

Yemini, M. & Maxwell, C. (*in press*) De-coupling or remaining closely coupled to 'home' – educational strategies around identity-making and advantage of Israeli Global Middle Class families in London. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*.

**De-coupling or remaining closely coupled to 'home' – educational strategies around identity-making and advantage of Israeli Global Middle Class families in London**

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**Abstract**

This paper makes an empirical contribution to the study of the Global Middle Classes (GMC), and sheds light on the complex relationships that are constructed and sustained by these families with their 'home nation' through their educational strategies. Drawing on an inductive analysis of twenty in-depth interviews with Israeli migrant mothers in the UK who constitute a specific fraction of the GMC, this article examines families' identity constructions and how these shape their educational practices. The participants constitute a growing phenomenon - highly educated, mobile middle class families who live and move around the world, and position themselves using global frames of references. We emphasise how country of origin acts as a symbolic object in the cultivation of their children's identity and how different types of attachment to 'home nation' are perceived as offering valuable capital for GMC. The paper therefore contributes much needed empirical analyses on education strategies within GMC, and challenges the suggestion that critical to the definition of the GMC is that they are 'rootless'.

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## **Introduction**

Migration, despite being a phenomenon with a very long history, continues to feature centrally in many everyday discourses – especially in large cities (Burrell, 2010; Kunz, 2016). Refugees, work migrants, tourists and global elites are flowing through nations' borders at a continuous rate. Diverse motivations drive people's migratory practices including realising opportunities in the labour market, the prospect of better living conditions, and the desire for educational qualifications. While a traditional line of research in migration studies is mainly concerned with migrants from less developed countries or with groups arguably positioned as elite transnationals (Kunz, 2016), recently there has been increased interest in the migration patterns, rationales and the experiences of the mobile middle classes (Scott, 2006).

This so-called Global Middle Class (GMC) is comprised of professionals and their families who move around the globe (at varying rates), usually in roles that service multi-national business corporations (Ball & Nikita, 2014). Such oftentimes frequent and relatively free movement across spaces is often unquestioned as a practice and identity by the GMC, as argued by the social theorists who have developed this concept (Bauman, 2000; Yeoh & Willis, 2005). The GMC make their lives in global cities around the world, experiencing places like New York, London, Paris, Sydney, Hong-Kong and elsewhere (Yeoh & Willis, 2005). The act of migration in the context of GMC is therefore perceived as routinised, as frequent mobility is expected and normalised. The literature also focuses on the extent to which their relationships with the concept of 'home' and 'belonging' are fluid and may include links to their 'home' countries, the new nation states they come to settle in, the networks they become embedded within (Favel, 2008). The suggestion made in much of the more theoretical writing is that the nation state gradually loses its significance to these groups, as they become increasingly untethered in terms of their relations of belonging, and largely pursue individualised trajectories across a series of global spaces (Ball, 2010). The nature of this 'rootlessness', how this is articulated and shapes identities but also everyday practices of the GMC, specifically education, forms the focus of this paper.

Research on the GMC is limited, but specifically, there is a lack of empirical work on the education and broader parenting practices of this group. In particular, studies are needed on the parenting strategies of the GMC, of which education is such a crucial element, as it is suggested that once the GMC have children – their narratives of, and desires for mobility and connections to home are affected (Favell, 2008). In this paper we seek to examine the claim that GMCs, who have dependent families, are largely untethered to the nation state, and to explore how this may or may not affect their education

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strategies. To facilitate this focus we recruited GMC members from the same nation of origin – in this case, of Jewish Israeli origin.

The parents recruited are highly educated, work for multinational corporations usually within the technology sector and are highly mobile (undertaking both regular short-term trips for work as well as moving their families between countries to pursue their employment). Mobility for these families was understood as a common and normalised practice, with some parents themselves having lived in countries other than Israel during their own childhood. Based on these characteristics we argue that our sample constitutes a GMC fraction. This sample of 20 – which forms the focus of our analysis – were selected from a larger group studied - Israeli upper middle class migrants (50 mothers). The Israeli GMC are a particularly interesting case because of their strong identification with being Jewish, the significant political investment expected of them that is driven by the Zionist project of the state, and the varied responses of Israelis to the long-term, ongoing conflict there. Thus, we anticipate ties to the homeland will be both prominent but also conflicted in their narratives of the educational approaches taken to bringing up children abroad and whose lives are characterised by relatively frequent mobility.

