The Diverse Geographies of Jewishness: Exploring the Intersections between Race, Religion, and Citizenship among Israeli Migrants in Toronto

by

Tamir Arviv

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Geography and Planning
University of Toronto

© Copyright by Tamir Arviv 2016
The Diverse Geographies of Jewishness: Exploring the Intersections between Race, Religion, and Citizenship among Israeli Migrants in Toronto

Tamir Arviv

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Geography and Planning
University of Toronto

2016

Abstract

In this dissertation, I explore how Jewish migrants who have relocated from Israel, but who are now living in the Greater Toronto Area understand, negotiate and perform their identities, belongings, and citizenship upon migration, both individually and collectively. Working from a series of forty-eight interviews and a set of participant observations at public events, I discuss how the discourses and material realities of life in Israel and in Toronto inform their attachments, identities, and claims of belonging. I illustrate the ways in which their hybrid and transnational identities, attachments, and claims of belonging challenge Euro-Zionism’s homogenizing project - opening up potential for new revitalized spaces for conversations about Israel/Palestine.

The empirical chapters in this study focus on the themes of diaspora, whiteness, and citizenship in an attempt to foreground the multi-dimensional and diverse nature of Jewish identity and Jewish multiculturality and multiraciality in Canada (and in Israel).

Theoretically, this opens up opportunities to consider scaffolding that describes the complex multiplicity within cultures. Case studies are used to address the formation and re-formation of racial, religious, and national identities after migration, providing theoretical insights into the complex relations of multiple local racial formations to global racial formations, both historically and in the contemporary period, and their interconnectivity with other axes of difference, such as religion.
In particular, I emphasize the intersection of racial formation and religious identity by foregrounding the immense diversity of Jewish identities, cultures, and racial connections. Doing so, I begin to map previously unexplored intersections between Jewish studies and critical theories of race in order to illuminate spaces for potential critical geographical analyses of these fields. This study, therefore, opens up new questions not only for future research on the “Israeli diaspora”, but also for studies of race, religion, migration, and urban space in social and cultural geography.
Acknowledgments

In writing this dissertation I was fortunate enough to receive extraordinary support from many people. First and foremost, I am deeply thankful to my co-supervisors, Prof. Debby Leslie and Prof. Minelle Mahtani for their unconditional personal and professional support from the time I arrived in Toronto in the fall of 2009. Thank you for your faith in my project and for constantly pushing me to think critically about both theoretical and methodological issues. Your critical thinking, patience and assistance (especially in times of crisis) have made completing this project possible.

I am also deeply indebted to Prof. Ju Hui Judy Han and Prof. Rachel Silvey who joined as members of my committee without hesitation. I gained invaluable insight from reading your work and hearing your comments about mine.

I wish to acknowledge the support of my colleagues, including both students and faculty in the Geography and Planning Department. Prof. Robert Lewis and Prof. André Sorensen, thank you for your trust in opening the doors of teaching for me. Thanks are also due to Prof. Ahmed Allahwala and Prof. David Roberts for their guidance in teaching, as well as to the diligent Graduate Program Administrator, Jessica Finlayson, for her help at various stages during my tenure.

I owe many thanks to the ISEF Foundation and the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies that supported this research.

I am particularly grateful to Dr. JP Catungal, Nehal El-Hadi, and Dr. David Seitz who have been exceptional friends throughout this journey. A special thanks to David Fisher, for many interesting and challenging conversations about race, religion, and geo-politics. Krysta Pandolfi is deserving of thanks for her friendship and intellectual discussions on Italians, Jews, indigeneity, and whiteness in Canada.

A big thank you goes to my interview subjects, whose names are protected for confidentiality. Thank you for your courage, for your openness, and for sharing your time and experiences with me, even when I disagreed with you. You have challenged me to revisit my understandings of identity, belonging, and citizenship in numerous ways. Without you, this dissertation could have not been written.

I am grateful to my family and friends worldwide, for their continuous support. My dear mother, Gila Sarussi-Arviv, thank you for raising me with awareness of a ‘higher power’, teaching me humility, and sharing with me your childhood memories. Your wisdom guide me in every step I take and in every word I write.

Above all, I am thankful to my beloved partner, Nir, who has been an incredible source of love, care, encouragement, and unconditional support, and to our precious daughter, Romy, who was born during the final days of writing this thesis. I love you both and dedicate this research to you.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ii

Acknowledgments iv

List of Appendices vii

## Chapter 1: Introduction 1

The complex interactions and intersections of ethnicity, race, and religion in Jewishness 5

Geography and demography of Israelis and Jews in Toronto 10

Overview of Chapters 13

## Chapter 2: Two Jews, Three Opinions: A reflection on positionality and method 15

Introduction 15

A short biography 17

“Who sent you to study us”? – Recruitment of Participants 25

“Dugri?” - Sharing and Trading Subject Positions in Qualitative Interviews 31

Coding the Qualitative Data 38

Participant observation 40

Writing Up – Confronting accumulated anxieties about the project 41

Conclusion 43

## Chapter 3: Reframing the Israeli Diaspora: Towards Post-Zionist Jewish Futures 45

Introduction 45

Challenging Diaspora: Two waves 47

Changing places of Zionist attachment 50

Zionist Territoriality and the Israel-Diaspora Binary 54

Multiple racial and diasporic identities and consciousnesses 62

“It is all mixed-up within me”: Multiple Jewish diasporic locations 65

Diasporic Re-location / Re-placing 74

Conclusion 78

## Chapter 4: Rethinking Whiteness: Towards Jewish Multi-Raciality 81

Introduction 81

How are Jews racialized? 84

“How Jews became white” 86

Complicating Jewish racialization 94

Ashkenazi whiteness – Between Israel and Canada 96

Overlapping, conflicting and intersecting spaces of Jewish whiteness in Toronto 98

The stepbrother from the Middle East 108

Conclusion 115
Chapter 5: Practices and Spaces of Transnational Citizenship in Toronto

- Introduction 119
- Citizenship and transnational migrants 121
- Affective racialized politics of citizenship and nationhood 125
- Re-alignment of Jewish citizenship 128
- Israeli activist’s imaginations of citizenship and motivations to join pro-Israeli events 130
- The performance of Western citizenship 140
- Conclusion 146

Chapter 6: Conclusion 150

Works Cited 158

Appendices 182
# List of Appendices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>Ethics Approvals</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>Letter of Information</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td>Recruitment flyer</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D</td>
<td>Interview guide</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E</td>
<td>Interview Participants</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F</td>
<td>Toronto Map</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1:
Introduction

Scenario #1

A young woman sits on a bus in Toronto on the way home from the university. The bus is filled with people from a wide diversity of cultures, and age groups – a level of diversity that she has become accustomed to since moving from Israel to Toronto two years ago. After one stop, a young, lighter skinned man of about the same age moves to sit down next to her, hoping to strike up a conversation. After hearing her talk on the phone in Hebrew for a few minutes, he asks her where she is from. She replies that she is from Israel and a surprised look crosses the young man’s face. “Are you Jewish?” he asks, in an incredulous tone. “Of course,” she replies. Curious, he begins to press her. “Oh, me too! But I wouldn’t have known - you don’t look Jewish!”. Offended and irritated – this has happened before since she moved here – the young woman explains that her parents came to Israel from India and Iraq, that she certainly is Jewish, and that, actually, more Jews in Israel look like her than like him. The young man seems quite surprised; “I guess I knew Jews can be kind of dark, but I never heard of Jews from India!”

Scenario #2

A darker-skinned Jewish man in his early 40s sits on a bus in Toronto. As the bus approaches a stop, an older woman wearing a headscarf scans the passengers, focuses in on the man with a look of relief, and approaches him. She then begins to ask him something in Arabic. Although the man, who mainly speaks Hebrew, can in fact recognize many of her words, he freezes with a sense of alarm and without thinking quickly stammers in English: “I’m sorry, I don’t understand what you’re saying.” As the woman leaves the bus looking confused, the man begins to feel ashamed, realizing that he in fact did understand enough to help her find her stop. He thinks to himself how much this woman looks and sounds like his own late grandmother, and realizes how automatic his fear of his own grandparents’ first language has become.

Scenario #3

A group of Mizrahi (Jewish of Middle Eastern descent) Israeli immigrants in their mid-40s sits in a Kosher café in Thornhill on a break from work, loudly arguing in Arabic-tinged Hebrew about Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu’s latest speech.

At the next table sits a Canadian-born Jewish couple in their 70s having coffee. The man, who recognises the group as Israeli, whispers to his wife: “Listen, you
know how much I love and support Israel, but if our ‘brothers from the Middle East’ are going to come over here you’d think they would try to learn some social skills. Talk about reinforcing stereotypes about ‘the loud obnoxious Jews’! They’re bringing us right back to where we started!” They ask the waitress if they can move to another table.

After apologizing to the couple, the two Israeli-born Ashkenazi (Jews of European decent) waitresses stand by the kitchen eyeing the group of men disapprovingly. With a smile, one of the waitresses says to the other: “No wonder the Canadians hate us Israelis.” Her co-worker replies in annoyance: “It’s because of “Arsim” (a racialized term for Mizrahi men) like them that I left Israel in the first place. Let them stay over with all the Arabs, yelling and complaining like that while we actually make our lives better here like the Canadian Jews”.

All three of these mock scenarios, which are based on my own experiences as a Jewish immigrant from Israel in Toronto, as well those of participants who I interviewed for this study, exemplify the intersections of race, religion, migration, nationality, and geo politics, that materialise everyday among members of a heterogeneous ethno-religious group – ‘the Jews’. Despite their cultural, political, and racial diversity, Jews are treated as a largely monolithic group in North America (Train, 2006; Kaye/Kantrowitz, 2007; Levine-Rasky, 2008; Haynes, 2013).

Using narratives presented in my interviews with a diverse range of Jewish Israeli immigrants to Canada as a guide, this thesis examines ways in which Jewish migrants from Israel living in the Greater Toronto Area (the GTA) understand, negotiate and perform their identities, belongings, and citizenship upon migration, both individually in their everyday lives, and collectively in public spaces. Interwoven with these narratives and self-interpretations, I present social, historical, and political contexts that frame the complex ways in which religion, race, and geo-politics intersect and are complicit in migrants’ identities, belongings, experiences, and spatial practices, as they move between Toronto, Israel, and other lands of ancestry. Yet, it is the narratives themselves that are at the centre of this work.

My study foregrounds the actual lived experiences, offering interpretive framings exploring the subjectivities of Jewish immigrants from Israel living in Toronto, collected through two
ethnographic methods: semi-structured interviews and participant observation. In placing the migrants’ stories at the center of this study, I adopt some of the tenets from recent approaches in social and cultural geography that seek to escape the ethnocentrism, masculinism, and economism that have dominated the discipline of human geography (see Silvey and Lawson, 1999: 27; Silvey, 2013: 419). Most studies of migration have attempted to analyze “the experiences of `the immigrant', as an objective analytical category, rather than the experiences of `an immigrant' (Kelly and Lusis, 2006:831). I have chosen the latter. As Walton-Roberts (2003) notes, “human mobility cannot be comprehended through a language of economic rationale alone, but must be interpreted as involving socially grounded processes imbued with thick cultural meaning” (236). By providing critical ethnographies of migration, feminist and anti-racist geographers illustrate that cultural geographies of migration are intermeshed with social relations of power, including the politics of gender, race, class, and religion. Attention to these types of lived geographies reveals “the political dimensions of migrants’ cultural geographies [illustrating] that cultural geographies of migration are political geographies” (Silvey, 2013: 409).

The choice to study Jewish Israeli immigrants had much to do with my own position as a member of that group. It presents an opportunity to examine a deeply complex set of questions regarding the political and social dimensions of identity through migration. These questions relate to the fact that Jews, when considered as a group, are simultaneously and sometimes interchangeably, associated with numerous categories of identity such as ethnicity, religion, culture, nation, and race. Such a degree of overlap is not uncommon amongst immigrant groups, though it is also not completely unique. Social and cultural geographers have yet to apply historical and geographically contingent forms of analyses to fully question how racial identifications and orientations intersect with religious identities amongst immigrants. There has been a particular lack of analysis exploring the experiences of Jews and Israelis, despite their complex positions between different types of identities.

---

1 The thesis is based on semi-structured interviews with forty-eight “first-generation” Jewish-Israeli immigrants living in Toronto (the GTA) and field observations at various community public events such as pro-Israeli protests and marches, Israeli national commemoration ceremonies and festivals, and Jewish holiday celebrations. The interviews and field observations were conducted between February 2011 and August 2014. The methodology will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Two.
Academic scholars, particularly in Israeli diaspora studies, have long tended to generalize Israeli immigrants as Zionist, white and/or Western diasporic subjects (Gold, 2001; 2002; 2013; Rebhun and Lev Ari, 2010:31; Mittleberg and Waters, 1992; Sobel, 1986; Kass and Lipset, 1982). Scholars have contributed greatly to the problematic parcelling of Jewish identities both inside and outside of Israel. Furthermore, they have seldom acknowledged that the choice of any one or two types of Jewish identity in ethnographic research (such as religious group, or ethnicity, or a race) implies its own set of contextual assumptions, political projects and outcomes.

In conversation with the above-noted literature, and the political context that literature mostly represents (mainstream Zionism post-establishment of the State of Israel), this thesis contributes a view that considers how these categories shift and intersect with each other, and with other historical and possible-future iterations of Jewish identity. I explore these intersections in two ways. First, instead of lumping Jews into one or more of these categories, I try to unpack the multiplicity, hybridity, and contradictory nature of these categories themselves as they manifest through migration between different geographical, political, and cultural spaces. I answer calls such as those from Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz (2007) who yearn for new conceptions of Jewish anti-racist diasporism that embrace diversity and put an end to the trope that the authentic Jew is exclusively white, Ashkenazi, of European descent, and a supporter of Zionism. I am also attentive to the work of scholars like Lisa Tessman and Bat-Ami Bar On (2001), who call upon researchers to map new intersections between Jewish studies and critical theories of race. It is, I believe, through migration between spaces where these intersections become clear. Second, I examine these migrations through a wider historical lens than previously conceptualized - one that attempts to include the wide, diverse, and fluid places of Jewishness in the past (with particular attention to the Middle East, Central Asia, and North Africa, where most Israeli Jews find their pre-State ancestry), and the possible changes to the geographies and identities of Jewishness in the future (both in Israel / Palestine and elsewhere).

To accomplish the above as part of a practical and ethical anti-racist political project that answers the needs of marginalised groups in Israel/Palestine, I have chosen to build my analysis largely on the work of post-Zionist scholars- especially those from anti-racist academics and activists from the marginalised and racialized Mizrahi (Jews from Asian and African Jewish
ancestries) majority. As a counterpoint to the minority, mainly Ashkenazi (Jews of European origin) and Western(ized) elite, that has dominated both Zionist and non-Zionist viewpoints of ‘Jewish history’, Mizrahi post-Zionist scholars provide what I feel is a more nuanced view of the complexity of Israeli society. These scholars emphasize the historical and contemporary places of Mizrahi Jews within Israeli–based ‘racial hierarchies’ (Pulido, 2006: 25), occupying an intermediate racialized entity – a third tier between Ashkenazi Jews (at the top) and Palestinians (at the bottom). Following Ella Shohat (2003), I engage with multiple racialized Jewish histories and geographies, including Arab Jewish and Mizrahi histories elaborated in Chapter Three, and examine how these historical geographies inform past, present, and imagined future identifications, belongings, cartographies, and political practices of the participants. I illustrate that Jewish immigrants from Israel living in Toronto are multiply and complexly located within intersecting, multi-scalar racial and religious formations.

The complex interactions and intersections of ethnicity, race, and religion in Jewishness

In Israel, the majority of the Jewish population are of Asian and African Jewish ancestries (mainly from the Arab and the Muslim World; Lavie, 2014:1). These are Mizrahi Jewsug. Thus, it

---

2 Post Zionism is an intellectual movement that emerged in the mid-1980s, in Israel/Palestine and elsewhere, that is aimed at challenging the dominant Zionist popular and academic versions, or myths, of Jewish/Israeli history, society, national identity, and security. Scholars in this diverse movement have drawn from cultural, post-colonial, and feminist studies (see Silberstein, 2008).

3 The categories of “Arab” and “Jew” are largely seen as mutually exclusive in contemporary Israel-Palestine (Shohat, 2003; Shenhav, 2003). “Arab-Jews” is a critical discursive concept aimed at challenging this dichotomy, which Mizrahi scholars argue has violently erased the ‘Arabness’ of the Arabic-speaking Jews who arrived in Israel from Arab/Muslim countries of the Middle East and North Africa. The employment of the concept does not suggest that there is an essential/singular “Arab-Jewish” history, but rather it aims at disturbing the notion of “Jewish history” being completely separate from Arab/ Middle Eastern history (Shohat, 2003). The term “Arab Jews” differs fundamentally from the term “Mizrahi Jews”, because the former refers to an identity that developed amongst Jewish in the Arab world before Israel’s establishment, while the latter is based on the cultural solidarity and common experience of racialization of all non-European Jews (i.e. also those from non-Arab places like India, Turkey, the Caucasus, and Central Asia) in Israel since the state’s establishment (Chetrit, 2004: 49; Shohat, 2003; Shenhav, 2003; Lavie, 2013, 2011). It is also important to note the distinction between Mizrahi and Sephardi identities. The term Sepharadim (literally, “Spaniards”) is theoretically specific to those Jews who descend from those exiled from Spain and Portugal in 1492 following the inquisitions, who happened to mainly resettle in Arab lands under Muslim rule (i.e. not counting Jews who always lived in Arab lands). While in Israel the “Sephardi” label bears mainly religious significance, in North America, these two categories (Mizrahi and Sephardi) are used more interchangeably.

4 One of the crucial background items that tends to be ignored or underplayed in both conservative and critical
is not a surprise that Jews from Israel have brought a level of Jewish ethnic and racial diversity with them. Before moving forward, I would like to briefly discuss the role of one particularly under-discussed three-way intersection—the fraught relationship that emerges between ethnicity, race, and religion—that has become especially clear in my study of this particular group. While anti-racist feminist geographers have been at the forefront of scholarship examining the intersection (and the mutually constitutive qualities) of gender, race, and class in relation to space and place in white settler societies (Kobayashi, 2005: 32, see also Razack et al., 2010), there has not been much attention paid to unravelling the relationship between race and religion and their overlapping intersections. Social and cultural geographers, who have also explored migrants’ experiences and negotiations of religious identity at multiple scales (the body, the neighbourhood, the city, the nation, and transnational/global scale; see Kong, 2010: 769; see also Kong, 2001; Holloway and Valins, 2002: 8; Yorgason and Della Dora, 2009; Silvey, 2013: 416; Oosterbaan, 2014), seem to underplay the co-constitutive nature of race and religion. Few studies in human geography have sought to bring the geographies of religion, race, and racism together (Hopkins 2007). This is not to imply that race and religion are the same, or that they should be conflated (Kong, 2001; 2010), but, rather, I believe that a more nuanced and historically and geographically contingent analysis must consider the co-constructed history and interdependent relations that have existed, and still exist, between race and religion.

Religious extremism, and especially Islamic fundamentalism, from 9/11 to ISIS, has wrested global attention in both western popular and political discourses. Longstanding Orientalized geographical imaginations that separate the Judeo-Christian West and the Arab/Muslim world have been further sharpened (e.g., Said, 1978; Hall, 1996; Gregory, 2004; Gilroy, 2004; Mamdani, 2005; Arat Koc, 2005; Frankenberg, 2005; Razack, 2007; Abu-Laban and Bakan, 2007). Academic and political discourses on the Israeli/Palestinian space is that half of the population of Israeli citizens, and 63 percent of the Jewish population in Israel, are Jews with no European or Western familial or racial background. Ashkenazim make up 30 percent of Israel’s population and they mainly migrated to Israel from Eastern and Central Europe (Lavie, 2014:1-2). Though there has always been a low level of religious pilgrimage and migration of Jews between Europe and the biblical land of Israel, the first organized immigration wave arrived in Palestine in 1882. Immigration of Jews from Europe continued until World War II with Zionism. Most Ashkenazi Jews, however, came to Israel after the Holocaust, and a further wave immigrated from the European parts of the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s. Palestinians citizens of Israel comprise the remaining 20 percent of the total population. Notably, this number excludes Palestinian descendants of those resident in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip prior to 1967, and those who fled or were expelled in the 1948 Nakba and their descendants who live abroad, all of whom are denied Israeli citizenship, and many of whom live in refugee camps or under Israeli military occupation.
2008; Razack et al., 2010; Rana, 2011; Kalmar –Davidson, 2013). As a result, recent studies examining the intersection of religion and race have been mainly focused on analysing the experiences of Muslims living in Western cities (e.g., Peek, 2003; Hopkins 2007; Phillips et al. 2007; Listerborn, 2015). Yet, the history of race-religion intersection extends the experiences of Muslims (Meer, 2012:2). Religion has played a significant role in the genealogy of the modern race concept itself, and both Jews and Muslims have for centuries been the central figures around which the modern secular notions of race are articulated (Rana 2011: 31). In fact, the dynamic, fluid, multiple, and at times contradictory processes of “racialization” of religion are perhaps exemplified by racialization processes in relation to both Muslims and Jews, historically categorised similarly as either religious outsiders (presenting an spiritual threat) or ‘Semitic’ others (constituting a racial-biological threat) in the Orientalist gaze of White Europe (e.g., Said, 1978; Omi and Winant, 1994; Baum, 2006; Joshi, 2006; Rana, 2011; Meer, 2012; Kalmar –Davidson, 2013).

The racial positions of Judaism and Islam (as well as Hinduism and Sikhism) in the West are, today, clearly different. Jews and Muslims, while sharing an overlapping racial history, have nevertheless come to be positioned differently in the contemporary Christian-dominant Western imagination. The complexity of geo-political and economic interrelations under advanced globalization have complicated simplifications and shifted allegiances markedly. At the same time, fears over phenomena such as so-called “home-grown terrorism” and the possibility of losing ‘native-born’ Westerners (especially White citizens) to ‘Islamic ideology’ have highlighted the role of culture and ideology in mediating race via religious doctrine. Still, while Islamophobia has become (re-)linked to ideas of cultural ‘primitiveness’, it also remains tied to stereotypical phenotypic features, and to imaginations of Semitic blackness in ways that are evocative for Jews. In fact, many of the ‘Oriental’ stereotypes now applied to Muslims and (especially) Arabs are the very same ‘Semitic’ stereotypes that many Jews have historically suffered from and wished to escape (Gilman, 1986; 1991; Boyarin 1999; Yosef; 2004; Falk,

5 Nevertheless, a recent study by the Pew Global Attitudes project (2008), surveying almost 25,000 people across twenty four countries, reported a strong relationship between anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim sentiments in the West. The U.S., France, Britain, Germany, Poland, Spain, and Russia were included in the survey. The correlation between unfavorable opinions of Jews and unfavorable opinions of Muslims is remarkably high (PRC 2008, p. 9, in Meer, 2012:8). For a discussion of the similarities and differences between contemporary anti-Jewish racism and anti-Muslim racism see Meer, 2012.
While it was also (and in the 20th Century increasingly became) understood as a national liberation project for Jews, early, Ashkenazi-dominated European Zionism was, in part, a ‘de-Orientalizing’ racial project in the eyes of its founders – an attempt to ‘rescue’ Jews from their permanent outsider status by making them ‘a nation like any other’ (Shohat, 1988; Raz-Karkotzkin, 1993/1994). In this vein, Ella Shohat (Shohat, 1988; 1999; 2003) argues that Euro-Zionism is in fact forever caught in an inferiority-superiority complex in relation to the West and East, always trying to prove Jews’ ‘Western’ credentials by separating itself from ‘Eastern-ness’. Similarly, Sara Chinsky (2009) frames Euro-Zionism as a Sisyphean project of ‘whitening’, which claims independence and confidence, but is in fact forever in self-conscious search of the approval of the Western (Christian-white) gaze of Europeans.

Jews have, in the Western imagination, ‘graduated’ through a series of racialized periods since the 19th Century: from pre-modern, religious-based racialization, in which Jews were lumped alongside Muslims as non-Christians, to the disastrous, biologically based (19th – mid 20th century) ‘Semitic’ racialization (a pseudo-scientific category that also includes Arabs) which culminated in the Nazi genocide, to a post-WWII cultural label of ‘ethnicity’ (or ‘white ethnicity’), in which Western Jews are currently situated. This progression allows us to see the shifting role of Jews vis-à-vis Muslims, Arabs, and the ‘East’ in general. Interestingly, while the first two stages of discrimination (up to the Holocaust) placed Jews together with other ‘Semitics’ and ‘Orientals’ as eternal outsiders to Europe and the West, the post-WWII application of “ethnicity” in place of “race” has for the first time allowed ‘assimilated’ Jews the possibility to abandon or disown certain ‘black’ elements of Jewish culture that were formerly seen as essential to being a Jew (Jacobson, 1998; 2006; Brodkin, 1998; Tessman, 2001; Baum, 2006; Goldstein, 2007; Greenberg, 2013; Bakan, 2014). Yet while in general the term “ethnicity” has come to be employed without much discussion in most of the literature on Jewish and Israeli “diasporas”, there are a number of very different ways in which the word is applied to Jews. On one hand, it is used to describe different divisions between Jews, particularly between Mizrahim/Sephardim and Ashkenazim (Shenhav and Yona, 2008). Ethnicity is also used to distinguish between immigrants from Israel and Jews from other parts of the world (Gold, 2002).
However, ethnicity is also often used to denote a division between “Jews” as a monolithic ethnic group and other, non-Jewish ethnic groups in host societies and globally. This is particularly the case in Canada, where the official policy and discourse of Multiculturalism tends to homogenize ethnic/racialized groups such as “the Jews” as monolithic ones (Kobayashi 1993; Li, 1999; Mahtani, 2002b), represented by their most established aspects – in this case, Ashkenazi Jewishness (Levine-Rasky, 2005; Train, 2000; 2006).

Part of the reason that Judaism is often seen as being an “ethnicity”, and that divisions within the Jewish community are often downplayed, relates to the fact that Jews share a common religious basis and a strong narrative of collective identity, in Judaism itself but also in Christianity and Islam. Therefore, Jews and non-Jews alike tend to consider “the Jews” as forming a singular group, assuming that they have faced identical historical phases (e.g. the Holocaust) and that they have moved on from these phases as a unit. In present-day North America, it is thus assumed that, since many Jews have achieved the status of ‘white ethnicity’, ‘the Jews’ are now ‘white’ (Jacobson, 1998; 2006; Brodkin, 1998; Goldstein, 2007; Greenberg, 2013; Bakan, 2014). However, as I show in this thesis, achievement of homogenous whiteness has not been available to all Jews – in particular, to Jews (of all backgrounds) who are phenotypically darker or Jews who are visibly religiously observant. This, in fact, is where the historical parallels between the Jewish and Muslim experiences – both of which are more racially and phenotypically diverse than portrayed in the West – resurface. Jews, rather than being simply “ethnic” are, still, in many cases, racialized as well. As Gil Anidjar (2008: 21 quoted in Kalmar–Davidson, 2013) claims “[r]ace is religion. The evidence lies in the Semites”. And nowhere is this clearer than with the ongoing racial discrimination faced by the most ‘Semitic’ of Jews – the Mizrahim and the Arab Jews.

Use of the category “ethnicity” is problematic because it overlooks two important facts. First, Jews, including Ashkenazi (European) Jews, can and have in the past been racialized vis-à-vis White Europeans, being seen as more than just ‘ethnically’ different (Baum, 2006: 239; Tessman, 2001). Second, there are markedly different histories and experiences of racialization amongst Jews, particularly those Jews who are racial and cultural minorities living within Ashkenazi-dominated communities. As this study demonstrates, despite many undeniable
common bases for identity and solidarity, Jews do not share one monolithic racial experience either in Israel or North America, with respect to other Jews or with respect to non-Jews (Baum, 2006: 235; Shenhav and Yona, 2008; Levin-Rasky, 2008; Train, 2006; Haynes, 2013; Greenberg, 2013). Similarly, the narratives in this study show that there is clearly lingering awareness of difference between Whitened, Westernized Jews and the historically hegemonic Canadian Christian White society; ‘the Jews’ as a whole are to some degree still seen as being racially different, even though large portions of the Jewish community are deeply assimilated into Whiteness and White identity, and have become oblivious to race (Jacobson, 1998; 2006; Brodkin, 1998; Goldstein, 2007; Greenberg, 2013; Bakan, 2014). This study focus on the themes of diaspora, whiteness, and citizenship in an attempt to foreground the multi-dimensional and diverse nature of Jewish identity and Jewish multiculturality and multiraciality in Canada (as well as in Israel).

**Geography and demography of Israelis and Jews in Toronto**

The Greater Toronto Area (or GTA), Canada’s largest urban region and one of the largest in North America, is an ideal place to explore the themes of this dissertation. The region functions as one of the main gateways for new immigrants to Canada, and with this, it has transformed, in less than a generation, from an overwhelmingly White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant space, to one with a variegated and complex racial, religious and cultural urban landscape (Murdie and Texeiria, 2006).

Although it is today one of the smaller “minority” groups in the city (Brym et al., 2010), Toronto’s Jewish community was one of the first communities in the city (outside of the founding British-Christian one). Today, Jews in the GTA make up about half of Canadian Jewry, estimated to be between 315,120 to 375,000 in total (Bryme et al., 2010; Harman Institute, 2010). This is the fourth largest Jewish country population in the world⁶. For its large size, Toronto’s Jewish community is also remarkably spatially concentrated, living mainly along the

---

“Bathurst Street Corridor” that runs from Downtown Toronto into the neighbouring York region (see Torczyner and Brotman, 1995; Cohen, 1999; Diamond, 2004 in Train, 2006; see also Appendix F). Compared to American Jews, Canadian Jews are less assimilated into the dominant Canadian Anglo-Christian culture. Canadian Jews tend to speak more Yiddish or Hebrew, provide their children with more years of Jewish education, and to practice a greater number of religious rituals (with a larger proportion practising religious orthodoxy). Canadian Jews tend to have lower rates of intermarriage, to contribute more generously on a per capita basis to Jewish and Israeli charities, and to visit Israel more. They also express more concern for Israel’s welfare (Brym et al., 2010; Taras and Weinfeld, 1990).

Although there are records of Jewish residents in Upper Canada (now the province of Ontario) arriving as far back as 1768, the number of Jews in Canada was still considered quite small until around the 1880s, when a mass migration of Jews from Eastern Europe began, following waves of violent anti-Semitic attacks there (Baum, 2006: 124; Troper, 2001; Tulchinsky, 2008). Even then, Toronto’s Jewish community remained relatively limited, because Jewish immigration was heavily restricted. This was articulated through a policy of “none is too many” towards Jewish immigrants (see Abella and Troper, 1983). The largest wave of immigrants was of the Nazi-Holocaust survivors in the 1950s. This wave happened after the Canadian government relaxed immigration restrictions, altering circumstances somewhat. Until the mid-1950s, the Jewish community remained racially homogeneous. Only Jews from European countries were permitted to enter Canada until 1956, due to immigration policies prohibiting the entrance of any immigrants from non–European countries. This effectively excluded Jews of colour (Train, 2006: 50).

---

7 Jews persistently have been discovered to be more residually concentrated than any other ethnic or visible-minority group in Toronto, as in other Canadian cities (Balakrishnan and Gyimah, 2007: 315; Murdie and Texeiria, 2006). Within the Toronto CMA, Jews are the most residentially concentrated group (followed by the Chinese and Portuguese communities). The majority (58 percent) of residents live in 14 Census Tracts. The core is around Bathurst Street and Steeles Avenue, where the Jewish population represents 60-70 percent of the total populations of these Census Tracts (Qadeer and Kumar, 2003). The “Bathurst Street Corridor” functions and is known as the heart of the Toronto Jewish community with an intensity of religious and cultural infrastructures (Diamond, 2004:207 in Train, 2006). Within the corridor are Jewish, organizations, synagogues, schools, as well as buildings, businesses, professional services, and residences that are largely, though not solely occupied and owned by Jews.
With the abandonment of this policy came the beginning of a different kind of Jewish migration to Canada, from the Middle East, North Africa and India, much of which occurred between the late-1950s and the mid-1970s, as Jews fled those home countries in response to rising hostilities against them. These hostilities were due to a combination of socio-economic issues, the rise of Arab nationalism (which excluded Arab Jews), and a backlash against those perceived as sympathetic to Israel and Zionism (Torczyner and Brotman, 1995: 242; Train, 2006).

