From IMMIGRATION To INTEGRATION

The Canadian Jewish Experience: A Millennium Edition

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14. The New Immigrants: A Contemporary Profile

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Unlike immigrants in previous generations who usually made a once-in-a-life-time move from the "old" country to the "new" one, contemporary immigrants tend to move back and forth (physically, virtually, and otherwise) between their country of origin and their host country, creating, in effect, a transnational ethnic community.[1] The transnationality of immigrant communities, the very split of economic, social, and political loyalties among migrants, is often perceived as problematic by the receiving societies and, thus, may slow the process of integration.[2] Most transnational networks in business, politics, and culture organize along ethnic lines where members of the same ethnic community spread out to different places on the map. Common language and cultural heritage are the key cementing factors for the transnational diasporas. In most cases, transnationals become bilingual and bicultural, but different communities may exhibit various levels of cultural separatism in relation to the host society.[3]

This essay examines the process of identity formation among two different groups of recent Jewish immigrants to Canada: Israelis and Russians.[4] Most members of these groups immigrated to Canada in the last three decades, creating two transnational ethnic communities that are part of, and at the same time distinct from, the larger Jewish community.[5] While the two groups are different in many ways, they are similar in that neither has fully integrated into the larger Jewish community. Russian Jews, as well as Israelis, have gradually developed distinctive ethnic transnational communities within the larger Jewish community.

Transnational Immigrant Communities

The concept of "transnationalism," described as a central component of the globalization process of the post-colonial world, is becoming increasingly popular in social and political sciences.[6] Originally coined in international economics to connote the flow of resources and labour across national borders in the post–World War II economy, this concept was later adopted by social

scientists to describe and analyze international migration, citizenship, ethnic identity, immigrant integration, and cultural retention.[7]

Individuals who took part in large immigration waves in the past (such as Ukrainians or Italians to Canada or, for that matter, Diaspora Jews after the destruction of the Second Temple) never fully cut off their bonds with the homeland ("Next Year in Jerusalem"). However, they rarely returned. Due to the financial and technical limitations of the time, these bonds primarily lasted in the cultural and sentimental domain, and were seldom manifested in active shuttle movement or intensive communication across borders. Economic ties with countries of origin were demonstrated through periodic monetary remittances to both relatives and charitable organizations. Although many of the immigrants of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries fostered the dream of return to their homeland, for most of them, in reality, it never happened and settlement in the host countries was a once-in-a-lifetime, irreversible process. Thus, integrating into the host community was a necessary element in a successful process of immigration.

The late twentieth century, with the development of time and space-compressing electronic technologies, has made this necessity practically irrelevant. These technologies allow numerous diasporic immigrants to live in two (or more) places at the same time, maintaining physical and social links with their country of origin. Transnational activities and lifestyles have spread, involving large numbers of people and playing an important role in the economy and political and social life of both receiving and sending countries.

Russian Jews in Canada

The migration of Jews from Russia to Canada started at the end of nineteenth century when thousands of Jews fled economic hardships and massacres in Russian towns and villages. The turmoil of World War I and the Communist revolution induced further migration during the 1920s. Many of these migrants settled in the Prairies, especially in Winnipeg, and on the Pacific Coast in Victoria and Vancouver. In the Prairies they found a vast productive land, a climate similar to that of Odessa or Kiev, and most importantly, a Canadian government that was willing, even eager, to grant large portions of land in Western Canada to settle eastern European Jews. By 1914, 20,000 Jews had entered Canada, and communities of mostly Russian (with some other eastern European) Jews could be found in every city and town, even in some villages, across the country.[8]

Gradually, between 1914 and 1930, the eastern European Jews changed the nature of Jewish organizational life in Canada. Bringing with them new ideologies and new movements such as Hasidism, socialism, anarchism, and Zionism, they managed to transform Jewish communal life from a religion-

centered community into a vibrant cultural and social one. Many of the "interior" Jews moved from farms in Western Canada and mines in the north of the country to the "ghettos" of Montreal, Toronto, and Winnipeg. They set up cultural, Yiddish-speaking, charity and fundraising organizations. Many got involved in Zionist and socialist Jewish organizations as well as in the Canadian labour movement.[9] From the onset of the Great Depression until the end of World War II, Canada practically shut its doors to Jewish immigration. After the war, between 1950 and 1953, several thousand Jewish refugees from eastern Europe, including Russian Jews, managed to enter Canada before the Cold War closed the entry gates again. During the 1970s and 1980s about 1,500 Soviet Jews entered the country as refugees from religious persecution.[10] Roberta Marcus and Donald Schwartz's early assessments of this new wave of immigration documented a large cultural gap between the Canadian Jewish host community, which had developed unique spiritual and social institutions, and the immigrants, who brought with them very different cultural-Jewish baggage.[11]

