

## Article

# North-African Jewish People in Paris: Multiple Identities—Ethnic-Religious, National and Transnational

Lilach Lev-Ari

Oranim Academic College of Education, Tivon 3600600, Israel; llevari@oranim.ac.il

**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to compare native-born and immigrant Jewish people from North African roots who reside in greater Paris regarding their multiple identities: ethnic-religious, as Jewish people; national, as French citizens; and transnational, as migrants and ‘citizens of the world’. This study employed the correlative quantitative method using survey questionnaires (N = 145) combined with qualitative semi-structured interviews. The main results indicate that both groups have strong Jewish and religious identities. However, while immigrants had fewer opportunities for upward mobility and were more committed to national integration, the younger second-generation have higher socio-economic status and more choices regarding their identities in contemporary France. In conclusion, even among people of the same North African origin, there are inter-generational differences in several dimensions of identity and identification which stem from being native-born or from their experience as immigrants. Different social and political circumstances offer different integration opportunities and thus, over the years, dynamically construct identities among North African Jewish people as minorities. Nonetheless, the Jewish community in Paris is not passive; it has its own strength, cohesiveness, vitality and resilience which are expressed not only in economic but also in social and religious prosperity of Jewish organizations shared by both the native-born and immigrants, who can be considered a ‘privileged’ minority.

**Keywords:** Jewish immigrants from North Africa; minorities; privileged minority; ethnic-religious identity and identification; national and transnational identity; Jewish people in Paris

**Citation:** Lev-Ari, Lilach. 2023.North-African Jewish People in Paris: Multiple Identities—Ethnic-Religious, National and Transnational. *Religions* 14: 126. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14010126>

Academic Editor: Rachel Sharaby

Received: 7 November 2022

Revised: 22 December 2022

Accepted: 11 January 2023

Published: 16 January 2023



**Copyright:** © 2023 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to compare native-born and immigrant Jewish people from North African roots who reside in greater Paris regarding their multiple identities: ethnic-religious, as Jewish; national, as French; and transnational, as migrants and ‘citizens of the world’.

According to the definition of the [United Nations \(2019\)](#) international migrants are “persons who are either living in a country other than their country of birth or in a country other than their country of citizenship” ([United Nations 2019](#), p. 5). International migrants might become ethnic groups as part of their long-term integration in the host society and construct their own social-communal, economic and cultural organizations. They build their own places of worship and develop educational institutions, communal social services and occupational niches, among others ([Castles et al. 2014](#); [Gold 2016](#); [Lev Ari 2008](#)). As a result of different policies, public attitudes and characteristics of the migrant group, there are differences in their migratory integration in the labor market, residential patterns and ethnic group formation. Some are fully integrated in the host society, while others are segregated for generations and might become ethnic minorities ([Castles et al. 2014](#)).

There are numerous definitions which describe what can be considered as minorities. For this paper I chose [Plasseraud’s \(2010\)](#) definition, which distinguishes between traditional national minorities and the new migrants, composed of recent minorities (since the 1990s, see [Lev Ari 2008](#)). Plasseraud claims that the difference between the two groups is

embedded in their rights in a certain country, whereas until recently international organizations could not offer a common definition for this term. In Europe (which is the context of my study), minorities were defined as a group of citizens characterized by having lower status, as well as ethnic, religious and cultural components, such as language, which differ from those of the majority. Regarding the 'new minorities', the definition is more complex since some are citizens in their host society and are still in their integration process, whereas others have no citizenship and/or are segregated. Thus, special considerations and policies should be implemented in order to enable new minorities' integration (Plasseraud 2010).

Some of the cultural characteristics of migrants and ethnic minorities' which distinguish them from the majority are their ethnic identity and identification. *Ethnic identity* is the reported beliefs, attitudes, perceptions and feelings which ethnic minorities and migrants attach to their group. Ethnic identity is constructed dynamically as a result of cultural, social and political inter-relations with the host societies. Through daily interactions between various groups and communities, ethnic boundaries are defined and redefined (Lev Ari 2013). Furthermore, ethnic identity can be anchored in various geographic spaces; in several communities and nations, namely, it is transnational (Lev Ari 2008, 2022; Rebhun and Ari 2010). Unlike ethnic identity, which is hidden and can be revealed through quantitative and qualitative methods according to the respondents' reports, ethnic identification is the behavioral expression of identity, such as religious practice, which points to attachment with a particular ethnic or religious group (DellaPergola 2011a).

Furthermore, transnational ethnic identity and identification can be manifested by multiple identities, such as *hyphenated identity*, namely, and by dynamic interaction between various components, which can be distinct and conflictual or complementary (Hertz-Lazarowits et al. 2012).

Ethnic identity may be interconnected with religious and national identities as a result of interactions and affiliation with various communities. Each type of identity can be strong or weak through one's life cycle, but these identities also frequently reinforce each other. As for *national identity*, the term *nation*, a product of modernity, is "a community that has its own state or is striving to attain some type of autonomy or independence on a territory and within borders that are perceived as the 'fatherland' or 'motherland'" (Prodanov 2010, p. 47); it also shares a common economy and legal system with rights and duties and is multi-dimensional, thus making it a controversial phenomenon (Prodanov 2010).

Similar to previous concepts, defining *religion* is also complex for reasons of finding a common term for a variety of religions. Theoretical sociologist approaches define religion as a social institution which includes beliefs, ceremonies and practices based on the supernatural and what is perceived as holy in a certain community or society. According to the functionalist approach, based on Emil Durkheim's definition, religion unites a group of people on the basis of symbols, norms and shared values which enhance social conformity and integration. Symbolic interaction theory focuses on the construction of religion as a result of inter-relations which are based on religious practices and ceremonies (Macionis 2000).