Following the arrival of ethnically and racially diverse Jews from Israel, post-revolution Iran, and the former Soviet states, there was a movement of many young Jews from Quebec. These Jews came to Toronto after the rise of the French-Separatist Parti Québécois (PQ) to power. The rise of the PQ in Quebec meant less tolerant attitudes towards Jews and other ethnic groups in the province (see Brym et al., 2010). With the waves of migration, Toronto had become the largest Jewish center in Canada, taking the place of Montreal by 1981 (Torczyner and Brotman, 1995: 229). Since this period it has become one of the largest and most diverse Jewish communities outside Israel.

Toronto has become popular among Israeli emigrants over the past decades and is now home to a growing Israeli community. In fact, Toronto has one of the largest concentrations of Jewish-Israeli immigrants in the world. In the early 1990s, between 20,000 to 35,000 Israeli citizens and their children (out of 52,000 Israelis in Canada) lived in the GTA (Gold, 1993:283; Cohen, 1999:128; Cohen, 2001).

In 2006, in a study commissioned by the Israeli consulate in Toronto and the Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, it was estimated that more than 50,000 Israelis reside in the GTA, forming around 25 percent of the total Jewish population (Barkat, 2006; Roginsky, 2010). In 2010, a joint study by the Consulate General of Israel in Toronto and the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto estimated that there were approximately 60,000 Israelis in the city (Interview with representative of the Consulate General of Israel in Toronto, February 2013). Jewish-Israelis in the GTA are generally educated, middle/upper-middle class, and younger than the general Jewish population. They tend to be secular or masorti (traditional) (Interview with representative of the Consulate General of Israel in Toronto, February 2013; Cohen, 2005:140;
1999: 128; Torczyner and Brotman, 1995). Geographically, as I hinted at earlier, Israelis mainly reside in Jewish neighborhoods along the north parts of the Bathurst Street corridor (particularly in the area of North York, Thornhill, and Thornhill Woods; Interview with Consulate General of Israel in Toronto, 2013; Roginsky, 2010; Cohen, 2001; 1999:12), reflecting areas popular with young Jewish families at the time when significant of Israelis began to arrive (1980s-1990s). A distinct Israeli ethno-cultural enclave began to emerge during the early 1990s in Thornhill (Ward 5 in the city of Vaughan), with Israeli-owned small businesses (restaurants, bakeries, barbershops, banquet halls etc.), as well as exclusive Hebrew community newspapers, Hebrew radio broadcasts, Israeli folk dancing clubs, Hebrew-speaking chapters in Jewish philanthropic organizations, and Israeli-centric synagogues, daycares, and youth and senior social clubs (Cohen, 1999; 2001; 2005:141; Cohen and Gold, 1997; Gold, 1993: 239). I offer this background to lend insight towards the theoretical and empirical conversations that follow.

Overview of Chapters

The chapters that make up this dissertation engage in common themes in contemporary social and cultural geography: transnational migration, diaspora, race, whiteness, religion, and citizenship, among others (Silvey and Lawson, 1999; Blunt, 2007; Silvey, 2013). While the three empirical chapters share similar data, I have used each one to focus on a specific theoretical framework and theme. While they are relatively self-contained, taken as a whole they present a coherent framework for re-thinking Jewish and Israeli identities. Prior to these three chapters, Chapter Two will present the methodological foundations for my project and issues of positionality, drawing largely from the work of feminists of colour.

Chapter Three critically examines the idea of a broad category of “Israeli diaspora” that has been markedly present in most of the literature to date on Israeli immigrants. Sharing the voices of a diverse set of Jewish Israeli immigrants who cross racial, cultural, political, and gendered boundaries, I discuss their cultural diasporic identities and belongings in Israel, in Toronto, and elsewhere along their journeys of migration. I discuss how migration opens up a material and discursive space for the re-negotiation of Jewish identities and belongings for many migrants.
Examining the lives and narratives of the migrants who I interviewed, including their experiences growing up in Israel, I conclude that there can be no obvious, single notion of “Israeli diaspora”. As I discuss, there are numerous Jewish identifications and belongings, both within and beyond Zionist definitions.

In the next chapter (Chapter Four), I approach the issue of race via the question: “Are Jews White?”. Drawing from the literature on critical whiteness studies (CWS) as a guide, I explore narratives of different and diverse Jewish Israeli immigrants, some of which confirm and some of which confound the assumption prevalent in contemporary literature that Israeli immigrants are easily and naturally absorbed into Jewish Canadian Whiteness. Continuing the discussion from the previous chapter on complicating diasporic identity, in this chapter I both integrate and challenge a key assertion of critical whiteness studies by emphasizing the refusal or inability of many Israelis to identify as whites in Canada. As the narratives show, this refusal speaks to the growing Jewish cultural, geographical, and racial diversity of Jews in Canada. I argue that scholars must offer more nuanced analyses of the relationship between whiteness and religion, particularly as related to racial categories, and look at the variations in the lived experience of members of “white ethnic” groups – minority groups like Jews who have supposedly become accepted into whiteness (Anagnostou, 2013). I also discuss the religious-racial binary and intra-communal racism through the eyes of the study participants.

Finally, in the last empirical chapter (Chapter Five), I look at the imaginings and performances of citizenship of Jewish-Israeli activists in Toronto with respect to public, pro-Israeli events (protests, rallies, etc.) held in Toronto’s public spaces. I use the discussion to draw particular attention to the complex links between citizenship and race, and how emotions (particularly fear) are used to frame and strengthen these links in a post 9/11 era.

I conclude with a brief overview of the discursive patterns and theoretical links between these chapters, as well as the main arguments and theoretical contributions of this thesis.
Chapter 2:
Two Jews, Three Opinions: A reflections on Positionality and method

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the methodological foundations for my project and discuss issues of positionality, drawing from the work of feminists of colour. For many years, academic research was founded on a methodological approach that privileged the notion of a detached, transcendent observer who could produce objective, value-free research (Kromer-Nevo et al., 2014). Although this notion of scientifically pure, transcendent research had been criticized (Kromer-Nevo et al., 2014), it was largely feminist scholars in the early 1990s who first raised the issue of how claims to neutrality and universality in academic knowledge production could in fact quite actively reproduce binaries of power relations between dominant and subjugated groups (Harding, 1991; Rose, 1997: 306). Feminist scholars also drew attention to the way that research implicitly and explicitly subjugated other forms of knowledge and their producers (Rose, 1997: 307).

In opposition to earlier understandings of an ‘all-knowing’ objectivity, feminist objectivity is understood in terms of situated knowledges (Haraway, 1991). These situated knowledges are based on particular “standpoints” or the limited “positions” of the researcher, who is inherently entangled in the research process (Haraway, 1991).

The move towards reflexivity in research has actively challenged the myth of value-free knowledge production and has illuminated in new ways the asymmetrical power relations that exist between researchers and research participants in social research (Rose, 1997; England, 2006). Self-reflection has become a tool for addressing “how the production of ethnographic knowledge is shaped by the shifting, contextual, and relational contours of the researcher’s social identity and her social situatedness or positionality…with respect to her subjects” (Nagar and Geiger 2007:267).
Feminists of colour have asserted that in contemplating how to make the voices of research participants heard without exploiting or distorting them, we need to acknowledge our own location and complicity in systems of privilege and oppression (white supremacy, capitalism, settler colonialism, and hetero-patriarchy). Accomplishing truly reflexive research means not only critically examining how our individual identities “intersect with institutional, geopolitical and material aspects” (Nagar and Geiger, 2007: 267), but actually incorporating this knowledge into our fieldwork and our papers (see also Chapman, 2005: 27; Mahtani, 2014). In my view, social research is most useful when it generates sincere and engaged moral discussion that goes well beyond the confines of any individual, and when it is incorporated into a broader system of thoughtful questioning (Koboyashi 2003), applied to the entire research process such that ethical commitments can be maintained from the beginning to the end of the research project (Mahtani, 2014). Although it is of course important that I discuss the functional components of the methods that I have used (including qualitative interviewing, participant observation, and writing), I feel that it is equally necessary for me to frame this chapter around a critical self-reflexive analysis, giving account of the power relations and politics that have influenced all the stages of my research.

The absolute hegemony of ‘rational analysis’ (a term itself loaded with positive connotations) can be rather dispiriting for those scholars whose non-Western backgrounds and beliefs form important parts of their own scholarly narratives. For me and for many Mizrahi Jews, the presence of religious tradition embedded in secular life is a point of pride and a marker of distinctly non-Western identity in an Israel in which secular, Western-oriented values are hegemonic. My upbringing in Israel was not an Orthodox religious one, and I don’t consider myself to be a particularly ‘religious’ person. Yet, I was raised in a home and a community in which religious traditions and awareness of a ‘higher power’ are inseparable parts of the fabric of everyday life, and of collective identity and counter-hegemonic resistance. This dissertation is, in part, my attempt to privilege counter-hegemonic Jewish narratives. It has been written through and within the ivory tower: a modern white institution, built explicitly on an ethos of rationality that is undeniably a form of whitening that seems to go against much of the anti-racist thought to which I subscribe.
I find Yair Caspi, an Israeli Jewish psychologist particularly compelling in my quest to unravel the complexities that I allude to in the earlier paragraph. In his book *Lidrosh Elohim* ("Demanding/Inquiring of God", 2005), Caspi argues that the practice of psychology in Israel, informed almost completely by modern Western secular ideals, has imposed secular European ideas about the importance of self. It eradicates Jewish traditions in a quest for rational modernization and Westernization. Answering the hegemonic psychological centering of the self vs. the other, Caspi argues that Jewish psychology requires that we see a third element (from the religious perspective God) in every conversation or encounter. As Caspi argues, in Judaism, “every time that two people sit down and talk, an additional voice can be heard” (39-40). Whether we see this voice as God or as something else, I find this a useful parallel for the external presences that have made these research interviews about so much more than individuals’ own stories.

I begin this chapter by providing a biographic background on how I came to this project. I then proceed to describe the procedural and discursive stages that have led to the production of this dissertation. Woven throughout these sections is a recurring discussion of the shifting / fluid identities that have been both a constant feature and a central observation in my work.

**A short biography**

Within the western academic context there is a demand for researchers to “reveal” their positionality with respect to their research subjects in order to legitimize their knowledge. Sadly, this so-called progressive demand is more often than not met by applying social categories that essentialize particular racialized, gendered, classed, and sexualized bodies (Nagar and Geiger, 2007; see also Herzog 2014; Arviv et. al., 2014) and that privilege the self as a site of knowledge and rational judgement.

Not unlike others, I, too, am often tempted to apply popular labels to describe important parts of my identity. Yet, as Nagar and Geiger (2007) argue, simply uncovering ourselves using fixed categories such as “Jewish” or “Israeli” or “gay” in a single dimension vis-à-vis research subjects is an essentializing practice that can easily and obviously reinforce pre-conceived, hegemonic
depictions of these identities. At the same time, acknowledgement of ‘positionality’ “can easily become a privileged and self-indulgent act, that ironically sets us apart, thus providing anything but an anti-racist lens” (Koboyashi, 2003: 348). With these arguments in mind, and with deference to the fact that I believe my own destiny is shaped by forces outside of myself, I have decided to discuss my positionality in terms of a biography that is inclusive of my familial, community, and political connections, and one that hopefully emphasises how these influences have fluctuated, diverged, and overlapped over time. I see this as a metaphor for the complex and fluid identities of those I have interviewed, and for the external forces (spiritual or otherwise) that have led to this project.

My personal story

Both of my parents were born in Tripoli, Libya, and moved to Israel as part of the mass migration/displacement of Jews that took place in the Arab world in the 1940s – 1970s. My father died from cancer when I was young, so my mother raised my two brothers, as well as my sister and I. Their stories – particularly that of my mother – have been strong components of both the political environment in which I was raised, as well as the direction which led me to this project.

Although they were born into families that had lived in Libya for countless generations, my parents did not have the chance to experience whatever ‘normal’ life had meant for their ancestors prior to the colonial period. Born under Italian occupation, they and their families were young when Mussolini’s Fascists brought Nazi-inspired anti-Semitic laws to Libya under the Manifesto della razza (the Charter of Race) in 1938. In 1942, as persecution worsened, my mother (then four years old) fled Tripoli hidden on a coal train with my grandmother and aunt to a remote Bedouin village. They were welcomed warmly with precious dates and carrots, and found refuge in the house of a Muslim family (where my uncle was born). Meanwhile my

---

8 Historical studies trace a continuous Jewish presence in the area now known as Libya from the third century BCE to the modern day. As in most other Arab and Islamic countries, most Jews left Libya following the establishment of the Jewish State of Israel in Palestine in 1948 (Hajjaj-Liluf, 2000). It is likely that my ancestors were either from the tribes of Jews who had lived in North Africa for thousands of years or from amongst the groups of Jews who fled the Iberian peninsula during the Spanish Inquisition. There is also a chance that they converted to Judaism in more recent centuries.
grandfather was interred in the Giado (جادو) labour camp. He eventually escaped with the help of his brother who converted to Islam.

Following the liberation of Libya from Italian and German influence by the British, my parents’ families found themselves at the heart of a country and region in intense flux. Subject to the extreme hunger and a lack of medical care common to most at that time, my parents’ families were also caught in the crossfire of an increasingly active anti-colonialist movement. As a new and exclusively ‘Arab’ national identity gained traction, the Jews of Libya (whose loyalties were distrusted by some) became subject to violent attacks orchestrated by nationalist groups such as al-Hizb al-Watan. My mother still vividly remembers two particular attacks in which she, her mother, sister and two young brothers escaped from what was seen as a certain death.

The drastic deterioration in the sense of solidarity between Jewish and Muslim Libyans sowed despair amongst Jews as it did elsewhere in the Arab world, and as in many of the newly-independent Arab countries, the vast majority of increasingly marginalized Jews were only too happy to follow the solicitations of Zionist emissaries promising a better future in the new State of Israel. Yet, despite their desire for a new start, most Arab Jewish immigrants expected and hoped that their new, more secure lives in Israel would still take place within the Middle Eastern sphere that they were comfortable with – Israel, after all, being in the Middle East. Most were not prepared to reject key elements of their Arab Jewish cultures and identities (e.g. Arabic and Ladino languages, Middle Eastern music, local religious customs, etc.) as was demanded of them in the new, European-oriented State of Israel. They expected to be able to continue their lives as Arab Jews in safety, and were not prepared for the public rejection of their “backwards”, “Oriental” Jewishness and “enemy” language and culture by other Jews (Shohat, 1988; 2003; Shenhav, 2003; Chetrit, 2004).

9 The most infamous of the Anti-Jewish Riots in Tripoli occurred in November 1945 (Hajjaj-Liluf, 2000).
10 Prior to the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Jews imagined themselves and were imagined by others as an integral part of the open space that formed the Arab and Islamic world. Jews’ millennia-old cultural affinity and political alliance with Arabs (and Muslims in general) was much stronger in many respects than that which existed between Jews and Christians in Europe (Chetrit, 2004:51-51; Shohat, 1988, 2003). In some regards it was also stronger than that which non-European Jews shared with European Jews (Chetrit, 2004; Shohat, 1988, 2003). Thus, for many, the concept of Jewish nationalism was politically irrelevant to their existence (Shohat, 2003). This began to change following the rise of Jewish and Arab nationalism after the First World War. After the declaration of the Jewish state...
My father arrived in Israel with an Aliya (immigrant movement) of Libyan youth shortly after the war and my mother with her family came in 1949. By 1967, after the Six-Day War, almost all of Libya’s Jews had left their ancestral homeland. The vast majority went to the State of Israel (Hajjaj-Liluf, 2000). Like my parents, most lived in ‘temporary’ ma’abarat (refugee camps) for years before receiving permanent housing. It is in these ma’abarat, many of which are now large towns and cities, that the myriad hybrid Jewish-Arab identities of previous centuries were subsumed into a new racialized ‘Mizrahi’ (Eastern Jewish) group identity encompassing the Jews of most Arab or Islamic countries. Like many children of Holocaust survivors, my parents never talked to me or my brothers and sister about what happened to them in Libya. My mother attributes this silence to a combination of her desire to protect us and the fact that once in Israel she soon learned that no one believed her story.

I was born and grew up in the working class “Development Town” of Or –Yehuda, a few kilometers from Tel Aviv. Or –Yehuda is one of many towns that were built by the state in the 1950s and 1960s to house the waves of arriving Jews. Like most of the Development Towns,
ours was populated predominantly by Mizrahi immigrants from Middle Eastern countries, and my childhood there provided an intimate (though often difficult) relationship with the Mizrahi identity.

Mizrahi Jews, such as my parents and myself, though demographically dominant and culturally influential in Israeli society, have faced pervasive forms of cultural and racial discrimination by the state’s founding elite (most of whom are Ashkenazi Jews of East European heritage) for many years (e.g., Shohat, 1988; 1999; Shenhav, 2003; Chetrit, 2004; Lavie, 2014). Still many, including many members of my family, identify strongly with Zionist politics and are strong supporters of the political right wing in Israel. During my military service and the first years of my undergraduate studies, as I became more aware of the racist attitudes present in Israeli society, I remember questioning my mother’s political positions, which were similar to those of many of other Mizrahi Jews. I didn’t understand how she was able to forgive the Ashkenazi elite who dominated the state for their racist and discriminatory attitudes to Mizrahi Jews like her (and her family) which had begun the moment they stepped foot at the Haifa Port. How could she not see the parallels between her own mistreatment as a Jew from an Arab land and that of the Arab Palestinians? How could she believe in the hegemonic narrative of being “saved” by Ashkenazi Zionist Jews when critical voices were arguing that Zionist leaders were far more interested in stabilizing the fragile Jewish demographic balance and exploiting a cheap Jewish mass labor source (Shohat, 1988; Chetrit: 2004: 52; Segev, 2001: 109)? How was a woman who was sent by Ashkenazi officials to live in a tent for most of her adolescent years, while watching more recent Jewish immigrants from Europe get permanent state housing, still able to see her Aliya to Israel as the best thing that ever happened to her? I began to understand the sources of my mother’s answers to these questions only in my mid-twenties, when aspects of my parents’ horrifying childhood experiences in Libya began to come into the open.

the 1948-9 war. The Development Towns were mainly populated by Mizrahim who, in most cases, had no say in the matter (Kemp, 2000; Chetrit, 2004; Yiftachel and Tzfadia, 2004; Tzfadia and Yaacobi, 2011). The settlement of large numbers of Jewish immigrants in contested areas was an integral part of the State’s efforts to assert Judaization of the new country’s borderlands after the 1948-9 war (Yiftachel and Tzfadia, 2004). Mizrahim were thus passively enrolled as a Jewish “security wall” against the Arab enemy, blocking the return of Palestinian refugees of the 1948-9 war by their presence and at the same time replacing them as cheap labour (Yaacobi, 2007: 66; Kemp, 2000; Chetrit, 2004; Yiftachel and Tzfadia, 2004). With few long-term employment options, many Mizrahim were forced to become low-paid manual labourers in nearby Kibbutzim, with minimum employment rights (Lavie, 2011).
My mother’s memories of life before immigrating to Israel are dominated by distressing images of violence at the hands of colonialist Europeans (the Italian and German Fascists) and of Arab nationalists, many of whom were former neighbors and friends. And though I don’t feel quite the same, I can’t deny that the trauma of experiencing ethnically-motivated persecution at the hands of, equally, ‘Christian Europeans’ and ‘Muslim Arabs’ very early in life has informed the suspicion with which she has viewed non-Jewish outsiders. As the details have unfolded, I have come to feel regret for simplifying her politics and her ‘uneducated’ attitudes. At the same time, I have felt increasing anger that the history of Libyan Jews, and in particular the Holocaust in Italian-occupied Libya, has been excluded from hegemonic narratives (while the persecution of Mizrahi Jews at the hands of Arabs has been more publicized to match the anti-Arab narratives of the state).

During my adolescence, repression of my sexuality and increasing awareness of the perceived ‘backwardness’ of the Mizrahi culture in which I was raised meant that I felt increasingly torn between being an ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ in my hometown. I naively and subconsciously believed that I could ‘act’ my way out of my Mizrahi identity by ‘Ashkenazifying’ myself and denying my Arabic-tinged upbringing. I often imagined life in the Tel-Aviv, the ‘big, modern city’, where I could both be open about my sexual identity as a gay man, while retaining my privileges as a member of the Jewish majority in Israeli society (a privilege that I was still blind and naïve to).

Three months after finishing high school, I started three years of mandatory military service in the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces), and it was there that I began to more intimately encounter how prevalent the unspoken stratifications of Israeli Jewish society are. I was assigned to an elite unit in the Air Force where the vast majority of combat pilots and intelligence and human resources staff were young Ashkenazi Jews from the better-off Ashkenazi-dominated cities, towns and Kibbutzim. Lower-ranked soldiers (the drivers, mechanics, groomers, cooks, etc.) were mostly Mizrahi (and later Russian) Jews from the social and geographic peripheries of Israeli society like myself. Through great effort, I found myself somewhere in between these two groups, not fully belonging to either one. Although my elite ‘job’ was on the Ashkenazi-dominated side of the division of labor, I was often marked and teased by my closest Ashkenazi colleagues as an
“outsider”. At the same time I was seen as too “whitewashed” to be included in the social clique of the Mizrahi drivers, cooks, and groomers. I was also deeply “closeted” at that time, which made my sense of belonging even more complicated. During those three years I learned to see the inter-Jewish ethnic/racialized divisions everywhere in Israeli society. I was haunted by questions of identity, belonging, and memory that no one in my immediate environment was able to answer for me. These questions pushed me towards an academic education.

After my military service I was accepted to the Film and Television studies program at Tel Aviv University, another bastion of the state’s secular-Jewish Ashkenazi elite. I was the first in my family to pursue an academic degree, and during my first year in university, I remember constantly feeling “out of place”. I contemplated dropping out. I did not, and in my second year of undergraduate studies I began to learn that there were others like me, a feeling that began abruptly with the discovery of Mizrahi academic scholar Ella Shohat’s seminal work *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation* (1989), which I stumbled upon while looking for a textbook at the library. I started reading Shohat’s book and couldn’t stop. What I was reading was different than anything else I had been exposed to, even in my year in Israeli academia (indeed, Ella Shohat’s work, and this book in particular were/are still considered to be radical in Israel, even amongst intellectuals who identify with the political Left; see Shohat, 2001). The post-colonial discourse used by Shohat to draw parallels between the Ashkenazi-Mizrahi and Jewish-Arab divisions in Israeli society were both new and fascinating to me. To the millions of Mizrahi Jews like myself who make up the majority of Jewish Israeli society, this was a resounding message.

Reading Shohat’s book and openly confronting my sexual and racial identities stimulated my interest in both critical post-Zionist theory, as well as Mizrahi social activism. I started working as a high school student counselor in the Mizrahi-dominant *Hatiqva* neighbourhood in Southern Tel Aviv with the support of ISEF Foundation. The bi-weekly trip from *Ramat Aviv* in the north end of the city - where the university campus is located - to the *Hatiqva* quarter took less than 30 minutes on the bus, but was really a trip between two worlds. The wide streets, tall modern buildings, manicured parks, European fashions, and high-end boutiques and cafes of *Ramat Aviv* were in stark contrast to the narrow streets, crumbling old houses, and colourful stalls manned by
kippah-clad vendors in the market (Shuq Hatiqva). The mostly Ashkenazi faces of Ramat Aviv were replaced with the faces of Mizrahi Jews, Palestinians, migrant workers and refugees from Africa. It was this divided urban reality that inspired me to pursue my master’s degree in planning, also at Tel Aviv University. During my masters, I also became active in a think-tank for affordable housing for the Palestinian-majority community of Jaffa (also in south Tel Aviv) under the affiliation of a non-profit organization “Bimkom- Planners for Planning Rights”. I volunteered in another non-profit – Hoshen (the Education center for the LGBTQ community in Israel) - preparing and conducting the program presentations for high school students and teachers, IDF soldiers, and social workers. I eventually wrote my masters dissertation on the planning policies and sense of place in Hatiqva neighbourhood.

Despite my active political life in Israel, upon entering the PhD program in planning at the University of Toronto in September 2009, I fantasized about starting with a ‘clean slate’ in a new society where nobody knew me. In fact, I secretly wished to move as far away from the politically charged topics that had consumed me in Israel and dreamed of transforming myself into a typical Canadian “young professional”, a planner with an uncomplicated career path. I strategically took planning and urban design courses that focused on technical skills. After starting my PhD, I decided to write my dissertation on the role of New Urbanist design on community building, and I constructed my reading lists with this topic in mind. However, by the time I arrived at the stage of actually writing my research proposal (around the end of my second year in the PhD program), the “old questions” that I thought I had left behind in Israel (around identity, belonging, etc.) began to ‘itch’ once again. I felt a growing disconnect from the topic of New Urbanism, while my everyday experiences in Toronto were on my mind more and more. During my encounters with non-Israeli Jews and non-Jewish Canadians alike, I found myself facing curious questions about my ethnicity and religion. Other immigrants of colour (my students in particular) would racialize me as Arab, Greek, or Italian, and many would have trouble believing that I was Jewish due to the hegemony of the European-Jewish cultural image in Canada. I learned through experience that as a gay, dark-skinned, Mizrahi, Jewish, Israeli man living in Toronto, I was expected to explain the ‘contradictions’ in my identity. Meanwhile, after watching the controversy surrounding the inclusion of an anti-Zionist group in the 2010 Annual Pride Parade during my first year in Canada, I started to understand that Toronto was not the
politically neutral space that I had hoped it would be. Perhaps because of my accent or my ‘look’, perhaps because of my foreign-sounding Hebrew name, or perhaps simply because of their global prevalence, hiding from the racial, religious, and cultural politics of my country of birth was not an option for me.

Talking with other Israeli friends in Toronto, I realized that I was not the only one with complicated questions. I began reading the literature on the Israeli diaspora, but the more I read, the more I realized that I wasn’t finding writing reflective of my own experience as a Jewish migrant from Israel in what I was reading. For one thing, excluded from the existing literature were the intersections of racial and sexual politics which I embody. Further, my own experience of being mistakenly racialized as an Arab or Muslim – an experience that was new to me - made me appreciate how little influence my own self-knowledge had over peoples’ assumptions about me. Reflecting my own story and that of many others like me who do not fit the idealized diasporic image portrayed in the existing literature, I wished to “tell the world” about the racial and political diversity, and indeed the diversity of experiences, of Jewish immigrants from Israel in Toronto.

Despite some worries over how my PhD committee members would view such a shift in topic at this stage, my supervisory committee was not only supportive, but genuinely excited about my new research trajectory. Facing a last bit of anxiety about making the switch, I remember revealing to one of them how I had wanted to write about New Urbanism in order to be an academic “professional” (in planning), to which she responded, “pursuing your passion is being an academic professional”. Her sentence stuck with me, and this dissertation is the culmination of that passion. The decision thus made, I embarked on the long journey to finding enough Israeli immigrants to present the open, diverse analysis that I felt was missing.

“How sent you to study us”? – Recruitment of Participants

In social research, how we present ourselves and are received by the participants during recruitment not only determines who we eventually interview, but may also shape the kind of
interactions that will occur during these interviews. As Mullings (1999) notes, “[h]ow individuals represent themselves can make a difference between being granted an interview or not” (340). The researcher’s ability to build trust is “a crucial requirement for being granted an audience” (ibid). Nonetheless, the presumption that my being of the “same” ethno-national community as my subjects would automatically make me an “insider” (Carling et al., 2014: 52) was anything but true. The questioning of my identity that I was faced with starting in recruitment (and thereafter) is testament to this, as well as to the politicized processes of locating and reaching out to participants which is often not discussed in reflexive accounts (Mahtani, 2014: 83).

In the spirit of feminist and anti-racist methodology, I chose to explicitly invite potential participants to an open dialogue in which they could discuss their identities, everyday experiences, and community and political involvements, as well as to raise other issues as they see fit (see Appendices 1 and 2). This way of presenting myself and my research to potential participants played a significant role in granting me access to a broad range of generally eager interviewees, helping to establish initial rapport. Their eagerness to be interviewed in some cases appeared to relate to homesickness, but many participants expressed more explicit appreciation at the chance to discuss and express views and opinions which they felt are under-represented in the public discourse (such as their relationships with other Israelis, Israeli state delegates, and members of Jewish and non-Jewish Canadian groups, as well as their own identity and belonging in Israel, in Canada, and in between).

I used two techniques to recruit prospective participants: some were recruited through flyers that I personally handed out during a number of communal public events (see appendix C), but most were contacted through a “snowball sampling”, in which a few of my Israeli acquaintances living in Toronto and other Israelis that I had recruited at public community events were asked to help with recruiting one or more other contacts (their Israeli friends, colleagues, or relatives living in Toronto) by mentioning my research and passing on my contact information. Usually, interested individuals contacted in this way called me to hear more about the research and to set a place and time for the interview. In a few cases I initiated the call once I was informed that the person involved was willing to participate. My interviews with these participants, in turn, put me in touch with others. Through this process of “snowballing”, I hoped to acquire a diverse group of
informants and to avoid the recruitment of a narrow group of like-minded individuals (see Valentine, 1997: 116). I deliberately attempted to locate a diverse group of Jewish immigrants from a variety of class backgrounds, life stages, genders, sexualities, levels of religiosity, and pre-Israeli familial continental origins (e.g. Europe, the Middle East, India, and beyond), in order to yield a rich data set that could challenge the hegemonic perceptions of a white/non racialized, Western, Zionist “Israeli diaspora”.

It was my intention to recruit a broad range of Jewish individuals, with the only limitation being that they had grown up in Israel (receiving Israeli socialization, language, and education) and that they had been living in Toronto consistently for at least two years (enough time to develop personal commitments, social networks, and experiences that could be reflected upon). Yet, it is testament to the challenges of diverse recruitment that the population I interviewed was generally educated, middle/upper class, secular/masorti (traditional), in their mid-life (building up families and careers) and with strong proficiencies in English, reflecting the demographics of Jewish Israeli immigrants living in the GTA (Interview with representative of the Consulate General of Israel in Toronto, February 2013; Gold, 2002: 46; Cohen, 1999: 128). The majority of the participants were second generation Israelis, born and raised in Israel to families of diverse ancestries (generally from Europe or the Middle East). A few participants were themselves born outside of Israel and had migrated to Israel with their families as children (from Morocco (1), Iraq (1), Romania (1), Bulgaria (1); as well as Ukraine (2), Russia (1), and Uzbekistan (1)). The majority of participants had been in Canada for at least 5-10 years (see Appendix E).

During my encounters with these prospective interviewees, I introduced myself and my research in Hebrew, as it is my first language, as well that of most of the subject group. With my relatively common Hebrew first name (loosely translated as “upright” or (“tall”) and with no sign of a “foreign” accent, I had the immediate privilege of being almost automatically perceived as a Sabra (an Israeli-born Jew integrated into the national Zionist culture)\textsuperscript{14}. Yet, while my

\textsuperscript{14} Whereas having a slightly Palestinian Arabic, Judeo-Arabic (Mizrahi), Russian, or other foreign accent in Hebrew would distance one from the [Ashkenazi-mediated] national identity, even if it didn’t signal non-Jewishness per se. The irony that the vast majority of Jews spoke liturgical Hebrew with either East European Ashkenazi or ‘Arabic’ pronunciations (the Arabic diction being in fact closest to the ancient Hebrew) prior to the Zionist reformation of the language in the 19\textsuperscript{th} Century clearly escapes most Israelis today. Despite this, many groups in Israel (particularly Arabs, ultra-Orthodox, some Mizrahim of lower social classes, and many older immigrants) do speak using these and other accents.
“Sabraness” was self-evident, my status as a fellow immigrant to Canada and as an independent scholar were not, and from time to time this raised sentiments of distance, suspicion, and even hostility amongst some of the potential participants.