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, an increasing flow of Soviet Jews entered Canada. This was part of a larger wave of immigration from the former Soviet Union to Western countries. Similar to the wave of migration from Asia, Africa, and Latin America to North America, the movement of population from Eastern Europe was economically motivated. As a result of the demise of the Soviet Union and the extreme economic difficulties in the newly established republics, over one million Jews migrated to Israel, the US, and Canada. About one half of the Jews from the former Soviet Union who entered Canada came in through Israel. The two-step immigration, once to Israel and a second time to Canada, I would argue, contributes to the transnational nature of the Russian Jewish community as part of a diverse international Diaspora.

The label "Russian Jews" is a problematic one since it includes a mixed group of people. The ethnographic divide cuts through the Zapadniki (Jews of the Baltics, the westernmost parts of Ukraine, and Moldova), the Heartlanders (Jews from Russia, Belarus, and Central Ukraine), and Central Asian and Kavkasian Jews. In addition to geographic diversity, there are other elements of heterogeneity: some "Soviet Jews" experienced World War II and Stalinism, some the "thaw" of Khrushchev, some lived through all of it, and still others lived only through the Brezhnev era of glasnost and perestroika. To add to this confusion, less than half of the "Russian Jews" came to Canada straight from their country of origin; some arrived from Europe and the US and about 50 per cent immigrated to Canada from Israel. "Russian Jews," like many other late-twentieth-century post-modern immigrants, do not conform to the neat definition of an ethnic community.

The beginning of the latest exodus of Jews from the former Soviet Union was prompted by the pressure of North American and Israeli activists to "Free

Soviet Jewry" and by the Six-Day War, which inspired the Soviet Jews to pursue their own struggle.[12] At the time Soviet Jews were seen as an oppressed group of people fighting to maintain their historical Jewish identity under the attack of a political system that simultaneously denied them such an identity, while imposing a legally stigmatized Jewish identification label on them.[13] Against the backdrop of antisemitism, as suggested by some researchers, Jews in the former Soviet Union developed distinguishing identity characteristics of cosmopolitanism and intellectualism.[14]

In Israel and North America, however, Soviet Jews were portrayed as freedom fighters, struggling against the silence imposed upon them by an oppressive regime. In reality, while a few were refusniks, secretly learning Hebrew, religion and heritage and eager to join other Jewish communities, many others were simply trying unsuccessfully to assimilate into a Soviet society that presented them with insurmountable difficulties. [15]

When the Soviet Jews finally emerged from behind the Iron Curtain and North American and Israeli Jewry confronted what they thought would be a group of people who risked their lives for the opportunity to live as Jews in the free world, this imagined portrayal of Soviet Jews began to crumble. Many American and Canadian activists in the "Free Soviet Jewry" movement were astonished by the number of Jews who preferred to come to North America rather than to Israel. They were also disappointed by the fact that the newcomers were, in their opinion, "too Russian" and not "Jewish enough," lacking the drive for ethnic and religious endurance so characteristic of their North American co-ethnics.[16] From the immigrants' perspective, they were a group of Jews looking to improve their materialistic opportunities, part of a Canadian transnational Russian Jewish community with branches in the US, Germany, and Israel.