The replacement of traditional religions by nationalism characterizes secular, multicultural or multi-religious societies. Different and dynamic inter-relations between religion and nationalism can be detected as a result of socio-political changes in the course of history (Prodanov 2010).

Jewish people in western nations, once considered minorities, in recent decades constitute a *privileged ethnic minority* group. As such, and unlike most minority groups that suffer from discrimination, Jewish people have equal civic rights, and their economic, social and cultural integration within their host countries is successful (Brodkin 1998).

Data reveal that after World War II, most Jewish people world-wide (76%), both the native-born and immigrants, prefer to reside in about 15 metropolitan regions and large cities (Rebhun and Ari 2010; DellaPergola 2017) which provide them with socio-economic opportunities. Furthermore, within these metropolises and cities, Jewish people reside in

neighborhoods that suit their socioeconomic status and provide communal ethno-religious services and organizations (DellaPergola 2011a; DellaPergola and Sheskin 2015).

In this study, I used a correlative quantitative method based on survey questionnaires and a qualitative semi-structured interview method. By focusing on native-born and immigrant Jewish people from North African origin residing in Paris, this study can contribute to understanding how multiple identities, particularly ethnic, but also religious, national and transnational are dynamically constructed and inter-related among immigrants and minorities. The comparison is between two groups whose roots are common but who differ in age, socio-economic status and migration cohorts, which affect their choices of identities and their importance. The following analysis of interactions with the host-majority society in a large western European city may also serve as a basis for other comparative studies among immigrants and privileged minorities, exploring their identities as well as their dynamic construction of identification.

## 2. Policies towards Migrants and Minorities in Western Europe, including Jewish People

After World War II until the early 1970s, most labor migrants to western European countries, including France, either came from the European periphery or were colonial migrants. In both cases these migrants were perceived as a solution for post-war labor shortage. Most of the labor migrants at that period were characterized by having low socio-economic status, including educational attainments and professional skills. (Castles and Miller 2009; Castles et al. 2014).

Between the 1970s and the 1990s, the world became more globalized primarily due to new investments in the Middle East (Gulf oil states, for example) or in parts of Asia and Latin America. In this period, there was a need for more skilled and educated people for the micro-electronic revolution and expansion of the services sectors in Western Europe. Thus, the second generation, the descendants of first-generation immigrants, was socialized and educated in Europe and had different opportunities for social mobility. The younger generation has higher educational attainment compared with their parents, although not as high as that of native-born people from the same age cohort (20–29).

At the beginning of the new millennium, Western Europe faced and still does face new and increased Muslim immigration flows which force EU members to formulate policies regarding an increase in Muslim population. Contrary to previous flows of immigration to Western Europe that integrated well into the host culture which was familiar to them, the new immigrants confront Europe's own contemporary cultural identity (Castles et al. 2014).

Among colonial immigrants to Western Europe, in general, and to France, in particular, there were Jewish people who preferred to reside there since they perceived France as a non-exclusionary country and as being culturally familiar. In the second period of migration to EU countries and since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s the European Union has become a major area of residence for Jewish immigrants. In that period and until recently, Jewish people in Western Europe confronted dynamic changes regarding tolerance and pluralistic issues across the European continent. In EU countries, France included, there are constant changes regarding equal and multicultural policies toward migrants and minority cultures which are not defined by a specific territory (DellaPergola and Staetsky 2020).

Recently, the Jewish population in Europe has decreased due to emigration (as a result of the new policies and new antisemitism, see Lev Ari 2022), not enough Jewish births and high intermarriage rates, which affect low Jewish identification among the children (DellaPergola 2020). Although Jewish people perceive themselves as part of an ethnic Jewish collective, at the same time they perceive themselves as being part of the nation state in which they reside in Europe. Thus, Jewish people in Europe might have a common Jewish identity, although in some EU nations such as France, where the concept of a Jewish people is 'unconstitutional,' they have to define their other identity as citizens of France.

In Europe, local culture and policy toward ethnic minorities as well as the size of the local Jewish community has a significant impact on the construction of Jewish ethnic identity and identification by enabling (or not) religious services and Jewish day schools. As for Jewish practices, only 30% of European Jewish people preserve the laws of *Kashrut* (regulations of Jewish dietary laws), which differs according to country of residence as well as socioeconomic status (Graham 2018).

### 3. Multiple Identities among Jewish People in France: Current State of Research

The 1789 Revolution in France established equal individual rights for all, including migrants and other ethnic minorities. In return for receiving citizen status, civil rights and enjoying equal opportunities, the French government demands individual cultural assimilation from its immigrants and minorities. However, migrants and minorities of a non-European country of birth (whether citizens or not) experience social exclusion and discrimination, residing in poor inner-city areas and having low-status insecure jobs (Castles and Miller 2009; Castles et al. 2014). According to this policy, Jewish people were granted equal civil rights as individuals but not as an intrinsic part of the majority (DellaPergola and Staetsky 2020).

As mentioned in the previous section, France experienced large-scale immigration from its former colonies in the Maghreb (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia). Algerian migrants enjoyed bilateral agreements which offered them, including Jewish people, a unique status in France. Moroccans and Tunisians, in contrast, were admitted through the *Office National d'Immigration (ONI)*, which was established by France to recruit workers from Southern Europe and has since 1945.

France has the largest Jewish community in Europe. The core estimate for the French Jewish population decreased to 446,000, the third largest Jewish population in the world (DellaPergola 2022). France is known to have one of the largest, if not the largest, *Sephardi* communities in the Diaspora. Jewish people of *Sephardi* ancestry, mostly first, second or third generation immigrants from North Africa, the Maghreb, clearly predominate numerically (75%) over those of central-eastern European origin who, until World War II, constituted the main component of Jewish population (DellaPergola 2011b; DellaPergola 2017; DellaPergola 2020). Today, about a third (34%) of Jewish people in France are immigrants, versus only 12% among the total French population (Graham 2018).