Even as I emphasized my affiliation to a Canadian university (presenting myself as a graduate student from the University of Toronto), I was perceived as an Israeli who writes about Jewish-Israeli immigrants from the ‘outside’. In many cases, such a presumption made potential participants suspicious about my “secret motives”, leading them to further interrogate me. For example, at the early stages of my recruitment process I attended a public event at the Jewish Community Centre – a panel on how to “bridge the gap between the Jewish Canadian and the (Jewish)-Israeli communities in Toronto”, organized by the Israeli–Canadian Project of the UJA (United Jewish Appeal). Before the panel I approached the Israeli-born event organizer, Shila, and we had a short chat in Hebrew in which I introduced myself and briefly mentioned my project focusing on Israelis in Toronto and my search for participants. She was genuinely interested and even offered to present me to the audience, which was dominantly Israeli. This is how she presented me (based on research notes taken immediately after):

We have a special guest in the audience this evening, Tamir Arviv [pointing at me], who is an Israeli student writing his dissertation about our community in Toronto.

By presenting me as an Israeli student, Shila communicated to the audience the presumption that my presence in Toronto was somehow temporary, despite the fact that I mentioned to her that I was studying at U of T. She may have thought that I was an international student or on a student exchange program. Regardless, I felt somewhat of an outsider, an Israeli student who had come to study her community of full-on immigrants. I was a “special guest”, rather than a fellow community member who happened to be a student. Similar assumptions were made by many of the potential participants during our initial interactions. They wondered why I was interested in the topic and how it was relevant to me. Many asked questions like “who sent you to study us?”, inquiring whether the Israeli state was paying me to interview them.
These assumptions, suspicions, and questions should be understood in the context of the discursive and material relationship between the Israeli state, local Jewish communities, and Israeli emigrants (both in general as well as in Toronto). The study of Israeli emigration is a politically “touchy” topic, given the longstanding Zionist ideological baggage attached to emigration from Israel, which negatively portrays it as a ‘betrayal’ of Zionism, and which categorised Israeli émigrés as Yordim (literally, those who have descended). While the discourse on Yordim is certainly not static and Israeli immigrants have increasingly been seen as “transnationals”, and even as a political, economic, social, and cultural asset to both the Israeli state and to local Jewish communities (Gold, 2002; Cohen, 2007; 2011; Roginsky, 2010; Reut Institute, 2013a; 2013b), apparent within the potential participants’ inquiries were the lingering effects of this longstanding baggage (as will be elaborated in the empirical chapters).

Indeed it is true that the perceived “threat” of Jewish emigration from Israel has made emigrants from Israel an over-studied, over-represented, and “over-policed” population group. As Steven Gold (2002) notes, Israeli state bodies, including the Central Bureau of Statistics, as well as Israeli demographers and other experts, devote explicit attention to the issue, “often featuring widely exaggerated estimates of their numbers indicating the seriousness with which these social problem is treated” (9). In the public sphere, Israeli emigrants have been the subject of novels, films, comedy sketches, and political speeches, as well as scholarly and journalistic inquiries (ibid). Moreover, the presence and the hegemonic power that Israeli state- delegates hold over the everyday lives of the Israeli immigrants in cities like Toronto has only grown over the years.15 Lastly, Israelis have often been studied by local Jewish organizations. For example, recently, the Israeli-based Zionist “Reut Institute” conducted study in Toronto funded by the Toronto UJA entitled: “Engaging the Israeli Diaspora” (2013).

With all of the above noted, it is interesting to me that Jewish-Israeli migrants have generally been studied by “outsiders” to their community – either by Israelis based in Israel or by non-

---

15 Nir Cohen (2007) has found that since the 1990s, the Israeli state has initiated a large number of new outreach programs and provision of services in several emigrant destinations (including Toronto), designed to either encourage its Jewish–Israeli citizens living abroad to return “home”, or at least to re-assert control over their political identifications, attachments, and participations (to ‘recapture’ the investments, remittances, and national loyalties).
Israeli Jews. It is seldom the case that an Israeli scholar permanently lives in the same community s/he wishes to study, which can explain why so many potential participants perceived me as a “guest” and expressed their worry about possible biases that I might hold towards their migration.

The main fears that potential participants expressed centered around the possibilities that I might judge their decision to stay abroad permanently, or that I might encourage them “to come back home”, or that I might harangue them to donate money to Israeli or Jewish causes by “playing on their guilt” over their absence from their country. Naturally, I remain uncertain regarding the participants’ indentations behind their questions. I often wondered whether the common question that was raised during the recruitment process (“who sent you to study us”?) was merely an expression of suspicion about my possible secret mission as an Israeli state-funded investigator, or whether it was possible that some were concerned about other issues that they didn’t explicitly express? For instance, is it possible that some of the participants were worried that I might in fact be affiliated with local pro-Palestinian/Anti-Zionist groups? Indeed such groups, and their public clashes with pro-Zionist groups, have become ever more visible in the local Israeli public sphere during my fieldwork. In the end this is a question of uncertainty about how my presentation of self and my research was understood and received by participants. I thus realized at an early stage in my recruitment process that in order to gain trust access to potential interviewees, I should present myself in a very particular order: first, as an Israeli immigrant living in Toronto (occasionally mentioning my permanent resident status) and only then as a graduate student at University of Toronto, not funded by the Israeli state or by any other interested parties.

If anything, my decision to highlight and downplay particular aspects of my identity was driven by my desire to develop rapport with the participants – a process that Na’amah Razon and Karen Ross (2012) refer to as “Building Alliance” (496). As the saying goes, you never get a second chance to make a first impression. In that sense, it is probable that the nature of the data I was able to co-construct with my participants was at least in small part affected by these pre-interview exchanges. Of course there is always a chance that selective and strategic disclosure in research can lead to ethical lapses, and I have been mindful of this possibility (as I discuss with
two particular cases below); yet, as feminist scholars have argued, such practices of strategic performance are inherent to research involving others (Mullings, 1999: 343; Mohammad, 2011).

“Dugri?” - Sharing and Trading Subject Positions in Qualitative Interviews

Conversations can produce alternative discourses that entail new subject positions, supplementing or supplanting those that currently exist. These new subject positions crystallise power in new sites, enabling novel performances [...] In this way the creation of alternative discourses subverts the power of existing discourses and contributes to their destabilisation (Gibson-Graham, 1994: 220).

An interview is a kind of social production - a site for “creation and interaction” (Gibson-Graham 1994:220), and for knowledge production (Gubrium and Holestein, 2002). Holstein and Gubrium’s (2004) metaphor of the interview as an interpersonal drama renders what is often seen as qualitative data ‘collection’ an occasion for constructing, rather than merely discovering or conveying, information. Indeed, we are always performing certain roles vis-à-vis other people. Just as Judith Butler’s (1990; 1993) influential notion of gender performativity challenges the concept of identity and unsettles the notion of a naturally existing subject - a notion that has also been extended to race (e.g., Mahtani, 2002a; Ibrahim, 2004) - I have attempted to approach all of the interview participants as performers of everyday life rather than as fixed, fully-knowable subjects. The same goes for the role that played by the interviewer (in this case, myself). It is important to question how the researcher plays with different positionalities to build rapport with different participants, how the research participants play back, and how such interactions affect and are affected by ethical commitments and constraints (e.g., England, 2006; Sultana, 2007; Razon and Ross, 2012; Mahtani, 2014). These are crucial considerations for research design.

For this dissertation, I interviewed forty-eight “first-generation” Jewish-Israeli immigrants (who were born or raised in Israel and chose to leave it and settle in Canada/Toronto, see Appendix E)\textsuperscript{16}. The interviews were conducted face-to-face between February 2011 and April 2013. In

\textsuperscript{16} Valentine (2001) has pointed out that in qualitative research, what matters is the depth and richness of the encounters, rather than the number of people. Qualitative samples are designed to make possible analytical generalizations (Curtis et al. 2000)
interviewing the participants for this study, I attempted to keep space for fluid engagement open by employing semi-structured in-depth dialogues, acknowledged as being the most appropriate methodological choice when the research goal is exploratory (Dunn, 2005). The interviews were conducted face-to-face at locations of the interviewee's choice (someplace quiet, private, and neutral where they felt comfortable and safe)\(^{17}\). Our discussions were recorded with the consent of the participants, except for two who refused. The interviews were lengthy - most were between an hour and a half to two hours and a half, and all were at least an hour in duration. In the write-up, all participants are referred to using pseudonyms.

Following the semi-structured in-depth approach, I structured the interviews around the themes of identity, community and political involvement, and everyday experience vis-à-vis structures of oppression and privilege. Each discussion theme comprised a set of open-ended questions (see Appendix D) used as a guide to steer our conversations towards discussion of the participants’ experiences, worldviews, and interpretations of meaning (Valentine, 2001). As well as encouraging a convivial atmosphere, this ordered but flexible mode of questioning allowed the participants the space to speak for themselves and to raise issues that I may not have anticipated. It also opened up spaces for the participants to relate back to previous themes and questions while answering each new question, creating a number of surprising connections between themes. Many of these unanticipated connections became the “meat” of my dissertation, a disturbance of my own preconceived ideas that I welcomed wholeheartedly. An interview is a contingent process characterized by spontaneity and creativity, as well as by tension and conflict. It is a co-production on the part of both interviewee and interviewer (Razon and Ross, 2012). Although we share a Jewish-Israeli immigrant status, we are separated by a wide variety of socially salient divisions (such as gender, age, sexual orientation, class, race, political perspectives, etc.). Trust, anger, suspicion, fear, love, and hate were among the various emotions that emerged during our encounters.

In the rest of this section, I discuss the process of interviewing participants by using two examples that illustrate the intense affective negotiations of identity and the shifting relationships of (racialized) power between the participants and myself. Here in particular, I wish to highlight

\(^{17}\) These places tended to be either coffee shops or the participants’ homes.
the elasticity between identification and dis-identification, proximity and distance, difference and sameness, and insider and outsider, with respect to the interview process.

The first exchange that I present includes the first words of my interview with Yoram. This exchange is an example of the selective “sharing” process typical of many of my interviews:

Yoram: First of all, every Israeli opens his day reading something like ‘Y-net’ (an Israeli news website). We are addicted to news. You probably do the same, no?
T: Of course, I’m also Israeli, aren’t I?! …..I even open with Ynet itself (Shared laughter)
Y: There’s no helping us (laugh)! We are different than other immigrants here (more serious tone). Let’s say there’s an Italian immigrant. Maybe he will listen to the (Italian) news once in a while if at all. What can he hear? That the Euro is too high? What? He won’t feel the pressure, the concern, the way we care about our country. They don’t have wars over there. When Italians or Greeks leave their countries, they leave. We never leave.
T: For sure! It’s the same with me. I feel that there is a difference between me and, for example, people who study with me, those who are also immigrants. There’s a contrast. Like, I’m physically here, but most of the time my mind is over there [in Israel], reading the news, hoping that everyone over there is OK, all the time.

Y: You see, these are things that strangers won’t get…. [Silence. Yoram starts getting emotional]. Every time that you hear that a soldier has fallen [sheds a few tears] or that a young child was killed in a terrorist attack, your heart is just broken. You are here. There is nothing you can do about it other than call your family to check if everyone is OK. I don’t need to tell you that you feel helpless. Helpless! You feel like someone cut you into two.

Yoram assumed that as an Israeli immigrant I would understand his pains and anxieties. He used phrases like “there are things that strangers won’t get“, and “I don’t need to tell you”. These are common Israeli Hebrew sayings which, pronounced in a decidedly emphatic tone, indicate warmth, proximity, shared knowledge and complicity. They also hint that the things discussed might not be told to a “stranger” (meaning a non-Israeli).18

18 Such expressions can be “a double edged sword”, as Mahtani (2014, 83) notes. The sense of shared complicity might also prevent participants “from divulging further detail, given that they simply [think] that I “understood” what they were not saying” (ibid). They may even be telling me things that they presume I expect or want to hear from them as a fellow Israeli.
Similar phrases of shared complicity were common during the interviews. They usually came up with a smile, a wink, or tears, which indicated that our conversation was perceived by the interviewees as safe and comfortable. In the above exchange, Yoram and I created and developed intimacy based upon shared experiences as Israelis. This was not a fabrication; I truly felt kinship with Yoram, identifying and empathizing with the experiences he had raised. In fact, as Yoram shed tears and exposed vulnerability to me, I would have found it both artificial and unfair to just stay silent or to presume neutrality. As in everyday life, this was not an option.

Geographer Gill Valentine (1997) has argued that “sharing the same background or a similar identity to your informant can have a positive effect, facilitating the development of a rapport between interviewer and interviewee and thus producing a rich detailed conversation based on empathy and mutual respect and understandings” (113). I generally felt, as with Yoram, that my status as a Jewish-Israeli immigrant provided basic common ground from which to start our conversations. Like Yoram, participants were generally willing to talk freely, frankly and straightforwardly about issues that I raised, explicitly connecting their openness to the fact that they were talking with “a fellow Israeli immigrant”, or that as Israelis we could “talk more dugri”19, sharing an unadorned, direct, and blunt style of speech heavily peppered with personal opinions and viewpoints20. I usually felt comfortable in their company, and in cases where the interviews took place in their homes, most participants were very welcoming, being hospitable as Israelis usually are. In some cases I even found that I shared mutual friends in Israel and/or in Toronto with the participants, which added to the intimacy.

Working through our differences in a politically and affectively charged terrain, I gravitated towards this type of alliance building, as I had in the recruitment process (Razon and Ross, 2012; 496). However, sharing key commonalities is no guarantee of sharing agreement, identification, empathy, or kinship, nor are there any guarantees that I, a “fellow Jewish-Israeli immigrant” will see myself in the participants’ comments, views, stories and experiences (see Phellas, 2000).

---

19 The slang dugri (דּוּגְרִי), which in Hebrew use refers to “straightforward talk”, comes from the Palestinian Arabic دُغْرِيّ, which itself derives from Turkish doğru, meaning ‘straight’ or ‘correct’. A typical use might be “Talk dugri to me, what’s going on?” roughly meaning ‘Tell me the truth’ or ‘Be honest with me’.
20 While this style of communication may be experience by non-Israelis as offensive, rude and unpleasant, for me – most of the time- this style of communication was experienced as a “side benefit” and a sign of warmth and familiarity.
Thus, while at times I strategically revealed or foregrounded particular aspects of my identity (e.g. my Mizrahi ethno-class background, my childhood in a peripheral “Development Town”, my sexuality, my political orientation, etc.) in order to build trust, the participants and I often oscillated between multiple positions that were at time overlapping, and at times conflicting, based on our readings of each other and of the progression of our conversation. Thus, as Gubrium and Holstein (2002) have noted, “an ostensibly single interview could actually be, in practice, an interview with several subjects, whose particular identities may only be partially clear” (23).

Revelations of some aspects of my identity came less voluntarily than others. For example, some participants took a more active role, “gathering data” on me before the interview and/or challenging me with intimate questions about my political views. Feminist scholars argue that staying ”neutral” or “objective” as an interviewer is impossible since the very interaction with the interviewees is an active and essential part of the co-construction of the stories collected21. Even remaining silent or nodding in quiet agreement are tacit signs of approval and encouragement. More importantly, adopting an “objective” and faceless stance during interviews creates a hierarchical (and patriarchal) relationship in which the researcher is positioned as a distant “expert knower” or appraiser, while the interviewee is treated as a research ‘object’ rather than another human being (Oakley, 1998: 711).

In response to such objectification, research participants may respond by not trusting researchers, and lying to them (Oakley, 1998: 711). On the other hand, unfiltered honesty can at times be uncomfortable even for those used to direct communication styles. This is a reality that became clear to me in an interview with Elad, a forty-three year old accountant, which I present as my second example of interaction.

21 Though some may argue that co-construction of narratives “games” the results of data collection, Gubrium and Holstein (2002) wisely point out that interviewers cannot taint knowledge “if that knowledge is not conceived as existing in some pure form apart from the circumstances of its production” (15). Put simply, interviewers are never passively collecting the stories of the participants, no matter how hard they might try to diminish their presence in the interview exchange (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004: 140).
Somewhere in the midst of our interview in his home in Thornhill, Elad and I came to discuss involvement in pro-Israeli political events in Toronto. Elad was very much involved in and aware of the public debates surrounding BDS groups in Toronto, and he referred particularly to their activity on the York University campus where his younger sister studied. After introducing the topic, I asked him about his opinion of the BDS groups’ right to protest, referring specifically to the debates around the participation of ‘Queers against Israeli Apartheid’ (QuAIA) in the annual Toronto Pride Parade. It was then that Elad said, with a laugh:

*Dugri, they [QuAIA activists] are a bunch of *Arabushim* and *Coccinellim*…… no Dugri?!*

Here, Elad uses derogatory Hebrew slang to refer to Arabs (‘*Arabushim*’) and transsexuals (‘*Coccinellim*’), and the familiar rhetorical question, “*lo dugri*” (‘*no dugri*’), which means ‘Am I right?’ Elad showed that he felt comfortable enough to make racist and homophobic/transphobic comments in my presence, assuming that I, a fellow Jewish–Israeli man (incorrectly presumed to be straight), would understand and share these views. Yet I did not. Listening to the recording of our interview later, and hearing myself stuttering and trying to steal time, I realized just how deeply offended, vulnerable, and confused I had felt. The fact that we were sitting in Elad’s home in a predominantly Jewish Ashkenazi, middle class, and hetero-normative suburban neighborhood only added to my sense of disempowerment.

As the interviewer seeking to build and maintain both rapport and safe space, I was faced with a dilemma. On the one hand, I couldn’t stay silent as I had in so many other interviews, because this time my silence would be interpreted as a sign of agreement with deeply offensive views. On
the other hand, I couldn’t simply respond heatedly with my own perspective (something that I would have done in a heartbeat in other settings such as a family dinner). I was committed to creating and maintaining rapport and a comfortable space of open dialogue founded on mutual respect (Sultana, 2007: 376-7; England, 2006). Moreover, opposing Elad directly might have alienated him deeply enough to end our interview altogether. Here I am reminded of Razon and Ross’s (2012) metaphor of the interview process as “a chess game” – a situation in which the two parties are constantly and carefully testing one another (498) and where every micro choice of how to respond can have macro consequences on our data collection.

Referring to her fieldwork among conservative Korean-American Evangelical missionaries, geographer Ju Hui Judy Han (2010) argues that truly ethical critical research engages without rejecting, opposing, or even empathizing with research participants. The possibility of maintaining both ethical and critical approaches requires that “the ethnographer stand in productive tension, moving in spaces both familiar and strange, negotiating the constant fluctuations of distance and proximity” (14). Thus instead of opposing or staying silent in the face of Elad’s rhetorical question, I decided to turn the question back to him, and into a different plane of investigation that I intuitively felt would be of value to this research.

I had a feeling that Elad’s comments might be connected to deeper affective sources that could be as relevant as they were offensive (see for example Tamir Sorek’s (2007) brilliant analysis of anti-Arab/anti-Muslim chants by Mizrahi soccer fans in Israel)24. The fact that some other interviewees had also expressed similar sentiments (though none in such explicit language) meant that the existence of such feelings was not exactly surprising. I hypothesized that these sentiments might speak to other elements of Jewish-Israeli identity. Asking Elad about his actual encounters with BDS activists in Toronto uncovered a number of complex sentiments of Jewish victimhood and fear, and anxieties regarding the survival of Israel and the Jewish people in the

---

24 Sorek (2007) emphasizes the difficulties of overtly racist, mainly Mizrahi soccer fans in dealing with the Arab component of their identity given the orientalism ingrained within Zionist discourses and practices. The fact that Arabs have been the historical enemies of Zionism, and that Mizrahim have often been placed on the front lines of this tension, has meant that many Mizrahim feel compelled to de-Arabize and de-Orientalize their appearance, as well as their cultural preferences (following Ella Shohat, 1992; 1999). He argues that adopting and emphasizing such nationalistic, hawkish and Arab-hating views enables Mizrahim to blur what they have in common with Palestinian Arabs.
face of existential threats (see chapter on citizenship). These were feelings with which I could empathize, even if not completely, confirming Han’s assertion that it is the moments in between empathy and opposition that have “the potential to generate most revealing insights about the complex social worlds that we all inhabit” (14). Indeed my interviews with Yoram and Elad emphasize that power relations between interviewers and interviewees are far more fluid and complex than many assume, rendering the “insider - outsider” and “researcher – subject” divides both simplistic and misleading (see Mullings, 1998; Mahtani, 2014: 158; Razon and Ross, 2012). The interaction with informants changes the general outlook and opinions of the researcher, as a result changing the research itself (Dowling, 2005:26-7).

**Coding the Qualitative Data**

Considering the fluidity, and indeed uncertainty, involved in collecting subjective and narrative-based ‘data’, the process of organising, interpreting, writing up, and presenting numerous different accounts is often a lengthy and emotionally demanding process (Schiellerup, 2008: 164) which requires a coherent and consistent strategy in order to draw out themes and to treat all of the interviewees equitably. I decided that the data collection and data analysis processes would take place simultaneously. I began to separate, sort, and synthesize the data through a recursive process known as qualitative coding (Crang, 2005; Charmaz, 2006: 2-3). Initially sorted data is used to inform and shape further data collection. New interview questions are developed (added or revised) as categorical patterns are found in, or created from the data, hopefully leading to coalescence around certain key themes (Charmaz, 2006: 3-4). Making sense of the information in this way was a tedious, exhausting and draining process, but it ultimately rewarded me with any unexpected and profound insights.

I started the process of coding with a very close reading of each interview. In most cases, I had transcribed the interview tapes within a week, while my impressions of the encounter were still “fresh” in my mind (Crang, 2005: 220). Printing the Hebrew interview transcriptions, I went through each interview a line or a sentence at a time, in some cases reading the same interview a few times, and wrote initial codes that stood out to me alongside the text (general headings that gave me a broad sense of the general themes that seemed to be emerging). This provided an
initial “open coding”, which I used to provide an early breakdown of the interviews into manageable topics. Examples of initial codes assigned to interview segments included “Involvement in pro-Israeli public activities in Toronto” or “Refusal to accept the ideology/stigma of Yordim”.

After conducting, coding and analyzing five preliminary interviews, I sorted the categories into piles and began to think more about who I wanted for my later interviews, and what patterns I wanted to explore further (both of which changed over time). In each round of coding I would read all of the previously coded segments again, going through each pile and asking myself the same two questions: what gaps left by earlier interviewees needed to be filled in, and what patterns needed to be explored further in the next round of interviews? In a few cases, these questions spurred the recruitment of additional participants based on what Charmaz call “theoretical sampling”, defined as a “strategy of obtaining further selective data to refine and fill out your major categories” (Charmaz 2006:12).

Over time, I analyzed the interview segments in greater depth, thinking about the context and processes of the statements, phrases, and actions described by the participants – a coding strategy that Cope (2005) describes as “latent” or “analytical” (224). Segments moved from one pile to other as new refined ideas emerged, and I also drew lines to connect between different piles/themes. I created new sets of piles with refined categories and themes, ‘breaking down’ initial broader codes (Crang, 2005:223) such as “Encountering racial remarks/attitudes in Canada” into refined sub-codes such as “Being questioned about your Jewish identity because of phenotypes” or “Being confronted with Jewish white privilege”. I deliberately tried to develop new refine themes using the participants’ own discursive expressions, which meant avoiding academic jargon and finding balance between academic theory and the participants’ own analytical viewpoints. Finally, I highlighted in colour the segments with the most intriguing remarks from the participants: those statements that stuck out for being memorable, surprising, emotionally affective, or thought provoking. I privileged these statements, putting them at the top of the piles.
Viewing the piles and highlighted segments gave me a visual image of which themes were more and less prevalent in the interviews. Keeping track of emerging patterns, ‘a-ha!’ moments, and related questions in a separate “memo notebook”, I asked myself: what do I see in these smaller refined piles that I would like to explore further in the next interviews? What questions and conceptual gaps can they contribute to? This process helped point to areas to explore during subsequent data-collecting, and gave me tools for obtaining additional focused data to inform, extend and refine the themes further (Charmaz, 2006). I repeated this process of systemic on-going exploration of unanswered questions and conceptual gaps after each round of 5-10 interviews throughout my two years of data collection.

**Participant observation**

In order to round out my analysis, I chose to conduct a series of field observations at various local community public events before, during, and after the interviewing process. Alongside interviews, this technique is the most common form of qualitative geographical research (see Winchester, 2005). It provides the researcher with a descriptive complement to more controlled and formalized techniques such as interviewing (Kearns, 2005:193). It also provided me with an additional site for recruiting interviewees.

Among the community public events I observed were Jewish holiday celebrations, pro-Israeli protests (such as political rallies during Israeli military confrontations and counter-demonstrations against pro-BDS groups) and fundraising marches (such as the United Jewish Appeal’s annual ‘Walk with Israel’). I also attended Israeli national commemoration ceremonies (such as the Holocaust Remembrance Day, the Israeli Fallen Soldiers Remembrance Day) and festivals (such as large solidarity celebrations on Israeli Independence Day). My observations at these events focused on the attendees themselves, as well as their interactions with each other and with other groups (when applicable). Field notes taken at these events were later coded and used to complement the themes that emerged from the one-on-one interview summaries.
Writing Up – Confronting accumulated anxieties about the project

As Schiellerup (2008) (after Holmes, 1993 and Davidsen-Nielsen and Leick, 2003), observes, the process of transforming a research project into a written dissertation is very much an “act of closure” (169) that requires us to definitively leave “all the theses that could have been written behind in favour of ‘this one’” (ibid). For my project, which has by design involved fluid and recursive analysis from the very start, the act of committing my analyses to paper has been the most difficult of all, because it has required me to make decisive judgments about the kind of knowledge I want to produce. The recurring decision of which themes, and by extension which narratives, to privilege over others is not only a stylistic one, but one which can profoundly alter the message that readers will take from the study. Such choices are not only inherently fluid and subjective, they are deeply political as well.

In order to sort out what content we will include and how, writers are often encouraged to ask of themselves: Who is my principle audience? For whom I am writing this dissertation? From this we are expected to address ethical questions about authority, responsibility, completeness, legitimacy, and acceptance of our research. However, over the years that it can take to produce a doctoral thesis, the answers to these questions can shift greatly, and it would be fair to say that many of my political views and commitments, as well as my identifications, have changed over the course of this project. My intellectual position has been “moved” not only by academic studies and “real life” events, but also by my encounters with the very participants featured in this research and with other ‘peripheral’ participants. I see these changes as a valuable feature of honest, open, and engaged research.

One particular issue that became more acute during the writing stage has been how to navigate between multiple commitments. I continuously have found myself oscillating between my own natural identifications with anti-racist and post-Zionist politics with the fact that, unlike many commentators, my life and that of those I love are directly impacted by what transpires in Israel-Palestine.

From one side, I had to contend with the fear of being personally attacked - particularly by members of the Jewish and Israeli community, for airing ‘dirty laundry’ about Zionism, Israeli
policy, or intra-Jewish racialized and political divisions that many (including some progressives) feel should be dealt with from ‘within the family’. As Moon (2013) notes, for Jews, public criticism of Israel (e.g., its policies in the West Bank and Gaza) is an issue that “threatens the very meaning of what it means for members of the group to exist at all, complicated by a history in which the meaning of group membership has been used by outsiders to legitimate extreme discrimination, violence, and even genocide” (262). Has this consciousness of ‘mainstream’ views moderated what should be a politically fierce statement?

On the other hand, in times of reflection I have also wondered whether I have privileged certain simplistic discourses from anti-colonial and anti-Zionist thought because of how highly valued and accepted they are in today’s progressive academia (see Gibson-Graham, 1994), rather than because I actually fully accept them, with the risk of reinforcing an uncomplicated view of the topic that I actually wish to fight.\(^{25}\)

In dilemmas such as these, I have found insights from critical race theory (CRT) effective in balancing my conflicting commitments (e.g. to the anti-racist struggle, to open-minded scholarship, to my various communities, to my family) and positionalities (Tamir the activist, Tamir the Western-educated scholar, Tamir the Israeli, Tamir the son/brother/friend, etc.). As Thandeka Chapman (2005) argues (after Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997: 95) and Ladson-Billings (2000:272)), the researcher is required to identify and interrogate how the multiple consciousness in which she/he is operating, as well as the familial, cultural, ideological, and educational histories that she/he is bringing to the inquiry may influence the ‘data’ collected and thus the information that becomes coded as ‘knowledge’ (35). Her/ his perspective, questions, and insights are inevitably shaped by these profound developmental and autobiographical experiences - these factors influence how the world is viewed, interpreted and represented” (35). Thus, “it is the author’s responsibility to demonstrate the complexities of people’s lives and the contexts influencing the choices they make” (Chapman, 2005: 48), all along without letting his/her personal histories obscure or overwhelm the inquiry (35).

---

\(^{25}\) Gibson-Graham (1994, 28) asserts that a discourse is “like a mineral”. It is “a substance that is socially constructed and valued on account of the uses to which it can be put […] [L]ike the miner, the researcher cannot just uncover and extract new mineral mass; she or he must also ensure that the product can be sold in the intellectual market-place.” (208)
Gillian Rose (1997) rejects the portrayal of the researcher as a transparently knowable agent whose position can be fully revealed and motivations can be fully known (309; 314). As she persuasively argues, we are not and cannot be fully conscious to both ourselves and the world in which we work, nor can we fully understand our position in complex webs of power or claim to know how power works (311). Put simply, I agree with the argument that being reflexive cannot make everything completely transparent or consciously unveil all inner and outer influences. Conducting research is “a messy business” (Rose, 1997: 314, after Parr, 1996) in which researchers are “entangled in the research process in all sorts of ways” (ibid). Fieldwork, in particular, as was illustrated in this chapter, should be seen as a site of messy, affective and contingent (racialized) power. I prefer to follow Rose’s proposal for a reflexivity that privileges an account of shifting positionalities beyond one’s fixed, particular self-identifications. This is, as Rose suggests, an exercise in “asking how difference is constituted, of tracing its destabilizing emergence during the research process itself” (313). Uncertainty and partiality, rather than being obstacles to ‘good’ research, have to be embraced if we are to be honest (Mullings, 1999: 337). I have tried to keep this advice present throughout my writing.

Conclusion

Entering this research, my primary desire was to share the voices of the many diverse Israeli immigrants whose narratives are not represented in popular and academic accounts of Jewish and Israeli migration, diasporism, and identity. Thus, I have explicitly attempted to privilege voices that complicate essential categories about Jewish identities, geographies of belonging, and politics in order to undermine the oversimplified representation of Israelis within the existing literature (e.g. by looking for certain symptoms in the participants’ narratives, and encouraging interviewees to talk more about these concerns more than they otherwise might). This, of course, makes it impossible to discern where their voices start and where mine ends. Of course, the complexity of ascribing reflexivity upon others presents its own problematic questions over the researcher’s projection of thoughts or feelings onto another individual, some of which simply cannot be answered. Moving beyond the simplistic binary of empowerment and oppression, I
have tried hard to acknowledge the interviewees in this project as reflexive subjects aware of the power dynamic during the interview.

At the same time, I have tried to be open about not only my own positionality and that of the participants, but of the inherent fluidity and subjectivity of these positions. Jewish immigrants from Israel are characterized by much the same internal diversity within their host societies as in the sending countries, divided along lines such as gender, age, political perspectives, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and class background. Further, both within Israel and elsewhere they are often subject to ‘whitening’ influences that privilege erasure of counter-hegemonic differences. Thus, we cannot assume or expect that there will be mutual recognition among all Israeli immigrants, or that every position will be clear on first glance. There is no essential core/center to discover, but heterogenic diversity of identities and experiences within the label of an Israeli immigrant contingent upon countless shifting factors.