The size of the Russian Jewish community in Canada is hard to determine. Statistics Canada can provide information based on either country of birth, which will include many non-Jewish people from the former Soviet Union, or on ethnicity/religion, which will include many non-Russian Jews. The only way the census data collectors could estimate the number of Russian Jews in Canada was to talk to community leaders in different parts of the country. Rabbi Yoseph Zaltzman, the head of the Russian Jewish Community Centre in Toronto, estimates that about 30,000 Russian Jews reside in Toronto and that they represent about 75 per cent of the entire Russian Jewish community in Canada.[17] Jay Brodbar, assistant director of community planning and director of research at the UJA (United Jewish Appeal) Federation of Greater Toronto estimates that the number is about 25,000. The difference in estimates, he explained, results from the fact that the leaders of the Russian community count children born in Canada as part of their community, whereas surveys done by the Federation exclude children who were born in

this country.[18] Half of the Russian community in Toronto arrived in Canada after an initial settlement in Israel.[19] In the last five years, however, the proportion of those who came through Israel has increased to 70 to 75 per cent.[20] According to Charles Shahar, research co-ordinator of the Montreal Federation CJA (Combined Jewish Appeal), the Montreal community includes between 7,000 and 10,000 Russian Jews, most of whom came to Montreal through Israel.[21] If we add the estimated number of Russian Jews in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Halifax, and Ottawa, the total would be around 50,000. Since most of the data on settlement patterns and services emanates from Montreal or Toronto, it is easier to give a profile of these communities.

Russian Jews in Montreal tend to reside in Jewish neighborhoods. They have their own synagogue, which provides services on Saturdays and on Jewish holidays. Rabbi Yisroel Sirota, who runs these services, heads the Russian Jewish Community Centre on Sundays and Wednesdays. The centre offers adult-education classes on the basics of Judaism and is involved in life-cycle rituals. The rabbi, for example, arranges bris ceremonies for Russian adults who were not circumcised in the USSR, leads bar and bat mitzvah celebrations, conducts weddings, performs divorces, and leads funeral services. The Montreal Jewish Community Centre (JCC) offers special programs for Russian children and youth, as well as a golden-age group. In addition, the Workers' Circle developed a special group for Russian Jewish seniors. The community has five Russian newspapers, one of which, *Voice of the Community,* is supported by the Federation CJA. They have a small Russian Jewish supplementary school that operates on weekday afternoons and on Sundays. According to Mrs. Anna Sirota, many Russian Jewish children in Montreal attend non-Jewish Russian supplementary schools such as Navigator and Gramota. These schools offer their students advanced courses in math, as well as in Russian language, literature, and history.[22]

A major organization that provides integration services for Russian Jewish immigrants is the Jewish Immigrant Aid Services of Canada (JIAS), the oldest chartered not-for-profit settlement organization in the country. This organization assists Jewish immigrants for the first two to three years following immigration with such programs as referral and translation services. Its mandate is the promotion of "long-term integration of newcomers into Jewish communities from coast to coast by building partnerships between immigrants, government, charitable foundations, employers, service providers, and volunteers." The JIAS national office is linked to Jewish Family and Child Service or JIAS offices serving eleven communities across Canada. According to Edna Mendelson, the interim co-ordinator of JIAS in Montreal, the organization offers additional services such as accompanying new immigrants to appointments with doctors and lawyers. JIAS also organizes integration programs for university students, youth groups, and adults, such as Shabbaton programs in

different synagogues, a joint choir of veteran Jews and newcomers, overnight trips, and outings to movies, theatres, and pubs.[23]

The Toronto community is about three times as large as the one in Montreal. Most of the Soviet Jewish emigrés in Toronto live in Jewish neighbourhoods along the north part of the Bathurst Street strip. About two thirds of them rent an apartment, rather than owning a house. JIAS in Toronto plays a central role in co-ordinating a variety of services for the newest arrivals in the community, including ESL (English as a Second Language) classes.

The Russian Jewish Community Centre organizes parties during Jewish festivals, community seders on Passover, Purim parades, lectures in Russian on Jewish values, a daycare centre, and afternoon and Sunday schools for children, youth, and adult-education programs in computers, ESL, and driving. The Russian Jewish Centre also arranges referrals to housing services available through B'nai Brith Canada and the Federation.

In addition to the Russian Jewish Centre, the Bathurst Jewish Centre (formerly the JCC), the Bernard Betel Centre, the Borochov Centre and B'nai Brith Canada run special programs for Russian Jews. B'nai Brith, for example, formed a Russian-speaking lodge, Shalom Aleichem, that offers special programs for Russian Jews. It also provides an outreach program for Russian Jews, led by Rabbi Hersh Rabiski, that operates out of one of B'nai Brith's affordable housing units. Hundreds of Russian Jews participate in life-cycle programs at this Torrresdale Avenue building. In addition, Rabbi Uri Gelman, who is Russian-speaking, serves as the spiritual leader of B'nai Brith's Bathurst Street property.[24] Women's organizations such as Na'amat (Pioneer Women) and Hadassah-WIZO offer Russian Jews special language classes, babysitting services, trips, parties, and outings.