### ***The study context***

From the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has provided a central dimension in Israelis' positioning of themselves both within Israel but also for those living abroad, as well as Jews worldwide. Defined as intractable (Canetti, Elad-Strenger, Lavi, Guy, & Bartal, 2015), the conflict has contributed to a highly politicised and vehemently debated cleavage within Israeli society. The conflict has divided the political Left from the Right, highlighted differences between the country's centre and periphery, between Jews originating from Western countries, and those from Eastern Europe, Asia and North Africa, as well as between the religious and secular populations (Agbaria, Mustafa, & Jabareen, 2015; Gavison, 1999; Kimmerling, 2001).

Israeli migration has been extensively researched (Gold, 2002), and today it is estimated that between 600,000 and 750,000 Israelis permanently reside outside Israel (Rubin & Rubin, 2014). Generally speaking, during the first decades of Israel's existence, emigration from Israel was condemned publically, as not supporting the Zionist goal of increasing the Jewish population in Israel. Emigrants were exposed to severe moral and ideological censures and “even the demographically neutral terms -

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immigration and emigration have been replaced in Israel by value laden terms having positive connotations from immigrants and negative one for emigrants” (Cohen, 1988: 909).

Gold and Hart (2013) claim that Israeli migrants (the Israeli diaspora) tend to resist full integration into the host societies, viewing their stay abroad as a temporary venture due to Zionist ideology which demands that Jews should live in their historical homeland, the state of Israel. However, recent studies on Israeli emigration (Gold & Hart, 2013; Harris, 2015) have found increased migration of highly skilled and educated Israeli-born population, and argued that the rationales for migration are no longer purely financial but also display ideological motivations, specifically in relation to a disapproval of current right-wing governments’ approach to managing the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and a lack of hope that it will ever be resolved. Migrants, today, have been found to be more critical of Israel (Hart, 2004) expressing nuanced and more individualised motivations for their mobility. This challenges previous scholarship that found where more collectivist drivers were articulated by both Jewish and Israeli diaspora communities in relation to the state of Israel and the need to collectively organise and support one another in different host countries (Harris, 2015; Harpaz, 2013).

Furthermore, several recent studies have focused specifically on the unique mobility patterns of Israeli workers in global high-tech industries, highlighting persistent mobility as an important element characterising those families’ identities and practices (Gold, 2018; Remennick, 2013). There has been a limited focus on how mobility and the cultivation of an Israeli identity is practised when living abroad, which nonetheless brings to the fore the importance of considering how the educational strategies of these parents shape social class identity and a sense of belonging (Tubin & Gans, 2012).

### **Theoretical and empirical underpinning of GMC**

With the ‘deterritorialisation of capital’ (Embong, 2000: 991), it has been argued, comes the emergence of a transnational capitalist class (TCC) (Sklair, 2001) and a global middle class (GMC) (Ball, 2010). The GMC are a form of transnational service class, facilitating the dominance of the TCC through providing the necessary expertise and management support for those groups controlling the resources in a global network of production, consumerism and bureaucracy. With the growth of the TCC and GMC (Finaccord, 2014), understanding how these groups’ orientations to mobility, belonging, parenting and education are articulated is critical to examining the ways these groups are shaping social relations more broadly, affecting opportunities for social class reproduction, and the extent to which

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the 'global' is becoming a more normalised and practised frame of reference (Favell, 2008; Andreotti et al., 2015).

Favell's (2008) research on the 'Eurostars', a study of young professionals moving across Europe, found that his participants still articulated a connection to their home nation, while also celebrating that mobility had 'liberated' them from some of the more oppressive aspects of the nation state and the relations structured through this apparatus (Robinson & Harris, 2000). In their new 'homes', these professionals tended to congregate with 'people like us' and found they experienced challenges, such as not having 'insider knowledge' of housing, access to welfare and so forth. Just as Favell (2008) found in his younger sample – once mobile professionals have families, their motivations and concerns around moving, and having to settle into a new city will change, by taking into account the 'imagined future' of their children (Doherty, Mu, & Shield, 2009). Andreotti and colleagues (2015) found that those mobile professionals in the European cities they studied still retained links to family 'back home' and engaged in a 'selective rootedness' (p. 180) in their new cities of residence. They created connections within particular social networks and spaces – managing strategies of 'difference and proximity to others' (p. 7).

In this paper we therefore seek to directly engage with the studies above, but also to consider more closely how motivations and orientations to mobility affect relationships to our participants' home nation, and the extent to which they conceive of mobility as an opportunity for their children's education and their futures (to, for instance, accrue cosmopolitan capital - Kim, 2016; Weenink, 2008). This will allow us to specifically examine how orientations to mobility and home shape educational strategies of the Israeli GMC, an arguably specific fraction of this broader phenomenon.