As I will point out in the remaining chapters, the group of people that I interviewed displays remarkably different perceptions, beliefs and experiences regarding their Jewish and Israeli identities. Likewise, my own racial, ethnic, and religious heritage are impossible to untangle from disparate aspects that have affected this research such as my gender, appearance, sexuality, spirituality, socio-economic situation, and Western education. All of this is to say that, though this project revolves around Jewish and Israeli immigrant identities in Canada which I share, it would be shallow for me to claim a homogenized “Jewish” or “Israeli immigrant” identity (or for that matter a “gay” or “leftist” or even “Mizrahi” identity) with the participants of my study. The challenge in navigating identity has shaped the research process, and its outcomes, deeply, and has been the main theme that I have been guided by in producing this snapshot.
Chapter 3: Reframing the Israeli Diaspora: Towards Post-Zionist Jewish Futures

Introduction

For Jews, Israel evokes particularly resonant, complicated meanings of home. Centuries of migration, history, politics, culture, and religious yearning have layered upon Israel multiple and conflicting meanings of home and homeland (Aviv and Shneer, 2005:9)

I usually identify as a Jewish-Yemenite. I have used Arab-Jew a few times. I also use Jewish-Israeli (Dikla, 38)

I connect myself to Judaism that existed before the establishment of Israel, to Judaism as a culture and not as a nationality, a territory, or autonomy (Lior, 51)

Studies of the “Israeli Diaspora” have been remarkably consistent in accepting and affirming the image of the Israeli Jew as a non-racialized or white, Euro-cultured subject, who exclusively locates his or her identity in Israel even after migration. By following this view, such studies have missed an opportunity to engage with emigrants who do not fit these stereotypes, denying them the opportunity to voice their not-so-uncommon narratives. In this chapter, I share the voices of racially and politically diverse Jewish Israeli immigrants who cross racial, cultural, political, and sexual boundaries as they discuss their cultural diasporic identities and belongings in Israel, in Toronto, and elsewhere along their personal and familial journeys of migration.

As I show, Jewish diasporic identities, as articulated among immigrants from Israel in Toronto, are constantly being produced and reproduced transnationally through the migrants’ familial histories, their movement across borders, and their everyday lives and interactions. Migration opens up a material and discursive space for the re-negotiation of Jewish identities and belongings. In particular, new connections with people of diverse origins, cultural and political attitudes and ideologies are forged. In fact, these everyday interactions shape and reshape the content of Jewish diasporic identities even when migrants have ‘settled’. Examining the lives and narratives of diverse Jewish migrants, including the transnationality of their lives within Israel
itself, we come to see that there is no obvious nor single “Israeli diaspora”. There are, in fact, numerous Jewish diasporic subject positions of identifications, and while some conform to Zionist typologies, many do not.

Existing studies of Israeli emigrants tend to locate “Israel” and “the diaspora” in two distinct spatial and temporal realms. Yet, participants’ narratives illustrate that the geometries of (Jewish) diaspora are not simple locations in time and space that can be mapped based on the mobility from one nation state to another. Some migrants understand their Jewish diasporic identities as being inherently multiple, fluid, and hybrid. They actively link diverse Jewish histories (e.g., Arab Jewish, Mizrahi, etc.) in complex ways to claim a non-Oriental Jewish/Israeli diasporic identity. Others understand their Jewish diasporic identities in de-territorialized and de-nationalized terms (i.e., in cosmopolitan terms that reject territory and nationalism). However, what is common amongst the participants is that they require us, as scholars, to stretch and re-form ethno-national Zionist geographies of social care, kinship, and belonging that are emphasized in the existing literature. Embracing these positions gives us an opportunity to more critically examine the diversity and hybridity of diasporic experiences, identities, and belongings as shaped by multiple historical and contemporary processes of mobility and racialization.

In this chapter, I discuss participants’ stories with reference to a number of anti-essentialist, processual (post-colonial, cultural, postmodern) conceptualizations of diaspora, drawing from the work of scholars like Stuart Hall (1990) and Paul Gilroy (1993; 2000), as well as by post- (and anti-) Zionist scholars, who cite the plurality of Jewish diasporism and the hybridity of Jewish cultural identities and histories (e.g., Boyarin and Boyarin, 1993; Raz-Karkotzkin, 1993/1994; Shohat, 2006; Ray, 2008; Aviv and Shneer, 2005; Butler, 2012; Kaye/Kantrowitz, 2007). I believe that these theorists offer an important counterpoint to studies of the Jewish / Israeli “diaspora”. Their notion of cultural identities as a set of processes and diaspora as a type of consciousness (with an emphasis on multi-locality) destabilizes and complicates the neat categorization of people and places as belonging to any one homeland to the exclusion of others.

The chapter is organized into six sections. In the first section, I review the evolution of scholarly approaches to diaspora. I then investigate the prevailing understanding of a monolithic Zionist,
white, and western “Israeli diaspora” present in much of the existing literature on Israeli immigrants. Next, I move on to discuss the epistemic binaries created by such discourse, and introduce interview material that views diaspora as the opposite of territorial attachment. Reflecting on some of the issues with a binary approach, I discuss anti-essentialist conceptualizations of diaspora, as formulated by cultural theorists and post-Zionist scholars of Jewish racialization, putting them into conversation in order to problematize the epistemological underpinning in the Israeli diaspora literature. I then begin to analyze the narratives of a group of racialized Israeli emigrants in Canada who have rejected the duality of Israel vs. diaspora and who view their lives in multiple diasporic locations. Finally, I present narratives of immigrants who have chosen to put down roots in Toronto and discuss how the re-establishment / re-placement of identity here creates a new diasporic station and a re-scaling of diaspora.

**Challenging Diaspora: Two waves**

I was curious to trace the roots of the term diaspora, given that it is a popular term employed in the literature exploring the experiences of Jewish migrants. The term *Diaspora*, from the Greek *Speiro*, to sow, and the preposition, *dia*, over (Shuval, 2000:42), has its roots in the Greek gardening tradition. With its implied imagery depicting the scattering of seeds (Kalra et al., 2005), it is a term that is strongly evocative of the concept of dispersal from a central source. In tracing its multiple meanings, I contend that diaspora remains a social construct. Its definition, meanings and coverage have shifted over time and are subject to ongoing academic debate (see Shuval, 2000; Kalra et al., 2005). Before introducing the voices of the study participants, I wish to provide some background on the progression of these debates, from the static and restrictive notions traditionally associated with the concept of diaspora, to the anti-essentialist and processual critiques that have more recently gained traction in critical academia. It is with this critical progression in mind that I will discuss the notions of Jewish and Israeli diasporas via the narratives of actual Jewish migrants from Israel.

Interestingly for this study, the conventional view of diaspora can be traced directly to ancient narratives of the Jewish experience of exile (Safran, 1991; Shuval, 2000), and indeed until the
last century, the term diaspora referred *almost exclusively* to the forced dispersal of the Jews. Then, in the early 1900s, the term began to gain wider use, gradually expanding to cover involuntary dispersals of other populations, particularly the displacements of Armenians and people of African descent (Kenny, 2013). Yet even in its expanded applications, diaspora maintained a clearly negative connotation, invoking notions of displacement, exile, trauma, and victimhood, as well as a sense of loss (derived from an inability to return to ancestral land) and a yearning for an obtainable home. As a consequence of these associations, the Jewish experience came to be seen not just as exemplary, but rather as a prototypical diasporic experience (Kalra et al, 2005:9).

Since the 1980s and 1990s, new definitions and notions of diaspora have emerged to encompass not just diverse identities, but also a broader set of experiences, and the term diaspora is now commonly applied - in academic, journalistic, political and popular usage (Kenny, 2013; Faist, 2010) - to a wide variety of groups, including refugees, illegal aliens, guest workers, immigrants, racial minorities, and various overseas communities (Shuval, 2000:41; Clifford, 1994: 312). Scholars such as William Safran and Robin Cohen have introduced formalized criteria for diasporism that have extended the applicability of the term to other groups. In addition, human geographers who follow emergent critiques in cultural and post-colonial studies, have increasingly viewed hybridity and difference as key characteristics of the people and processes associated with diaspora (Mitchell, 1997; Carter, 2005; Blunt, 2007; Rios and Adiv, 2010). These anti-essentialist and post-colonial critiques have gained currency across the social sciences.

Influential authors on diaspora have tended to view diaspora mostly as a descriptive typological tool, what Kalra describes as a method more concerned with ‘naming’ people (Kalra et al.2005:11; Habib, 2004). For instance, William Safran, in his influential work, defines diasporism as a list of conditions, including dispersal from an original centre to more than just

---

26 Most accounts of Jewish diasporic experience begin with the Babylonian captivity/exile in 586 BCE: the destruction of the First Temple and Jerusalem, the expulsion of Jews from the city and their subsequent forced displacement to Babylon and other scattered colonies outside Palestine (Shuval, 2001; Kalra et al., 2005:9). Yet while the exile to Babylon has become one of the central Jewish cultural and political narratives, even according to Biblical accounts Jewish people had been migrating since long before this critical event (Kenny 2013: 2), with Jewish settlements in many parts of the region, notably in Egypt and Greece, at the time. By the fourth century BCE there were more Jews outside than inside the region surrounding Jerusalem (Ages 1973 in Kalra et al, 2005:9).
one country; emergence of collective memories/myths about an original ancestral land, and attachments to a homeland which defines its collective identity. Commitment to support the homeland, and to reconstruct and rejuvenate it are also included in understandings of diaspora, as is an experience of alienation or marginalisation within host societies. This experience of alienation results in the cultivation of a dream of “return” as well as with identification with diaspora members in other countries (Safran, 1991: 83-4). Robin Cohen, in the seminal book “global diaspora” (1997), builds on these foundations, and expands them by emphasizing the importance of context and the possibility of comfortable diasporism27. Yet, by emphasizing attachment and commitment to a single original homeland in the construction of identity and solidarity, such conceptualizations of diaspora maintain an implication of static duality between here and there that does not leave much room for more complex narratives of migration, identity, or belonging (Kalra et al., 2005:11-12). Moreover, by attaching these categories to ethnicity and territory, their works imply that other axes of difference (such as gender, race, class, etc.) are secondary in influencing the creation of communities and solidarities. As will be explained in the next chapter, these generalizations have allowed the definition of the “Israeli diaspora” as white, western, and Zionist to go unchallenged despite the presence of numerous subaltern voices.

The critical wave of scholarship on diaspora that has emerged in the last couple of decades, led by scholars such as Stuart Hall (1990), Paul Gilroy (1993, 2000), among others, has problematized the idea of “primordial kinship and rooted belonging” (Gilroy, 2000:123) based on “either blood or land” (Gilroy, 2000: 133; also see Kalra et al., 2005). Importantly, it also has begun to unsettle “the fundamental power of territory to determine identity, by breaking the simple sequence of explanatory links between place, location and consciousness” (Gilroy, 2000:133). As Hall (1990), in his well-known work on black cultural identities, puts it, diasporic identities “are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference” (235). With these most recent theoretical advances in mind, I have chosen to build upon two important features of anti-essentialist scholarship. These features include the recognition of multi-locality (rather than attachment and commitment to a single original

27 Cohen provides a typology of five different diasporic categories that would result from differing combinations of historical, mythological, and social factors (Shuval, 2001). The five types are: victim diasporas, labour diasporas, trade diasporas, imperial/colonial diasporas, and cultural diasporas.
homeland in constructing identity and solidarity, see also Clifford, 1994). And the view of diaspora as a societal process that is always undergoing change.

Geographer Sean Carter (2005, 55) notes that scholars tend to “utilize...spatial metaphors, whilst simultaneously denying the significance of geography” (and geo-politics). Throughout this study, Carter’s words have resonated, and had led me to conclude that the progressive potential of diaspora and hybridity is conditional upon placing the narratives of transnational populations within specific historical, geographical, political and economic contexts (see also Smith and Katz, 1993; Mitchell, 1997; Silvey and Lawson, 1999; Kelly and Lusis, 2006), including racial circumstances (Mahtani, 2014). Yet as Carter (2005) argues, even these accounts can ignore or underplay the materiality of borders, boundaries, and space itself.

In this chapter, I attempt to address such shortcomings by not only studying the narratives of diverse Jewish Israeli migrants, but by connecting them to the material histories and geographies of a wide range of Jewish, Zionist, and Israeli spaces. In particular, I have worked to provide empirical data on the geographical narratives of Israeli migrants who have not received as much attention. As Smith and Katz (1993) conclude, we must examine material, social, and geographic spaces, if spatial metaphors are to be useful to the radical political project.

**Changing places of Zionist attachment**

The study of Israeli émigrés has mostly conducted in the North American context where the majority of them reside. This literature included numerous Jewish scholars over the last few decades. In this section I briefly review this body of research and point to two main and related limitations. First, I discuss the problematic depiction of Jewish-Israeli emigrants as diasporic

---

28 Literature in this vein describes how shared experiences of marginalization in the host society can create non-territorially-based solidarities (e.g., Stuart Hall’s (1992) theorisation of ‘new ethnicities’), and how this diminishes the importance of a ‘desire to return’ to former ‘homelands’. According to Clifford (1994), a negative experience of racial and economic marginalization can lead to new coalitions, such as the “Maghrebi diasporic consciousness”, which unites Algerians, Moroccans, and Tunisians residing in France (312). Here, “a common history of colonial and neocolonial exploitation contributes to new solidarities” (ibid). Another example of this can be found in 1970s Britain, where the strategic appropriation of the term ‘black’ allowed immigrant South Asians, Afro-Caribbeans, and Africans to form anti-racial alliances between (ibid). According to Clifford (1997:317), diasporic cultures often seek hybridized cultural practices as a means of maintaining community, “selectively preserving and recovering traditions, ‘customizing’ and ‘versioning' them in novel, hybrid, and often antagonistic situations”.

subjects based on theoretical reliance on descriptive (hermetic and static) models of diaspora. And second, I discuss the (usually) unqualified assumption of this diaspora as monolithically Zionist, white, and Western.

The sub field of the study of Israeli diaspora had a number of phases. Earlier ethnographic studies (up until the mid-late 1990s) tended to emphasize the refusal of Jewish-Israeli immigrants to ‘become diasporic’ due to their supposed strong commitment to Zionist ideologies. Scholars’ explorations tended to mirror the Zionist ideological baggage attached to emigration from Israel, which negatively portrayed it as a ‘betrayal’ of Zionism, and which categorised Israeli émigrés as yordim (“those who have descended”, Cohen 2007; Gold, 2002; 2013). This scholarship generally assumed that the strong Zionist socialization of the Israeli immigrants in the Jewish State had made them ill-suited for life outside of it (Gold, 2002: 10).

The literature downplayed the successful adaptation and accomplishments of many individual émigrés, while focusing on individual and communal troubles instead, including feelings of isolation, guilt, rootlessness, homelessness, and tensions with other groups (17). There was an emphasis on the resentment that they experienced from assimilated North American Jews. The focus of many of these studies was placed on testimonies of Israeli immigrants who viewed their lives abroad as temporary sojourns. For example, in a series of studies in Toronto, Gerald Gold and Rina Cohen (Gold, 1992; Cohen and Gold, 1996; 1997; Cohen, 1999) argue that even long-term residents, cling to a “myth of return”, constantly contemplating re-immigration to Israel, which they simply ‘postpone’ indefinitely. Moreover, their studies showed that Israeli immigrants in Toronto deliberately distanced themselves from non-Israelis, by clinging to their shared ‘myth of return’, allowing or forcing them to form an isolated, distinct, and exclusionary Hebrew-speaking Israeli community in Toronto, while giving them an ‘alibi’ for their long stays outside Israel (Cohen and Gold, 1997: 373). Indeed, the myth of return is a common theme in ‘Israeli diaspora’ studies up until the late 1990s. For example, scholars have defined Israeli immigrants in North America as “self-defined sojourners” (Kass and Lipset, 1982; Uriely, 1994), and “permanent tourists” (Shokeid, 1988: 66; Magat, 1999:125), who persistently sit by their “imaginary suitcases”(Linn and Barkan-Ascher, 1994). Scholars have argued that even those who are reconciled to life in the host country and who no longer consider a permanent return to Israel as a viable and realistic option, seldom describe themselves as nationals of the host society.
(i.e., as ‘Americans’ or ‘Canadians’). Accordingly, they continue to feel a strong sense of loyalty to the homeland and perceive themselves as citizens of Israel first and foremost.

Another study (Linn and Barkan-Ascher, 1994) compares Israeli immigrants in Western Canada to refugees living in exile. Like exiles, the ambivalence of Israelis about their departure from the homeland is centered on shame, guilt and a sense of violation of moral, ideological Zionist values (24), as well as a sense of pain and anxiety over the prospect of not returning home (34). Regarding Israel as part of themselves, Linn and Barkan-Ascher (1994: 30) claim, “Israeli expatriates are bound to find separation from the part of the self very difficult” (ibid). Ilan Magat (1999) presents similar findings in his study of Israelis in Edmonton. He describes how Israelis become only superficially involved in Canadian society, experiencing a sense of rootlessness and homelessness outside their homeland. Magat concludes that “for some of these immigrants, paradoxically, their home might be in Canada, but Canada is not elevated to the status of Home; it is simply the wrong place” (125).

Since the 1990s, scholars have moved away from the limiting discourse of Israeli immigrants as Yordim, and have begun to conceptualize them as transnational migrants, who, similar to other contemporary transmigrants, locate their lives outside of their birth home (i.e., in “the diaspora”), while still maintaining strong multi-strand links to it (e.g., Cohen, 2001; Gold, 2002; 2004; Gold and Hart, 2009; Roginsky, 2010; Rebhun and Lev Ari, 2010; Porat, 2013). This process has involved negotiation of the migrants’ rights and obligations as transnational Israeli citizens (see Cohen, 2011). Scholarship since this period acknowledges the possibilities of successful migration from Israel, as well as the contributions of successful emigrants to the Jewish state. These more recent studies describe a transformation in the attitudes among Israeli immigrants regarding their presence in the diaspora. Contemporary Israeli immigrants feel more comfortable with their departure from Israel and are less likely to maintain a myth of return (Gold and Hart, 2009; Harris, 2009; Roginsky 2010). For example, Gold and Hart (2009) argue that Israeli immigrants in the U.S. and the U.K. now acknowledge the benefits (cultural, financial, religious, and otherwise) of life abroad. Fewer are choosing to return, and more are ready to admit that their move is indeed not temporary. Many in fact believe that the meaning of Yerida has changed in Israeli society. Rather than regarding time away from Israel as an expression of disloyalty, some now describe the emigration in altruistic terms – as providing benefits, including
remittances, to Israel and its citizens (27; see also Cohen, 2011). These scholars have linked these transformations to political and economic changes in Israel, as well as a more tolerant attitude towards emigration that developed during the 1990s. This attitude has allowed Israeli immigrants to justify their departure (Gold, 2002: 29; Cohen, 2007).

With an end to the assumption that all Israeli émigrés are transients destined to return to their homeland, scholars have now begun to examine the gradual integration of Israelis and their children (the second generation) into a “sub-diaspora” (the “Israeli diaspora”) among the long-assimilated “Jewish diaspora” communities in North America, Western Europe, and Australia (e.g., Cohen, 2001; Gold, 2002; 2004; 2013; Gold and Hart, 2009; Roginsky, 20010; Rebhun and Lev Ari, 2010; Porat, 2013). Yet, despite their departure from earlier assumptions, these more recent studies have maintained fairly monolithic views of Israeli emigrants.

A good example of this is the work of Jewish-American sociologist Steven, J. Gold (2002; 2004; 2013), who depicts a gradual shift in Israeli expatriate identities from purely national affiliation (i.e. “Israeli” identity) to broader membership in a Zionist ‘Jewish peoplehood’. This ‘Jewish peoplehood’ is defined as “the deterritorialized ethnic or religious community of the Jewish people that spans both Israel and the diaspora” (352). While Gold’s work has increasingly emphasized “a movement away from nationally-bounded forms of Jewish identity within Israel, the United States and other settings, and their replacement with flexible and less geographically fixed forms of Jewish identification” (Gold 2013), the familiar dualism of Israel vs. Diaspora remains strong, and Israeli ‘Westernness’ is all but taken for granted.

Similar trends are evident in work by Lilach Lev Ari and Uzi Rebhun, in their comprehensive study “American Israelis: Migration, Transnationalism, and Diasporic Identity” (2010). Lev Ari and Rebhun describe a process of “Jewish Americanization” – a process in which the identity of U.S. Israeli immigrants shifts from a purely national affiliation (“Israeli”) to a conjoined bi-national and religious one (“Israeli and American-Jewish”) (21-24, 143).

29 For a discussion on the changing discourse and policy towards the Jewish-Israeli emigrants see Cohen, 2007.
Thus, despite the many changes in focus within the sub field of Israeli diaspora studies, the majority of analyses maintain an essentialist notion of identity (Jewish-Israelis / Jewish) and of place (the State of Israel, ‘the diaspora’). These analyses are based on a theoretical reliance on descriptive (hermetic and static) models of diaspora (e.g., Safran, 1991; Cohen, 1997). These works lump Jews “divided by class, gender, age, etc…together in a flexible, but vague, self-confirming category” (Kalra et al., 2005: 11). Moreover, there is no shift away from the generalization of Israeli immigrants as Zionist, white and Western (i.e., non-racialized) diasporic subjects within this ‘Israeli diaspora’ literature (Gold, 2000; 2002; 2004; Rebhun and Lev Ari, 2010:31; Mittleberg and Waters, 1992; Sobel, 1986; Kass and Lipset, 1982). The emphasis in ‘Israeli Diaspora’ studies is on Israel as a new nation state where nationalism has been included in childhood socialization, and the underlying assumption is that all Jews who left Israel for other parts of the world (like other Jews that reside in “the diaspora”) essentially attribute their identity, belonging, loyalty and culture to Israel (“the homeland”). Finally, this “homeland” is understood solely in Zionist terms – as a culturally homogenous, Jewish, Western-oriented territorial nation-state that is and will always be the center of Jewish life. It is therefore not a surprise that scholars generally downplay non-western(ized) and hybrid Jewish identities, multiple belongings and homelands, and non-territorial understandings of Jewish diasporism. Despite their prevalence (including in Israel), these identities simply conflict with the aspirational norm of ethno-national solidarity. Together, all of this has served to frame Jewish diasporic identity as an essentially European/Western ethno-national position, homogenizing the wildly broad range of Jewish histories, politics and culture into a single ethno-national narrative.

In the next section, I elaborate on the epistemic binaries created by this discourse, and introduce narratives in which diaspora is viewed as the opposite of any single territorial attachment. These narratives are analysed in the context of anti-essentialist conceptualizations of diaspora, as formulated by cultural theorists and post-Zionist scholars of Jewish racialization.

**Zionist Territoriality and the Israel-Diaspora Binary**

In reaction to an escalating biological racialization of Jews in the maturing nation-states of modern Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (see Gilman, 1986; 1991; Falk, 2006;
Baum, 2006:124-5; Sand, 2009: 242-3), the modern concepts of nationhood and statehood became common themes in Jewish Europe. In the most lasting incarnation which became known as Zionism, these themes were retroactively applied to Jewish history in order to build a case for the mass resettlement of the biblical Land of Israel (then known as Palestine) by the Jews (some of whom had always lived in Palestine, but most of whom had not). According to Gabriel Peterberg (1995), Zionist historiographers have long sought to create a coherent organic-territorial narrative that could span the long period since the expulsion of the Jews from ancient Israel. This narrative unites the present Jewish State with the sovereignty exercised in the biblical past on the same territories. As was necessary for such a diverse and dispersed group, a case for a unified consciousness of Jewish national (as opposed to religious, ethnic, or racial) identity was built. Fuelled by a desire amongst many European Jews to leave the difficult past behind, Zionism came to embody the erasure of the many existing forms of Jewish diasporic consciousness. In order to construct this compact territorial narrative, the bulk of Jewish history since the Roman period was, and continues to be, presented in terms of a moratorium, caused by a removal from Israel, the Center of Jewish life. Life in the diaspora has since been presented as partial and lacking in ‘authentic’ substance, a situation in which the spirit of the nation – its territorial essence – could not materialize due to external circumstances (Peterberg, 1995: 245).

However, the Zionist movement, arising as it did in response to the tumultuous nationalist politics particular to modernising Europe, was from the start Eurocentric, and so the narratives that surround this movement were particularly ignorant of complex Jewish histories and identities outside of Europe (including, ironically, that of the ancient Jewish communities of the Land of Israel / Palestine and the surrounding countries). The Zionist meta-narrative was thus presented as a binary with two poles: a pathetic and doomed European (Ashkenazi) Jewish diaspora and a utopic “new Jewish” future in Israel, with non-European and non-Israeli Jews somewhere off of the map (Said, 1978; 1979[1992]; Shohat, 1988; 2003).

The reductionist equation of diaspora with expulsion/ exile (galut), as Jonathan Ray (2008) asserts, functions as a unifying image for Jewish history that has privileged the modern State of Israel as the universal and natural Jewish homeland over other concrete ties that Jews developed in the lands of more recent residence. Particularly negated has been the considerable Jewish presence in the Muslim world prior to the creation of the State of Israel. The aim of Zionism was
in part a reaction to the biological racialization of Jews in Europe. It set out to formulate a modern and ‘non-Oriental’ Jewish racialized identity. As a result, traditional narratives and Jewish identities have been re-molded to fit the presumptions of modern Western culture almost exclusively (Said, 1978; 1979[1992]; Shohat, 1988; Yosef, 2004; Sand, 2009; Goldberg, 2009).

It is perhaps in response to this privileging of Israeli life in opposition to diasporism that some participants who I interviewed for this study expressed a strong wish to leave Israeli life in the past and to effect a “return” to diasporism without specific territorial Jewish memories in the first place. Drawing from the work of Homi Bhabha (1990) and Paul Gilroy (1993), Clifford (1994) asserts that “experiences of unsettlement, loss, and recurring terror produce discrepant temporalities—broken histories that trouble the linear, progressivist narratives of nation-states and global modernization” (317). As Bhabha (1990, quoted in Clifford, ibid) notes, “the homogeneous time of the nation’s imagined community can never efface discontinuities and equivocations springing from minority and diasporic temporalities”. Indeed, selective embrace and negation of various Jewish political temporalities was something of recurring theme in my interviews.

Clifford (1994) argues that “the nation-state, as common territory and time, is traversed and, to varying degrees, subverted by diasporic attachments” (307). For Clifford, this is particularly the case for “[p]eoples whose sense of identity is centrally defined by collective histories of displacement and violent loss” or of ongoing, structural prejudice (307).

Moti, one of my interviewees and a fifty-two year old, Israeli-born teacher and musician of Belgian and Polish Jewish descent, explained how he subverts the Zionist-Israeli employment of ‘redemption’ discourse by reversing Zionist ideology and questioning the status of the Israeli state as a safe haven for “the Jewish people” against anti-Semitism lurking in “the diaspora”:

The Jews of Toronto are not the ones who are living in a ghetto or in any existential danger… The Jews of Israel are the ones that are living under serious threats. Thanks to Israel we have managed to create a ghetto. It is also a mental ghetto. They created ghetto. It is a part of the everyday discourse in Israel that “the world is against us”. People (from Israel) always ask me about anti-Semitism here, and I answer, “I don’t know. I never encountered anti-Semitism here”. Israelis have an obsession with Judaism and the conflict with the Palestinians. They are a post-traumatic people in a tiny state that are looking for self-proof that they are victims. They are always searching for a
possible danger, even when it doesn’t really exist; always looking for ways to clash that will isolate them from their surroundings (Interview).

For Moti, the security of the Jewish community (particularly in Israel) is *compromised*, rather than protected, by a territorial imperative, and by the isolationist regional policies that Israel promotes with neighboring countries and with Palestinians that are deeply embedded within Zionism (examples of this argument in academic literature include Said, 1978; 1979[1992]; Shohat, 1988; 2001a; Segev, 2001; Gordon, 2011). Of particular interest is the way that Moti invokes the notion of the (Eastern European) Jewish ghetto. He distinguishes between a physical and a mental ghetto, attributing the latter to the conceptual framework of fear, existential threat and victimhood that guides Jews in Israel. In doing so, he turns much of Zionist logic on its head, and explores questions about the notion of a “Zionist diaspora”.

Moti was not alone in privileging their present transnational location, or their ancestral Jewish transnationality, over a territorially-rooted Israeli upbringing. For example, when I asked Lior, a fifty-one year old psychotherapist of Jewish Polish decent, about his identity in Toronto, he stressed:

> First I am a human being - a man - and then a Jew. In that order. I connect myself to Judaism that existed before the establishment of Israel, to Judaism as a culture and not as a nationality, a territory, or autonomy. It makes sense to me and fits my values as a human being […] Living here (in Toronto) allows me to add new faces to my Jewish identity. Israel is still important to me because this is the place I was born, where my family and friends live. But I feel that what’s going on there doesn’t reflect my liberal values. This is the conflict I am facing. I feel that Israel is no longer relevant to me as a person that supports a non-violent solution- that cares about the other. I am relating more and more to the idea of the Wandering Jew that does not belong to a defined territory or autonomy.

Interestingly, Lior chooses to return to the mythical idea of the “wandering Jew,” an identification that refers to the history of (forced and voluntary) relocation of Jews that existed before Zionism and the establishment of the State of Israel. Lior’s conception of non-territorial Jewish diasporism as a more ethical form of Jewishness is suggestive of the work of Jonathan Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin (1993), who argue that it is precisely the process of *dispersion* that has allowed Jewish identity to survive and Jewish culture to develop (see also Butler, 2012). Boyarin and Boyarin (1993) privilege diaspora as a site that has historically enabled the development of Jewish identity understood as “a perpetual, creative diasporic tension” (715).
For Lior, the mere act of living and experiencing religious and ethnic identity in “the diaspora” opens up spaces for the performance and development of more humanistic forms of Jewishness. He describes himself as relating to others via a common identification as a human being, rather than through cultural affiliations. Lior’s narrative, like Moti’s, also challenges the logic of the Zionist temporality and spatiality by expressing a desire to “return” to a non-territorialised past.

The Zionist hegemonic narrative is based upon, and thus privileges, a particular kind of temporality. It relegates pre-State Jewish diasporic existence to a miserable past framed by galut (exile). This past is characterized by rootlessness, isolation, oppression, and danger outside Israel. Lior and Moti locate isolation, danger and rootlessness in present Israel. They also identify an ancestral past “wandering” without need of a homeland. Using this model, they envision a future in Canada disconnected from a “Jewish” homeland. The participants both understand this type of Jewishness as more positive and ‘humanistic’.

Many of the participants I interviewed expressed the view that Judaism in Israel has become “frozen” by being reduced to nationalism, militarism, and a perpetual violent conflict with proximal “others” (particularly Palestinians). They also note that it has become characterized by a deep divide between Ultra-Secular and Ultra-Orthodox Jewish segments. Moti believes that the true characteristic of Jewish identity is a diasporic one (see also Boyarin and Boyarin, 1993; Butler, 2012). The Zionist-Israeli model of Jewish identity is seen as empty of “real” Jewish content. Moti envisions “true” Jewish identity as lying in a particular place and as associated with particular body:

I’ve grown up on the idea of Shlilat Hagalut (negating the diaspora) and it took me many years to overcome it and to realize that the true Jew is Woody Allen. I mean that the Diaspora is the place for Jews, and Israel is a new place that was created. I was born in Israel, so I am not really a Jew. Woody Allen is a Jew. Me? There is nothing Jewish about me. I was raised in Israel in a secular environment. There was nothing Jewish about it. Definitely not the Jewish culture the Jews are famous for. The culture of Einstein, of the Nobel Prize winners, the European Jewish culture.

Moti is an Israeli-born product of the Zionist desire to “re-build the Jew” as a “rugged pioneer”. He felt that his identity had been stripped of all authentic Jewish content. However, of particular interest to me, especially as an Israeli-born Mizrahi Jew of Libyan (i.e., non-European) ancestry,
is how Moti envisioned his model of non-Zionist “authentic” Judaism in a European and Orientalised fashion. Moti identifies Woody Allen, who is a secular Ashkenazi Jew born and raised in New York, as a “real” Jew. Embodying the image of the bookish, neurotic, hysterical, and ‘feminine’ Ashkenazi New Yorker, Woody Allen’s persona reflects some of the stereotypical (and derogatory) characteristics of the “old Jew” in Eastern Europe in the 19th and early 20th century (Gilman, 1991; Boyarin, 1999). To understand why Moti wishes to ‘return’ to this image, once considered a mark of shame, requires situating it in the context of Zionist identity.