The major organized religious denomination in France is modern orthodoxy (World Jewish Congress 2020). The majority of French Jewish people (85–87%) were born to both parents who are Jewish. The rates of intermarriage are relatively low (22%) compared with other western European countries such as Germany and Sweden (38% in each) (DellaPergola and Staetsky 2020; Graham 2018).

A comparison of eight European nations found that in France, where Jewish people expressed the strongest feelings of being part of the Jewish community, they also have the strongest level of emotional attachment to Israel. Seventy percent of French Jewish people consider supporting Israel as a very important component of their Jewish identity, and 75% visited Israel but did not live there (Graham 2018). The French result is surprising since, theoretically, the Republic 'demands' loyalty to the French state alone, and French–Jewish identification with a second state (e.g., Israel) could be construed as dual loyalty and thus controversial. However, another previous survey confirms the finding that "the Jews of France in general have strong ties to Israel" (Cohen 2009, pp. 124–25). When asked about the sense of attachment to the Jewish people and to their current country of residence, 96% have strong feelings towards the first group, while 83% are attached to France (Graham 2018). Only a third of (36%) of Jewish people in France reported that religion is the main factor in defining their Jewish identity (DellaPergola and Staetsky 2020). With regard to Jewish practice (ethnic identification), France stands out compared with other western countries. A relatively high proportion (20%), (second among eight European countries), follow five or six religious practices (attend *Seder* [Passover meal], observe the *Shabbat*, eat only *Kosher* meat at home, attend synagogue weekly or more often, light candles most

Friday nights, and fast on *Yom Kippur* most or all years), compared with the proportion (26%) that follow one or no practice (Graham 2018).

As for communal institutions, in France, Jewish schools require tuition fees. Thus, only 24% of the parents aged 20 to 54 send their children to a Jewish school or Jewish kindergarten (Graham 2018). Furthermore, with its highly centralized system and predominantly Catholic population, the concept of citizenship is at the core of education in France. State education is considered the key to political freedom and to national identity, achieved particularly through linguistic unification. The strongest normative pillar of French political philosophy is the separation of state and church, and thus, education is secular. The goal is to offer pupils equal opportunity in knowledge acquisition. Freedom in the choice of public schools is highly restricted; parents are allowed to send their children only to schools located in their neighborhood. Alongside the public school system, however, there are private schools that serve various groups in the population (Gross 2006).

All major Zionist organizations are active in France, and there are several local youth movements. Despite organizational and communal Jewish vitality in France, only around 40% of the community is officially affiliated with or are members of synagogues or Jewish organizations. Alongside assimilation, there is also a noticeable tendency toward religious revival, including a growing ultra-Orthodox community (World Jewish Congress 2020).

Similar to other Jewish people in western countries, more than half of the Jewish people in France reside in the *greater Paris* metropolitan region (337,600 people); they constitute 2.8% of the city's population (Cohen 2002; Fourquet 2015), and they are the focus of this study. Most Jewish people living in Paris are *Sephardi* Jewish people. A minority are *Ashkenazi* Jewish people of European origin (Graham 2018). Jewish people who reside in Paris are more integrated in the wider society compared with those in other areas in France. They also have much higher education—at least a bachelor's degree (73%)—compared to 66% of other Jewish people in France and 50% among the non-Jewish population in the country (Cohen 2009).

Paris is the center of Jewish organizations and communal activities in France. In Paris alone, there are more than 20 Jewish day schools as well as multiple kindergartens and religious seminaries (World Jewish Congress 2020). Paris is also the center of intellectual and cultural life for French Jewish people: conferences, colloquia, exhibitions, and other Jewish-related activities. Yet, most research carried out on Judaism, its history, its culture and Jewish languages is conducted in institutes of higher education. Numerous teams at the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* deal with research focusing on the “science of Judaism and Jewishness”. A dozen Paris universities have departments or courses devoted to Hebrew, to other Jewish languages or more generally to teaching and research related to Judaism and Jewish studies. Paris today is one of the main centers for Jewish intellectual life in the Diaspora (Jewish Virtual Library 2021).

#### 4. The Study

This study employed two research methods: the correlative quantitative method using survey questionnaires and the qualitative semi-structured interview method.

The questionnaires were completed by telephone, face-to-face or via the internet; a total of 455 questionnaires were filled in. In addition, I conducted 22 semi-structured interviews (see Lev Ari 2022). For this paper, I used data only from 145 respondents whose fathers were born in North Africa. In addition, four semi-structured interviews were analyzed (out of 22) to supplement the quantitative data.

Most respondents (61%) are native-born, and 39% were born in North Africa and immigrated to France at the average age of 14 (standard deviation = 9 years). Most of them (80%) immigrated as children or in their youth; namely, they are 1.5 or second-generation immigrants (Lev Ari 2012).

More than half (56%) are women, and the average age is 46 years (standard deviation = 16 years). About a quarter are retired; 18% have liberal occupations; 14% are teachers; 12% are in sales and business. All the rest have other occupations, such as

blue-collar work, management, non-academic professions and clerical jobs or are students. Regarding their educational attainment, most of them, 73%, reported on having an academic degree, of whom 43% have a graduate degree; another 16% have a non-academic degree, and the rest (33%) have a high-school diploma. Another 20% reported on having “other” educational attainment, and 7% did not answer this question. Only 40% own a house or an apartment.