## **Methods**

For the purpose of this paper we present an analysis of 20 interviews carried out with Israeli migrant mothers, categorised as belonging to the GMC and who have children in primary and/or secondary schools (state, public and Jewish), the majority of whom live in London (17 out of 20). Interviews were conducted by the first author between autumn 2016 and spring 2017. This paper emerged from a broader research project concerned with educational strategies of Israeli migrant families in London with regard to their children's anticipated futures. In all 50 interviews were completed.

Yemini, M. & Maxwell, C. (*in press*) De-coupling or remaining closely coupled to 'home' – educational strategies around identity-making and advantage of Israeli Global Middle Class families in London. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*.

Participants were recruited via a closed Facebook page for “Israeli imas” (mothers in Hebrew). The posting of one announcement introducing the research to members of this group (total members: more than 1600) yielded 150 responses from mothers willing to participate in the study. Over a period of eight months the first author interviewed 50 mothers, with discussions lasting between 60 to 180 minutes, which were recorded and then transcribed. The interviews were conducted face-to-face. Mothers were asked about their migration biographies and post-migration experiences (McGhee , Heath, & Trevena, 2012); their children’s education and schooling; home practices in relation to language, identity and cultural/religious habits; friendships and networks they belonged to; their broadly understood world view; past educational experiences; and aspirations for their and their children’s futures (as per Lopez-Rodriguez, 2010). Through the interviews, it became clear that 20 of these families met the criteria for being considered members of the GMC - constant mobility for work – both for short-term business trips and requiring re-location of their families, highly educated, and working for multi-national corporations. Their educational strategies were found to be distinct from those expressed by rest of the sample (we focus on these differences in another contribution). Given the paucity of empirical examination on GMC families specifically, the current paper takes this group as our focus.

Most of the participants were part of globalised Israeli high-tech industry, working as computer engineers or middle/high level managers in global high-tech companies, thus we define them as ‘global middle class’ professionals. As Ball and Nikita (2014: 85) explain: “These global mobile professional and managerial workers have responsibility for the day-to-day activity of transnational business rather than strategy. Accordingly, they and in some cases their families, move between and make and live their lives in global cities as employees of or contracted by multinational corporations”. Many of the families had lived abroad during their own childhood, suggesting a family history of high socio-economic status as well exposure to cosmopolitan inclinations (Weenink, 2008). 14 out of 20 mothers that we interviewed themselves held professional positions in such global industry (in those cases mobility had usually been due to both their professional needs and opportunities that had opened up). The rest of this sub-sample were currently stay-at-home parents, while their husband worked in transnational organisation, or working in temporary positions in local settings, mainly serving the Israeli community in London. All the mothers in our sample held higher education credentials and had held highly paid, prestigious work positions previously. Those mothers who were not currently working had relocated to the UK due to their partners’ work, but during the interviews described at

Yemini, M. & Maxwell, C. (*in press*) De-coupling or remaining closely coupled to 'home' – educational strategies around identity-making and advantage of Israeli Global Middle Class families in London. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*.

length their previous professions and previous working experiences in Israel or elsewhere within high-level professional roles.

Interview quotes are directly taken from transcripts in order to reflect the speech patterns of the mothers. Pseudonyms are used to protect their identities. Quotes are used throughout the analysis section in order to provide a more accurate account and representation of mothers' own perceptions and voice. The quotes, originally transcribed in Hebrew, were translated to English and back to Hebrew to ensure that the intended and accurate meaning was maintained in the translation process. Thus, we aim to maintain the mothers' authentic voices throughout the article to the best of our abilities, mindful of the potential danger of speaking for others or asserting our own opinions and perceptions over those expressed directly by the mothers themselves (Clandinin, 2006). The constitution of the research team aided access and the critical engagement with the data, we would suggest. The first author is an Israeli migrant mother herself, and was temporarily based in London at the time of the research. The second author served as critical outsider throughout the data analysis process, suggesting alternative explanations to the data and thus facilitating a process of sharpening and shaping the final interpretations presented here. The trustworthiness of findings derived from multiple iterations between the authors, repeated readings of theory and interviews' transcripts, and continuous dialogue between the authors, the data and the literature.