Within the racial anti-Semitic discourse that developed in the 19th century, the Jewish male body, and Judaism itself, were associated with femininity, passivity, homosexuality and ‘blackness’ (see Gilman, 1986:4-7; 1991:171-179; Boyarin 1999; Falk, 2006:82; Yosef; 2004). The Zionist political project of liberating the European Jews by creating a Western “nation like all other nations” was intertwined with a desire to normalize the Jewish body and to present a new Jewish hero built on the image of the European Orientalist pioneer, in diametric opposition to the diasporic Jew in anti-Semitic Zionist imagery (Shohat, 1988; 1999; Almog, 2000: 78; Segev, 2001:24; Said, 1979[1992]:251), in order to solve the gender and race complex of the Jewish European male (Gilman, 1991; Boyarin, 1999). The Ashkenazi Sabra was thus constructed in Zionist-Israeli lore with all of the positive attributes lacking in the “old Jew”, as an active, masculine, athletic, assertive and rooted nation (Almog, 2000:77) finally deserving of entry into the Euro-Western family.

The “Woody Allen” diasporic model in this respect is a reaction to a reaction – a badge of rebellion against the Israeli Sabra norm that itself was employed to ‘kill off’ the Orientalised Jewish model of Eastern Europe. Jewish figures known widely in Europe and the West - like Woody Allen, Albert Einstein, and other icons of European Jewish culture - are romanticised as

---

30 By the late 19th century, the consensus in the ethnological literature was that the Jews were the least pure ‘race’. Jews were ‘black’, or at least “swarthy” (Gilman, 1991: 171), with partial black-African blood (Gilman, 1986:7). Race scientists believed that the supposed “blackness” of the Jew’s skin and the crookedness of the Jew’s nose (product of its racial impurity) were marks of racial inferiority and symptoms of disease (Gilman, 1991: 172-173, 179), and that this diseased exterior reflected internal moral and psychological decay. Jewish males were perceived as effeminate and queer, “a type of female” (1991: 127; see also Boyarin, 1999), and were perceived as a polluting force, associated with sexual perversity. As Ann Pellegrini (1997) argues, Jewish women were also affected by these constructions; “in the collapse of Jewish masculinity into an abject femininity, the Jewish woman seems to disappear” (109).
opposes to Israeli *Sabra*, and as negations of its hyper-aggressive imagery. Indeed, it seems that many Jews opposing Zionist Jewishness embrace this rebellion. However, the seemingly cosmopolitan remaking of “authentic Jewish” identity raises its own serious issues for those who wish to promote an anti-racist project. I would in fact argue that the exclusive placement of ‘model’ humanistic Judaism in a prototypically Euro-American cultural figure (as opposed to, say, a well-known non-European or Arab Jew, such as a Maimonides) serves to continue the erasure of non-Western, non-European or non-secular forms of Judaism, and to privilege the Euro-American sphere as the natural home for ‘humanism’.

The issues raised by attempts to “return” the image of the Jew to classic European stereotypes are, after all is said and done, sadly reminiscent of the racial confusion that Zionism itself has perpetuated. The prototype of Woody Allen is accessible to Moti as a white Ashkenazi Jewish man, despite his Israeli upbringing, language, and mannerisms. Lior’s wish to be racially ambivalent is also reflective of a degree of white racial invisibility (which will be explored further in the next chapter). Ultimately, then, the accessibility of the “Woody Allen” ideal to Moti, and of the “first a human being” identity to Lior, reflect a degree of racial and cultural invisibility that not all Jews are willing or able to achieve (due to markers such as skin colour, religiosity, dress, language, and so on). Indeed, despite the intention to negate the Israeli mindset, it can be argued that the privileging of an American Ashkenazi cultural icon may in fact reflect an Ashkenazi- and America-centric socialization in Western-oriented Israel. Thus, the diasporic locations of Moti and Lior, while based on humanistic intentions, are dependent, at least in part, on the possibility of fitting into a racialized (white) image of the diasporic Jew in North America (Levine- Rasky, 2008; Train, 2006; Haynes, 2013). This is an identity that is inaccessible to many non-European / racialized participants (as will be discussed in the next chapter). While Moti’s and Lior’s diasporic locations complicate Zionist historiography (that, it must be noted, has also included an erasure of Ashkenazi diasporic culture and traditions, see Chinsky, 2002), they also base this location on a flawed essentialization of Jewish identity, memory, belonging, and culture as being *authentically* and *exclusively* tied to Euro-American Jewish culture and history. Ironically this is the same historical selectivity and orientalism that has characterised Zionist discourse itself. The exclusive reference to Jewish identity in Zionist terms (as an ethno-national territorial identity), *as well as in Euro-centric* terms (as being essentially white,
Western, and Euro-cultured), downplays the political, cultural, and racial diversity within Jewish communities in Israel and elsewhere, as well as the racialization of non-European Jews within these communities (see Shohat, 1988; 2003; Train, 2000; 2006; Goldstein, 2006; Levine-Rasky, 2008; Haynes, 2013; Greenberg, 2013). It certainly downplays the possibility that a humanistic Jewish culture could be located outside of the west or in a non-Westernized, non-white body.

All in all, the emphasis on locating “Israel” and “the diaspora” into two distinct realms is predominant in the existing literature on the “Israeli diaspora”. This understanding prevents an opportunity to more critically examine the diversity and hybridity of diasporic experiences, identities, and belongings as shaped by multiple historical and contemporary processes of mobility and racialization. At the same time, simply privileging one particular image of Jewish diasporism as a polar opposite to Zionist territoriality (i.e. the image of the Euro-American/Ashkenazi Jew) avoids difficult questions about non-European forms of diaspora and Judaism. The repetition of stories from the point of view of white(ned) Western(ized), and Zionist Israeli emigrants and scholars can only exacerbate this rendering of the stories of racialized and post-Zionist Israeli emigrants as ‘invisible and ‘ungeographic’ (McKittrick, 2006:xv).

In sum, the existing Israeli diaspora literature ignores or denies the diverse histories, geographies, identities, cultures, and experiences of a great deal of Jewish migrants whose Jewish (and Israeli) histories are rooted to Muslim and Arab, not European or American, countries and cultures. In my view, this is a form of epistemic violence which marginalizes their stories. I believe that such theoretical short-sightedness (combined with the acceptance of the Jew vs. Arab binary) prevents scholars from studying Israeli migrants in a more robust fashion, and indeed other Jews inside and outside of Israel, with a truly anti-racist lens – one that includes the possibility of multiple and hybrid racial and diasporic identities and consciousness. Thus, there is a pressing need to move beyond statically historical Zionist understandings of Jewish diaspora to more open-ended historicized accounts that acknowledge the ongoing development of various hybrid Jewish identities and cultures (within and outside, and before

---

31 Much Zionist literature portrays Mizrahim as lacking roots and as having emerged out of nowhere. Mizrahim, for many, appears on the historical and geographic map of the Middle East only with Zionism-like the Palestinians, it is a population frozen in time, (Said, 1978; 1992[1979]; Shohat, 1998; 2003). This narrative is instrumental to Zionist hegemonic discourse: by intentionally ignoring rich and historic Jewish roots in Arab lands, hegemonic discourse in Palestine/Israel have picture of a ruptured community that needs to be re-territorialized and re-invented to fit the mold of the Westernized and nationalized Jewish subject.
during, and after, Israel). The distinction between historical and historicized is pertinent here for my analysis.

In the next two sections, I critically examine the emergent scholarship on multiple diasporic consciousness, and present narratives of Israeli emigrants who have chosen to interpret their identities beyond the binary of ‘Israel vs. Diaspora’, through their attribution of equal importance to each of their previous locations and identities. I then return to the accounts of cosmopolitan transnationalism discussed above to explore what lessons we can take from a combination of these perspectives, and what they say about the importance of race in transnational identity.

**Multiple racial and diasporic identities and consciousnesses**

The myth of the “Ingathering of Exiles” (*Kibbutz Galuyot*), of Jews returning to their promised / historical homeland from the “four corners of the earth” (*Arba’a Kanfot Tevel*) after years in forced exile is predicated on an essentialization of Jewish memory as being tied to one particular place. It is also based on a concept of diasporism as *essentially* worthless and dangerous, as well as on the imposition of one sphere of Jewish diasporism (the Ashkenazi Jewish experience in pre-war Europe) onto other Jewish geographies (such as the Judeo-Arabic, Judeo-Islamic, and Judeo-Mediterranean spheres, see Raz-Krakotzkin, 1993; 1994; Shohat, 2003). This, in part, creates the problematic (and false) binary discussed above. As one of the first scholars to recognise this, Ella Shohat (2003:53) emphasizes how the Orientalism and Euro-centrism of Zionist historiography obscures the complexity of Jewish diasporism:

[The Zionist master narrative] concerning Jews within Islam consists of a morbidly selective ’tracing the dots’ from pogrom to pogrom. The word *pogrom* itself, it must be noted, derives from and is reflective of the Eastern European Jewish experience. I do not mean to idealize the position of Jews within Islam, rather I argue that Zionist discourse has, in a sense, hijacked Jews from their Judeo-Islamic political geography and subordinated them into the European Jewish chronicle of *shtetl* and *pogrom*\(^\text{32}\).

---

\(^{32}\) *Shtetl* is the Yiddish word referring to the towns and villages in the Pale of Settlement where Eastern European Jews were forced to live. The Pale of Settlement is the region of Imperial Russia in which permanent residency by Jews was allowed and beyond which Jewish permanent residency was generally prohibited. *Pogrom* is the Russian word for massacre (нор裟). A wave of anti-Jewish pogroms occurred from 1881 through 1884, and again between 1903 and 1906, in the Russian Empire (particularly in the Pale of Settlement). These pogroms were accompanied by rapes and looting. Hundreds were killed and thousands forced to flee west in search of less hostile surroundings,
Unfortunately, some post-colonial scholars such as Hall and Gilroy, who have approached the issue of Israel / Palestine in their work often fail to recognize the plurality and complexity of Jewish identity. Post-Zionist scholars (e.g., Boyarin and Boyarin, 1993; 2002; Raz-Krakotzkin, 1993; 1994; Shohat, 1988; 1989; 1999; 2003; Aviv and Shneer, 2005; Ray, 2008; Butler, 2012; Kaye/Kantrowitz, 2007) have taken increasing note of this since the early 1990s, and have worked to produce a more diverse and fluid understanding of Jewish diasporic identities, cultures, and histories. For example, Boyarin and Boyarin (2002) point out how Hall’s (1990) study excludes Jewish diasporic experiences, and in a way “banishes Jews from the brave new world of hybridity altogether”33 (13). Hall reduces Jewish diaspora to a “caricatured Zionism,” and “identifies Jewishness only with a lack, a neurotic attachment to the lost homeland” (Boyarin and Boyarin, 2002:13). In fact, Jews have long record of group movements, displacements, and multiple diasporas (Jewish ‘micro-diasporas’) (Ray, 2008). Furthermore, both within the State of Israel and outside of it, Jewish identities form themselves as much through the complex social interactions of daily life as they do through the ideological bounds of Zionism. Ultimately, generalizations that ignore this plurality ironically play into the hands of those who wish to essentialize and homogenize Jewish identity.

Contrary to the essentialist and Eurocentric formations of Zionism, then, Jewish identity has in fact always comprised different categories of collective consciousness, loyalty and belonging, including culture, historical memory, territorial memory, genealogical descent and religious faith. Boyarin and Boyarin (1993:715) point out that in Jewish culture, genealogy and territorialism are two terms that are in fact “more obviously at odds with each other than in synergy”. In “Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity” (1993), Boyarin and Boyarin (similar to black cultural theorists such as Hall and Gilroy), renounce Indigenousness as the material base of Jewish identity and culture. Informed by Jewish historical experience, Boyarin and Boyarin (1993) argue the ‘diasporic identity’ model is not one of literal diaspora, but rather a way of experiencing subjectivity, identity and belonging that does not necessarily resulting in mass migrations. By 1914, about 2.5 million Jews had left the Russian Empire. More than 2 million went to the United States, about two hundred thousand to England, and sixty thousand to Palestine (Baum, 2006: 124).

33Despite their critique of Hall (1990), Boyarin and Boyarin (1993) also see diasporic identity as the result of a constant blending and mixing of cultures. For them, cultures and identities are constantly remade (721), with cultures being the products of mixing. While this is the case of all cultures, “the diasporic Jewish culture lays it bare because of the impossibility of a natural association between this people [the Jewish] and a particular land” (ibid).
have to occur in an actual place of ‘exile’. Diaspora is re-conceived as a social and political choice that can be exercised in any situation and under any circumstances.

In order to do justice to both the depth and breadth of Jewish national and transnational identities, while recognizing the need for deconstruction of the homogenizing, Eurocentric meta-narrative prevalent within the literature on the Israeli / Jewish diasporas, it would thus appear that a conversation between the theories of black scholars and post Zionist scholars is in order (e.g., Boyarin and Boyarin, 1993; Raz-Krakotzkin, 1993; 1994; Shohat,1988; 2001a; 2003 ; Aviv and Shneer, 2005; Ray, 2008; Butler, 2012) 34. Jonathan Ray (2008) suggests that we approach Jewish history not as a singular diaspora of exile, but rather as a series of culturally defined, ethnically distinct and temporally limited micro-diasporas that were created and sustained during the long centuries of Jewish migration and statelessness. The notion of micro-diasporas suggests that some Jews, like Gilroy’s Black Atlantics, have multivocal belongings that stem from their personal (and familial) geographic movements, narratives, and longings.35

Viewing diasporic identities, and indeed identity in general, as fluid constructions can allow us to receive common narratives that blur the lines between essentialised ethnic, racial, and religious categories while, as post-Zionist scholars such as Boyarin and Boyarin show, maintaining reference to long held views and traditions in Judaism. In the following section, I recount a number of stories from interviews that help to illustrate the fluid geographies of multiple diasporic identities. These stories describe the diverse ways in which racially and politically diverse Jewish Israeli immigrants imagine and negotiate their Jewish cultural diasporic identities and belonging upon their migration from Israel and to Toronto.

34 It should be noted that post-colonial theories such as post-Zionism and Black Atlantic scholarship are not immune to critique. Lawrence and Due (2005) have made the argument that post-colonial theories, by seeking to de-territorialize identities, contribute to the “ongoing de-legitimation of Indigenous nationhood” (128). These authors argue that post-colonial critiques of “ethnic absolutism are destructive of Indigenous national identity and struggle” (131). For the purpose of this study it makes sense to anchor diaspora within the post-Zionist-black readings (against the particular notion of territory in the exclusive ethno-centric sense that has guided European nationalism, Zionism, and to a large degree Arab Nationalism). However, I do not imply that non-territorial models of diasporism are applicable to all contexts.

35 In reality, for most Jews, Zion was only one of a network of Jewish religious centers. James Clifford (1994) refers to multiply-centered Diasporism of the medieval Mediterranean Jewish world (11th to the 13th century). Similar to Gilroy’s Modern Black Atlantics, Jews created a sprawling social world linked through cultural forms, kinship relations, business circuits, and travel trajectories, as well as through loyalty to the religious centers in Babylon, Palestine, and Egypt (305).
I begin with narratives of hybrid Arab-Jewish /Mizrahi diasporism. I then return to the accounts of cosmopolitan / de-territorialized (Ashkenazi) Jewish diasporism presented in the last section in order to discuss the possibilities that these perspectives present when viewed together.

“It is all mixed-up within me”: Multiple Jewish diasporic locations

Studies of the “Israeli Diaspora”, and indeed the accounts of some Israeli migrants themselves, tend to assume that Israeli immigrants are non-racialized subjects who exclusively locate their identity and belonging in Israel after migration. This approach more often than not serves to confirm hegemonic Zionist ideologies to rebuild and re-brand Judaism as being consistent with (Christian) Western sensibilities, dispositions, values, and appearances (Goldberg, 2009:115-116; Shohat, 1988; Chinsky, 2002). Such a view ignores the fact that the majority of Israelis have no familial or ethnic connections to Europe.

Participants in this section offer up stories that illustrate the complexities and interconnections between multiple Jewish experiences and histories across multiple geographies - including the typically neglected Arab Jewish and Mizrahi geographies (Shohat, 2003). Their diasporic identities complicate Zionist hegemonic binaries of Israel vs. “the diaspora” and Arab vs. Jew, and provide an opening for engagement with other modes of being Jewish.

A common theme in my discussions with racialized Israeli-Canadian migrants was the situational dependency of identity. For example, when I asked Charlie, a sixty-five year old self-employed Jewish man from Morocco via Israel, about how he identified in Toronto he stressed:

It depends who is asking. When I am talking with a (Jewish) Israeli client, I am an Israeli for that matter, but if I am with other clients (who are mostly Jews), I will identify as a Moroccan (Jew). And don’t get me wrong. It is not that I am misrepresenting myself. I am really all of these things. It is all jumbled within me. I was born in Morocco after all and I was old enough to remember my life there. I had a good childhood in Morocco. Not only that, but when we arrived in Israel, they put us in a neighbourhood with all the other Moroccans. It was as if we were still living in Morocco. We used to speak mainly French back there (in Morocco) and it was in Israel that I learned how to speak fluent Moroccan (Moroccan Arabic ‘darija’).
Charlie’s account immediately complicates a number of aspects of the hegemonic Zionist duality of “homeland” vs. “the diaspora” (see Aviv and Shneer, 2005). First, the question of which country is his ‘homeland’ and which one is in the ‘diaspora’ is variable for Charlie. Moving from what he describes as a “good childhood” in Morocco to Israel in the 1960s, Charlie’s family was housed by the state in one of the many Mizrahi-dominated public housing projects36 (see Kallus and Law Yone, 2000; Tzfadia and Yaacobi, 2011). In these housing projects, he was surrounded by many other Jewish-Moroccan immigrants. Yet, in an interesting counter-example to experiences of homogenization and Westernization of Jewish immigrants in Israel, Charlie describes how his Moroccan identity and culture was not only maintained, but in some senses even strengthened in Israel, despite the state’s efforts to “de-Arabize” Mizrahi newcomers (and to “de-Orientalize” Jews in general) (Shohat, 1988; 2003; Shenhav, 2003). Critical Mizrahi scholars have pointed out that, such marginalization aside, from the point of view of Arab Jews themselves, the movement from nearby Arab countries to Israel was understood and experienced as mobility within the “same cultural-geographic space” of the Judeo-Islamic world, rather than as the epic journey to the east that some European Jews saw it as (Shohat, 1988; 2003; Hever, 2000; Shenhav, 2003; Chetrit, 2004). Still, Charlie does not romanticise his experience of marginalization by the Ashkenazi elites of Israeli society. Later in his interview he mentions that being shunted into the social and geographical margins of the State as a young Moroccan immigrant eventually contributed to his choice to depart from Israel to Toronto, where he already had economically successful relatives and better prospects of socio-economic advancement. Charlie’s narrative exemplifies the existence of multiple Jewish homes and multiple diasporic attachments (Aviv and Shneer, 2005, Ray, 2008). Rather than seeing Israel as his ‘primary’

36 Charlie’s experience must be understood in the context of the racialization and marginalization of Jewish newcomers from Asia and North Africa (Mizrahi Jews) upon their arrival in Israel by the Ashkenazi (Jewish European) Zionist leaders of the state. Most Mizrahim who arrived to Israel in the 1950s and 1960s were impoverished and destitute. In many cases, their properties, homes, lands, and legal statuses were abandoned or confiscated by the governments in the countries of origin (Shohat, 1988; 2003; Meir-Gilitzenstein, 2011). Lacking social networks in Israel, they were totally dependent on the Ashkenazi-dominated Labour Zionist state’s welfare institutions, housing and settlement policies in their first decades in Israel. In comparison with Ashkenazi newcomers, Mizrahim faced systematic discrimination in the distribution of resources, such as housing and settlement, education, health, culture, and employment (e.g., Shohat, 1988; 1999; Shenhav, 2003; Chetrit, 2004; Khazoom, 2007). The racist absorption policies of the Labour Party-led state in the 1950s and 1960s were not spontaneous as it often argues, but with a long history in the pre-statehood period (1882-1948) (Shohat, 1988; Chetrit, 2004; Bloom, 2008). This ideology of systematic inner–Jewish racial segregation and discrimination in the 1950s and 1960s also set the stage for ongoing racial, class, and gender division within Israeli Jewish society (Swirski and Bernstein, 1993; Cohen, 1998; 2006; Swirski and Konor-Attias, 2003;; Haberfeld and Cohen 2007).
home, Charlie holds memories from both Israel and Morocco, and as he indicates later in interview, has returned to both places since he has moved away. Israel is not an emotional center, nor a periphery for Charlie’s identity, but rather a hybrid space.

In Toronto, Charlie identifies as either Moroccan or Israeli, but inside, he feels that Israeli-ness and Moroccan-ness are jumbled. He uses the Hebrew term “mebulgan”, meaning disorganized or mixed-up. His ‘Moroccan’ and ‘Israeli’ Jewish diasporic identities are not separated or mutually exclusive and they clearly challenge the notion of stable, homogenous Israeli diasporic identity as being exclusively Zionist, Western, and white. At the same time, his identities are rooted in his locational history and cultural experiences, and do not privilege his current location (Toronto) above his previous locations.

Charlie is far from alone in identifying experiences from his life in Israel with memories of other non-European / non-Western homelands and diasporas. For example, Nitza, a forty year old secretary born in Israel to Egyptian and Tunisian parents recounted a similar story in our interview:

Do you remember the Egyptian movies that they used to show on Channel One (then the only television channel in Israel)? Maybe you are too young to remember that, but every Friday we used to watch them with my [Egyptian-born] grandma and she used to tell me and my brothers stories about the places we saw in the movie, about her home in Alexandria - the boardwalks, the beach, stories from her homeland. It was a magical time for us. As an adult, I visited Sinai, Cairo, and Alexandria a few times. I understood what they were saying to me [in Arabic] thanks to my grandma. I was familiar with the music. We used to listen to Umm Kalthoum and Farid el Atrash [Egyptian singers popular throughout the Middle East and amongst Mizrahi Jews and Arabs in Israel / Palestine], not to Chava Alberstein (an Ashkenazi Israeli folk singer) in my home. Where I grew up, Mizrahi Music was the dominant music. So back to your question on immigration and Israeli and Jewish identity - watching movies in Arabic every Friday before Kiddush (the start of the Jewish Sabbath) with my Egyptian grandmother is part of that. Mizrahi music is a part of that.

Nitza was raised in a working-class, geographically peripheral town (one of the so-called “Development Towns”) where most of the population, like herself, were Mizrahi Jews. She describes her Israeli culture as one in which ‘Middle Eastern’ and Arabic influences were always present, more than the Western or European ones normalized in Ashkenazi-dominated spaces.
From Nitza’s perspective, Arabic films and singers, and Mizrahi-hybrid music were integral features of a Jewish Israeli upbringing, and Mizrahi ‘Middle Eastern’ culture is authentic Israeli culture. Even after leaving Israel for Toronto, Nitza sees the Arab and Mizrahi-hybrid cultures as inseparable parts of her Israeli diasporic identity, and of her Jewish identity.

Tzfadia and Yacobi (2011) assert that the mainly Mizrahi populations of the Development Towns (such as Netivot), produce (and reproduce) a Mizrahi diasporic sense of place. These towns serve as a link to pre-State, Judeo-Islamic and Arab-Jewish histories that are ignored in the normative discourses of the Israeli State and in the face that the Israeli elite presents to the world. The Mizrahi diasporic sense of place (culture, identity, and landscape), present in much of Israel and backed by the narratives of the numerical majority of Israelis, functions to partially undermine the State’s production of Israel as a modernized, de-Orientalized, Western space (also Yaacobi, 2007). By framing Israeliness as an identity that includes memories of her familial Arab-Jewish roots, Nitza provides an example of how this reproduction of Mizrahi diaspora continues outside of Israel. Nitza is able to create continuity and coherence between her grandparents’ route from the Arab world to Israel (which was only across a single land border), and her own personal route from Israel to Canada. Israel as her homeland is intimately connected to her grandmother’s homeland in neighbouring Egypt, and her presence in Canada is, through this, connected to these multi-located memories. This diasporic continuity is possible by envisioning Egypt and Israel as more than just neighboring states, but as countries that share similar cultures and histories. Though it is obviously still important in many ways (especially politically and militarily), the Israeli-Egyptian border is thus revealed as porous to the identity of some Jews. One can imagine the same for the many Jews who migrated to Israel from neighbouring Syria and Lebanon.

Zionist and anti-Zionist binaries alike often paint Jews as being essentially different than (and even opposite to) Arabs. They often implicitly and explicitly portray Jews as agents of European culture in the Middle East, as though ‘Jewish’ and ‘European’ are a natural pair. But these

37 Mizrahi music, dance, theatre, and other cultural products are fusions of materials from several sources, including traditional (Jewish and non-Jewish) culture from Arab and Muslim countries, placed in the Israeli political context. Although these art forms have often been the most popular amongst the majority of Israelis, they have also been considered as having lower cultural value than Western art, and thus have been neglected by the elite institutions of popular culture in Israel (Regev, 2000).
accounts, both pro- and anti-Zionist, are problematic because they erase or ignore the many realities of historical continuity, ongoing conversation, and continuous hybridity between Arab and Jewish spaces and identities. These accounts ignore or underplay very common narratives such as Nitza’s, which include Egyptian and Tunisian cultures brought to Israel and carried to Canada. These complexities undermine the hegemonic binaries of “East” vs. “West” and “Arab” vs. “Jew” so common in Zionism and in Western political thought. While they are rarely, if ever, represented in studies of Israeli migrants, conceptions such as Nitza’s are actually quite common.

Another example of the blending of spatial and temporal identity politics can be found in my conversation with Dikla, a thirty-eight-year old writer of Yemenite Jewish descent. Dikla explicitly rejects the hegemonic Zionist (and, implicitly, the corresponding anti-Zionist) binaries of “Arab” vs. “Jew”:

I won’t identify as merely “Jewish”. Not that I have a problem with my Jewishness. It is an inseparable part of my identity, which I love. [Rather,] I usually identify as a Jewish-Yemenite. I have used Arab-Jew a few times. I also use Jewish-Israeli […] [But] just “Jewish” sounds very North American Ashkenazi. I don’t feel that I have much in common with them. I mean, I do have a bit in common with them, but I also have a lot in common with people who look like me.

Dikla goes on to argue,

When I first arrived here I found out that people don’t understand what I am - why I look the way I look or why I don’t speak Yiddish, [or] how can it be that I had never eaten a matzo ball soup (a typical Ashkenazi dish) in my life […] I was once on a bus talking to this white guy and he asked me where I was from. I said that I am originally from Israel. So he said: “Really?! You don’t look Israeli”. And this guy was also Jewish. So I said: “Yes, because my family came from Yemen”. So he said: “What do you mean from Yemen? You are Muslim?” So I said “No”. And he said “But Yemenites are Arabs”. So I said: “Yes, we are Arabs. We are Arab Jews!”

Dikla does not identify as “merely Jewish” in Toronto. Rather, she makes the conscious choice to identify as an Israeli-Jew, a Yemenite-Jew, and an Arab-Jew in various situations. In Toronto, she learns that Canadian Jewish identity is more closely associated with Ashkenazi (Eastern European) forms of Jewish culture and appearance than ‘Middle Eastern’ forms, even amongst Jews themselves (see Brodkin, 1998; Train, 2000; 2006; Kaye/Kantarowitz, 2001;2007; Levine-
Rasky, 2008; Haynes, 2013, Greenberg, 2013). This is a problematic misconception that I elaborate on in the next chapter.\(^\text{38}\)

Returning to the question of identity, it is interesting to consider the circumstances in which Dikla chooses to self-identify as an Arab-Jew (as opposed the just a “Jew from Israel”). She strategically invokes the idea of Arab-Jewishness only after her identification as an Israeli Jew is met with questions (like in her encounter with a “white” Jewish Ashkenazi man on a bus in Toronto). Refusing to choose between being a ‘Jew’ (read in Canada by both non-Jews and Jews as being European) and an ‘Arab’ (something else), she instead allows herself to be both, to embody identities that have been made to appear mutually exclusive due to the normative dichotomy between the Arab and Jewish worlds discussed earlier. Dikla’s choice of identification is about continuity. When she says, “Yes we (Yemenite-Jews) are Arabs, we are Arab Jews!” she emphasizes a continuous line of communication between her Arab Jewish history in Yemen, her Mizrahi history in Israel, and her “Jewish” present in Toronto (see Shohat, 2003).

Dikla insists that the cultural and racial affinities that she shares with other racialized non-Jewish diasporic groups are as significant as the affinities she shares with Ashkenazi Jews.

Dikla describes how she rejected this Arab-Jewish identity during her youth in Israel:

> When I was younger I was very proud that we were not listening to Mizrahi (Israeli Middle Eastern) music in my home. I wanted nothing to do with it. I didn’t care about anything that had to do with the Mizrahi elements of my identity. I was listening to Euro-pop and pop. All of my friends were Ashkenazi. I wanted to be fair skinned - blonde hair and blue-eyes. I wanted my grandfather to have been a partisan (communist-aligned guerrilla) against the Nazis. That is what I wanted. I was annoyed that my grandfather wasn’t a partisan in the Holocaust.

She then describes her experience of cultural ‘awakening’ in Toronto:

> One time I was sitting at the front of the bus (in Toronto) and I heard people talking Arabic at the back and I felt stressed. I looked back and saw a bunch of young students joking around, and I was also a student at the time. It sounds so

---

\(^{38}\) In North America, Ashkenazi Jews constitute a numerical, social, and political majority (Kaye/ Kantarowitz, 2001; 2007; Levine-Rasky 2008). In Toronto, Ashkenazim form a particularly large majority of the Jewish population (Train, 2006). The majority of North American Jews (and especially non-Jews) do not do not regularly encounter non-European “darker” Jews (Kaye/Kantarowitz, 2001). As a result, Jewish racial diversity is seldom recognized in North America (Haynes, 2013:151). }
trivial, but in Israel I got used to the idea that Arabic is the language of the enemy. But, it is also the language of my grandmother. My parents spoke Arabic at home, and that is something that took me a while to understand since I’ve arrived here...In retrospect it is not by coincidence that my first jobs here were in Indian and Lebanese restaurants. It reminded me of home. To me they were more Israeli than the Jewish Community Centre. I looked like I belonged there, like I am a part of that place. The Arab owner used to tell me that I look more Arab than him. I saw people dancing at a wedding in the Lebanese restaurant and it was like seeing people dancing in a Yemenite family wedding. So I felt happy, connected. The owners adopted me. It felt like home. Something in the music. In the dishes. The Indians have *chatni* which is exactly like the Yemenite *Skhug*, and here I started eating that. Now during my visits to Israel I eat my mom’s *Skhug* that I rejected as a child. I eat all kinds of staples from the Yemenite cuisine: cumin, turmeric, and cilantro. I know that it might sound superficial, but these things make me feel at home.

Dikla describes a sense of alienation from her family history and from her own body during her adolescence in Israel. She describes wanting to be a white Ashkenazi Sabra - to have the physical attributes associated with whiteness (blue eyes and blond hair). This longing is similar to the experience of the blacks in Fanon’s “Black Skin, White Masks”\textsuperscript{39}. Fanon (1967) theorizes a “colonized mentality” marked by a sense of inferiority and a desire to be more like the colonizers (following the traumatic encounter of the black subject with the white gaze). Fanon describes “a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an utterly naked declivity where an authentic upheaval can be born. In most cases, that black man lacks the advantage of being able to accomplish this descent into a real hell. Man is not merely a possibility of recapture or of negation” (10).

Dikla wished for a familial biography associated with the Ashkenazi elite’s historical struggles in Europe (which are foregrounded in Israeli consciousness by that elite). Indeed, these experiences and desires are common amongst the second and third generation of Arab-Jews in Israel - “the *Mizrahi Sabras*” - who are still exposed to a Eurocentric representation of Jewish history and culture in the Israeli public sphere and education system (Chetrit, 2004; Shohat, 1988).

