show that ultra-Orthodox who more strongly identify as Israelis are less happy. Two hypotheses as to why this is the case can be suggested.

First, integrating into Israeli identity is considered an offense, and even betrayal, of the cultural ethos in which they were raised and educated — which requires total emotional and identity isolation from the non-Orthodox majority. Second, they develop a “neither here nor there” consciousness of one who no longer belongs fully to ultra-Orthodox society, but who also is not accepted by, nor feels a sense of belonging to general society.

The ultra-Orthodox group ethos asserts that ultra-Orthodoxy is the continuation of authentic Judaism that has existed since the biblical Exodus. According to this ethos, all other Jewish factions have deviated from the original way of life. For example, this ethos sees secular Judaism as a faction a few decades old, perhaps a little older, originating in the Jewish Enlightenment or *Haskalah*.^① This, while ultra-Orthodox society carries the burden of every wrong suffered by the Jewish people during their years of exile. According to the ultra-Orthodox ethos, other nations’ persecution of the Jews throughout two thousand years of exile has fundamentally targeted Jews who looked and acted like the ultra-Orthodox of today.^②

Studies show that feelings of victimhood increase the likelihood that a group will cultivate sentiments and practices of convergence,^③ which may

① Aviezer Ravitzky, *Freedom Inscribed: Diverse Voices of Jewish Religious Thought* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1999). [Hebrew]

② Benjamin Brown, *The Haredim: A Guide to Their Beliefs and Sectors* (Jerusalem: Am Oved/The Israel Democracy Institute, 2017). [Hebrew]

③ Michael Wohl and Nyla Branscombe, “Group Threat, Collective Angst, and Ingroup Forgiveness for the War in Iraq,” *Political Psychology* 30 (2009): 193-217.

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include hostility towards and self-isolation and distancing from the majority group.^①

The feeling of victimhood serves the satisfaction levels of the ultra-Orthodox. A study the author conducted along with Itzhak Trachtingot and Gabriel Horenczyk showed that the ultra-Orthodox believe that they become stronger the more they are discriminated against.^② Discrimination sharpens and emphasizes the difference between the ultra-Orthodox and the other groups: “The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew.”

Another study by Bergman, Horenczyk, and Abramovsky-Zitter shows that the more discriminated against the ultra-Orthodox feel, the more satisfied they are with their lives.^③ In a follow-up study, we found that the ultra-Orthodox individual prefers his ultra-Orthodox peers to integrate at a lower level than the individual would allow himself or herself.^④

Ultra-Orthodox identity is an ethnic-communal identity, while Israeli identity is a national-civil identity. It is not necessary for these identities to coincide.^⑤ Those who identify as ultra-Orthodox find it easy to ignore other identity frameworks, deny them, and maintain their opinion that they are the sole authentic representatives of Judaism. The ChazonIsh based ultra-Orthodox

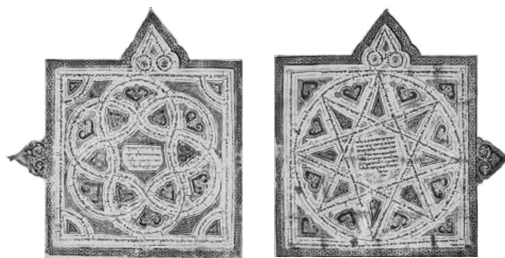
① Gilad Hirschberger, TsachiEin-Dor, Bernhard Leidner, and Tamar Saguy, “How is Existential Threat Related to Intergroup Conflict? Introducing the Multidimensional Existential Threat (MET) Model,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 7 (2016): 1877-1889.

② Shlomo Black, ItzhakTrachtingot, and Gabriel Horenczyk, “Community Post Traumatic Growth: Israeli Haredim Coping with Corona Virus,” *Contemporary Jewry* 42 (2022): 85-112.

③ Yoav Bergman, Gabriel Horenczyk, and Rachel Abramovsky-Zitter, “Perceived Discrimination and Well-Being Among the Ultra-Orthodox in Israel: The Mediating Role of Group Identity,” *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 48 (2017): 1320-1327.

④ Shlomo Black, “Acculturation Integration Discrepancies Between the Individuals and Groups: The Case of the Ultra-Orthodox Community in Israel,” PhD Dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2020. [Hebrew].

⑤ Uzi Ben-Shalom and Gabriel Horenczyk, “Cultural Identity and Adaptation in an Assimilative Setting: Immigrant Soldiers from the Former Soviet Union in Israel,” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 28 (November 2004): 461-479.



ideology on the idea of delegitimizing Israeli culture.^① Thus, ideology generated a self-isolating society, not the other way around.

This explains the connection between isolation and life satisfaction. An ultra-Orthodox who was raised believing in the benefits of self-isolation, and chooses to turn from these and join the general public, feels a sense of guilt for breaking the Haredi ethos via integration into Israeli society. Thus, integrated individuals who retain a strong ultra-Orthodox identity feel a sense of guilt.

Moreover, the integrated ultra-Orthodox who is still embedded in ultra-Orthodox society sometimes feels rejected by members of his or her community. Their standing in the synagogue is undermined, their children find it harder to join the local community's educational institutions, and their peers' esteem of them decreases.^② Therefore, such a situation, even if integration was the individual's choice, can be expected to include numerous and difficult choices.