The themes emerging as the primary categories in this inductive analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2014) are discussed below, accompanied by examples of how respondents discussed each of them. Codes that emerged during the analysis included: "definition of children's identity", "feeling towards Israel", "friendships of different kinds", "identity crisis", "school choice". During the process of analysis two distinct subgroups with the GMC mothers emerged – those who sought to distance themselves from the political situation in Israel today and the more extreme religious and Zionist orientations that appear to characterise it; and the other group who still articulated strong connections to, and support for, the state of Israel. Each of the groups' positionings in relation to Israel as their home nation and how this shapes their educational strategies will be discussed in turn, followed by a broader discussion of how these findings contribute to our understandings of the ways GMC may or may not be 'rootless'.

## **GMC construction of identities and parental strategies**

The common discursive trope engaged by many migrant mothers emphasises the potential for enhanced social mobility through immigration (e.g., Lopez Rodriguez, 2014; Song, 2010; Waters, 2005). For middle and upper class groups in many countries, acts of immigration or interacting with migrant groups is perceived as a key for cultural (Bourdieu, 1986; Reay et al., 2007) or more specifically cosmopolitan (Weenink, 2008) capital acquisition. Most of the Israeli mothers in the broader study presented worldviews similar to that which Waters (2005) described in her research of Chinese familial strategies in migration, which included an emphasis on the acquisition of foreign educational credentials and western education as universal signifier of quality. However, the GMC groups in this study foregrounded their main rationalisation for mobility in political and ethical terms. This appeared to have a significant effect on these participants' feelings towards their homeland and their sense of belonging to the old and new communities. This, in turn, had a direct effect on their education strategies. In the following section we will offer an analysis of their perceptions of 'home', immigration and schooling in the UK for each of the two sub-groups of GMC participants, presenting their employment of particular political stances in relation to their home nation (a de/re-coupling to Israel) as a means for self-definition and one that informs quite diverse parenting and education practices.

### ***De-coupled members of the GMC***

This section focuses on the first group of Israeli mothers (n=11), whom we have called 'de-coupled GMC'. These mothers rationalize their decisions around mobility in mainly political terms and also use this political stance as a form of identity in shaping their parenting and educational practices.

The decoupled GMC mothers defended their decision to emigrate and develop their lives outside of Israel by presenting the political situation in Israel as leading them to feel as outsiders in their own country, and this feel had to all intents and purposes forced them leave due to the incongruence between their values and those being implemented by successive Israeli governments. Specific issues that were identified in this respect were related to the continuous occupation of the territories<sup>3</sup> and an increase in religious and right-wing influences within the Jewish secular education sector. As noted

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<sup>3</sup> The Jewish presence on Palestinian territories is a result of 1967 war between Israel and neighboring Arab nations. Palestinian conflict remains the most explosive conflict in Israel, placing the Jewish and Palestinian population in constant clash, and forcing the Israeli Jewish society into intensive internal cleavage over the future of those territories, peace process and financial governance of the country (Zembylas & Bekerman, 2011).



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also by Gold and Hartman (2013), the new generation of Israeli migrants are not shy about criticising Israel, and have seen their public image being transformed from “yordim” (negative word for emigration from Israel, literally ‘going down’) to occupying a more desired status as assessed by many in the Israeli general public. The mothers that were interviewed felt themselves to be political and sought to be quite public about their criticisms of Israeli politicians and events via a range of social media platforms.

For example, one of the mothers in this group, Maya, explained:

*“I couldn’t stand it anymore... We all here are still addicted to the news from Israel and mostly I feel ashamed. How dare they act like this (discussing recent ruling of Israeli parliament enabling settlements enlargement on what is claimed to be private Palestinian land). I always comment on this on Facebook and share... People should be active... they (the government) will find out eventually that no one is left there (due to high level of migration out of Israel). We talk about this at home. [The] kids are taking full role in our discussions. We encourage them to understand and they know we are not going back. We are definitely not coming back in this situation.”*

Such strongly-held views were mirrored in the reasons mothers gave for emigrating in the first place: Shirley: *“We are very political family. Myself and also my partner. We went to demonstrations (in Israel). We took the kids to the housing demonstrations (in 2011). We came here, because we can’t change things there. It was a temporary move at the beginning but after several weeks here, it was clear to us that we would stay. We opted out from all of this. Our kids are very Israeli but they do not belong to Israel. If you ask them they understand crystal clear why we are here. They were going to the demonstrations with us”*

Similar to Shirley, Julie emphasised:

*“We in our nature are very engaged. We had extremely good education opportunities for our children in Israel... but we thought of leaving because we couldn’t stand it. The occupation and the anti-democratic ruling and the rudeness of everybody there... So we thought to give it a try here (in UK). We want to live according to our beliefs”.*

These responses provide an insight into the rationale given for emigration from Israel which is rooted for this group in the deep dissatisfaction with the current political situation in Israel. The mothers presented their desire to emigrate as a direct consequence of the political situation, with them opting

Yemini, M. & Maxwell, C. (*in press*) De-coupling or remaining closely coupled to 'home' – educational strategies around identity-making and advantage of Israeli Global Middle Class families in London. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*.

out of the country and the Israeli education system accordingly. In this case mobility is not only part of a mobility project related to their employment, but critically related to the perceived educational needs of their children, as well as a very specific act of exit, a de-coupling of the family from the nation state in question.