When compared by country of birth, some significant differences were found. Those who were born in North Africa are older than the native-born. As mentioned earlier (e.g., [DellaPergola and Staetsky 2020](#)), the first group immigrated to France during the 1950s and the 1970s, and their average age is 60 years (standard deviation = 13 years); thus, more than half of them are retired by now. Those who are native-born are much younger (37 years old, standard deviation = 11 years) and can be considered as second-generation (see also [Lev Ari 2012](#)). Those from the second group have higher educational attainment compared with the first group, whereas 61% have graduate degrees compared with 17%, accordingly. In addition, about half of the native-born have liberal occupations, such as teaching and business. Higher socioeconomic mobility among second-generation non-European immigrants—in general—was found in previous studies (see for example [Castles et al. 2014](#)).

As for the interviewees, all of them have fathers either from Morocco, Tunis or Algeria. The two immigrants were born in Morocco and immigrated to France in their teens. They are 58 and 64 years old. The younger (rabbi Y.) is married with seven children and serves as a rabbi in the French army with no academic degree. The older (S.) is married with five children and is retired from being a school principal and a teacher with a B.A. The two native-born interviewees (N. and R.) are second-generation immigrants in their thirties; both have B. A. degrees. N. is an accountant, and R. is a teacher for Jewish religious studies.

## 5. Results

### *Multiple Identities: Immigrants and the Native-Born Compared*

Three dimensions of ethnic-religious identities were studied here: (1) Jewish identity and attachment to Israel, (2) transnational and ethnic identity with country of origin and (3) national-local identity, as French citizens, and transnational, as ‘citizens of the world’.

Regarding Jewish ethnic and religious identity, in both groups it is the strongest identity component and, in comparison, almost similar. Both immigrants and the native-born feel and present themselves as Jewish, are proud of their Jewishness and are aware of their religious-ethnic identity. In addition, their emotional attachment to Israel is high and they perceive it as a spiritual center for the Jewish people.

As for identity with country of origin and transnational identity—in the case of those who immigrated to France from North Africa, there was a significant difference in the transnational component. North Africans expressed low attachment to their countries of origin regarding feeling ‘at home’ there, presenting themselves as North Africans and being North African as a significant part of their identity, whereas the native-born express higher affiliation to France as their country of origin.

The participants’ national identity as French citizens is rather strong but to a lesser degree than their sense of Jewish ethno-religious identity and their attachment to Israel as part of it. Nevertheless, they feel ‘at home,’ are emotionally attached and feel ‘French’. In both groups, there is low transnational identity as ‘citizens of the world,’ but it is stronger among the native-born (Table 1).

In sum, both groups, immigrants from North Africa and the native-born (second-generation of north Africans) are similar in their strong Jewish identity and spiritual attachment to Israel. However, in two transnational identities they differ: national identity among the immigrants is rather strong, compared with their transnational identity with their countries of origin, whereas feeling transnational identity as citizens of the world, the native-born reported on higher attachment than immigrants, although not as high as their national identity. Thus, Jewish ethno-religious identity is the strongest in both

groups, to a similar degree, followed by French national identity, then with country of origin; transnational identity is stronger among the native-born.

**Table 1.** Multiple identities: Immigrants and the native-born compared (*t*-test analysis for independent samples, means and standard deviation, 1 = not at all, 5 = to a very large extent).

Variables	Immigrants		Native-Born		Sig. (2-Tailed)
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	
Jewish identity and Israel—attachment					
Feel Jewish	4.85	0.49	4.88	0.35	n.s
Present yourself as Jewish	4.62	0.65	4.54	0.80	n.s
Proud to be Jewish	4.40	0.82	4.81	0.61	n.s
Emotional attachment to Israel	4.60	0.70	4.42	0.86	n.s
Israel serves as spiritual center for the Jewish people	4.36	1.04	4.40	0.82	n.s
Have a clear sense of being Jewish	4.38	0.70	4.47	0.74	n.s
Summary index (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.70)	4.61	0.45	4.55	0.48	n.s
Ethnic identity with country of origin/transnational					
Attached to country of origin	2.61	1.35	3.46	1.27	**
Feel primarily as native-born of country of origin	2.65	1.45	3.61	1.27	**
Feel “at home” in country of origin	2.46	1.51	3.56	1.32	**
Present oneself as native-born from country of origin	3.21	1.31	3.62	1.28	n.s
Summary index (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.84)	2.73	1.11	3.57	1.07	**
National-local identity					
Feel “at home” in current country of residence	3.60	1.06	3.65	1.16	n.s
Emotionally attached to current country of residence	3.54	1.05	3.69	1.13	n.s
Feel French	3.79	1.18	3.73	1.24	n.s
Summary index (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.86)	3.62	0.94	3.72	1.05	n.s
Transnational					
‘Citizen of the world’	2.12	1.01	2.97	1.45	**

\*\* *p* < 0.01; n.s = not significant.

In the interviews there are some citations which provide further understanding regarding the participants’ attitudes and feelings, which constitute their multiple ethnic identities.

As for Jewish ethnic and religious identity and the place of Israel within it, S. an immigrant from Morocco, makes a distinction between the more material component in his national identity and the religious–Jewish aspect identified with Israel: “You can live ‘at home’ in France, a democratic, open, tolerant country, beautiful culture, you can enjoy everything. You can... there is even a saying in French, ‘live like God in France’. [...] The dimension of ‘home’ which is more spiritual and religious is in Israel”.