Several demographic characteristics of this group of immigrants may explain the transnational nature of their community. First, because of the non-elective nature of immigration policies relating to refugees and their relatives, the Soviet migration, especially during the 1990s, was a mass resettlement movement of extended families. As a result, a high proportion of Russian Jews was considerably older than the average age of other Canadian Jews. According to a recent survey of the Jewish community in Toronto, 22 per cent of Jews born in the former USSR were 65 years or over in 1991.[25] About 40 per cent of Russian Jews are over the age of 45, creating a community with a relatively high proportion of elderly people. Older immigrants tend to be more predisposed to ethnic and cultural retention. They are likelier to speak only Russian, and have a lower potential for social, cultural, and professional integration.

Second, the Russian language and the Russian-Soviet literature and culture play a salient role in informing the Canadian Russian community. Many stores in Jewish neighbourhoods in Toronto carry several newspapers, maga-

zines, and newsletters in the Russian language. About eight video stores specialize in Russian-speaking movies and twelve second-hand bookstores cater to the Russian community, enabling Russian-speaking immigrants to borrow or buy books and music in Russian and Ukrainian. Local radio stations offer daily news and music broadcasts in Russian and the multicultural television station offers weekly programs in the Russian language. Occasionally, Russian artists, singers, comedians, and theatre troupes frequent the city of Toronto, offering the latest in Russian cultural productions.

Mastering the Russian language and its literature is a source of pride for Russian Jews. In the last Soviet census of 1989, 95 per cent of Jews named Russian as their mother tongue, compared to only 30 to 60 per cent among other non-Russian Soviets.[26] Many leading Russian writers, journalists, poets, actors, art directors, and media and television celebrities are Jews. Jews are among the creators of the Russian-Soviet culture of modern times. They are an integral part, often labelled "the heart," of the Russian intelligentsia. This explains the solid connection between the Russian cultural traditions and Russian Jewish identity.

Third, between one quarter to one third of the immigrants are partly Jewish or non-Jewish.[27] After seventy-two years of atheist indoctrination in the USSR, assimilation and intermarriage became very common among Soviet Jews. Over 90 per cent of these Jews are completely secular and their Jewish identity is defined as ethnic rather than religious. Non-Jews and assimilated Jews are less likely to develop a strong Jewish identity or to integrate into the Canadian, synagogue-centered Jewish community. Unlike the immigration waves of the 1970s and the 1980s that was partly motivated by religious persecution and by identification with Judaism and Jewish values, the latest wave of immigration from the former Soviet Union is motivated primarily by the economic and political instability, as well as by the growing nationalism and antisemitism in the respective republics. About 70 per cent of respondents in a recent survey indicated "negligible" or "weak" exposure to Judaism in the USSR. Over 50 per cent never, or hardy ever, attended a synagogue. Most of them expressed no, or very little, affiliation with Jewish organizations or with a synagogue. Only 28 per cent were affiliated with the Association of Soviet Jewry in Canada and only three out of fifty-four respondents belonged to the JCC.[28]

Similarly, the rate of participation of the children of Russian Jewish immigrants in the Jewish education system is relatively low. Jewish education was found to be the most important variable predicting Jewish identity and community affiliation. Canadian Jews take pride in their relatively high rate of participation in Jewish education. A recent Toronto study documented that, despite an increasingly high rate of drop-off in early adolescence, 90 per cent of all Jewish children in the former Metropolitan Toronto have experienced some form of Jewish education, and 58 per cent were enrolled, at the time of

the study, in a Jewish school.[29] By comparison, only 40 per cent of Russian Jewish children experienced some form of Jewish education and this was usually for a shorter period of time.[30]

Fourth, many Soviet refugees experience a serious downgrading of their occupational status when they arrive in Canada. Over 21 per cent of them acquired a university degree in the former Soviet Union and more than one third have some form of higher education.[31] They possess the highest level of educational attainment of any refugee group in Canada. Despite their high level of education and academic and professional degrees, the occupational integration of Russian Jews is, to say the least, very problematic. The numbers of doctors, scientists, and engineers among the arrivals of the 1990s exceeded the capacity of the recession-stricken Canadian market. In addition, the professional skills of Soviet-trained specialists were frequently incompatible with local requirements. As a result, many Russian Jewish immigrants, especially older ones and women, had no choice but to make their living doing blue-collar or service work. The slim chances for occupational success discouraged them from improving their English-language skills, which in turn diminished their chances for occupational advancement.