As Hadas claimed:

*“What bothered me in school (in Israel) was that everything is indoctrinated towards religion and politics. They study about God in science, pray to God studying rules on behaviour to cross the road...God is everywhere and it was a secular school in very secular town... and the only Arab people they meet are the cleaning personnel in the school. I wanted something totally different for them in school”.*

This quote illustrates what appeared to be a typical perception held by this group of mothers of the Israeli education system – as deeply segregated. Thus, emigration was not only a political act, but also seen as necessary and congruent with their desires to support their children’s educational experiences through the acquisition of particular liberal orientations and the accumulation of a form of cosmopolitan capital (Weenink, 2008). According to Weenink (2008: 1092) “Cosmopolitan capital comprises bodily and mental predispositions and competencies (*savoir faire*) which help to engage confidently in [global/non-local] arenas. Moreover, it provides a competitive edge, a head start vis-à-vis competitors.”

As Maya explained:

*“I believe that the best thing in this move is that the kids are becoming aware of the world. We are still very connected to the ongoing Israeli situation but here they learn to be entirely colour blind<sup>4</sup>. They have a lot of Muslim friends and we instil in them those values...This is a big advantage for (developing) their identity”.*

Another mother (Mali) similarly articulated how her political stance was shaping the approach taken to her children’s education:

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<sup>4</sup> Color-blindness is a frequently re-curring phrase in our study, as a description of exposure and acceptance of a difference. We acknowledge here that color-blindness might be interpreted as discriminative practice due to elimination of differences within the society (Mizrahi, 2012).

Yemini, M. & Maxwell, C. (*in press*) De-coupling or remaining closely coupled to 'home' – educational strategies around identity-making and advantage of Israeli Global Middle Class families in London. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*.

*“When Noa was four, she already knew that we resist “Bibiniah” as she called him (derogatory name of Israeli prime minister)...she is very aware and this is exactly the type of education we want to give her. No – she is very Israeli but she doesn’t want to live in Israel...we are trying to instil in her universal values...she will be able to live and thrive wherever she will want to”*

This group of mothers positioned themselves and what they desired for their children in opposition to their understanding of the general Israeli public *“they are growing up being so nationalistic and such narrow thinkers”* (Mali) as well as the Israeli community in UK *“some people here continue to avoid contact with others (such as Muslims)...it is like they are still in Petach Tikva (city in Israel)”* (Tali).

Thus, these mothers were actively developing in their children an anti-right-wing orientation and through their educational choices in a new country - seeking to ensure their children could interact with different Others. However, despite this distancing from the prevailing politics of Israel, these mothers also worked hard to ensure their children retained a sense of being from somewhere – i.e. being Israeli. Efrat explained, *“he feels very Israeli, because the Israelis that around us, are all of our kind. Here you usually find what we call “the Beautiful Israeli”, so it is fun to belong to such community”*. Beautiful Israelis stand in opposition to the “ugly Israeli” - a common expression which “entail[s] criticism on deteriorated manners and a loss of solid civil norms and values, whether those of European ‘civilized culture’ in general or those derived from the legacy of Zionism in particular” (Sela - Sheffy, 2004: 484).

With regards to the anticipated future mobility of their children, the mothers in this group mostly saw this as normalised and expected for their children. Maya pondered: *“I would like him to live nearby of course, but we follow the work of my husband right now and it can be everywhere on the continent (Europe) and later-on they will want to study in the best place”*. Efrat continued *“If they would dance, they shall go to Julliard (New York) and if they would into marine biology, they will be in Sydney (Australia)”*.