\textsuperscript{39} Fanon (1967) theorizes a “colonized mentality” marked by a sense of inferiority and a desire to be more like the colonizers (following the traumatic encounter of the black subject with the white gaze). Fanon describes “a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an utterly naked declivity where an authentic upheaval can be born. In most cases, that black man lacks the advantage of being able to accomplish this descent into a real hell. Man is not merely a possibility of recapture or of negation” (10).
The internalization of the pressure to conform to the Zionist ‘de-Orientalizing’ project and the “white-is-beautiful” aesthetic that dominates in the highly Westernized Israeli media leads many Mizrahi Sabras, like Dikla, to an exile from their own bodies (see Shohat, 1988; 1999: 15; 2003b; Naaman, 2006), and from their hybrid familial cultures that include both Jewish and Arab (or Persian, or Turkish, or Islamic) elements. As Shohat (1999) explains,

Dominant media in Israel have disseminated the hegemonic aesthetic inherited from colonialist discourse, rendering homage to ideals of whiteness and non-Semitic looks… [This] explains why darker women in Israel dye their hair blonde, why Israeli TV commercials are often more suggestive of Scandinavia than of a non-European majority country, and why women undergo cosmetic surgery to look more European… Mizrahim in Israel were made to feel ashamed of their dark, olive skin, of their guttural language, of the winding quarter tones of their music, even of their traditions of hospitality. Children, trying desperately to conform to an elusive Euro-Israeli Sabra norm, were made to feel ashamed of their parents and their Arab countries of origin… Thousands of Ashkenazi "wannabes" have rejected their Arab origins and mimic Sabra Europeanized speech patterns, body language, gestures, and thinking… Young Mizrahim made sure that the Iraq or Morocco of home was invisible at school, work, in buses or streets, repressing all that was theirs while being induced to emulate those who oppressed them. At the same time, they continued family traditions, entering a space both collective and private-inaccessible to Euro-Israelis (15-16).

Dikla came to experience certain non-Jewish, non-white and non-Western diasporic spaces in Toronto (such as Indian and Lebanese restaurants) as a type of diasporic space that, paradoxically, reminded her of home in Israel in a way that evoked her own roots more than the local “Jewish” spaces like the Jewish Community Centre, in which Arab-Jewish cultural heritage is almost totally ignored. Reflecting a complex re-organization of the geographic imagination, the Indian and Lebanese restaurants she worked at allow Dikla to more strongly appreciate the cultural influences of her own parents and to feel a sense of belonging amongst other migrants in Toronto. For Dikla, these places reflect specific geographic places (such as Lebanon) that, while they are not Israel, somehow remind her of aspects of her life there that she formerly shunned (like her mother’s cooking, the music, and family celebrations).

In contrast to some of the participants who expressed a desire to adopt new, liberal or cosmopolitan Canadian identity, Dikla explains how being in Canada, much farther from the ‘Middle East’ than Israel, has actually strengthened the ‘Arab’ part of her Arab-Jewish identity in ways that were more difficult back home. In our discussion, Dikla emphasizes that she was
able to overcome her learned association of Arabs with “the enemy”, and thus her inner exile, only outside of Israel. With time, and through encounters with others who she found shared identity, she allowed herself to be both more ‘Arab’ and more ‘Israeli-Jewish’ at the same time, obliterating the barriers formed in her Israeli upbringing. In this, Dikla describes a process of discovering multiple diasporic belongings: to Israel in general, to the Mizrahi Israel in particular, and to the Yemen of her parents and grandparents. This is a subtle subversion of Israeli Zionist dichotomies that does not rely on outright negation of her Israeli Jewish identity in favour of a diasporic stereotype.

Dikla, Charlie and Nitza all tell different stories of Jewish diaspora than those that are emphasized in the existing literature on Israeli diaspora. Instead of the emotionally difficult displacement from Israel described in earlier literature, the lives of these Israeli immigrants in Toronto reflect a connection between their parents and grandparents’ Arab Jewish histories in Morocco, Egypt, or Yemen, their Mizrahi history in Israel (see Shohat, 2003), and with their lives in Canada. They strategically claim to belong to multiple places (Israel, Yemen /Egypt/ Morocco, and Canada), embracing the Israeli parts of their identity without negating the other ones. And perhaps most subversively, they claim an Israeli - Jewish diasporic identity that imagines and enacts Israel as an integral cultural and physical part of the ‘Judeo-Arabic’ world, in opposition to the dominant, and deliberate, construction of Israel in a ‘Judeo-Christian’ alignment that the state’s leadership has promoted. In this way they actively create continuity and coherence between their personal histories and geographies, embracing their ‘Middle Eastern’ identities via location in the West.

The diasporic experiences and agencies of the participants in this section are multiple and situational. Similar to “Black Atlantics” in Paul Gilroy’s work (1993; 2000), Charlie, Nitza, and Dikla embody inherent contradictions that result from the struggle to create a continuous chain of belonging to multiple places, each of which holds facets of personal, familial, and communal importance. All of the participants hold multiple identities (Hall, 1990; Gilroy, 1993) that complicate the notion of a stable, homogenous Israeli diasporic identity. They lay bare the absurdity of the exclusive association of the “Israeli diaspora” - and indeed, the Jewish diaspora, with the hegemonic Zionist Orientalized binaries of “East” vs. “West” and “Arab” vs. “Jew”.
They formulate a cultural Jewish identity that cannot be located to a single “authentic” territory. Their identities are linked to particular places. In the next section I return to the narratives of participants such as Moti and Lior who refer to more cosmopolitan / post-modern ideals in order to complicate the ethno –national territorial Zionist models in other ways. As I discuss, the contrasts between these two strategies become particularly interesting when we consider the role of race in how different participants see their past, present and future identities.

**Diasporic Re-location / Re-placing**

Earlier, I presented the narratives of Lior and Moti, two Israeli emigrants who have chosen to reject the Zionist national model of Jewish identity in favour of cosmopolitan and humanistic interpretations of Jewish history that they feel are more accessible in Toronto than in Israel. Interestingly, Moti and Lior both refer to a particular, Euro-American image of Jewish diasporism in opposition to Israeli Jewishness. This progressive narrative places the West as a natural home of Jewish life, can also be somewhat exclusionary of non-Western Jewish identities. Nonetheless, narratives such as Moti’s and Lior’s still complicate the main tenet of Zionist historiography by challenging its negation of diasporism (which in Zionism is seen as being essentially worthless and inherently dangerous for Jewish safety and continuity).

What was common amongst many of the participants was the feeling that the absolute negation of diasporism in Israel caused them to be isolated from non-Jewish people, traditions, and cultures. In this sense, they have favoured Toronto as a site for encounters with different diasporic communities, diverse cultures, religions, and lifestyles, which they believe remain inaccessible to them in Israel. These participants express a desire to raise their children to be more tolerant, and believe that Toronto offers a more suitable environment - a home, and thus a new place to establish roots.

As Eran, a thirty-nine year old social worker and a father of two, stressed:

> Toronto became home for me […] I feel more comfortable here than in Israel. I don’t have guilt about my *Yerida* (leaving Israel), B’nei-Israel (The Israelites) did the same. When things got bad they also *Yardu* (left) to Egypt […]
He goes to argue,

There are these stupid commercials of the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption: ‘If you don’t return [to Israel] in time, your kid will know what is Christmas, but not what Hanukkah is’. Come on! Are you trying to scare me?! I want my kids to learn everything there is to learn about the world, to know about different religions and celebrate different holidays. If there is any chance for a dialogue, it will come from knowledge and education, and not from this idea of ‘us’ against ‘them’, as I have learned in Israel. I want to raise my kids here differently than the way that I was raised in Israel. I want them to have a choice. I haven’t issued an Israeli passport for them for that reason.

Eran articulates a sense of rootedness in Toronto, imagining the city that he lives in as his home. In the face of what he perceives as shaming by the Israeli mainstream, Eran points to the similarities between the historical departure (known in the Torah as Yerida, or the ‘going down’) of the ancient Israelites southward to Egypt to escape famine, and the contemporary departure of Jews from the State of Israel (also known as Yerida, but with new, negative connotations)⁴⁰. For Eran, the departure of the Israelites from Canaan to Egypt is an essential part of Jewish history. He sees himself as continuing that tradition of responding to adverse conditions by re-establishing himself and his family elsewhere as a response to poor conditions in Israel. He rejects the Israeli state’s attempts to draw Jewish emigrants back to Israel through commercials that portray life in the diaspora as a threat to Jewish cultural continuity. He contends that children in Israel are educated according to doctrines that are not worth preserving: binaries of “us” (Jews) against “them” (Palestinians, Arabs, and other non-Jews). He believes that in Toronto he can educate his children to become tolerant through knowledge of other cultures - a cosmopolitan version of Jewishness. He refuses to issue an Israeli passport for his two boys because he prefers not to impose Israeli citizenship upon them before educating them about the Israeli state’s history, culture, and politics.

It should be noted that cultural considerations are likely not the only issues contributing to Eran’s ambivalence about passing on Israeli citizenship to his children. Israeli law subjects dual citizens, like other citizens, to mandatory military service in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), and many parents that I interviewed in this study expressed unhappiness with the prospect of

⁴⁰ For instance, Jacob is told by God: “Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation”. (”וַיֹּאמֶר, אָנֹּכִי הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵי אָבִיךָ; אַל תִירָא מִרְדָּה מִצְרַיְמָה, כִי לְגוֹי גָדוֹל אֲשִימְךָ שָם”) - Genesis, Chapter 46, Verse 3.
their children having to serve in the Israeli military. Shira, described her feelings on the topic after her child’s birth in Toronto:

My son was born in Canada and we were having serious doubts about whether we should also issue an Israeli passport for him and take the risk that he will be called to serve in the IDF once he will turn eighteen. I am looking at it now as a mother, thinking back on my own military service. Would I decide to serve in the army if I knew what I know today? I am not sure. Would I want my kid to serve and risk his life for Israel? I certainly don’t!

Shira, like Eran and many other interviewees refuse to enlist their children in the service of the State of Israel. Some participants even left Israel right before their children reached the age of conscription. Reacting to their discomfort with their own Zionist histories, these emigrants envision what might be called ‘post-Zionist futures’ for their offspring. The envision paths that reject the hegemony of the Jewish State in their lives. If anything, they see formal Israeli citizenship as a liability - a source of anxiety about the future, rather than a source of security. Such narratives interrupt the Zionist narrative of Israel as a safe haven for Jews around the world, and the construction of all diasporic Jews as “citizens-in-waiting” (Bakan, 2014). Rather, the participants’ acts of departure from Israel reflect a narrative of re-establishment outside of Israel. They, and others like them, reflect a desire common among migrants. They seek a better future for their children and their grandchildren in a new land viewed as more peaceful and tolerant than Israel. And despite the discussion of diasporism, many of the interviewees are interested in laying down new Jewish roots in Toronto. The imagination of Toronto as a desirable location for the re-establishment of a permanent home was a recurrent theme in many of the interviews. Most of the participants viewed this as having the potential to strengthen the Jewish identity and culture of their children.

A number of geographers have noted that belonging often occurs at multiple (imaginative) scales, including the community, the city, the nation, and “the global” (Fenster, 2005; Blunt, 41 Israeli citizens living abroad are required by the Israeli law to register their child as Israeli within 30 days after their birth, see http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ConsularServices/Pages/Registering_child_birth.aspx. 42 According to Abigail Bakan,(2014) the construction of diasporic Jews as “citizens-in-waiting” is institutionalized in the “Jewish Law of Return”. The “Law of Return” was legislated in July 1950 by the Israeli parliament (the Knesset) and remains in effect today. The law consider Jewish ancestry as key to citizenship, allowing the right of any Jew – and only Jews - to immigrate to Israel and gain full citizenship almost automatically (regardless of other conditions normally associated with immigration policies and practices), while denying Palestinians refugees the legal right to return to their lands and properties.
When we incorporate multivalent narratives such as Charlie’s, Nitza’s, and Dikla’s presented in the last section with those of Moti, Lior, Shira, and Eran, we see that the boundaries between these scales are easily collapsed by narratives that seek new and multiple attachments that, in the views of the participants, need not be mutually exclusive. It is not that territorial position doesn’t matter in the life stories of the participants. What is important to note is that in their sagas of migration, territory is the theatre, rather than the play itself. Jasmin Habib (2004:15) describes how many of the existing anthropological models of diaspora promote an essentialism located in territoriality by giving members of geographically dispersed groups a common narrative of being somehow ‘out of place’. Anthropologists, thus, have constructed diaspora as a thing (a noun) rather than a process or a relationship, emphasizing the importance of spatial location over all other factors. Habib (2004) encourages us to rethink the practice of naming people by where they are located geographically. She argues that diaspora must be understood as a location in much broader terms, such as those described by feminist writer Adrienne Rich (1988). Rich sees location not merely as a spatial position, but as a practiced relationship of identification and attachments to the idea of a homeland.

Participants in this section do not express a fixed or primary attachment to Israel as their national territory, nor do they consider themselves as Jews living in diaspora /exile (b’galut). At the same time, they do not explicitly discuss being motivated to form a new national-territorial attachment to Canada at the expense of their memories. Through their narratives, these participants view Toronto as a place where they can, perhaps paradoxically, put down roots while remaining transnational and cosmopolitan Jews who also remember all of the stations along the way. In this sense, Toronto serves not as a new territory, but as another location in which to accumulate experiences and to allow culture to evolve. Some scholars, such as Aviv and Shneer (2005), see such emigrants as post-Zionist “New Jews”, who are approaching the world “less as Israeli nationalists and more as global Jews” (xvi), and who are looking for alternatives to the Zionist diaspora nationalism (Aviv and Shneer, 2005:17.). That may or may not be the case, but all in all, the narratives clearly complicate the spatial and temporal cartographies expounded by Zionist ideology, that break the Jewish world into a dichotomous relationship between “Israel” (at the center), and “the diaspora” (at the periphery). Those who I interviewed expressed a desire to move beyond Zionist cartography, both spatially – by leaving Israel and settling in Toronto – and temporally – by imagining post-Zionist Jewish futures in Canada.
Conclusion

Recognizing the shortcomings and ideological baggage present in orthodox nationalist approaches to diaspora, critical geographers have, since the 1990s, moved to employ anti-essentialist formulations, viewing hybridity and difference as characteristics that define people and processes associated with diaspora (Mitchell, 1997; Carter, 2005; Blunt, 2007; Rios and Adiv, 2010). These accounts explore diasporic identities by looking into the existence of multiple homes, diverse home-making practices, and the intersections of home, memory, identity and belonging (Fenster and Visel, 2006; Blunt, 2007:689-690; Rios and Adiv, 2010). Yet, one major shortcoming in the geographical literature on diaspora has been that it is too often too abstract, downplaying the significance of geography, history, economy, geo-politics, and race (Mitchell, 1997; Carter, 2005; Kelly and Lusis, 2006; Mahtani, 2014). In this chapter I have attempted to address this shortcoming while raising the importance of studying the grounded (geo-) politics of diasporic hybridity. I conduct empirical research on the specific, multiple, and often racialized geographies of diverse Jewish migrants.

This chapter offers an intervention that disengages the conservative understanding of a monolithic Zionist, white, and Western “Israeli Diaspora” prevalent in much of the existing literature. The case studies presented above challenge the neat, but ideologically limited categorizations of race that have characterized previous work on the “Israeli diaspora”, emphasizing the possibility of multiple racial and diasporic identities, and of multiple post-Zionist Jewish futures. These identities are rarely acknowledged in studies of Israeli migrants. The interviews present illustrations of Israeli immigrants’ diverse histories, memories and belongings (their emotional and cultural ties) to other countries/regions of the world in which they or their families resided before their arrival to Israel. They also recount their diverse histories/experiences within Israel and in Toronto. While some participants most strongly understand their Jewish diasporic identities in terms of attachment to already-hybrid identities in Israel, other participants understand their diasporic Jewish identity as committed to universal and cosmopolitan humanistic ideologies. They explicitly reject Jewish or Zionist nationalism. For many, it is only upon migration that the gaps within the Eurocentric Zionist dichotomies with which they were raised (such as homeland vs. diaspora, Jew vs. Arab, Yerida vs. Aliya) are starkly illuminated. As discussed, these varying approaches are intricately linked to the
experiences and identities of the migrants themselves – experiences that vary from being part of the Israeli mainstream to being marginalized and racialized. All of the narratives demand that we stretch the ethno-national Zionist understandings of group identity and belonging that are reproduced in the existing literature.

Opening up the narratives of different Jewish migrants to include multiple aspects of identity abroad and in Israel, it becomes clear that there is no such thing as a monolithic “Israeli diaspora”. There are, in fact, numerous possible Jewish diasporic positions, and not all of them intersect with the ideological confines of Zionism. Thus, the narratives also illustrate the incompleteness of the Zionist imposition of a singular cultural identity. Jewish identities are shaped in material and discursive spaces that are always being formed and re-formed, in Toronto, in Israel, and elsewhere. In fact, it is everyday social interactions that most strongly shape and reshape the content of Jewish diasporic identities even after migrants have ‘settled’. As I have shown, Jewish diasporic identities among immigrants from Israel in Toronto reflect not just physical or spiritual absence from the Israeli ‘center’, but rather diverse familial histories, movements across borders, and everyday life experiences.

The geographies of (Israeli/Jewish) diaspora are complex, and inherently hybrid, and they connect to both material as well as symbolic spaces. As Habib (2004) reminds us, they are also predicated on a conception of having common history by being perpetually “out of [territorial] place”. Thus, reframing the geographies of Israeli (Jewish) diaspora requires that we move beyond the conventional notion of diaspora as a simple location in time and space that can be mapped based on movement from one nation state to another, and that we actively dislodge hegemonic Eurocentric Zionist binaries such Arab vs. Jew and home versus exile, in order to make discursive space for progressive realizations of Jewish and Israeli identity. By combining the progressive approaches of Black diaspora scholars such as Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy with the more intimate Jewish perspective of post-Zionist scholars such as Ella Shohat and the Boyarin and Boyarin, we can more fully appreciate the complexity of these narratives.

Ultimately, such an approach is important because it can help us to raise the geographical stories of less dominant groups in relation to hegemonic geographical narratives, and to explore how racialized subjects subvert, expand, and create new geographical stories (McKittrick, 2006).
Diasporic geographies – intimately connected to geographies of nationhood and belonging - are incomplete without this perspective. Ultimately, I believe that the integration of diverse first-person interviews reveals multiple diasporic attachments. These are attachments that can assist us in decentring the dominant model of diaspora. Hopefully, this can illuminate a more open engagement with the diasporic narratives of all Jews, as well as with other groups - particularly the stateless Palestinian diaspora (Hall, 1990) – while still retaining reference to mutually shared and deeply significant Jewish religious and cultural traditions.
Chapter 4: Rethinking Whiteness: Towards Jewish Multi-Raciality

Introduction

Many of the participants interviewed in the previous chapter express the desire to move beyond conservative conceptions of Jewish identity by transcending the links between Judaism, Zionism, and Israel that exist in Israeli society. In presenting these stories, I introduce the possibility of Jewish futures in Canada as a challenge to the Zionist discourse that Jews belong in Israel. In this chapter, I begin to address the other half of that possibility: namely, the ways in which the integration of newcomers from Israel is viewed and, in some cases, challenged by already existing racial conceptions and hierarchies in the Canadian host society. I examine the complex position of Israeli migrants vis-à-vis the Canadian-born Jewish community. As I will show, the reception of migrants from Israel in Canada, and in the Canadian ‘Jewish community’, are highly dependent on factors that, contrary to the generalizations made in previous studies, are both complex and politically loaded, particularly when it comes to the question of racialization.

A recurring theme in this discussion is the situatedness of “whiteness”, and its variation from place to place. Attempting to build more nuanced, and strategically more useful, anti-racist discourse in recent years, spatialized questions of race and whiteness have become increasingly common, both within and outside human geography. Employing principles of critical race theory (which addresses the social construction of race, the structural power of racism, the power of representation, the significance and influence of whiteness, and the unique voice of (women of) colour, see Delgado and Stefancic, 2001:7), anti-racist feminist geographers have illustrated that racial hierarchies come into existence through other systems of oppression, such as hetero-patriarchy, settler colonialism and capitalism (see Kobayashi and Peake, 2000: 393; Peake and Schein, 2001:135; McKittrick, 2006; Shaw, 2006; Pulido, 2006 ; Baldwin et al., 2011; Mahtani, 2014). As some of these studies and others have shown, race, racism, and whiteness are not lived, experienced and expressed in identical ways across all geographical scales and historical
Hegemonic forms of whiteness are in fact both temporally and spatially variable (Pulido, 2006: 26). They are defined, deployed, performed, policed and reinvented in locally specific ways within the context of the regional, national and the global scales (ibid; Twine and Gallagher, 2008:5).

The call to address the complex interconnections that link local (either regional or national) racial discourses and hierarchies to global racial hierarchies and formations has been made by various scholars within and outside human geography (e.g., Bonnett, 1997; 2000; Winant, 2000: 170; Pulido, 2006; Nayak, 2007; Twine and Gallagher, 2008; Moreton-Robinson et al, 2008; HoSang and LaBennett, 2012; Levin-Rasky, 2012). Bonnett (1997: 196) for example, calls for an exploration of the multiple intersecting experiences of race and place, and the historical geographic specificities of whiteness/racial categories. In general, these authors seek to address the ways in which racial categories and meanings are affected by transnational and translocal processes (see Glick Schiller et al., 2006; Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007).

Indeed, migration has increasingly been shown to involve acquisition of new racial classifications in addition to those learned in sending countries (though both remain largely unspoken), a fact that exposes the slippery, incomplete and diverse nature of white 'racial' identity (Bonnett, 1997; Mahtani, 2014). Yet, only a few studies so far – mainly outside human geography (e.g., Scheck and Haggis, 2004; Lundström, 2014; Roth, 2012, but see Van Riemsdijk, 2010), have addressed how the meaning of race (and whiteness) change upon migration. These studies have demonstrated that transnational migration is one of the main processes over which the form of whiteness is transformed, as migrants’ subjectivities, including white subjectivities experienced in places of origin, are re-constructed in the receiving countries.

A transnational analysis illuminates the variations that exist amongst different national and cultural understandings of race, as well as the complex interconnections that link local (regional and/or national) racial discourses to global racial hierarchies and formations (Omi and Winant, 43 Within critical race theories, racialization is conceived as a function of history - a dynamic process that happens through primarily discursive means (e.g., Omi and Winant, 1994). Anti-racist feminist geographers emphasize that processes of racialization happen through both social and spatial construction, and explore the role of both the material organization of space and the discursive/ imaginative representation of places, spaces, and scales in the naturalization of racial difference and hierarchy.

44In much of the study of transnationalism (Basch et al., 1994; Vertovec, 1999), it has been noted that scholars continue to cling to nationally defined categories (see Glick Schiller et al., 2006; Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007).
Spatializing and transnationalizing the construction of whiteness raises a number of important, and related questions. How do racial privileges and identities shift from one place to another? What kinds of new understandings and performances of racial self and racial otherness emerge through the process of migration?

Geographers, with their interest in all things spatial, have led in terms of answering such questions, and in discussing the idea of whiteness as a construction that manifests itself differently across many geographic scales. This has gone a long way towards addressing what Twine and Gallagher (2008:6) have described as a problematic “tendency towards essentializing accounts of whiteness” in critical race theory. Yet, beyond the questions of a scalar context, there are issues of social context that have still been left unexplored in deconstructing whiteness as a concept. Particularly under-discussed has been the role of two other related axes of difference, namely religion and “ethnicity”, in complicating absorption into whiteness. Questions about what mediates the ability and desirability to join (or refuse) a notion of racial “invisibility”, and how the experiences of white racial privilege differ qualitatively from one hyphenated “ethno-white” group to another, are real issues that need to be part of the project of opening the construction of “whiteness” to challenge and destabilization (Bonnett, 2000; Liu 2000; Mahtani, 2014).

This chapter contributes to this project of destabilizing and deconstructing whiteness by presenting narratives of race and migration that challenge the perceived stability and inevitability of the construction of the label ‘white’. It compares the racial histories of Canadian and Israeli Jews - groups whose identities have historically crossed intersections of race, ethnicity, and religion. Understanding the complexity of what whiteness means in both Israel (a state where Jewish people make up the majority, but where there is a high degree of racial and political diversity amongst them) and Canada (where ‘the Jews’ constitute a small minority, but where they have come to be represented by a ‘white’ homogeneity via the history of integration of the European-Ashkenazi Jews) offers a particularly fruitful case to examine these indicators of transnational difference, and how they are articulated through racial hierarchies.
How are Jews racialized?

As critical race scholars have in recent years emphasized, there is no single notion of what it means to be “white”. A location of privilege, “whiteness” possesses considerable variability across time and space (Twine and Gallagher, 2008; Mahtani, 2014). For Jewish Israeli immigrants, these differences, and the considerable debate surrounding them, can manifest only after settlement in Canada, when they are faced with questions of racial identity in different ways than in Israel. Many Israeli immigrants must come to terms with the fact that, in Canada (and arguably the rest of North America), being identified as a ‘Jew’ has, in general, come to mean being homogenised into an accepted image of ‘Ashkenazi whiteness’. This is in opposition to the situation in Jewish-majority Israel, where whiteness has typically been defined by the minority elite of Jews.

Yet theoretical debates which explore the question of contemporary Jewish racialization in the West tend to paint all Jews with the same racial brush, ignoring, or worse sanitizing, the lived experiences of racism and marginalization that non-white/non Ashkenazi Jews, and Jews who are unable or unwilling to adopt white North American cultural norms (Levin-Rasky, 2008; Kaye/Kantarowitz, 2001; 2007; Train, 2000; 2006; Haynes, 2013; Greenberg, 2013).

In general, the place-specific, and often contradictory, constructions of post-war Ashkenazi Jewish whiteness in Israeli and Canadian societies has generally been overlooked in the existing literature on Jewish whiteness, as well as in literature on the Israeli diaspora more particularly. There has, to date, been next to no empirical analysis offered about the lived experiences of Israeli migrants with respect to their navigation of racialized identity between Israel and Canada. This oversight has served to essentialize Jewish Ashkenazi whiteness as a homogeneous and stable entity. As demonstrated through the interview segments presented in this chapter, such simplifications do not hold up to scrutiny. Below, I examine the ways in which a racially diverse set of secular, middle class Jewish Israeli immigrants negotiate a new racial landscape in Canada\(^{45}\). Interviewees encounter the fact that Jewish identity in Canada is, today, associated

---

\(^{45}\) It should be noted that identifying as “secular” in the Israeli context doesn’t equal being atheist. The majority of the Jewish population in Israel identify as either secular (hiloni) or as secular ‘maintainers-of-tradition’ (Shomer-Masoret) who observe, but don’t adhere strictly to, a core set of Jewish customs. Regardless, religion is a part of the
with whiteness. In order to destabilize this perception, I study race and whiteness through the eyes of these newcomers themselves. Reviewing their personal stories of their lives in Israel, in Toronto and in between, I consider the processes of racialization that they encounter at various stages on their journeys as migrants, as well as the diverse understandings and performances of their racial selves that emerge as result of these multi-locational experiences.

Studying the narratives of migrants themselves allows us to highlight the fluid meanings of race and whiteness as articulated through their stories. Focusing on these lived stories, with all of their complex identities, provides a unique opportunity to plot the intersecting geographies of racialized markers such as religion, ethnicity, nationality, and class (Nayak, 2007:751).

Since conceptions of “whiteness” are both locally produced (i.e. in Canada or in Israel) and globally linked (to wider racialized social hierarchies), undertaking a study of racial identity requires that we spatially contextualize the development and entrenchment of racial categories, examining the complex political aspects of racialization at multiple scales. However, the literature engaging race and scale remains limited (although see Mahtani 2014). Thus, I begin by providing an overview of how contemporary Jewish identities, including the different, but hegemonic, forms of Ashkenazi Jewish whiteness, have evolved in North America and in Israel. I focus particularly on how the contemporary Ashkenazi white identity that has become dominant in Canada and on the Ashkenazi minority-elitism that has long set Israel’s norms. I examine how these work together to mediate the participants’ new understandings and performances of their racial self as immigrants in Toronto, whether they are Ashkenazim or not.

By employing a transnational multi scalar approach to study race and whiteness, it becomes clear that once in Toronto, “Ashkenazi”, “Mizrahi”, and “Mixed” Jewish Israeli immigrants learn to think of themselves and others through new racial terms which render Israeli-based racialized hierarchies largely irrelevant. The interviews presented in this chapter illustrate how

---

Jewish-Israeli identity and culture. A large number of Jewish-Israelis, including those who identify as being ‘secular’, observe some key traditional religious practices, such as fasting during Yom Kippur, the most important Jewish holiday, holding family dinners on Shabbat eve (Friday evenings), and holding the traditional seder pesah meal at the beginning of Passover. Indeed a recent poll found that 80% of Jewish-Israelis believe in G-D (http://www.haaretz.co.il/magazine/1.1625680).

46 It is worth noting that “scale” is a loaded term in geography, with much having been written on the topic in the last two decades (see, for example, Cox, 1997; Marston 2000; Herod and Wright, 2002; and Jones et al., 2007).
contemporary North American Ashkenazi Jewish whiteness is a social and geographic
collection, and that the privilege associated with whiteness is fluid, contextual, and relational.

After reviewing the literature on the history of Jewish racialization in North America, as well as
the limitations in the application of this image to Israeli immigrant experiences, I present and
analyze a set of interviews in which study participants discuss their experiences, understandings
and performances of racial self. In the following discussions, I pay particular attention to how the
participants’ social interactions and experiences upon migration have shaped how these migrants
classify themselves and others, and how they reveal or assert their internally-held feelings and
beliefs of racial identity differently in different social settings. This is a phenomenon known as
‘racial performativity’. In opposition to essentialist studies, I explore Jewish whiteness in
Toronto as a relational construct that both intersects with other axes of difference (such as
religion, class, and ethnicity), and as embedded into local and global racial systems.

“How Jews became white”

It is well acknowledged among critical geographers and other scholars on race that the
production of race as a marker of human difference and the rise of global whiteness are
intimately linked to imperial and colonial expansion, Western global hegemony, and the
imposition of Western norms of appearance and behaviour across the globe (Goldberg, 1993;
Winant, 2000; Bonnett, 2000; Kobayashi, 2005). In these contexts, those deemed as ‘white’ have
been granted access to the symbolic and cultural capital of whiteness, and access to certain
material privileges and resources. However, scholars have emphasized that there is no such thing

47 Critical theories de-naturalize the ostensibly solid foundations of ‘race’ based on biology or physiology, but
emphasize its persistence in social formation and relations, political interactions and economic structures (Omi and
Winant, 1984; Goldberg, 1993; Delgado and Stefancic, 2001; Baum, 2007). Bruce Baum (2006) has discussed how,
though racialized identities “don’t have any biological significance” (242), they do have social significance, by
providing “people with a way to interpret their relationships to others and their place in contemporary society”
(Baum, 2006: 235). As Minelle Mahtani (2002a) asserts, “individual racialized subjects, respond to the gazes placed
upon them in various ways. They can subvert, confirm, or challenge their racial identity by enacting racial
performances” (427-8). Mahtani’s (2002a) study of racial performativity among mixed-race women in Toronto
extends Judith Butler’s (1990; 1993) influential notion of gender performativity to race. According to Mahtani, both
gender and race are acts and styles- fabrications of identity that are constructed through various performances on the
stage of everyday life (Mahtani, 2002a; see also Ibrahim, 2004).
as a singular ‘white’ experience. In fact, whiteness is influenced by factors such as social class, gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, nationality, politics, and historical context. For groups such as Jews, who are and have been present across many such categories, and whose histories have long involved transnationality, crossing large geographic distances over very long periods of history, these intersectionalities are particularly apparent. Debates on the construction of Jewish whiteness in North America occur within a larger set of academic examinations concerning the forms, constructions, and performances of white identities more generally. These discussions, dating back to the late 1980s within the United States and Britain, have gradually developed into a global and distinct sub-discipline which is known as “Critical Whiteness Studies” (Bonnett, 1997:195; Rasmussen et. al, 2001), and it is within such discourses that I wish to situate this contribution.

One of the more seminal texts in critical whiteness studies that influenced its inauguration as a sub discipline includes Ruth Frankenberg’s *White Women: Race Matters* (1993). Frankenberg provides a particularly helpful definition of how whiteness comes to be. She describes the social construction of whiteness as ‘a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically and culturally produced and, moreover, are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination’ (6). Whiteness is ‘unmarked’ and ‘unnamed’ (Frankenberg, 1993:6). Whiteness is being represented as the ‘norm’ against which other categories are defined, such as ‘blackness’, ‘Asianness’, ‘indigeneity’, and in certain historical periods and places, also ‘Jewishness’ or Jewish ‘Semitic-ness’.

