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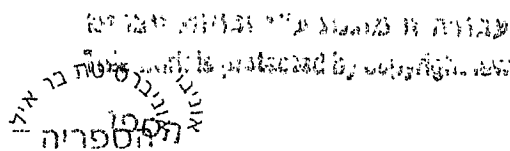
**Involvement of Parents and Teachers as Significant Adults, Self,
Ethnic and Jewish Identity Formation and Excessive Alcohol
Drinking among Immigrant Bnei Menashe Youth.**

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Abstract

Scientific background: The Bnei Menashe, who are from the tribes of Kuki, Chin and Mizo, identify themselves as Jews and reside in the states of Mizoram, Assam and Manipur in Northeastern India on the border of Myanmar. According to data provided by the Shavei Israel organization (2010), there are now 1,700 people in Israel from the Bnei Menashe community, who immigrated to Israel during the last decade. The inter-cultural encounter of East and West, which includes different languages, value systems and social codes, creates various divisions and conflicts between the culture of origin and the new culture, including many transitions such from a traditional society to a developing modern society, from living as Jews among non-Jews to living as Jews among Jews and from Eastern culture to Western culture. In addition to the difficulties that derive from cultural differences, the immigrants from India also experience difficulties deriving from their external appearance (Israel Ministry of Justice, 2012).

Immigrant adolescents have to cope with absorption difficulties and a sense of alienation, among other things, and, like other adolescent immigrants, constitute a population at risk. An immigrant adolescent, or one whose parents are immigrants, also has to deal with the quest for independence and the formation of personal identity alongside conflicts related to the process of establishing ethnic identity (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind & Vedder, 2001). In the course of adolescence, which is characterized by a quest for independence and the process of establishing one's personal identity, many adolescents engage in a variety of risk behaviors including drug and alcohol abuse (Levrin, 2002). Research studies have indicated that immigrant adolescents, or whose parents are immigrants, are more involved in drug

abuse and alcohol consumption than native Israeli adolescents. (Mahal, 1999; Slonim-Nevo & Israelovich, 2004). It was also found that among immigrant adolescents in the process of establishing personal and ethnic identity, there is a higher probability of personal crisis, which leads to a desperate attempt to resolve the distress through the non-adaptive solution of drinking alcohol (Berger, 2002).

The relationship between adolescents and significant adults (such as parents and teachers) has a great influence on risk behaviors (abuse of addictive substances, smoking and alcohol) during adolescence, especially among immigrant adolescents (Walsh, Harel-Fisch & Fogel-Grinyald, 2010).

Several studies have investigated the differences between immigrant and native Israeli in patterns of alcohol consumption, but there has not yet been any research done on alcohol consumption among the Bnei Menashe adolescents.

The aim of the study: This pioneering research study, which focuses on Bnei Menashe adolescents, seeks to examine the connection between the process of their identity formation and their propensity for developing problematic patterns of alcohol consumption, while investigating the involvement of significant adults (parents and teachers) in predicting the course of identity formation and problematic patterns of alcohol consumption.

The findings of this study will hopefully be able to contribute toward understanding the processes of identity formation among Bnei Menashe adolescents as affected by their relationships with significant adults and empowering these beneficial processes, which in turn could contribute toward a reduction in problematic drinking patterns among this population at risk. The hypotheses of the study were formulated in a Pathway Analysis presenting the hypothetical direct and indirect connections of the

presence of significant adults to the establishment of personal identity and patterns of alcohol consumption among Bnei Menashe adolescents.

Research population: The target population of this study included Bnei Menashe immigrant adolescents in 7th to 12th grades (ages 13 to 18), who immigrated to Israel, or at least one of whose parents immigrated to Israel. This population in Israel numbers 72 adolescents who correspond to these criteria, of whom 63 subjects took part in the study, whereas the remainder declined to participate. The number of participants comprised 88% of the target population.

Research method: The study was conducted by a survey method, with questionnaires filled out by the subjects. The questionnaires, which were extracted from the HBSC questionnaire, were validated by the World Health Organization and translated from English to Hebrew (Harel-Fisch et al, 2011). The questionnaire used in the study included 194 closed questions to be answered by the subjects themselves. It was anonymous and distributed by interviewers who were not identified as teachers or educational supervisors. In the towns of Kiryat Arba and Beit El, the questionnaires were distributed by the researcher, and in the town of Nitzan, they were distributed by a Bnei Menashe - community coordinator. Some of the questionnaires were distributed in schools after contacting the school principal and speaking to the parents of the subjects and obtaining their signed consent. Others were distributed through informal frameworks such as in a club for after school hours.

The study attempted to examine the entire target population, not just a sample. Consequently, the subjects constituted target population, and sampling methods were therefore not utilized.

Main findings: The findings indicated patterns of excessive alcohol consumption among the target population, with the extent of alcoholic intoxication far greater among the boys (60%) than among the girls (20%). Similar to the general adolescent population in Israel (Harel-Fisch et al, 2011), the extent of excessive alcoholic consumption increased with age. The relationship model was found to be relevant, whereas parental support was found to be positive and benefited the process of identity formation for Bnei Menashe adolescents. The findings indicated that greater parental involvement significantly predicts the establishment of ethnic identity as a member of the Bnei Menashe community. They also indicated that a subjective sense of greater family involvement is a beneficial factor in the formation of personal and ethnic identity and significantly predicts both a firmly established personal identity and a firmly established ethnic identity. Regarding parental support in areas related to school, the findings indicated that when there is greater parental support, the personal identity of the subjects is more firmly established as well as their sense of Jewish identity. Regarding problematic patterns of alcohol consumption among Bnei Menashe adolescents, it was found that less parental support and less family involvement predict a greater probability of problematic alcohol consumption.

Supportive teachers had a positive influence on the process of identity formation among this group, especially Jewish identity. As for ethnic identity, less support from teachers along with a positive attitude to scholastic achievement and greater family support were found to predict stronger ethnic identity formation among the Bnei Menashe adolescents.

The relation of supportive parents and teachers to excessive drinking was the greatest, as indicated by the findings of this study. It was found that low levels of family

involvement, and a negative subjective attitude to scholastic achievement, significantly predict problematic patterns of alcohol consumption among the Bnei Menashe adolescents. Bnei Menashe adolescents who report a lack of support from parents and teachers, and an unformed identity, will eventually reveal problematic alcohol consumption patterns (excessive drinking and intoxication) to a greater extent than their peers with such support and with cohesive identity.

Main Conclusions: This study offers a great deal toward understanding the main prediction factors for problematic patterns of alcohol consumption and identity formation, and the importance of the significant adults, among the population of Bnei Menashe adolescents in Israel. The study also presents the differences between genders and age groups for this population. Since no similar research has ever been conducted with this particular population, it is also a pioneering study in its field and is therefore very important, whereas there are many possibilities for studying this population further in order to prepare for the immigrants expected to arrive in Israel in the coming years. The findings of this study can assist in preparing intervention programs for educators who work with the Bnei Menashe population, for social and community workers in the areas where they live and for the Shavei Israel organization, which is involved in the process of their immigration to Israel and their integration in Israeli society, and thereby help Bnei Menashe adolescents in their personal, ethnic and Jewish identity formation, and in reducing their problematic patterns of alcohol consumption.