We argue that that for these Israeli members of the GMC, the motivation for mobility is both linked to their family’s social class position and particularly their professional background, but also a liberal political stance, infused with a belief that they possess the ‘right’ kind of political morality. It is this latter orientation that is critical in shaping their education practices – both the decision to leave the Israeli education system and the kinds of school provision that are sought out in their new place of

Yemini, M. & Maxwell, C. (*in press*) De-coupling or remaining closely coupled to 'home' – educational strategies around identity-making and advantage of Israeli Global Middle Class families in London. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*.

residence (with a focus on culturally-mixed, but oftentime appropriately classed environments). These mothers rationalise their families' decision to leave Israel in similar ways to those parents who send their children to mixed urban schools in UK and Australia (Reay, Crozier, & James, 2013; Rowe, 2016). Instead of “living in a bubble” (Efrat) and sending their children to better-off, homogeneous schools in Tel Aviv or its affluent suburbs, these parents have chosen the path of emigration, which is both an anti-government stance, but also directly benefits their children's education (ultimately potentially leading to elite destinations such as Julliard or Sydney for higher education).

### ***Re-coupling members of the GMC***

In this next section we focus on the perceptions and motivations of a second group of Israeli mothers who we have categorised as 're-coupling GMC' (n=9). The mothers in this group tended to rationalise their educational choices as well the act of immigration through drawing on political rationales, but in quite a different way. Most of the mothers in this group sought to retain the possibility that they or their children could return to Israel. It was not necessarily something they had definitively planned to do, but they nonetheless worked to ensure their ties to Israel, the possibility of re-entering the education system, and more broadly maintaining the social networks which might garner advantages in securing future positions of influence in employment, were maintained. While other research emphasises an articulated ambivalence about returning to Israel for long-term immigrants in US (see Cohen, 2011; and also noted as common to migrant populations elsewhere - Sinatti, 2011), this group of GMC mothers perceived their relations with their nation of origin differently:

Elinor: *“We are many years here, through the relocation of my husband. It started from a two years mission and was renewed again and again. But we don't have any dilemmas regarding their education. They are Israeli and Jewish...Both...We are not bringing in a Christmas tree or things like that...no – that absolutely not...”*

Another mother, when asked to describe challenges she faced related to her children's identity explained:

Shira: *“I had a funny incident, when my son said to this beautiful Muslim girl from his class, “you are so kind, I want to marry you”...and his sister immediately cried “we are not allowed” “anahnu yehudim [‘we are Jews’ in Hebrew]...I was lucky that she said the second sentence in Hebrew...I felt awkward in front of the girl's mother”*.

Yemini, M. & Maxwell, C. (in press) De-coupling or remaining closely coupled to 'home' – educational strategies around identity-making and advantage of Israeli Global Middle Class families in London. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*.

Elinor: *“We are very Israeli. Of course...everything about us is Israeli...we have only Israeli friends and we attend Jewish school here...We support Israeli in every step we make...Being abroad for several years already doesn't change this...”*

Through the data generated in discussions with mothers we have categorised as belong to this subgroup, we found that they continually work to retain and conserve their affective ties with Israel, as can be seen from the words of Natali:

*“I think that the huge advantage that we have over other Israeli immigrants is that we are not giving up on the (Hebrew) language and (Jewish) holidays. We met this Israeli boy, in the nursery ten years ago and I became a friend with his mum. Anyhow, now the kid doesn't even know a word [of Hebrew]. This is awful from my point of view. They moved two years after us and he is not an Israeli anymore...I believe that I must provide the children with those skills... it is for their future... It is a must for us”*

Malcha and Zviah, followed the same line:

Malcha: *“We are talking a lot about the army service [in Israel there is compulsory army service]. He is not obliged by the law, but he [my son] is very into it. I believe that this is happening because of the values he has been educated on. We are pro-Israel. Always pro-Israel. We are very Israeli at our home, here in London, in Africa, anywhere...we will not be losing our roots like others and you can see it in their (children) education and manners...”*

Zviah: *“Most of this is about our values. I work very hard to teach them all about Israel. We are always watching TV from there and being updated on the news there. They are here now and are getting better equipped to get into university in Israel and everywhere, but our home is a central point for Israelis...you should see what is going on here...We had more than fifty people here during Rosh-Ha-Shana [Jewish new year religious holiday]”*. When asked about her future educational aspirations for her children she explained, *“This is exactly the type of values that we are working on providing to them... this is what will make them resilient, ready to enter the world. They can live anywhere, be whatever they want, but will not have to worry about their values...They know who they are and where they belong”*.