Dynamic change in the participants’ identity is expressed in the interviews with both immigrants. Rabbi Y., describes a ‘revival’ of transnational-religious identity and feelings of ‘home’ in his country of origin, which he left at a young age (12 years), some decades ago: “Last year I was in Morocco, for Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai’s celebration. I really

was 'at home'. That is how it was, we would go to the same place with the parents and the family, so we remembered everything". S. describes the dynamic change between transnational identity with country of origin, as an immigrant, versus the local-national and ethnic identities: "Someone who has lived here for forty-fifty years does not feel like an immigrant. It feels as Jews but not as immigrants".

Multiple identities can be in conflict among them or complement each other. Rabbi Y., who serves as a military rabbi in the Paris area, expresses in his words some frustration at the French's perception of him as a foreigner and different, even though he serves in the army like them. He mentions his multiple identities, the national versus a constant sense as a migrant and wanderer:

So they [his friends in the French army, L. L.] say: 'what are you?' or when they talk about something they say: 'in your country', so I look and say: 'what is my country? What country are you talking about?' 'Israel', they tell me. So I say, 'for now, my country is here'. I'm in the army, you see what uniform I wear. How can you say I'm from Israel? If you take my passport and see where I was born, then you'll say I'm also Moroccan? Even those who have studied [...], they have a problem with the Jews. But let's say that when I am in Israel I'm a bit of a wanderer, when I'm in France I'm also a bit of a wanderer.

Contrary to Rabbi Y., S. who also immigrated to France from Morocco, describes a lesser conflictual interaction with non-Jewish people, whom he calls 'Goyim' (gentiles) and more complementary relations among his ethnic, religious and local-national identities:

The feeling of an immigrant does not exist. The feeling that you as a 'kosher Jew', or you wear a hat or a kippah, or you don't participate in all gentiles' holidays. I know Christmas, but you feel that you are not part of everyone who lives in my building. You say hello, you know them, you chat with them even in the elevator. But there is some kind of difference [...]. That on Saturday you wear a hat and a suit, while everyone is jogging. These are the reminders, but apart from that, there is no feeling of an immigrant.

N. (wife) and R. (husband), a married couple, both native-born, have a different mixture of identities. While N. expresses a more transnational identity with Israel but understands that living there will be difficult for her professionally and family-wise, R. expresses less enthusiasm for Israel and has stronger local-national identity. R. seems to represent the second-generation in his stronger national identity, whereas his wife, N., tends to perceive Israel as part of his transnational ethnic identity, similar to those of immigrants:

N.: "I feel good in Israel. When I'm there I tell myself that I would like to live there, even though I know that professionally it's hard and leaving my family is hard". R. noted that: "I feel 'at home' here, because when I go on holiday to Israel I am very happy to go there but not to live there. I feel here [in Paris to. L. L.] at 'my place'. [...] For me here it is 'at me' (chez moi) speaking in my language".

As an elaboration of exploring their ethnic identity, the participants were asked in the questionnaires about the importance they attach to their Jewish identity in various areas, as well as social relations and integration among the majority, non-Jewish people in Paris (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Degree of importance attached to Jewish identity, social connections and integration: Immigrants and native-born compared (*t*-test analysis for independent samples, means and standard deviation, 1 = not at all, 5 = to a very large extent).

Variables	Immigrants		Native-Born		Sig. (2-Tailed)
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	
Jewish identity and Israel—attachment					
The Jewish religion	4.40	0.73	4.56	0.73	n.s
Residing next to other Jews	3.90	1.12	3.88	1.11	n.s
Keeping Jewish customs	4.34	0.84	4.50	0.79	n.s
Jewish education to your children	4.43	0.77	4.61	0.75	n.s
Attachment to Israel	4.52	0.81	4.40	0.79	n.s
Your Jewish identity	4.38	0.71	4.14	0.99	n.s
Social relations mainly with Jews	2.60	1.14	2.98	1.10	*
Having social relations with non-Jews	2.03	1.18	2.63	1.26	**
Acquaintance with local non-Jewish culture	2.27	1.40	2.72	1.29	*
Being part of the majority community in Paris	1.68	1.04	2.27	1.16	**
Summary index (Cronbach's alpha = 0.75)	3.47	0.58	3.66	0.54	*

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; n.s = not significant.

Consistent with the findings presented in Table 1 is the importance the participants give to Jewish religion, practice, identity and Jewish education for their children; their attachment to Israel is very high in both groups and with similar distributions (according to standard deviation). As for being part of a Jewish neighborhood, it is still important but to a lesser degree, again, almost to a similar degree in both groups. However, when it comes to social relations, both with Jewish people and non-Jewish people, and integration within the majority, the degree of importance drops dramatically in both groups but in a different pattern. In all of these components, the native-born attach more importance to have social relations with Jewish people and non-Jewish people, to be acquainted with local culture and to be part of the majority in Paris.

Although in both groups the tendency to assimilate is low, it is more pronounced among the younger interviewees, the second generation, who are more interested than the immigrant generation in learning the local culture and being part of the community of the majority society in the city (Table 2).

## 6. Ethnic Identification

Ethnic identification includes three components: (1) children's education and community, (2) Jewish practice and (3) visits to Israel.

Children's education, both formal and informal, is more common among the native-born compared with the immigrants. Those from the first group send their children to Jewish schools to a larger degree than the second and in a more homogenous distribution (mean = 3.81, standard deviation = 1.58; 2.83, 1.86, accordingly). The native-born also send their children to Zionist movements more than the immigrants, who hardly do so (mean = 3.11, standard deviation = 1.50; 2.26, 1.52, accordingly). In addition, native-born people belong to Jewish-community organizations to a larger degree than immigrants (mean = 3.25, standard deviation = 1.51; 2.67, 1.50, accordingly).

As for other communal components such as volunteer activities for Israel, for the Jewish community and for affiliation with non-Jewish organizations, there are no significant differences between the two groups.