Feminist anti-racist and anti-colonial academics have called to situate white supremacy as foundational to, and as the ongoing result of, the colonial logics that permeate settler societies in the Americas and Oceania (e.g., Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis, 1995; Anderson, 2001; Razack, 2002; Smith, 2006; 2012; Shaw 2006; Gunew, 2007; Razack et al., 2010). Moreover, critical race

---

48 The field was developed in the late twentieth century, catching the attention of dominantly white scholars from different disciplines. However, the critical look at whiteness is the product of black studies. Black intellectuals (e.g., W.E.B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, bell hooks, and Toni Morrison to name a few) have raised questions on the dominance of whiteness in the western world.

49 According to these scholars, the phenomena of white supremacy and colonization are not relics of unenlightened past or of extreme fringe groups, but that they are rather part and parcel of the present organization of these societies.
scholars have argued that there is a great need to confront the materialities of race (e.g., Mahtani, 2014: 24; Saldanha, 2006) when thinking about issues of anti-colonialism, anti-racism and the white settler state. There is a need to connect the discursive construction of race to the structural, material, and corporeal production of white racial hegemony, maintained by (a nexus of) racial and colonial power. These scholars have also illustrated the different and unequal positions of Indigenous peoples and people of colour in relation to the hegemonic white settler group and to each other. Razack et al. (2010, 5), for example, writes that “the racial and gendered politics of the [Canadian] state were organized through a complex triangulation of relations, with Indigenous peoples marked for physical and cultural extinction, European settlers for integration, and people of colour for perpetual outsider status as ‘immigrants’ and ‘newcomers’”. By framing settler colonialism as an ongoing project sustained by interlocking systems of oppression (imperialism, hetero-patriarchy and capitalism), we can expose ‘white privilege’ as part of a much broader white supremacist, settler socio-spatial logic. Sara Ahmed, drawing from the work of Frantz Fanon, has effectively built on arguments such as these, arguing that bodies themselves are shaped by histories of colonialism that have attempted to make the world ‘white’ (Ahmed, 2007: 153). In Western cultures, in particular, whiteness is represented as the basis upon which all humanity can be described. White people often do not acknowledge their whiteness. They consider themselves to be “just people” (Dyer, 1997: 10), or typical members of “the human race” (11). By comparison, bodies of colour are represented as something else, something perhaps less human (12; Ahmed, 2007:161). As such, whiteness is a hidden system of race-based privilege; a worldview that claims white people to be morally and culturally superior (Frankenberg, 1993; Dyer, 1997; Ahmed, 2007). Whiteness is a dominant form of identity that locates one in terms of structural advantage. Subjects identified as ‘white’ (in other words, those who, by fitting the norm, might consider themselves to be ‘without race’), assume their own cultural practices as the normative. As such, they are able to profit socially, psychologically, and economically, whether they are consciously aware of it or not (Dyer, 1997: 44; Frankenberg, 1993; Mckintosh, 1989).

Paradoxically, whiteness is mostly invisible for those who inhabit it (white people), while it is generally quite visible to non-white groups, who are aware of the privileges associated with
whiteness. As such, Critical Whiteness scholarship has primarily been concerned with ‘naming whiteness’ in an attempt to displace the apparent invisibility and normativity of white identities. Critical Whiteness Studies seek to render whites as visible objects within racially-determined positions of power. Doing so allows us to expose whiteness as being the unstable position of political authority that it is, rather than the neutral, natural entity it is often assumed to be (Bhabha, 1998:21; Frankenberg, 1993:1; Dyer, 1997:1-4; Clark and Garner, 2009: 1).

Rendering whiteness as a visible and dynamic social position, rather than an obvious natural feature, is important not just in analysing structures of power in the present, but in observing how power structures adapt themselves and are adapted over time. For groups such as Jews, whose geographic and social positions have shifted over time, the social, spatial, and political negotiations of racial identity are especially interesting. Not only do they illuminate what is, by many accounts the formation/ adoption of new ‘white’ identities, but they also reveal the complex ways in which these new white identities can be reinforced by political and economic interests, while being challenged by their complex intersections with other facets of identity.

Historical accounts and scholarly approaches to understanding the formation of ‘white’ Jewish identities can be found in a number of the seminal texts of Critical Whiteness Studies, focusing on the shifting historical definitions of whiteness and the processes through which various ethnic and immigrant groups "became white". Notable studies have examined white identities as linked to immigration, economic competition, and labour organization politics in the US context (see Rodeiger, 1991; Ignatiev, 1995; Jacobson, 1998; Brodkin, 1998). Within this body of work and throughout much of the Whiteness Studies literature, Jewish immigrants are placed alongside other working-class Euro-ethnic immigrant groups, such as the Irish, Southern Europeans, and Eastern Europeans, in what is viewed as a common (uni-directional) journey into American whiteness. As I will discuss, there are some conspicuous absences in this description.

Two influential studies recount the incorporation of Jews into American whiteness. The first is Matthew Frye Jacobson’s “Whiteness of a Different Colour: European Immigrants and the

---

50 For example, critical feminist and anti-racist scholar bell hooks (1992) argues that in the American context, white people have always been visible to black people, who have associated “whiteness with the terrible, the terrifying, the terrorizing.” (39). However, Sara Ahmed (2007) argues, however, that whiteness can also become invisible to non-whites, as they get so used to its inhabitance that they learn not to see it (157).
Alchemy of Race” (1998). Jacobson traces a progression of key historical moments that changed the American conceptualization of racial categorization (the black / white binary) in service of the social, political and economic needs of dominant (i.e., Anglo-Saxon) groups (14). His review begins in the 18th Century, when binary opposition was legally inscribed to define ‘free white men’ (including Jews and other non-black ethnicities), with no detailed distinctions elaborated within each camp (at least in principle). Jacobson (1998) then discusses the dramatic changes to this understanding made during the period of massive immigration between the 1840s and the 1920s. In this period there was xenophobic panic in the Anglo-Saxon ruling class, which led to a new discourse of immigration restriction that hierarchically ordered different European groups. Reflecting discourses in Western Europe during this period, Jews and other non-Nordic or non-Anglo-Saxon ethnic groups were considered to be less white, less civilised, and, at times, threatening to American democracy and American culture. At the same time, they were deemed “whiter” and more “civilizable” than non-European groups (such as Asian, Latin Americans, and Africans) and eligible for American citizenship rights (75). This were in short, an “in-between” people (Garner, 2007: 99). Only in the 1920s, following restrictions on immigration and other domestic political changes did popular cultural representations in America gradually shift back to the previous black-white binary. In the years following World War Two, while the American civil rights movement gathered speed, Jews began to be assimilated into the American white mainstream, with a large proportion rising into the middle class, adopting American cultural norms, and distinguishing themselves from the white mainstream by religion, rather than by race (188; see also Baum, 2006:187; Goldstein, 2006: 205; Brodkin, 1998: 36).

The second influential work on Jewish-American whitening is anthropologist Karen Brodkin’s “How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America” (1998). Brodkin offers a different take. Adopting a neo-Marxist analysis, she argues that Jews were treated as racially different in the U.S. so that they could be exploited as industrial laborers. She writes:

Initially invented to justify a brutal but profitable regime of slave labor, race became the way America organized labor and the explanation it used to justify it as natural. Africans, [Non-Anglo-Saxon, including Jewish] Europeans, Mexicans and Asians each came to be treated as members of less civilized, less moral, less self-restrained races only when recruited to the core of America’s capitalist labor force (75)
According to Brodkin, whiteness was later extended to working-class groups such as Jews for economic reasons. They were assigned into whiteness through state policies and affirmative action programs that granted them access to certain economic resources that remained unavailable to Africans, Asians, Latinos, and other non-European groups, as well as to women\(^5\). Importantly, Brodkin challenges the ethnic stereotype that Jews were abnormally smart, and that their success in the United States was due exclusively to their own efforts and ingenuity (50). According to Brodkin (1998:36), Jews eventually became white because they became middle-class, suggesting that “money whitens”. Jews were strategically invited into an expanded version of whiteness that opened up the economic doors to this middle-class status. According to Brodkin, Jews eventually “became white folks”, part of the post-war norm of middle-class, white suburban American citizenry, and sit unambiguously there today (36).

Unfortunately, Brodkin’s work remains limited in scope in relation to the United States, and it places too great an emphasis on economic factors. As American historian Peter Kolchin (2002) has noted, Brodkin fails to acknowledge that the racism against American Jews was a part of the long European history of anti-Semitism – an anti-Semitism that “was not always rooted in economic interest and did not always require that Jews be seen as non-white” (161). Indeed, thinking historically and globally is “absolutely necessary for fully understanding (Jewish) present locations” (Tessman and Bar On, 2001:5). The complicated relations between Jewishness and whiteness necessitate a longer historical and wider geographical view than is typically offered in diaspora literature (Bonnett, 1997).

Canadian-based scholar Abigail Bakan (2014) has expanded the American-centric focus studies on the Jewish journey. She offers a more robust understanding of whiteness in the Western global context. Bakan (2014) describes a transnational transformation in the public perception of (Ashkenazi) Jews as whites, and links it to two particular global geo-political events in the post-World War Two period: the transformation of Euro-centric racial discourse following the Holocaust in Europe and the establishment of the State of Israel as a European-oriented Jewish polity in a strategic part of the Middle East. This legitimised the national Jewish settler project (Zionism) amongst Western powers.

\(^5\) One example of affirmative action federal programs is the GI Bill of Rights of 1944 for World War II veterans that provided a range of benefits in employment, housing, and education (36-8).
First, according to Bakan (2014), as the horrors of the Holocaust slowly became known, public discussion of biological racism and eugenicism (like racial anti-Semitism) became less acceptable, replaced instead with a “softer” global racial formation. As such, in the post-War period, Ashkenazi Jews (like many other ethnic groups) were co-opted into the category of a “Caucasian race” (e.g., in the 1950 UNESCO “statement on Race”, see in Baum, 2006:187-9). This occurred not only in the US, but also in Canada and elsewhere in the West\textsuperscript{52}. The integration/assimilation of Ashkenazi (European) Jewish communities into Canadian whiteness, particularly during the 1950s and 1960s, was linked to the gradual removal of institutional social, economic, and political barriers, allowing access to the white mainstream\textsuperscript{53} (Tulchinsky, 2008: 427-9; Troper, 2010). Today, surveys indicate a high level of social, economic and political success for assimilated Jews in North American urban centers, such as Toronto (Ben-Rafael and Ben-Haim, 2006; Sheffer, 2012; Brym et al., 2010). Canadian Jews have come to be recognised, and to recognise themselves, as ‘racial insiders’ in the racial taxonomy of Canadian belonging (Train, 2000; 2006; Jackson, 2006; Balsam, 2011).

Second, and importantly for this study, Bakan discusses how the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, and particularly its strategic positioning in reaction to Western interests, altered the perception of global Jewish racial position via the state’s political alignments. Bakan (2014) captures the intimate relations between the status of the State of Israel in Western geopolitics and the racial designation of Jews living in the West. She argues that Israel’s military victory in the 1948-9 war demonstrated the new State’s potential as a political ally to Western empires in the oil-rich region of the Middle East. As a result of Jews and Israel supporting the imperial project, Bakan asserts, Jews in the West were permitted to enter the realm of whiteness. Following this argument, a further, significant step in this ascendance was the 1967 Arab-Israeli War (the “Six Day War”), in which Israel fought a pan-Arab force led by Egypt (then called the United Arab Republic), Jordan, and Syria over Palestine, and ended up dramatically increasing its territorial

\textsuperscript{52} According to Bruce Baum (2006), the category of a “Caucasian race was revived among Europeans, and in British New World societies (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the US) in order to unite diverse European nationalities in against “the rising tide” of “colored” peoples” (21).

\textsuperscript{53} Non-European Jews were considered as colonized subject/non-white and were not allowed to immigrate to Canada until the 1960s (Train, 2006).
holdings\textsuperscript{54}. These moments indicated changes in the legitimacy of Zionism, and the transformation of the image of Jews, in Western circles.

Gregory (2004) follows this line, with the argument that Israel’s relatively quick victory in 1967 (as American forces were being humiliated in Vietnam), actually turned Israel and the Jews from being seen as needy protégés to models of military prowess in the eyes of the United States. Meanwhile, Jews living in the West (particularly in North America) underwent a parallel transformation from being seen as a stateless diaspora to a politicised, Western-oriented lobby group with power in the Middle East. They enjoyed increased political, social, and economic participation and assimilation as part of this new position (see also Jacobson, 1998: 188; Shohat, 1988; 2001a).

Today, there is considerable disagreement within the North American Jewish community, as well as more formal debate amongst Western Jews and critical race scholars, as to the position of “the Jews” in contemporary American and Canadian racial hierarchies. In essence, this is a disagreement over whether being ‘Jewish’ and ‘white’ are mutually exclusive, and whether Jews enjoy “white privilege”. For scholars such as Stratton (2001) and Goldstein (2006), emphasizing Jewish distinctiveness offers Jews a way to negotiate between conflicting desires: a desire for acceptance and success in American society which requires being white, and a desire for group distinction, continuity and survival\textsuperscript{55}. In this vein it is argued that, like other “white ethnic” groups, Jews may deny white identity in order to return to their “roots”, as a way to maintain their distinct community, while nonetheless protecting their achievements of whiteness (see Jacobson, 2006; Greenberg, 2013: 45). Others take a more critical view, arguing, for instance, that Jews who claim that they are “not white” are in a sense ‘living in the past’, downplaying their participation in present white privilege by referring to historical Jewish racial oppression\textsuperscript{56}.

\textsuperscript{54} Whether the Israelis or the Arab armies (led by the United Arab Republic of Egypt) were the belligerents in this war is the subject of some debate. The existence of considerable agitating factors on both sides, and the insistence of each side it was attacked first, clouds the issue. Some argue that the Arab sides were poised to invade Israel, while others believe that the Israeli military was enacting a premeditated plan to enlarge the State’s territory (Oren, 2002:196; Quigley, 2005 :163).

\textsuperscript{55} Eric Goldstein, (2006) describes Jewish integration into American whiteness as an ongoing ambivalent process that involves significant social privileges and losses. Goldstein argues that one of the effects of integration is that it compromises Jews’ ability to assert group distinction. He adds that because ethnic distinction is required for their survival as a religious minority group within American society, the inability to assert group distinction that comes with integration to whiteness is a great source of anxiety.

Critics point out that most lighter-skinned Ashkenazi Jews do not face the forms of disadvantage most frequently experienced by communities of colour because they can “pass” relatively easily into the Anglo-American white mainstream, and are thus able to avoid racial profiling that people of colour can’t easily escape. Yet, even this argument is complicated by the fact that, even if many Jews themselves enjoy white “invisibility”, Jewish spaces, which are marked as visibly different, are indeed targeted for hate crimes (see Kaye/Kantrowitz, 2001:115; Weinfeld, 2001).

Overall, the underlying assumption in debates over Jewish whiteness seems to be that today’s Jews can at least pass as being white. This is where, once again, I wish to complicate the story, using the narratives of participants. Despite the validity of many arguments for and against “Jewish whiteness”, the fact remains that the academic focus on Jews who can identify as assimilated, secular, upper-class, and Ashkenazi (as indeed most of the academics themselves do) and the re-iteration of an homogenizing story of Jewish Ashkenazi racialization in North America perpetuates a simplistic and assimilationist model of Jewish identity that downplays the cultural, geographical, and racial diversity among the Jewish population, particularly when the diverse Israeli Jewish population is considered. Academic discussion of “the Jews” as a monolithic ethnic-but-white group among other Euro-ethnic groups (such as the Italians or the Greeks), and on “becoming white” as a geographically stationary process, ignore the complex associations that exist between migration, transnationalism, settlement, religion, ethno-cultural practice, and racialization. In fact these claims deny the multiple visible racial markers such as phenotype, language, and behaviour that vary widely among Jews, and they ignore or downplay the fact that intra-Jewish racism based on these differences does exist within Jewish communities, in Israel and in the West (Levin-Rasky, 2008; Kaye-Kantrowitz, 2001; 2007; Shohat, 1988; Train, 2006).

**Complicating Jewish racialization**

Jews obviously come in all races and colours, and are from nations that span the globe’s continents. This includes individuals and groups such as converts, biracial and multi-racial Jews, and Jewish groups from non-Western areas with significant historical Jewish populations such as
North Africa and the Middle East, Latin America, Ethiopia, India, and Central Asia (Gibel Azoulay, 2001; Kaye/Kantarowitz, 2001; 2007; Train, 2000; 2006; Tobin et al. 2005; Levin-Rasky, 2008; Haynes, 2013). As Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz (2007) asserts, “The number of Jews of color is large enough that Jewish Whiteness should never be assumed” (100), and will continue to grow constantly through intermarriage, adoption, conversion, re-immersion, and the reclaiming of Jewish identity (101). The emphasis on research that explores “how Jews become white” pays little attention to the agency available to those who cannot pass, and those who refuse to pass as whites, whether they are Ashkenazi or not, because they carry visible symbols of difference (e.g., having dark skin colour, wearing the religiously-proscribed Kippa, female head scarf or wig, speaking Hebrew, and performing otherwise non-Anglo-Saxon behavioural codes). Studies that ignore these complications contribute to racial epistemic violence both against and within Jewish communities in Canada, perpetuating the myth that all Jews have travelled a path to Euro-American whiteness. Jewish Israeli immigrants are assumed to be non-racialized, generally ‘white’, ‘well-educated’, and ‘highly westernized’ (Gold, 2001; 2002; 2013; Rebhun and Lev Ari, 2010:31) and as such issues of race and racialization in the lives of Israeli immigrants are generally overlooked in both the receiving Jewish communities and the host society. Meanwhile, only a few studies address how the so-called “ethno-class” divisions between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jews within contemporary Israeli society play out upon migration to North America (Gold, 2001; 2002; Lev Ari, 2005). Those that have addressed these distinctions have in fact found that the divisions between predominantly Ashkenazi middle class, secular, and skilled/professional Israelis and predominantly Mizrahi, working-class, religiously conservative co-nationals are often maintained and even enhanced outside Israel, with members of each subgroup often keeping to themselves and holding considerable hostility towards each other (Gold, 2001; 2002; Lev Ari, 2005). This points to a need for further study.

The widespread conflation of Whiteness with Jewishness by hegemonic Jewish and non-Jewish voices homogenizes the diverse racialized identities and experiences of Jews (Train, 2006; Baum, 2006:235; Kaye/ Kantarowitz, 2001; 2007; Tobin et al., 2005; Levine-Rasky 2008). Gibel Azoulay (2001), also asserts that the tendency of many Jews to refer to themselves alternatively as ‘white’ and as ‘Jewish’ reflects “a collective amnesia of the roots of the Jewish people [which are predominantly] in the East” (97). Today, these rich, non-Western Jewish cultures (such as Yiddish-Ashkenazi cultures; Ladino or Judeo-Arabic Sephardic cultures; Amharic-Ethiopian
cultures; Judeo-Persian cultures; and others) are increasingly being ‘re-discovered’, revived, and celebrated by Jews within Israel and around the world who are looking for alternatives to Zionist diaspora nationalism (Aviv and Sneer, 2005:17). Yet, unfortunately, the existing scholarship on Israeli immigrants tends to treat the Mizrahi and Ashkenazi categories as ethnic (i.e., non-racialized) and ontological categories, while the existing debates in North American Jewish raciarity/whiteness downplay the experiences of Jewish (mainly Israeli) newcomers, many of them are what Kaye/Kantrowitz (2007, 115) calls “the other Jews, the one who don’t look white”. Their voices and experiences are important to highlight. As Kaye/Kantrowitz (2007) notes: “those Jews who are cultural minorities within a hegemonic Ashkenazi community are often best equipped to help the Jewish world reckon with our multiculturality, and to know that this multiculturality is an enormous asset when it comes to combating racism and anti-semitism and to building social justice coalitions”(xi). If so, I suggest we need to start asking new questions about the refusal of many Israelis to identify as white in Canada. Is it an attempt to avoid “white guilt” and to return to some lost “Jewish” roots? This seems simplistic. What about non-Ashkenazi (i.e. Mizrahi) immigrants? Do only Ashkenazi Israeli immigrants have potential to assimilate into Canadian Jewish whiteness? As will be illustrated in the next section, the narratives of Jewish-Israeli immigrants in Toronto complicate the white assimilationist story in current debates around Jewish whiteness, and expose the complexities and contradictions of historic-geographical variability of Ashkenazi whiteness. More broadly, the participants challenge the assumption that Jewish immigrants (as well as immigrants who are members of other “white ethnic” groups, such as Italians or Greeks), necessarily want to achieve whiteness upon migration and thus are naturally (and even easily) absorbed into Jewish whiteness (see Ansgnustou, 2013). Such assumptions are prevalent in the field of critical whiteness studies, which situates whiteness at the top of the racial hierarchy (Mahtani, 2014).

Ashkenazi whiteness – Between Israel and Canada

Jewish Ashkenazi Whiteness, the hegemonic image of global Jewishness today, is a transnational construction that is at the same time heavily dependent on national context. It is important to consider an intersectional approach to understanding this identity. Within Israel, the hegemonic
form of whiteness is associated with an identification of being a Jewish, secular, Zionist, Ashkenazi, middle class, and heteronormative male (Shohat, 1992; 1999; Yosef, 2004; Sasson-Levy, 2008; 2013; Amor, 2014). Members of this numerical minority have long constituted the political, academic, economic, military, and cultural elites of the state\(^\text{57}\) (Haberfeld and Cohen 2007; Mautner, 2013). As such, Ashkenazi Sabras (Israeli born Jews) often imagine and represent themselves as simply being “Israelis” with no particular ethnicity or race, in opposition to ‘ethnic’ Israeli categories such as Mizrahi Jews and Palestinians whose Israeliness is not taken for granted (Shohat, 1999:13; Chinsky, 2002; Yosef, 2004; Hever, 2008; Sasson-Levy, 2008; 2013; Abutbul-Selinger, 2012; Amor, 2014).

The racial position of Ashkenazi Jews within Israel as “the Israeli version of whites” means that Ashkenazim tend to enjoy socially-encoded privileges that are equivalent in effect to the white privilege enjoyed by white Anglo-Saxon Protestants in Canada (Sasson-Levy, 2013: 28). Both are associated with a racially unmarked subject position (Bannerji, 2000; Razack, 2002; Arat Koc, 2005). In contrast, Ashkenazi Jews in Canada, despite homogenizing narratives of Jewish ‘whitening’ and despite having attained a great deal of white privilege, are still constructed as “white Others” (Train, 2000). They are positioned somewhere in between dominant Anglo-Saxon and “visible minority” groups. Put simply, Canadian born Ashkenazi Jews do not completely fit into the white settler colonial identity, though they are well integrated into the white male capitalist normativity (Train, 2000). This is embodied in the culture, national identity, and spatial representations of the country (Bannerji, 2000; Peake and Ray, 2001; Razack, 2002; Arat Koc, 2005; McKittrick, 2006; Baldwin et al., 2011; Baldwin, 2012; Francis, 2011; Mahtani, 2014).

\(^{57}\) According to studies, Jewish men of European origin (other than those from the Former Soviet Union) enjoy the highest socioeconomic ranking in Israel, as reflected in housing values, family income, and level of education, followed by Mizrahi Jewish men, Ashkenazi Jewish women, Arab (Palestinian) men, and finally Mizrahi Jewish women. Arab/Palestinian women do not even make it onto the table (Haberfeld and Cohen 2007; Cohen, 2006; 1998; Swirsky and Konor-Attias, 2003). Although a significant Mizrahi middle class was consolidated in the early 1980s (see Samoocha, 1993; Cohen and Leon 2008), and a growing number of Mizrahim have held key positions in the Israeli government and military establishments since then, even in the late 1990s, 88 percent of upper-income Israelis were Ashkenazim while 60 percent of lower-income families were Mizrahim (Swirski and Konor-Attias, 2003). The socio-economic gaps between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi men were in fact wider than those between White and African American men in the US (Rubinstein and Brenner, 2003, quoted in Haberfeld and Cohen 2007:657).
The complex relationship that emerges between Israeli and Canadian-based Ashkenazi whiteness begs the following questions: How are racialized identities of Israeli migrants transformed through travelling to Canada; and how do Israeli-based white Ashkenazi (Jewish European) identities shift across time and space?

As was mentioned in the introduction, I employ a transnational multi-scalar approach to study race and whiteness through the eyes of racially diverse Jewish Israeli newcomers. The Israeli immigrants in this study describe experiences of discovering many of the *largely unspoken* rules of Canadian racial classification, and of coming to terms with the social norms and established patterns of behaviour, not only in the Canadian white Anglo-Saxon space, but also in “whitened” Jewish spaces dominated by assimilated Ashkenazi Jews. As we will see, this highlights an important axis of racial difference amongst Jews. While the experience of racialization comes as a shock to many of the Ashkenazi secular participants, who, before coming to Canada, were accustomed to occupying the top ranks of what ‘whiteness’ is in Israel, for the Mizrahi participants, the experience of migration to a place in which all Jews have seemingly been homogenised into an essential ‘whiteness’ presents an opportunity to transcend the racial identities that they grew up with and, in some cases, to become “just another Jew” in the eyes of Canadian society. In opposition to studies that tend to essentialize Jewish whiteness/non whiteness, I share narratives that exemplify how Jewish whiteness in Toronto is a *fluid, contextual and relational construct*, embedded into local as well as global racial systems and intersecting with other axes of difference.

**Overlapping, conflicting and intersecting spaces of Jewish whiteness in Toronto**

The process by which immigrants learn the largely unspoken rules of racial classification in their adoptive countries is one that takes place mainly through social interaction. In “*Race Migrations: Latinos and the Cultural Transformation of Race*”, Wendy Roth (2012:4-5) theorizes this phenomenon as a process of “racial acculturation”. Roth shows that migration can change how you see yourself, how you see others, and how others see you in your new home. In the case of many of the Israeli immigrants that I interviewed, the realization that Jews are generally considered to be ‘whites’ in the popular Canadian racial taxonomy was a surprise.
However, the very elucidation of their own racial position proved to offer up an even greater surprise at times.

Nati, a forty-three year old high tech consultant, and an Israeli Jew of German and Hungarian descent, recalled one particular experience that transformed his understanding of his own racial identity and of race in general:

N: I hate the census questionnaires that they send you in the mail. I remember the first time, they ask you to fill out what are you: white, black, Chinese, and all of that, and at the bottom you have “other”. So I wanted to fill out “Jewish”, but I already wrote “Jewish” in the question about my ethnicity. I was confused about what to write. It felt weird to circle white. I asked my girlfriend at the time what does she think I should fill out, white or Jewish, and she said “you are white, da. Jews are white. You are white, go look at the mirror”.

T: Was she white?

N: White as it can be. Aryan (laugh).... She is blond, blue eyes, million generations in Canada.... But it wasn’t only her. I began to be more aware about how I am seen by other Canadians. That they see me as a white man, and that I sometimes get special treatment because of that. My father used to tell me growing up that “no one will give you anything because of your beautiful eyes” (a Hebrew expression meaning: no one will give you anything for free), and I think that I do get things because of my green eyes.

In the hegemonic Israeli discourse, there is a general disdain of overt racial references (Shenhav and Yona, 2008), although global norms of white dominance are very much present. Although he is certainly aware of being Jewish, within the Jewish state, Nati explains that he is used to experiencing himself as a person without race or ethnicity.

Since his Ashkenazi (Jewish European) identity is the national norm in Israel (Shohat, 1988; 1999; 2003b; Yosef, 2004; Chinsky, 2002; Hever, 2008; Sasson-Levy, 2008; 2013; Abutbul-Selinger, 2012; Amor, 2014), it is typical that Nati’s position of secular Ashkenazi privilege— the Israeli iteration of white privilege— would have seemed invisible to him there. More interesting is how this racial identity has changed in Canada. In Canada, his girlfriend - a definitive gatekeeper to Canadian whiteness - affirms coherence between whiteness and Jewishness. After this experience, he begins to notice that his race positively effects the way that he is treated in Canada. His ability to ‘pass’ as a white man has positive implications. Yet in our interview, Nati
doesn’t make a connection between his racial privileges in Canada, and his privileges in Israel as an Ashkenazi secular middle class man.

Nati’s case seems to affirm claims of Jewish whiteness in Canada, yet it represents only one potential story. In contrast, non-Ashkenazi participants whose distances from white Canadian normativity were more visually apparent, tie their experiences of racialization in Canada explicitly to their racialized experiences in Israel. For example, Daphna, a thirty-eight year old teacher of Indian and Iraqi Jewish descent stresses:

D: I have experienced racism in both Israel and Canada surrounding my Indian descent, but in different ways. In Israel it is about being Mizrahi, and if you are also from a peripheral town (a so-called ‘development town’) and Mizrahi, you are doomed (laugh) - but at least people know in which box to put you. […] But here I have encountered such ignorance, and it usually comes from the Jewish community, out of all people - usually from Ashkenazi Jews who didn’t believe that there is such a thing as an Indian Jew. Since I arrived here I have been asked so many stupid questions, like: ‘What? Really?! There are Jews in India?’, ‘Are you sure that you are Jewish?’, or ‘How did you get this [skin] colour?’.

T: How has it made you feel?

D: At first I was in shock… I was deeply offended. How dare they question my Jewishness?! I couldn’t believe their ignorance and narrow-mindedness. I don’t think that I will ever become used to this line of questioning.

Yossi, a thirty-five year old design engineer of Yemenite and Turkish Jewish descent describes similarly distancing experiences in Canada:

Y: I raise eyebrows here. It’s not like with Israelis, who immediately know who you are - if you are Ashkenazi or Mizrahi - before you open your mouth. Canadians never encounter a dark Jew. I remember one time a guy I worked with told me, when he heard that I am Jewish, that I must be half black, “like Obama”, because all the Jews that he ever met in his life were white.

Daphna and Yossi explain the differences in the processes of racialization and their experiences of racism between Israel and Canada. In Israel, they are associated with the broader racialized category of Mizrahi Jews. However, Mizrahi identity is familiar to Israelis in a way that it is not to Canadians (including many Canadian Jews), and it does not involve a contradiction with Jewishness.
Ideas about race, racial identities, and practices of racism, are both historically and geographically specific. They derive from national racial regimes and have specific material and ideological effects (Clark and Garner, 2009: 15). They are also complexly linked to global racial formations (Bonnett, 1997; 2000; Winant, 2000; Peake and Scehin, 2000; Pulido, 2006; Nayak, 2007; Twine and Gallagher, 2008; Moreton-Robinson et al, 2008; HoSang and LaBennett, 2012; Roth, 2012). While darker skin colour is often attributed to Mizrahi identity in Israel, the two do not always go together. There are a host of other signifiers, such as habitus, class, and culture that mark out subjects as Mizrahi in Israeli hegemonic spaces (Bourdieu, 1990).

There are many locally specific reasons for this. For one, Mizrahi Jews constitute the numerical majority of Israel’s population and are, despite consistent marginalisation by the ruling institutions, culturally visible in both Judaism and in secular life. Moreover, in many cases, Jews from Eastern Europe and those from Muslim countries (not to mention Palestinians!) often have quite similar skin colouring (Yosef, 2004)58. Thus, “passing” as Ashkenazi is possible for many Mizrahi and mixed Mizrahi-Ashkenazi subjects. However, it requires downplaying a number of important cultural signifiers of race, such as lower levels of education and class, religious traditionalism, right wing political tendencies, usage of particular words and pronunciations, and particular geographic location (the “periphery”, in towns and suburbs far from centres of economy or politics; see Regev, 2000; Shenhav and Yona, 2008:20; Yiftachel and Tzfadia, 2004; Abutbul Selinger, 2012)59. This in part explains why, in the Israeli sphere, ethnico-cultural and religious dichotomies crown out race in the public discourses concerning inequality.