Consequently, Soviet Jews experience the highest rate of poverty and unemployment of any immigrant group in the Jewish community. Thirty-five per cent of all Russian Jews who have entered Canada since 1975 live below the poverty line, in comparison to only 20 per cent among all Jewish immigrants and about 8 per cent among Canadian-born Jews.[32] The combination of high rates of unemployment and poverty with a high rate of elderly and single-parent families means that the Russian immigrants are likelier to require Jewish communal services. Indeed, Russian Jews are most often assisted to come to Canada by the Jewish Immigration Aid Services of Canada and therefore are already known to the community upon their arrival.[33] They are also the group that is most assisted by the Jewish Family and Child Service. Living in poverty, in need of social assistance, and having to lower their occupational expectations in the larger society, Russian Jews tend to seek recognition among their Russian-speaking co-ethnics in Canada and in other locations in the Diaspora.

Fifth, many Canadian Russian Jews have extensive networks of relatives and friends in the US, Israel, and Russia. Tel-Aviv, Ashkelon, Los Angeles, New York, Boston, Berlin, St. Petersburg, and other major cities have become, for the Russian Jews who can afford it, attractive tourist and business destinations. Many immigrants of the 1990s kept their citizenship in the post-Soviet republics. Some even kept their apartments there so they would be able to go back for extensive visits. With the emergence of new economic opportunities in the former Soviet Union, a number of Canadian Russian Jews have developed international businesses with affiliate companies in their home countries. Although there are no official Canadian statistics available characterizing

transnational economic activities of immigrants, some Israeli figures may serve as vague indicators. According to the Statistical Abstracts of Israel and the Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, about 15 to 20 per cent of Russian Israelis make annual trips to their home cities in the former Soviet Union and over 40 per cent visit there every two to four years. Approximately 20 per cent of Russian immigrants between the ages of twenty-five and sixty-five own, work for, or are somehow involved in, a small business in the former Soviet Union. About half of them make international phone calls to their homeland at least once a month; approximately 75 per cent hosted relatives and/or co-ethnic friends in their homes.[34] Canadian research also confirms the high rate of inter-ethnic relationships and a high rate of insularity from non-Soviet Jews.[35] With recently increased possibilities for international exchange through the Internet and e-mail, as well as transnational travel, the idea of a former Soviet, world-wide Jewish community assumes practical dimensions.

Israeli Jews in Canada

While Soviet Jews are viewed as an oppressed group of people fleeing anti-semitism and economic hardships for the freedom and opportunities in the Western world, and therefore receive an appreciated refugee status and generous benefits, Israeli migrants are viewed very differently. They are considered *yordim*—that is, literally "those who go down," those who have chosen to leave Israel[36]—violators of the Zionist ideology and, as such, a potential hazard for the Jewish state as well as for the mostly Zionist Jewish community in Canada. Israelis themselves feel guilty for leaving their homeland and express significant ambivalence about their presence in Canada.[37] Most of them foster a dream to return to Israel one day.[38] Thus, they make no visible efforts to assimilate into the culture of the country in which they live, or even into that of the native Jewish community. In contrast to the reception of the Russian Jews, there has been a very limited organized attempt to reach out to Israelis. While almost all Russian Jews who entered Canada were refugees, with few possibilities to return to the former Soviet Union, Israelis are able to return to the Jewish state. This distinguishes Israelis from roughly all other Jewish immigrants in the history of Canada.