These mothers refer to Israeli society as a symbolic object informing their (mobile) futures, where education of a certain kind (pro-Israeli and Jewish) will have an advantage in the later stages of their children lives, which may actually take place elsewhere in the world. This advantage is not directly

Yemini, M. & Maxwell, C. (*in press*) De-coupling or remaining closely coupled to 'home' – educational strategies around identity-making and advantage of Israeli Global Middle Class families in London. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*.

aligned by the mothers to education in Jewish institutions but it rather related to the ethical standing that those mothers perceive as a vital advantage for their children (mobile) futures, and which is practised as an educational strategy most strongly in the family home. While the mothers in this group stressed the many positive opportunities that had been provided to their children through transnational mobility in terms of education, their particular stance to relation to 'being Israeli' led to them limiting their children's interaction with 'people not like us'. The mothers' also practised a mixed education strategy that sought to on the one hand open up possibilities for future education and employment mobility, while also retaining the possibility for their children to return to their roots physically (i.e. to live in Israel) and not just via a symbolically. Overall, the re-coupled mothers perceived their pro-Israeli political stance as a valuable and prominent resource for their children's future success and well-being – wherever they decide to study or live. The adherence to an Israeli identity within the global-mobile landscape allows this type of family to more securely fix their identity and the values they adhere to, while navigating different locations and choices.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper we present the perceptions and behaviours of a yet relatively unstudied group of migrant mothers – families constituting part of the GMC, who are of Israeli origin and currently reside in the UK (see notable exceptions Davis, 2016 and Hart, 2004). Specifically, our focus has been to empirically examine a particular social class grouping that has gained increasing attention of late (Goren & Yemini, 2016; Goren & Yemini, 2017; Yemini & Maxwell, 2018; Ball & Nikita, 2014; Weenink, 2008). Here, we examined how Israeli GMC families' relationships to the nation state of Israel are fundamental in shaping their understandings and motivations of mobility, and consequently their approaches to the education of their children. Relations to the home nation have been shown to diverge for the mothers in our study, and we found that the 'political orientation' of these two groups serves as a prominent factor of their GMC identity - active de-coupling from their nation state or an attempt to re-couple, despite a history and future that is likely to remain mobile. Both groups develop post-national forms of identity, while building their new lives abroad, and in our study, more specifically in the UK (Maxwell & Aggleton, 2016). In both groups the 'think global act local' notion is translated into new forms of identity, actively cultivated through the education strategies of the mothers. Their past, present and anticipated futures are conceived of at the global level, where borders are eliminated when reviewing the choices that are open to them and their children. Critical to their engagements with the world around them is, however, the strong connections they retain to their former

Yemini, M. & Maxwell, C. (*in press*) De-coupling or remaining closely coupled to 'home' – educational strategies around identity-making and advantage of Israeli Global Middle Class families in London. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*.

home nation – a finding which challenges to some extent the current conceptualisation of the GMC as 'rootless' (Ball & Nikita, 2014). The mothers in our research shaped their children identities, emotions and beliefs through either a vehement rejection or active embracement of Israel and their political affinity to the contemporary state.

The de-coupled GMC group build their sense of self through a strongly politicised act of exit and detachment from the former nation state, which follows on into the development of their 'new' identities as mobile professionals. Their identities are built upon a denial of, and sustained through strongly affective articulations of (dis-)connections – with the state of Israel, with Israelis 'not like us', openness to Others and a more cosmopolitan orientation to the future. The mothers in this group therefore have not become rootless cosmopolitans, but rather their act of emigration (from Israel) is perceived as a critical foundation for their and their children's mobile present and futures. Such a stance is then actively practised through their education strategies – choosing culturally- and ethnically-mixed schools, encouraging social interactions and friendships with Others (seen as unavailable in Israel), educating their children about politics and rights to in turn politicise them.

Meanwhile, the re-coupled GMC group ground their mobile present and futures through strong affiliation with and support for Israel – the nation state - but from a distance. This group traditionally identified as the Israeli diaspora (Hart, 2003), perceive such a sense of belonging as being extremely valuable and advantageous for them and for their children. Such a political stance is presented as a vital foundation for their children's well-being. But critically, the surety offered in terms of identity does not constrain the educational choices mothers make for their children in the present or for the future, where opportunities for transnational mobility are maintained. It is the sense of affective belonging (Maxwell & Aggleton, 2013, 2014) that is seen as so critical in helping to inform relations developed in their new homes, and retaining numerous possibilities for their futures.