In the interviews, one of the immigrants, who came from Morocco in his teens and currently lives in Paris (Rabbi Y.), gives an example of a situation where he could not send his children to Jewish schools some decades ago. Previously he lived in another small city in France which did not have Jewish schools. He describes difficulties finding a suitable school for his children where they can preserve their Jewish identity and his choice of a Catholic school that was willing to consider the issue of *Shabbat* and Jewish holiday practices. Thus, despite the lack of a Jewish school there, he found a compromise that allowed at least partial observance of Jewish customs until they arrived in Paris:

They worked on *Shabbat*, and did not want to accept our children, because we told them we would not send them on *Shabbat*. They will come on holidays, to school, but they will have a task that the teacher will give them before the holidays, or, immediately after the holidays in the evening, they will go to their friends who will give them the homework.

Indeed, the Jewish community in Paris has undergone many changes in recent decades. S. describes these changes from his point of view—from being a community undergoing a process of assimilation from the 1970s to the 1990s through the establishment of the community economically (restaurants) and culturally (synagogues):

There was a revolution here. There was Americanization among Jews in France, [...] took off their hats, wore a *kippah*, took out tassels, stopped driving on *Shabbat*, and synagogues popped up everywhere. [...] Restaurants flourished everywhere; whereas twenty years ago there were maybe thirty or forty restaurants [...], today there are over a hundred in Paris alone. In Paris alone, in the seventeenth arrondissement, there are maybe twenty-five restaurants. Just in one arrondissement. In Boulogne [...] in the 1980s, there was not a single grocery store. There was no restaurant, there was only one synagogue in the north of the city. It was almost empty. Today you have to be a candidate to get a seat and find a place to sit. You need a subscription to enter. You have to wait five or six years until a place becomes available for you in the synagogue.

S. continues to describe this revolution among older as well as younger Jewish people in Paris:

Many people who came to pray did not know how to pray, did not know how to read Hebrew. There were not even books in French. Today there are all kinds of '*Siddurs*' [a book of Jewish prayers] in phonetics, so everyone can read in Hebrew, [...] and their children, who didn't even go to [Jewish] schools and synagogues, today synagogues are full of children and adults. The average age in synagogues has dropped a lot.

The two native-born people, R. and N., also perceive the Jewish community as vibrant and as having many organizations and activities which attract old as well as young members:

They are united and have joint projects, *Mikveh*, restaurants, community centers, a *Chabad* house, there are many things. [...] The community is very active. They organize a lot of things every holiday. In *Sukkot* there are many organized community meals, in *Hanukkah* there is a public candle lighting. On *Hanukkah* there are parties for children every day in every synagogue.

N., his wife, adds regarding the existence of rites of passage in the Jewish community in Paris: "Weddings, engagements and *bar mitzvahs*".

Another component of ethno-religious identification is Jewish practice. In both groups there is a high degree of practicing Jewish customs in interviewees' daily lives, similar (mean of 4.31, standard deviation = 0.75) among immigrants and (4.37, standard deviation = 0.72) among the native-born. Jewish practice included lighting *Shabbat* candles,

participating in Passover *Seder*, eating *Kosher* food, fasting on *Yom Kippur*, celebrating *Rosh Hashana* and synagogue affiliation.

One of the interviewees, S., (an immigrant) perceives religion in a functionalist manner, as an important component of social cohesion. Religion acts as a compass, a framework, compared to liberal life characterized by him as 'wild'. In his eyes, religion is seen as a source of communication, as a positive and even idyllic structure:

It gives direction. [...], it gives a framework for the family, it gives challenges in education, it gives challenges to you personally [...]. Religion consolidates, and gives some kind of sense to the Jewish society to be together. It also preserves the people socially, enabling communication, love, connection between the people.

N., a native-born, also perceives religion as important in every-day life; she emphasizes the importance of religion so that she does not work on *Shabbat* and has a place to eat *kosher* near her workplace: "Religion is very important, in the first place. When I start a new job on Friday, I have to leave at least an hour before *Shabbat* begins. Well, that's primary (central) and also that I can eat *kosher*." On the other hand, her husband R. mentioned religion as uniting the family but as potentially causing conflicts and disputes between Jewish people. In doing so, he demonstrates a more critical attitude toward religion, maybe as a result from his experience with the side of his family of Jewish origin (a converted mother), compared to his wife, who sees it as very important to her.

Finally, the participants' high attachment to Israel, as part of their Jewish identification, is manifested in frequent visits to Israel. In both groups, above 90% visited the country at least three times (96% among the native-born and 91% among immigrants), whereas the rest visited twice, and very few, in both groups, have never visited. However, it should be mentioned that 79% responded to this question, which might imply that a fifth did not visit or could not afford the trip.

S. mentions Israel's central place since his childhood in Morocco and as part of his school curriculum there:

When I was a child [...], at home in Morocco, I remember my mother sitting at the radio to listen to news from Israel. She also listened to the Voice of America in foreign languages, but Israel was very central. Religious life was around Israel, in school we learned about it and I even had teachers who came from Israel.

Rabbi Y. also describes his strong identification with Israel, which includes his wife's Jewish-Zionist education in the past and the fact that most of their children reside in Israel. His description implies the socialization of his children, which probably strengthened their Jewish-Zionist identification:

The first time I came here to *Eretz Israel* [the land of Israel], it was in honor of my *Bar Mitzvah* [Jewish coming of age ritual]. [...] I was young, thirteen years old. [...] As a rabbi, I supported Israel a lot, which is not just a state, but the Jewish people should live there. [...] My wife is very Zionist. She attended a school called *Yavneh* in Marseille which was Zionist. [...] She insisted that our sons would love the Land of Israel so much, that today six out of our seven children are here in Jerusalem.