The Israeli community in Canada is estimated to include between 20,000 and 50,000 immigrants. Since many Israelis were not born in Israel and some entered Canada by way of Europe or the US, it is difficult to evaluate the accuracy of different estimates. More than half of the Israeli-born Jews live in Toronto.[39] Israelis in Canada tend to be younger than the general Jewish population, are more likely to live in conventional husband-and-wife families, and have a lower rate of intermarriage. Similar to the Israeli communities in the US and in Europe,[40] they tend to live in Jewish neighbourhoods, send their

children to Jewish day schools or Sunday schools, be members of the JCC, and participate in some of the local organized Jewish activities. While a marginal part of the general Jewish community, they have developed distinctive, transnational, Israeli communal activities involving politics, recreation, culture, and entrepreneurship.

In spite of having lived in Canada for many years, they have retained a strong Israeli identity. In Toronto, for example, they have deliberately distanced themselves from the highly-organized Jewish community, constituting an Israeli ethnic group in the city. First came a weekly radio program in Hebrew designed for Israelis that started in 1989, then two free Hebrew-language weekly newspapers, aimed at an Israeli readership, were distributed in shops and restaurants with an Israeli clientele. These newspapers chiefly promote Israeli businesses that aim to cater to a specific market. The Hebrew radio program and the Hebrew free newspapers are also a type of bulletin board, which gives not only Canadian news, but also a summary of current events in Israel. The children of the immigrants have been encouraged to join the Israeli Scouts organization, Tsabar, while the Israeli senior-citizens club, Etrog, provides elderly Israelis, most of whom have followed their adult children who immigrated to Canada, with some Israeli culture. Israeli migrants formed Hebrew-speaking chapters of several Jewish international, secular organizations in Toronto and in Montreal: WIZO, Na'amat, and ORT (Organization for Rehabilitation through Training). As well, B'nai Brith Canada's Aluma lodge was specifically designed for elderly Hebrew-speaking Israelis. The community also supports an organization that caters to Israelis who have been injured or disabled during war service. Finally, the Israelis have established two synagogues of their own in Toronto: one for the Sephardim and a Lubavitch (Hasidic) synagogue for the Ashkenazim. This must be one of the most singular ways in which these immigrants have asserted their wish to retain their Israeli identity, which is secular and nationalistic rather than religious.

How Do Russian Jewish and Israeli Immigrants Differ?

Israeli immigrants differ from their Russian Jewish counterparts in several dimensions: in the reasons for leaving their country of origin and coming to Canada, in their sense of Jewish identity, in their retention of separate ethno-cultural enclaves, and in the extent of their transnational adjustment, integration, and community involvement.

The primary motivation of both Israelis and Russian Jews to come to Canada was their hope of improving their economic well-being and enjoying the economic opportunities that Canada has to offer. Secondary to prosperity was the desire to live in a "peaceful country." In addition to these two common

motives, Russian Jews indicated that they were "pushed" out of their homelands because of antisemitism and lack of political freedom. They found Canada attractive because it is a "democracy that provides its citizens with political freedom."[41]

The secondary migration of Russian Jews, from Israel to Canada, was prompted by different motives. A recent task force of the UJA Federation identified a number of characteristics of the phenomenon of secondary migration of Russian Jews, typically occurring after a five- to seven-year stay in Israel. These Jews reported leaving Israel for a variety of reasons, including economic hardships, difficulties encountered by intermarried or non-Jewish couples, fear related to terrorism and war, anxiety over their children's conscription into the army, and a general discomfort in assimilating into Israeli society.[42]

Israeli-born Jews voiced concerns similar to those of Russians who came to Canada via Israel. They reported leaving Israel to escape the constant stress caused by the ongoing military threat and the required participation in the *miluim* (military reserve service). An additional motivation was to pursue academic or professional careers.[43] Their motivation to leave is perceived as less legitimate and is often expressed in an apologetic tone, followed by a defensive assurance that their migration is a temporary and reversible act. They frequently consider their stay in Canada as temporary and plan to return home as soon as they have achieved their economic or educational goals. Many describe their stay in Canada as accidental, the result of staying on following a job, a visit, or a university program.

While Jews from the former Soviet Union consider their stay in Canada to be a positive experience, many Israelis regret "overstaying" in Canada, describing it as "getting stuck". Israel, most Israelis believe, is a better place to raise children, both safer and cheaper. In Israel, Jews are the religiously and culturally dominant group—the equivalent of the white Anglo-Saxon Protestants in Canada. In Israel, many Israeli women reported, they are surrounded by relatives and a network of friends. In Canada, they are a minority, struggling to preserve their language and a sense of "Israeliness" for their children.[44] By contrast, Soviet Jewish women, especially single mothers, feel that it is easier to raise children in Canada. They have observed that one wage can support their family and that their children have a better future here.