The correlation between life satisfaction and the sense of security that the ultra-Orthodox community instills may explain why there are ultra-Orthodox individuals who, though they stopped following the Torah and stringently observing the commandments, insist on maintaining an ultra-Orthodox appearance and on belonging to their community, at least superficially.

In a focus group organized to analyze these findings, one of the participants argued that an ultra-Orthodox who integrates wants with all their heart to belong to their original group, and that's why they spend their free time studying the Torah or "hanging out with ultra-Orthodox friends" in order to have some sense of belonging. Still, even if they try to maintain two identities, the community does not always allow for that. Therefore, an individual who holds two identities might find himself or herself alone and without any sense of belonging. This creates a feeling of "neither here nor there" and traps the

^① Yoav Bergman, Gabriel Horenczyk, and Rachel Abramovsky-Zitter, "Perceived Discrimination and Well-Being Among the Ultra-Orthodox in Israel: The Mediating Role of Group Identity"; Yedidia Stern, "The Identity Crisis of the State of Israel," *Democratic Culture* 14 (2012):257-275 [Hebrew]; Yitzhak Trachtingot, "Ultra-Orthodox Yeshiva Students and Entry into the Workforce: Reasons, Concerns, and Perceptions Regarding Employment."

^② Yitzhak Trachtingot, "Ultra-Orthodox Yeshiva Students and Entry into the Workforce: Reasons, Concerns, and Perceptions Regarding Employment."

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individual in a state of acculturative “marginalization.”^①

Exposure to the secular world might also undermine well-informed beliefs and offer ideological alternatives, provoking questions and doubts. This, too, might hurt the levels of life satisfaction.

The rabbinic authority that controls every aspect of life allegedly harms the freedom of the faithful.^② Still, life satisfaction is not necessarily dependent upon an individual’s freedom of choice. The decisive question is to what extent a person wants to be free to choose and whether the person is happy with the degree of freedom he or she has. A person who cedes freedom due to ideological motives and accepts rabbinical authority willingly does not feel unsatisfied with the consequences of that choice.

Conclusion

It should be noted that the current study was not conducted under experimental/operative conditions, so the findings can imply patterns, or at the most, they can describe the participants’ concept and understanding of their own experiences. To explore which of the variables studied suppresses/increases the other, follow-up studies are necessary, which will allow for testing the order of the variables’ appearance.

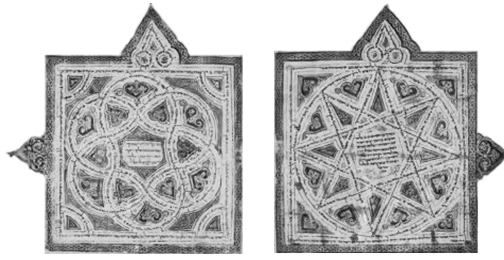
One may claim that because the ultra-Orthodox identity item was rated at high levels, the interpretation of the interaction was affected. To that end, it is important to note that such a claim does not significantly weaken the research findings regarding the correlations between the two identities, and between each identity and life satisfaction. Furthermore, the distribution of participants that rated the Likert scale between five to seven is roughly equal.

A majority of participants in this study were male (65%), and a minority were female. It is possible that female respondents would react differently than the average found.

Another limitation has to do with the volatile nature of the relationship

① Shlomo Black, “Acculturation Integration Discrepancies Between the Individuals and Groups: The Case of the Ultra-Orthodox Community in Israel.”

② Menachem Friedman, *Ultra-Orthodox Society: Sources, Trends and Processes*, 40-80.



between ultra-Orthodox society and Israeli society as a whole. There are periods in which the conflict increases and the legitimacy of integration decreases. Conversely, there are periods of collaboration that the ultra-Orthodox consider fertile (mostly when their representatives are part of the government). Additional research is necessary, therefore, to better clarify the relationship between ultra-Orthodox integration and their life satisfaction.

Still, the research does allow a measure of familiarity with the subjective experiences and beliefs of the ultra-Orthodox.

Since 2010, Israel's governments have invested large sums to integrate the ultra-Orthodox in various fields.^① Some of these integration efforts were successful, but some failed remarkably.^② Attempts at integration were based on socio-economic data but neglected the psychological understanding of the ultra-Orthodox individual.^③

It is appropriate for decision-makers to respond to the results of this research. The majority group must take the psychological profile of the minority group, which it aims to integrate, into consideration. Understanding the results of this research might furnish policymakers with important tools to better integrate the ultra-Orthodox into society. The key to successfully managing this integration, as the research results show, is to do so in a way that would help avoid feelings of spiritual decline and that would not damage the feelings of belonging to ultra-Orthodox society.

On the other hand, as long as young ultra-Orthodox individuals are taught to self-isolate from the general population and to see the non-ultra-Orthodox majority as a negative influence that might lead them to deviate from the original ultra-Orthodox way of life, relations with non-ultra-Orthodox society will often be accompanied by suspicion and antagonism.^④

The ultra-Orthodox and the majority are thus both required to create a meaningful dialogue that would remove walls of suspicion and allow for painless integration.

① For additional information see: Government Resolutions 1994/10, 869/15.

② For more information see: Report of The State Comptroller of Israel 2019.

③ Shlomo Black, Tomer Fadlon, and Meir Elran, "Integrating the Ultra-Orthodox into the Labor Market."

④ Thomas Pettigrew and Linda Tropp, "How Does Intergroup Contact Reduce Prejudice? Meta-Analytic Tests of Three Mediators," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 38 (2008): 922-934.