## 7. Summary and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to compare native-born and immigrant Jewish people from North African roots who reside in greater Paris regarding their multiple identities: ethnic and religious, as Jewish; national, as French; and transnational, with Israel, as migrants from North Africa and as 'citizens of the world'.

Although the two groups in this study have common roots, they differ in their age, in their migration cohort and thus in their opportunities for integration in France. The immigrants are older and were socialized in North Africa and France during the 1950s and 1970s of the 20th century, when Maghreb countries just received their independence from

France. France granted migrants and minorities, including Jewish people, equal individual rights but demands integration within the French culture (see also [Castles et al. 2014](#)).

In the current study, both groups, immigrants from North Africa and native-born people (second-generation of north Africans), are similar in their strong Jewish identity and spiritual attachment to Israel, as well as their national identity. However, when it comes to other components of identity, the native-born are more attached to France as their country of origin, whereas immigrants from North Africa are less attached to their countries of origin. In addition, the native-born have stronger general transnational identity as ‘citizens of the world’. Thus, the hierarchy of identities is as follows: Jewish ethno-religious identity and identification, including transnational attachment to Israel, are the strongest among both groups, followed by French national identity, identification with country of origin and general-transnational attachment, particularly among the native-born.

The native-born, who can be considered as second-generation immigrants, experienced different social, political and economic circumstances and thus had better opportunities for integration and social mobility than the first or one and a half generation of immigrants (see also [Castles et al. 2014](#); [Lev Ari 2012](#)). It is rather evident that while immigrants had fewer opportunities for upward mobility and were more committed to national integration, the younger second-generation were mostly educated in the secular French educational system and had more choices regarding their identities. Furthermore, while the immigrants came to a Jewish community in Paris which just started to recover from World War II, accompanied by a high degree of assimilation, the second-generation native-born people were raised and socialized in a community which started to strive due to large waves of immigration composed of mainly Sephardic Jewish people from the Maghreb who were more traditionally inclined than the Ashkenazi local Jewish people at that time.

Thus, the native-born could choose to be more affiliated with their Jewish community and to send their children to formal and non-formal Jewish schools and even youth movements, which they could also financially afford due to their higher socio-economic status. Although the Republic ‘demands’ loyalty to the French state alone, the young generation of native-born people may have more freedom and a variety of Jewish schools and institutions compared with immigrants, and thus, they have become more confident when confronting the need to be loyal to their national identity.

The group of immigrants is more segregated from the national and Jewish communities. They are less interested in social relations both with Jewish people and especially with non-Jewish people. Only few attach importance to their countries of origin as well, probably since their immigration to France was a few decades ago. Therefore, the immigrants are somewhat ‘in between worlds’: not immigrants anymore but also not fully integrated, except for within the Jewish community.

Multiple and hyphenated identities could be either conflictual or complementary and constantly changing in their strength (see also [Prodanov 2010](#)). Jewish ethnic and religious identities are strong and complementary in both groups. National identity is less strong but shared by most participants—native-born and immigrants—and does not seem to contradict the first two identities. Furthermore, although in both groups the tendency to assimilate is low, it is more pronounced among the youngsters, the second-generation, who are more interested than the immigrants in the local culture and attach more importance to becoming a part of the majority. This dimension is part of native-borns’ identification with their country of origin, France, and as part of their higher opportunities for integration, compared with the immigrants. Since their ethno-religious identity as Jewish people is so strong, it does not compete with their national identities and identifications.

As for transnational identities, it is composed of three components: with Israel, which is the strongest, as complementary to their Jewish and religious identities and identification (frequent visits); with country of origin, among the immigrants, which is rather latent; and as ‘citizens of the world’, which is low in both groups but almost non-existent among the immigrants. Since the sample is not very large, particularly the qualitative one, I am not claiming that it is representative of both groups of participants. Nonetheless, some findings

and their patterns are supported by previous studies. Thus, the finding of this study and research questions can also serve as a basis for further research regarding first and second-generation immigrants' experience and the reconstruction of their ethnic identities in France or elsewhere in Western Europe.

In conclusion, even among people of the same North African origin, there are inter-generational differences in several dimensions of identity and identification which stem from being native-born or from immigrant experience. Over the years, different social and political circumstances have offered various integration opportunities for Jewish people as minorities in France in general and in Paris in particular. For example, rising antisemitism in France (see also Lev Ari 2022) might create feelings of alienation and segregation from the French society and bring about stronger Jewish community coherence and weaker national identification. Thus, identities are constantly changing regarding their strength as a result of local policy toward ethnic minorities in general and Jewish people in particular. However, the Jewish community in Paris is not passive. It has its own strength, cohesiveness, vitality and resilience, which are expressed in economic but also social and religious prosperity of Jewish organizations shared by both younger generations of the native-born and immigrants, who can be considered as a 'privileged' minority in Paris.

**Funding:** This research was funded by Oranim College and the Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry at Tel Aviv University.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** The study was conducted among participants who were at that time older than 20 years. The questionnaires were anonymous and were administered by research assistants or through the internet and unknown to the author. All of the participants were free to refuse or quit at any time. As for the interviews, in each one the participants were asked for their consent at the beginning of the interview, stating that if they did not want to answer a question or quit in the middle, they could do so. In addition, all details, including names, were coded, and the interviewees have been told about this before the interview began and taped. Both questionnaires and interviews included questions regarding attitudes and perceptions about various interactions and ethnic identity and none were invasive.