Jewish Identity

Both Soviet Jews and Israelis share certain notions of Jewish identity that are more secular than those held by religiously active Canadian Jews. Russian Jews, however, have demonstrated a weaker attachment to the Jewish religion than their Israeli counterparts. The study by Markus and Schwartz of Soviet migrants during the 1970s and 1980s found no desire to regain religious

freedom among Russian newcomers.[45] Similarly, Avrich-Skapinker and, more recently, Glickman have reported that while Canadian Jews had expected the Soviet immigrants to integrate into their religious community, Soviet Jews expected to be economically assisted and to be left alone to practice their secular orientation and their strong attachment to Russian culture. [46]

Both Israelis and Russian Jews are unfamiliar with the wide-ranging structure of self-supporting institutions through which their Canadian counterparts express and reproduce their collective Jewish identities. For example, while Canadian Jews are accustomed to paying membership fees for belonging to a synagogue, these immigrants are not. Both Israelis and Russian perceive Jewishness to a large extent as a nationality, which stands in contrast to the essentially religious identity of Canadian Jews. This incongruence in the essence of Jewish identity creates considerable tension between the host Jewish community and the immigrant groups.

Recent immigrants from Israel, just like Russian Jews, do not participate in activities of the Canadian Jewish community. They, similar to Russian immigrants, speak a different language, enjoy a different kind of music, eat different kinds of food, have contrasting political views, and like different kinds of sports and entertainment. While Israelis celebrate Jewish holidays and speak Hebrew, they do not associate these behaviours with their Jewishness, but rather with their "Israeliness." However, when Israelis confront the danger that their children might assimilate into the non-Jewish foreign ways of Canadian life, they enrol them in parochial day schools and other Canadian Jewish institutions—only to confront another foreign notion of identity that is religious rather than ethnic or nationalistic. In order to escape both assimilation and religiosity, Israelis take action to maintain cultural connections with Israel and other Israelis. Russian Jews, on the other hand, are less afraid of assimilation and are more likely to integrate in the larger Canadian society. As Gold, who studied Israelis and Russians in the US, puts it, "In this way, Israeli identity does not lend itself to the hyphenated Russian Jewish-American identity that Soviet emigrés often develop."[47]

Unlike Russians, many young second-generation Israelis still maintain a strong attachment to Israel and want to go back, serve in the army, study, and work there. This is due mainly to parental influence, participation in Israeli-oriented programs (the Israeli Scouts in Canada and various summer programs in Israel), and frequent visits to the Jewish state.[48] Young Soviets immigrants, on the other hand, appear to be less attached to their country of origin.

Retaining an Ethno-Cultural Enclave

As immigrants with a particular linguistic, national, and cultural heritage, both Israelis and Russians create their own ethno-cultural enclaves in Canada.

Since both groups have a high rate of self-employment, their neighbourhoods contain a variety of ethnic establishments. These include restaurants, music, book and video stores, travel agencies, bakeries and delicatessens, driving schools, and so on. In addition, the two immigrant communities have developed ethno-cultural centres, language-specific day-care centres, afternoon and Sunday schools, synagogues, and social clubs.

Israelis, however, differ from the Russian Jewish community in that they come from a diverse nation of immigrants. They come from an extremely stratified society in which ethnicity, military service, seniority in the country and religion play important roles in a stratification system that is often maintained in Canada. It is manifested by a clearly delineated community with sub-groups retaining unique forms of identification. Thus one can find in Canada different Israeli sub-groups: Moroccans, Romanians, and Iraqis, as well as military officers, academics, and kibbutzniks.

Although the Russian Jewish community is less stratified, a distinction is nevertheless often made between European Russians and Central Asian Russians.