Reflecting on our findings, we suggest that like Franceschelli and O'Brien (2014) development of the notion of Islamic capital, for our participants, the de-coupling or re-coupling with the nation of origin offers a way of informing an individual's, and critically a family's, identity and serves as a foundational resource for managing the affective insecurities prompted by mobility. The families who feel so strongly connected to Israel in a positive way, use this as an affective resource for identity-making, but also as a form of capital to help their children connect to others like them anywhere in the world. However, the groups' engagement with Israel is also practically evidenced by retaining the

Yemini, M. & Maxwell, C. (*in press*) De-coupling or remaining closely coupled to 'home' – educational strategies around identity-making and advantage of Israeli Global Middle Class families in London. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*.

possibilities for their children to return in the short-, medium- and long-term to their country of origin. Mothers do this by ensuring their children remain fluent in Hebrew, attend either a Jewish school or additional Hebrew classes, celebrate significant Jewish holidays and socialise almost exclusively with other Jewish-Israelis with a similar political orientation. Meanwhile, the de-coupling Israeli families are employing the nation state of Israel as a symbolic object against which to position themselves, and others like them – politically liberal and outraged – thereby facilitating their sense of belonging outside the state. Their rejection of the state becomes a secure, reliable object against which to articulate an identity and have a ready-made values base to inform their parenting and educational practices.

The paper, while drawing on a relatively focused sample, makes an important contribution to the broader literature on the GMC because of its empirical nature. The GMC is still largely a theoretical construct, understood to be mobile cosmopolitans who are more or less rootless in relation to any nation state, and who develop relations with others in a relatively strategic manner – those who are 'like us' and adhere to similar world views. Based on our findings, we would instead argue that the need to affectively belong in some way is critical to these families – as it offers a psychological resource for managing the fluidity that characterises the mobility of the GMCs. It could be that the nation state of Israel – with its Zionist roots and the very intractable nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – offers a particular case in the GMC, yet relations of dis-affection are likely to be evident for many members of the GMC, but perhaps for different reasons. This is therefore a critical area for further research.



Yemini, M. & Maxwell, C. (*in press*) De-coupling or remaining closely coupled to 'home' – educational strategies around identity-making and advantage of Israeli Global Middle Class families in London. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*.

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**Table 1: Informants and their background – decoupled GMC**

| Pseudonym | GMC characteristics   | Children's age | School type  |
|-----------|---|----------------|--------------|
| Shirley   | Married; both parents hold MA in engineering; both work in hi tech industry; relocated due to the fathers' position | 11,8,5         | State        |
| Esther    | Married; both parents hold MA in engineering; both work in hi tech industry; relocated due to the mothers' position | 14,11          | Jewish State |
| Hadas     | Married; both parents hold MA in engineering; both work in hi tech industry; relocated due to the fathers' position | 8,5            | State        |
| Mali      | Married, highly educated; the father works in hi tech industry the mother at home                                   | 11,9,6         | State        |
| Julie     | Married, the mother academic and the father works in hi tech industry; moved from the US                            | 9,1            | Public       |
| Shahar    | Married, highly educated; the father works in hi tech industry the mother at home                                   | 5,1            | State        |
| Efrat     | Married, highly educated; the father works in hi tech industry the mother at home                                   | 10,8           | State        |
| Tali      | Married, both parents are working in the diplomatic community   | 8,6            | State        |
| Aviah     | Divorced; Academic in science; Moved to London from US  | 5              | Public       |
| Tamar     | Divorced; works in academia; married to   | 8              | Public       |
| Maya      | Married, The father works in hi tech industry, the mother at home, moved to London from Spain                       | 9              | Public       |

**Table 2: Informants and their background recoupled GMC**

| Pseudonym | GMC characteristics  | Children's age | School type |
|-----------|--|----------------|-------------|
| Miriam    | Married, both parents hold MA in technological fields; both parents work in hi tech  | 3,8            | State       |
| Shira     | Married, both parents work in hi tech; both parents hold BA in technological fields moved from Singapore   | 7,8,14         | Jewish      |
| Yifat     | Married; both parents hold university degree; the father works in financial industry; moved from Spain   | 3,8            | Jewish      |
| Natali    | Married; both parents academics; moved from the US   | 7,9,15         | State       |
| Malcha    | Married, both parents hold MA in technological fields; the father works in hi-tech industry and was relocated and the mother works in the local Jewish community | 11,14,16       | State       |
| Zviah     | Married; both parents hold MA in technological fields; both parents work in hi tech industry; lived in Switzerland beforehand                                    | 8,10           | State       |
| Emma      | Married; both parents hold BA; both parents work in hi tech industry   | 1,4,11         | State       |
| Tal       | Divorced; MA graduate; works in hi tech industry   | 6,8            | State       |
| Elinor    | Married; both parents work in hi tech industry; moved from Israel, but were living in Thailand and the US beforehand   | 10,15          | Jewish      |