**Data Availability Statement:** The quantitative data can be obtained by contacting the author.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

## References

- Brodkin, Karen. 1998. *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Castles, Stephen, and Mark J. Miller. 2009. *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, 4th ed. New York: Macmillan.
- Castles, Stephen, Heinde Haas, and Mark J. Miller. 2014. *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, 5th ed. New York: Guilford Press.
- Cohen, Erik H. 2002. *Les Juifs de France: Valeurs et Identité*. Lyon: Fonds Social Juif Unifié. Available online: <https://archive.jpr.org.uk/object-fra22> (accessed on 9 October 2022).
- Cohen, Erik H. 2009. *The Jews of France at the Turn of the Third Millennium: A Sociological and Cultural Analysis*. The Rappaport Center for Assimilation Research and Strengthening Jewish Vitality. Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University.
- DellaPergola, Sergio. 2011a. *Jewish Demographic Policies: Population Trends and Options in Israel and in the Diaspora*. Jerusalem: The Jewish People Policy Institute.
- DellaPergola, Sergio. 2011b. Jews in Europe: Demographic Trends Contexts and Outlooks. In *A Road to Nowhere? Jewish Experiences in Unifying Europe*. Edited by Julius H. Schoeps and Olaf Glockner. Boston and Leiden: Brill, pp. 3–34.
- DellaPergola, Sergio. 2017. World Jewish Population, 2016. In *The American Jewish Year Book*. Edited by Arnold Dashefsky, Sergio DellaPergola and Ira M. Sheskin. New York: Springer, pp. 253–332.
- DellaPergola, Sergio. 2020. World Jewish Population, 2019. In *The American Jewish Year Book, 2019*. Edited by Arnold Dashefsky and Ira M. Sheskin. New York: Berman Jewish DataBank, pp. 263–356.
- DellaPergola, Sergio. 2022. World Jewish population 2021. In *The American Jewish Year Book*. Edited by Arnold Dashefsky and Ira M. Sheskin. Cham: Springer, pp. 313–412.
- DellaPergola, Sergio, and Daniel L. Staetsky. 2020. *Jews in Europe in the Turn of the Millennium: Population Trends and Estimates*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.
- DellaPergola, Sergio, and Ira M. Sheskin. 2015. Global Dispersion of Jews: Determinants and Consequences. In *The Changing World Religion Map: Sacred Places, Identities, Practices and Politics*. Edited by Stanley B. Brunn. New York: Springer, pp. 1311–43.

- Fourquet, Jérôme. 2015. *Enquête Auprès des Juifs de France*. Paris: Institut Français d'Opinion Publique (Ifop) pour la Fondation Jean Jaurès, Département Opinion et Stratégies d'Entreprise.
- Gold, Steven J. 2016. Patterns of Adaptation among Contemporary Jewish Immigrants to the US. In *The American Jewish Year Book*. Edited by Arnold Dashefsky and Ira M. Sheskin. New York: Springer, vol. 116, pp. 3–43.
- Graham, David. 2018. *European Jewish Identity: Mosaic or Monolith? An Empirical Assessment of Eight European Countries*. Report. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR). Available online: <http://archive.jpr.org.uk/object-eur183> (accessed on 12 April 2021).
- Gross, Zehavit. 2006. Power, Identity, and Organizational Structure as Reflected in Schools for Minority Groups: A Case Study of Jewish Schools in Paris, Brussels, and Geneva. *Comparative Education Review* 50: 603–24. [CrossRef]
- Hertz-Lazarowits, Rachel, Moran Yosef-Meitav, and Abeer Farah. 2012. Hyphenated Identity Development of Arab and Jewish Teachers: Within the Conflict Ridden Multicultural Setting of the University of Haifa. *Creative Education* 3: 1063–69. [CrossRef]
- Jewish Virtual Library. 2021. Paris, France. Available online: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/paris> (accessed on 4 September 2022).
- Lev Ari, Lilach. 2008. *The American Dream: For Men Only? Gender, Immigration and the Assimilation of Israelis in the United States*. New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing LLC.
- Lev Ari, Lilach. 2012. North Americans, Israelis or Jews? The Ethnic Identity of Immigrants' Offspring. *Contemporary Jewry* 32: 285–308.
- Lev Ari, Lilach. 2013. Multiple Identities among Israeli Migrants in Europe. *International Journal of Jewish Education Research* 6: 29–67.
- Lev Ari, Lilach. 2022. *Contemporary Jewish Communities in Three European Cities: Challenges of Integration, Acculturation and Ethnic Identity*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Macionis, John J. 2000. *Sociology*. Hoboken: Prentice Hall.
- Plasseraud, Yves. 2010. National Minorities/New Minorities: What Similarities and Differences in Contemporary Europe? Essais. Available online: <https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/sp/1900-v1-n1-sp04852/1064037ar/abstract/> (accessed on 10 November 2022). [CrossRef]
- Prodanov, Vassil. 2010. Ethnic and religious revival: Religion as a ground of ethnic and national identity. In *Diversity and Dialogue: Culture and Values in a Global Age*. Edited by Andrew Blasko and Plamen Makariev. Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, pp. 47–78.
- Rebhun, Uzi, and Lilach Lev Ari. 2010. *American Israelis: Migration, Transnationalism, and Diasporic Identity*. Boston and Leiden: Brill.
- United Nations. 2019. *International Migration 2019 (Highlights)*. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. Available online: [https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/files/documents/2020/Jan/un\\_2019\\_internationalmigration\\_highlights.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/files/documents/2020/Jan/un_2019_internationalmigration_highlights.pdf) (accessed on 2 October 2022).
- World Jewish Congress. 2020. France. Available online: <https://www.worldjewishcongress.org/en/about/communities/FR> (accessed on 15 September 2022).

**Disclaimer/Publisher's Note:** The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.