Transnational Adjustment and Integration

Israeli and Russian Jewish communities in Canada are, as noted earlier, transnational communities. There is a large and growing body of literature that attempts to understand immigrant groups in terms of their involvement with economic, social, and political interests in multiple localities. This literature, which is part of the literature on globalization and post-colonialism, refers to groups such as Central and South American, Filipino, and Haitian communities in the US, Turks in Germany, and Armenians in England. Transnational ethnic communities are actively involved in shaping the social and economic life in their country of origin. They are often considered to be contributing "citizens in exile" by their home-country governments. [49]

Israeli immigrants in Canada, unlike Russians, are also involved in nation-building activities. Being socialized in a small and young country that is in a constant state of conflict with its neighbours, Israelis were inculcated with a strong Zionist ideology. Despite their move to Canada, they continue to identify with Israel, visit frequently, be involved in fundraising for Israeli causes, engage in political lobbying, vote in Israeli elections, and represent Israeli government and business interests in Canada. The Israeli government has encouraged these links between Israel and its citizens abroad.

While Israeli transnationality is based on economic, social-cultural, and political links with the Jewish state, the Russian Jewish transnationality is expressed only in the economic and social-cultural domains. In contrast to Israelis, Russian Jews are not engaged in nation-building activities. As a point

of comparison, however, Russian Jews have managed to achieve a high level of cultural retention. As already noted, Russian Jews cherish their identity and culture, considering it to be superior to the shallow North American one (as well as superior to the "Asian" Hebrew-based culture). Moreover, due to a high rate of elderly and unemployed, many members of this community are further discouraged from learning English and integrating into the local social dynamics and politics. More than Israelis, they maintain a vibrant cultural life, including reading Russian books, newspapers, and magazines, attending Russian concerts (from rock groups to classical music), and enjoying stand-up comedians and theatre companies. Being constantly exposed to a flow of information from their home country through watching talk shows and listening to cultural programs and daily news shows creates the effects of being psychologically present, along with a virtual participation in, and empathy with, modern history in post-Soviet republics. Many immigrants from the former Soviet Union, especially those who are older and female, can be described as physically living in one country while mentally belonging to another one. They are, in many ways, the least integrated group among recent Jewish immigrants to Canada.

Challenges for the Larger Community

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the Jewish community in Canada faces the challenge of integrating two groups of recent immigrants who exhibit strong transnational orientations. These transnational orientations result, at least in the first and second generation, in cultural separatism. Rather than resisting these tendencies, the Canadian Jewish community should find ways in which the community as a whole can benefit from the transnational activities of its immigrants. Contrary to popular stereotypes about the apathy and lack of involvement of Israelis and Russian Jews, recent studies reveal that these two groups are quite involved in their own communities.

Having a high birth rate, Israelis and Russian Jews play a key role in stabilizing older Jewish neighbourhoods. In the long run, Russian Jews as well as Israelis will provide the critical mass that allows for the preservation of older Jewish communities and institutions in Toronto and Montreal. Eventually, as they become more established, Israelis and Russian Jews will occupy and upgrade housing, and attend synagogues, day schools, and Jewish community centres. They will run and patronize more Jewish businesses. While Jewish immigrants, particularly the Russians, are currently poorer than the rest of the Jewish population, they are also upwardly mobile. With time, they will—if encouraged—contribute time and money to Jewish causes that are relevant to them. Many immigrants are already involved in the Jewish educational scene, Israelis as Hebrew teachers and Russians as teachers of art and music.

Despite the high level of separatism, there are some encouraging signs of a slow shift of these Jewish migrant groups from margin to centre. Israelis and Russian Jews are slowly increasing their level of religiosity. Numerous recent young immigrants participate in different activities of the Lubavitch and Aish Hatorah movements in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. Representatives of both communities can increasingly be found in a variety of Jewish organizations.

The historical experience of the organized Canadian Jewish community clearly demonstrates a trend in which immigrants become self-employed, establish themselves economically, and only later take up positions of philanthropy and leadership in the community. This was typical of the English and German Jews of the nineteenth century, the Russian Jews of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, and the post–World War II immigrants from Europe and North Africa. Contemporary Israelis, as well as Jews from the former Soviet Union, will probably follow a similar path. The question is not whether the Israeli and Russians immigrants will be involved in the Jewish community, but rather how this involvement will be shaped. The research has found ample evidence of social and community cohesiveness and solidarity among both Israelis and Russians. It remains to be seen whether they will amalgamate into the existing organizations of the host community, or whether they will create, with the support and guidance of the established Jewish community, their own brand of Jewishness and Jewish community life.