In contemporary multicultural Canada on the other hand, where persistent attempts to place racialized people outside of the Canadian nation, and questions such as “where are you from”, are common (Bannerji, 2000: 64; Mahtani, 2002b; Arat Koc, 2005), the darker phenotypes and

58 As Raz Yosef (2004) notes, there are different levels of phenotypic “whiteness” among Ashkenazi Jews, and different levels of phenotypic “blackness” among Mizrahi Jews (125). Skin color in Israel ranges from very light to very dark among both Ashkenazim and Mizrahim.

59In his research on middle class Jewish adolescents living in the metropolitan Tel Aviv area, Guy Abutbul-Selinger (2012) concludes that “[F]or Mizrahi adolescents, light skin color serves as one of the main routes to enable passing […] Having white skin enables “Mizrahi” adolescents to partially experience difference, or in other words, to partially experience their social reality as Ashkenazi” (163). Yet, while the ability of many Mizrahi to “pass” as Ashkenazi would appear to undermine the dichotomous essence of the racial/ethnic categories in Israel, these youth do not develop new identities that challenge the Ashkenazi or Mizrahi categories themselves (Abutbul Selinger, 2012; Okun, 2004).
non-European origins of many Mizrahi Israeli immigrants such as Daphna and Yossi mark them as racial outsiders. Meanwhile, despite the very common notion that, by European standards, Jews tend to be of darker colouring (as with Euro-Mediterranean ethnicities), the fact that the majority of modern Jewish emigrants have come from Central and Eastern Europe. The fact that many immigrants from Southern European countries have entered whiteness along with European Jews, has helped to mask Jewish racial diversity (Haynes, 2013: 151).

Through their everyday social interactions with non-Israelis, Yossi and Daphna learn that they are considered to be an anomaly within an imagination of Jewish identity that it is predominantly white. For the first time in their lives, they experience overt incoherence between their racial and ethno-religious identities. They are treated not only as inferiors, but also with suspicion. They are considered racial anomalies, and are questioned as to the authenticity of their Jewishness. This reflects the privilege and dominance of the assimilated Ashkenazi Jewish community (Haynes, 2013: 153). For Daphna and Yossi, the biggest shock is that they do not fit within the Canadian racial structure. This is a structure in which being a Jew is associated with being an invisible minority. Perhaps Yossi and Daphna are being at once members of both “visible” and “invisible” minority classifications. They are both non-whites and Jews. They exemplify a contradiction in Canadian racial taxonomy60.

In reading experiences of racialization such as Yossi’s and Daphna’s, it would be easy to deny the agency of Mizrahi Jews in performing their new racial identities, or fall into the common trap of essentializing Ashkenazi whiteness. However, in recognition of the real and increasing cultural and racial diversity among contemporary North American Jewish communities, it crucial that we consider the agency of individual Jewish migrants in adopting, rejecting and performing different types of perceived Jewish identity, rather than assuming that they either reject or assimilate into Ashkenazi whiteness solely based on their descent. Anti-racist scholars have emphasized the inherently strategic, pragmatic, and situational nature of racialized identities. Articulations of the meaning of race “are open to many types of agency, from the individual to the organizational, from the local, to the global” (Winant, 2000: 182). Like other identities,

---

60 Statistics Canada, the agency in charge of the national census, formally defines “visible minorities” as people who are “non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour”. This category comprises mainly Chinese, South Asian, Black, Arab, West Asian, Filipino, Southeast Asian, Latin American, Japanese and Korean ancestries. (See: http://www.statcan.gc.ca/concepts/definitions/minority-minorite1-eng.htm)
racialized identities are a matter of rich and complicated negotiation and performance. Individual racialized subjects exercise their agency by responding in varied ways to the gazes placed upon them, subverting, confirming, or challenging their racial identity by enacting racial performances (Mahtani, 2002a: 427-8). They are forced into *negotiating between racial, cultural, and religious identities*.

Anti-colonial and anti-racist scholars have discussed the complex relationships between transnational migration, race, religion, and nation in contemporary Canada (and throughout the “West”), but mainly in relation to Muslims. Debate focuses on the post 9/11 global racial formation within which Muslims, Arabs, and people of Middle Eastern appearance are collapsed into a singular category of non-white otherness, and subsequently cast out the Western nation and city (e.g., Rana, 2011; Razack, 2007; Arat Koc, 2005). Less has been written about the relationship between race, religion and nationality in relation of Jews and Israel, although many Jews, Israeli and non-Israeli, have an “Arab”/”Middle Eastern” phenotypes. In fact, it is not uncommon for Jewish and Israeli actors to be cast as “Arabs” and “Muslims” in film and television productions. Others’ perceptions of Jewish racialized bodies are scale and place-specific. These perceptions can be multiple and contradictory (such as in Toronto/Canada, where phenotypes are often perceived as contradicting ethnic affiliation). One result of this is that racialized Jews, like other racialized people, employ different social strategies to make themselves legible to outsiders. A number of the participants who I interviewed clearly utilized a strategic approaches to the often difficult negotiation of their racial, religious, and ethnic identities in Canada. For example, Liora, a forty-seven year old of Yemenite Jewish heritage, describes how she learned to anticipate and cope with perceptions by preparing a strategy - a *script* of identification that she uses to expose her Jewishness. In her words:

*I learned to never [just] say that I am Jewish to people here. I avoid unnecessary questions. I usually say that I am Israeli first and then explain that my skin colour is from my parents that are Jews and came from Yemen to Israel, and that Israel, like Canada is a country of Jewish immigrants from all over the world, even places like Ethiopia. I have a lecture prepared in advance. People here really don’t know anything.*
Thus, Liora has developed a particular social script to avoid irritating questions from people who are unable to deal with her being both Jewish and a woman of colour (Mahtani, 2002a; 2014). She performs her “racial self” in a way that she feels “people here” will understand.

Meanwhile, for some Mizrahi immigrants who are on the ‘lighter’ side of the skin colour spectrum, migration from Israel to Toronto can change their possibilities of (Ashkenazi) whiteness when they employ Jewishness strategically to avoid racialization. For example, Miri and Oded strategically identify as ‘Jewish’ after learning that Jewish identity in Toronto is associated with racial and class privilege. Jewish affiliation provides them an access to a white ethnic identity that disassociates them from other non–European racialized immigrants in Toronto.

Oded is a forty year old, secular, Israeli-born software engineer of Moroccan, Iraqi and Egyptian Jewish origin. He has been in Canada for 15 years and lives in a predominantly Jewish and Italian upper-middle class suburb north of Toronto. Oded reflects on how his ‘darker’ appearance (olive skin, brown eyes, and black coiled hair) confuses the dominant European racialization attributed to Jews in Canada. When I ask him about the ways he has been identified by others in Toronto, he stresses:

I am constantly being asked where I am from, especially by clients at work, because of my name and how I look. They don’t know what I am. Some are guessing, but they always get it wrong […] I get Italian a lot. Also Latino. Some think Persian, Pakistani. I get that a lot too. But when I say that I am a Jew, people usually say – ‘oh, really? We would have never guessed that’. For them, a Jew is not someone who looks like me. It is more of an Eastern European look.

Oded (like Yossi and Daphna) encounters a lack of knowledge among gentiles (and some Jews) about the existence non-European Jews, reflecting the cultural dominance of Ashkenazi Jews in Canadian imagination. But unlike Yossi and Dapha, his appearance is racially ambivalent. Some positions him within a white ethnic category (Italian), while others label him a visible minority (Latino, Pakistani). When he identifies as ‘Jewish’, Oded describes encountering a reaction of surprise. However, his medium skin tone gives him leverage that some others may not have. He can identify as Jew and get away with it.
Interestingly, Oded prefers to be recognized as Italian rather than as a Latino or Pakistani. When I ask him about his feelings regarding being recognized as Italian, he explains:

O: Well, if I should be fully honest with you, when people think that I look Italian, I take it as a big compliment. The other guesses, not so much….

T: Why?

O: Because I think that Europeans are perceived as more educated here. I will tell you the truth. That’s how it is […] When I say that I am a Jew, people say ‘you are a Jew so you must be a very smart person’. It comes particularly from Asians. There are many Asians in high-tech and they admire us. If you are Jewish then you are worthy of doing business with. We have a good reputation of being smart people who are good with money.

T: But isn’t that reverse anti-Semitism?

O: Sure. There is also a dark side to that. Sure. Jews control the banks. Jews control Hollywood. Jews want to take over the world. Sure. But I am honest here. If I must choose between being seen as ‘the Jew’ or ‘the Muslim’ or ‘the Latino’ here, as a person who is in business, I prefer to be seen as the Jew.

Oded is flattered when he passes as an Italian and insulted when he is recognized by others as Pakistani or as a Latino. His racial performances in Toronto are driven by a desire to avoid being associated with non-whiteness, or non-Westerness (“blackness”; “Arab-ness”; “Muslim-ness”).

He has observed that in Toronto, people of European origin, including Italians, are accorded higher cultural and intellectual status than people of non-European origins. Although many “Latinos” have European origins, names, language and phenotypes, this is somehow less relevant. For Oded, Italian immigrants, viewed as being more uncomplicatedly European, and are held to be superior. This perception of a need for simple identity categories continues. For example, Oded strategically downplays his “Israeli” and “Mizrahi” Jewish identities, preferring to be simply “Jewish”. Being simply “Jewish” is associated with the economic, social, and political success of assimilated Canadian Ashkenazi Jews (Brym et al., 2010). It is also, sometimes, (mistakenly) associated with being European. As such it is familiar to gentile Canadians, unlike Mizrahi or Israeli Jewish identities, which are Orientalized. In business situations in particular, Oded chooses to embrace stereotypes of Jews as being ‘very smart’ and ‘good with money’. He prefers to confirm ‘reverse anti-Semitic’ stereotypes (e.g., ‘Jews control the banks’), than to be associated with racist stereotypes against non-European immigrants in
Canada. In order to avoid the contemporary type of Orientalisation against non-Europeans relevant to present day Canada (Arat Koc, 2005), Oded relies on a historical form of Orientalisation against Jews which has conveniently lost many of its negative connotations in contemporary capitalist Canadian society (Bakan, 2014).

The reinterpretation of racial Anti-Semitic tropes is also evident in Mali’s story. She is a thirty five-year old artist of Moroccan-Tunisian and Turkish background. Mali describes being proud of her “Jewish nose” because it relates her to assimilated Jewish Ashkenazi whiteness. As she recounts:

M: I’ve suffered a lot from being ha-Sh’hora (“the black”) at school, during my military service and afterwards on campus. Everywhere really. There will always be this one patronizing Ashkenazi asshole who will remind you that you are a trespasser. That you don’t belong [in elite circles]. I learned to feel ashamed of my Mizrahiness, to downplay this aspect of myself. I think that by the time that I arrived to Canada, I was carrying this big inferiority complex inside…Only here I was able to let it go, to transcend myself from this bullshit. Here I found out that I can be Italian. I can be Greek. I can be Jewish – I mean Jewish-Jewish. Some people told me that I have a Jewish look, including a Jewish nose.

T: A Jewish nose?! That’s sounds awful! It is a very racist thing to say…. Isn’t it being called “black” all over again?

M: No….No (laugh). The Jewish nose part is kind of an internal joke that I have with friends, most of them are Jews themselves… I don’t have an issue with that. I am proud of my Jewish look, and I am pretty sure that Jews are considered relatively white here… Anyhow; no one will give you any shit for looking or being Jewish or Greek here! No one can call me ha-Sh’hora here.

Growing up in Israel, Mali learned to downplay any signifiers of her Mizrahi identity in order to fit in, particularly within Ashkenazi dominant spaces (such as her elite high school, elite military unit and elite Israeli university campus). As a Mizrahi woman with lighter skin colour from a middle class family in central Israel, she was able to partially experience her social reality as Ashkenazi (see Abutbul-Selinger, 2012). But Mali explains that no matter how much she downplayed her Mizrahi origin, there was always the risk that someone would mark her as a trespasser. Mali describes an “inferiority complex” that was built in Israel. These past experiences have influenced how Mali reads her present and presents herself in Toronto.
In Toronto, Mali learns that she has the ability to pass as a European immigrant by appearing “Greek”, or “Italian”. Most importantly, she finds that she can fit the North American stereotype of the Ashkenazi / European Jew - what Mali calls “Jewish –Jewish”. She can thus take on what is perceived as Jewish whiteness. Yet, it is ironic how, in performing an Ashkenazi Jewishness in order to avoid orientalization, Mali celebrates what is in fact a classic European anti-Semitic orientalization: her stereotypically “Jewish” features such as a “crooked” nose and dark hair and eyes. Clearly, Mali views the racism that she experienced in Israel for being a Mizrahi Jew as much more severe and real than any racism that she would expose herself to in Toronto by identifying as a Jew. For Mali, as for Oded, the road from Mizrahi (non-white) subjectivity in Israel to Jewish Ashkenazi (white ethnic) subjectivity in Canada is an upgrade in terms of opportunity.

Both Oded and Mali take control of how they are read in Toronto by enacting “racial performances,” strategically managing their racial identities (Mahtani, 2002a; Roth, 2012). They rely on popular stereotypes of North American Jews, as well as on their abilities to pass as Euro-Canadians. Oded and Mali perform whiteness by affiliating themselves to the hegemonic identities and narratives of assimilated Ashkenazi Jewish Canadians. However, despite gaining access to Canadian whitened “Jewishness’, liberating themselves from the rigid Ashkenazi-Mizrahi binary in Israel, their experience in Canada is oppressive in two important ways. First, their accessing of white Jewish privilege requires that they conform to Jewish Ashkenazi secular middle class identity (itself an assimilation into dominant Canadian Anglo-Saxon identity). It also demands that they erase Mizrahi and Arab-Jewish identities, norms, cultures, family histories and memories. Second, in not challenging the hegemonic construction of Jewish Canadian whiteness (as secular, assimilated, middle class and European), they perpetuate the

---

61 The popular understanding of a Jewish prominent/bumpy/crooked nose as a symbols of a ‘Jewish face’ originated in 19th century Europe alongside other stereotypes (such the darker skin colour, and dark curly hair). European race scientists believed that these physical characteristics are the product of Jews’ racial impurity, and markers of racial inferiority and symptoms of disease (Gilman, 1991: 172-173, 179). These stereotypes serve to "other" the Jew from his/her gentile neighbours, whose slimmer noses and naturally straight, smooth, and often blond, hair are the normal standard of these features (173-4). Jews, especially Jewish women, have a long history of making alterations to their bodies such as “fixing their nose”, through Rhinoplasty surgery (nose job), or straightening their naturally curly, frizzy hair. They do this in order to “normalize” their appearance, to better "pass" in gentile culture, and to "make their physical features conform with widely promoted standards of Anglo-Saxon beauty" (Kleeblatt, 1996:13).
epistemological violence and invisibility of all other Jewish narratives and identities (e.g. those which are non-secular, non-European, or unassimilated).

The epistemological framing in critical whiteness studies assumes that a white identity is only accessible to individuals of exclusive European ancestry. This is a particularly problematic because it can easily lead us to essentialize categories, ultimately rebiologizing race (Mahtani, 2014:140). Oded and Mali demonstrate that in order to be Jewish and white in Canada, you don’t have to be Ashkenazi. However, it must be clear that their ability to “perform” is also heavily dependent on other factors such as religiosity (the fact that they are secular and don’t display religious signs and customs), class identity (they are both skilled, educated, and solidly middle-class), familiarity with dominant Canadian norms (they are Canadian citizens who are fluent in English), and their relatively light skin colours. In fact, Oded and Mali are able to “pass” as white more effectively than some less assimilated Israeli immigrants from European descent, or than many Canadian-born Orthodox Ashkenazi Jews, who are viewed as less white due to the visibility of their non-mainstream dress and customs because of intersection with other aspects of identity- such as class. Thus, a non-European origin does not necessarily hinder access to Jewish Ashkenazi white identity in Canada. Ashkenazi Jewish descent likewise does not guarantee full access to whiteness for Ashkenazi Israeli-Jewish newcomers. At the same time that Israeli immigrants learn that Jews are considered whites in Canada/Toronto, they also learn that the category of an “Israeli immigrant” is (culturally) less white than Canadian-born Jews. In the next section I focus on the loss of Israeli-based Ashkenazi privilege within the Jewish community.

The stepbrother from the Middle East

“An Israeli is (?):

Jewish Canadian man: “Cigarette in the mouth”
Rabbi: “Thorny on the outside sweet on the inside”
Jewish Canadian man: “rough”
Jewish Canadian woman: “very upfront”
Jewish Israeli immigrant: “rude”
Jewish Canadian man: “loud”
Jewish Canadian girl: “loud”
Jewish Canadian boy: “very loud”
In Toronto, the most proximate ethnic host group for Israelis is made up of Canadian-born Jews, and together they tend to be more segregated / residentially concentrated than other ethnic or visible-minority groups in Canadian cities (Balakrishnan and Gyimah, 2007: 315). Indeed most of the participants in this study, as with the majority of Jews in the GTA, reside along a corridor that roughly follows the Bathurst Street strip (Terczyner and Brotman, 1995, Cohen, 1999; 2001; UJA report, 2006; Qadeer and Kumar, 2003). Within this corridor are Jewish communal organizations, synagogues, schools, businesses and residences (Diamond, 2004:200). Many Israeli business owners have decided to locate their businesses (restaurants, bakeries, barbershops, banquet halls etc.) in these established Jewish neighborhoods in order to attract a broader variety of Jewish customers, since the Israeli community is too small to self-maintain (see Cohen and Gold, 1997; Gold, 1992: 239; Cohen, 1999; 2001; 2005:141). As a result of proximal location, Israelis and Canadian born Jews are in everyday contact.

The documentary Y.I.D (“Yehudim [Jews] In the Diaspora”) by Igal Hecht and Ron Fruman examines the tensions between Jewish-Israeli immigrants and Canadian-born Jews at the beginning of the millennium. The assimilated Canadian-born Jews who were interviewed in Hecht’s documentary described Israeli immigrants as being very rough, upfront, rude, and loud. Those Israeli immigrants who I interviewed for this study were painfully aware of being stereotyped in this way by fellow Jews. Some also noted more specifically how Canadian-born Jews see them in Orientalist terms: as uncivilized, hot tempered, aggressive and dishonest (see Said, 1978). Conversely, many of the Israeli participants stereotyped “Canadian-Jews” and gentile Anglo-Saxon Canadians as being cold, remote, self-righteous, insincere, elitist, and generally hostile to them (see also Y.I.D). Previous ethnographies also confirm that mutual tensions and stereotypes exist between Israeli immigrants and Canadian Jews, with first generation Israeli immigrants often feeling that they do not belong to local Canadian Jewish communities. They often continue to experience ambivalent relationships with these communities. Israeli immigrants, mostly secular, are expected to cooperate with the religious, economic, political, and cultural agendas created for them by the Jewish host community –
becoming paying members of synagogues, sending their children to Jewish private schools, donating to local Jewish organizations, etc. (Gold, 1992:247; Cohen and Gold, 1997:22; Cohen, 1999; 2001:136-7; Magat, 1999; Fogell, 2006; Harris, 2009). In their interactions with assimilated Canadian Jews, Israelis commonly describe experiencing a form of ‘boundary maintenance’ that seeks to ‘police’ the image of whiteness achieved by Jews in Canada (Roth 2012: 84).

Benny, a sixty-three year old private business owner, born in Israel to Hungarian and Algerian parents, believes that Israeli immigrants in Toronto are systematically discriminated against by assimilated Canadian-born Jews:

There is an Anti-Israeliness here. Canadians [Canadian born Jews] don’t want us here in their community…. There are many Israelis that are afraid to give away their Israeliness. They won’t tell that they are Israelis. One day I entered a store on Centre Street (a shopping street in Thornhill). The business owner was an Israeli guy, so we talked in Hebrew. All of the sudden he told me: ‘be quiet, be quiet, don’t talk!’ So I told him ‘what’s wrong?’ It happened that a Canadian customer entered the store. He explained it to me after the customer left. The customer was Jewish, so he preferred that we didn’t speak in Hebrew. I told him ‘what are you afraid of’? If the customer doesn’t like the fact that you are an Israeli then he shouldn’t shop at your store. I never returned to his store […]

Benny continues:

Seven years ago, I applied for a job in the JCC [Jewish Community Centre]. After the second interview, no one called me, so I went down there to see what’s going on. As I walked through the parking lot, by coincidence I see one of the interviewers. So he asked me what am I doing here, and told him that I wanted to check up about the job. So he told me: “listen, don’t go…It will only upset you …They will not pick you”. So I said – ‘why?!’. And you know what he told me? He told me that he just submitted his resignation so he can tell me, just between us, that they rejected me because I am an Israeli. “You are an Israeli, so they won’t consider picking you”. He knew. He was in there in the room. They won’t accept us. You can’t come to a Jew [born in Canada] and tell him: ‘please accept me’. You have your Israeli character. They have their Canadian culture.

Of interest to me was how Benny described assimilated, middle class Ashkenazi Canadian Jews as simply “Canadians”. Like many other participants in this study, Benny differentiates between Jewishness and Canadian-ness, seeing assimilated middle class Ashkenazi Jews as representatives of “their” elitist and inaccessible “Canadian culture”. For Benny, [Jewish] Canadian-ness stands in opposition to Israeliness. In response to this feeling, identification with
Israeli ethnic identity in Toronto (after more than 30 years living in the city) functions as a competing racialized identity that disrupts processes of assimilation into Canadian Jewish Ashkenazi whiteness. Class identity also plays a central role. Benny is not highly educated, and speaks with a thick Hebrew-Israeli accent.

Benny claims ethnic Israeli distinctiveness, not in denial of ‘white Jewish privilege’ or in a search for ‘authentic’ Jewish roots, but rather in response to his lived experiences of alienation, exclusion, negative stereotyping, and discrimination by assimilated Canadian born Ashkenazi Jews. He believes that Israeli immigrants in Toronto will never be accepted as equals by assimilated Canadian-born Jews, so they might as well stay Israelis. Identification as Israeli thus functions as a distinct racialization in Canada.

Benny is the son of a Jewish “mixed marriage” (*Nisuey Ta’arovet*) with one Ashkenazi and one Mizrahi parent, something that places him in a mixed ethnic-racialized category in Israel (Okun, 2004; Abutbul Selinger, 2012). However, once in Toronto, this “mixed” identity becomes irrelevant, subsumed as it is by a larger Israeli identity.

As another participant, Galit, who is of Libyan and Hungarian Jewish descent stresses:

Here the Ashkenazi and Mizrahi issue is erased. In Israel you can call yourself Mizrahi, Ashkenazi, half-half or whatever. You can live in the periphery or in ‘Tel Aviv State’ [the tongue-in-cheek term for liberal/secular Tel Aviv] but in Toronto, these things do not matter anymore. What matters is that you are an Israeli.

Benny and Galit’s narratives complicate the Israeli concept of “*Nisuey Ta’arovet*” (mixed marriage) which implies that Ashkenazi and Mizrahi are pure, static, ontological, and mutually exclusive ethno-racial categories “that existed before the mixing” (Yu 2003:1407 in Mahtani, 2014). Similar to Benny and Galit, the participants in this study, for the most part, stop articulating to others the internal ethno-racial distinction between Ashkenazi, Mizrahi, and mixed in Toronto. They learn to conceive of themselves as Israelis – a distinct ethnic community that is subject to negative stereotyping and even systemic discrimination by assimilated Canadian born Ashkenazi Jews.
Some participants, like Benny and Galit have confronted overt stereotypes and exclusions from Canadian born Ashkenazi Jews. Others feel it more quietly. As one of the Ashkenazi participants notes:

Canadian (Jews) and Israelis here are like Ashkenazim and Mizrahim in Israel - even worse, because the Canadians are too polite to show us how much they hate us.

Israeli-born participants in this study who are Ashkenazi, secular, and middle class – those who are used to viewing their identity in Israel as simply “Israeli”, without race - find that the meaning of the “Israeli” label has shifted for them in Toronto. In Israel, being “Israeli” is a signifier of non-racialized ordinariness (in opposition to ‘extra-ordinary’ Israelis such as Mizrahi or Arabs). But in Canada, “Israeliness” is a marker of racialized otherness. For the first time in their lives, these participants experience having a racialized subjectivity ascribed to them from outside. Their migration has involved a loss of the invisible white status that they enjoyed in Israel, and has placed them on a similar footing as their Mizrahi compatriots. At the same time, the view of Canadian-born Jews as being “too polite” to show their true feelings reflects a classic reverse racialization of ‘white’ people as being cold and emotionally detached – features that, in Israeli Mizrahi discourse are attributed only to Ashkenazi Jews, but that in Canada seem to be made applicable to Israelis more generally. Ironically, many of the racialized stereotypes that circulate between Israeli immigrants and ‘Canadian Jews’ in Toronto are remarkably similar to the stereotypes that have traditionally been used to differentiate between Jews and Anglo-Saxon groups in North America, and between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews in Israel. The classic stereotypes of European Jews as being impolite and ill-mannered compared to white Europeans is yet a deeper level of this relative and situated pattern of racialization.

Gur, a twenty-eight year old student, and a sabra of Polish Jewish descent, refers explicitly to an experience of being “blackened” by assimilated Canadian-born Jews. He states,

Jews here see themselves as white people, but they see us [Jewish Israeli immigrants] as something else. I have a very good friend here, a Jewish guy, and he is white in every respect. So I say: if he is white, what are the differences between us? The only difference is that his grandparents emigrated from Poland to Canada and mine have emigrated from Poland to Israel. That’s it. We don’t have any genetic difference. We look similar. So if he is considered as a white person, I am white person too. But he once told me that I am ‘Olive’. Both of us have the same skin
colour, but because I am from the Middle East and more rough-acting than him, he
is somehow whiter than me.

Race, as a fabrication of identity that is constructed through various performances on the stage of
everyday life, is not a fixed entity. On the contrary, like gender, it is a temporal, situational,
historical and social product (Butler, 1990; 1993; Mahtani, 2002a; Ibrahim, 2004). Gur learns,
through his daily interactions with assimilated Ashkenazi Canadian born Jews in Toronto that the
old racial taxonomy that places Ashkenazim as the elites in Israel is irrelevant, and that only
Canadian-born Jews are allowed to be ‘white’; but, interestingly, his story also demonstrates
how, as Ahmed (2007) described, the idea of whiteness is not, as is commonly assumed, simply a
question of superficial features; indeed, whiteness cannot be simplified “to white skin or even to
‘something’ we can have or be” (159).

Rinat, a thirty-four year old psychologist of Polish and Bulgarian decent believes, like Gur, that
Israeli immigrants are seen as a non-white group in the eyes of Canadian–born assimilated Jews.
She stresses,

I feel like, for them [Canadian born Jews], we [Israeli immigrants] are coming from a
different culture. It’s like we are giving them a bad reputation. We are destroying their
reputation. We are like the black sheep of the family. It is very nice and idealistic [for
assimilated Canadian Jews] to love the Sabras from afar, but it is much less comfortable
when we are in their face. Suddenly we are here and they are forced to deal with us.
They say… when we are talking too loudly, or shoving, behaving uncivilized like
Israelis do, our behavior is projected badly on all Jews… It’s like, for them we are the
step brothers from the Middle East. We are their ‘Sand Niggers’.

Rinat believes that Canadian Jews love the Sabras (an Israeli-born Jew integrated into the
national Zionist culture), but that this love for the Sabras is only from afar, conditional on Sabras
staying in Israel. She feels that Canadian-born Jews treat Israeli immigrants in Toronto as their
‘step brothers’, or ‘Sand Niggers’ (a racial slur usually used against people of Middle Eastern
descent - sand indicating the popular geographical imagination of the Middle East as a desert
region). The mythical image of the Sabra- the heroic, brave, assertive, and self-confident Jewish
subject in Israel (see Almog, 2000) - is admired and valued among Zionist diasporic Jews
because this image projects well on their image in North America. According to Canadian
Jewish scholars, the image of the Sabra offers Canadian-born Jews an alternative subject
position to the anti-Semitic image of the diaspora Jew, helping them to “reshape the general image of bookish, nerdy Jews” (Weinfeld, 2001:34), and as such, it holds a “whitening appeal” (see Balsam, 2011). Indeed, the image of the brave, victorious Israeli soldier became a source of pride and prestige among Canadian and American Jewish communities following Israel’s quick victory in the 1967 “Six Day War” (see Tulchinsky 2008: 439; Troper, 2010: 164; Ben-Rafael and Ben-Haim, 2006:261; Sheffer, 2012). As American Jewish comedian Jerry Lewis joked after the war: “now we could get our nose back” (Quoted in Mendes-Flohr, 2010: 174).

Yet when Israelis move to Toronto, something seems to change in the eyes of Canadian Jews: their admirable sabra characteristics (‘Mediterranean’ behavioural codes, culture, values, norms, and ways of being) become a liability according to dominant Anglo-Canadian ones. As Canadian Jewish sociologist Gerald Gold has asserted, “the reputation of the resourceful Israeli merges with that of the stereotype of a displaced super-hero who, in a Canadian context is unpredictable and untrustworthy” (Gold, 1992: 236). When Israelis do not act “white” (with accordance to dominant white Anglo Canadian norms, for example, by shoving, and shouting), their behaviour is seen as projecting badly on all Jews living in Canada, undermining their fragile ‘white’ status.

The majority of Jewish immigrants from Israel do not, or cannot conform to one of the cornerstones of contemporary mainstream ‘white’ Jewish identity in Toronto, which involves cultural assimilation into Anglo-Saxon dominant culture (while maintaining vestigial familiarity with Eastern European Jewish histories and folklore, see Train, 2000; 2006).

In a different, and more geo-political vein, at the same time as the growing presence of Israeli immigrants is seen as posing a threat to the precarious whiteness of assimilated Ashkenazi Jews in Canada, for some, the departure of Jews from Israel and their permanent settlement in Toronto can be associated with a more global existential threat to Jewish collectivity in general. In popular mythology, the State of Israel is seen as the powerful guardian of physical and spiritual Jewish existence, and some also believe that Jews in the West are permitted to enter the realm of whiteness thanks to Israel’s racial contract with Western governments (Abu-Laban and Bakan, 2008; Bakan, 2014). Jews who leave Israel, are known by the derogatory Hebrew term Yordim (‘those who have descended’). They have broken the contract according to which the Jewish state protects the Jewish people, religion and culture against the threats of oppression and assimilation in the diaspora, while Jews abroad provide political and financial support for Israel
As Ya’akov (age 60) recounts in our interview,

When a [Canadian] Jew hears that you are from Israel he will say “why have you come here? You should stay there!” “Who will defend the country?” And when I ask what is it exactly that they are doing for Israel the answer is “we send money”. OK. You send money. But …I will die there defending the country. I already fought the wars. Why don’t you go there to defend the country? Where is your responsibility? …Do you get what I mean? He sends money, so he thinks that this makes him a better Jew than me.

The “blackening” of the Israeli Sabra in Toronto by assimilated Canadian born Jews, is intimately linked to multiple related threats to Jewish Ashkenazi whiteness in Canada. On the one hand, Israelis are viewed as people who behave too “Middle Eastern” to fit into Canadian Jewish norms. This reflects the collapse of Israeli-based racial categories (Mizrahi, Ashkenazi, mixed) in favour of “Israeli” as a racialized category, distinct from ‘Jewish’, reserved for Canadian-born Jews (it also, to some degree, reflects an interesting failure of the overall Zionist whitening project). On the other hand, Jewish Israelis who migrate away from Israel are seen as being ‘traitors’ who have broken an unspoken global contract by which Jews in the diaspora provide moral and financial support for Israel in exchange for guarantees of a strong Jewish state on the backs of Israelis themselves. These views demonstrate the complex dependencies between local Jewish whiteness (in Toronto) and transnational geo-political processes (global Jewish whiteness).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have illustrated the multiple and often contradictory processes of racialization affecting Israeli immigrants in Toronto, describing how the immigrants themselves use, reinforce, and subvert racial identities in a contextual way. For the Israeli participants in this chapter, all of whom are secular/masorti, educated, and middle class, Jewish ethnic markers of religious difference and socio-economic status are not the factors that potentially mark them out as ‘others’ by Canadians. Rather, it is on the basis of their nationality, mannerisms, accent, aesthetics, and only in some cases skin colour that these participants are made distant from Canadian dominant groups, including assimilated second and third-generation Jewish Canadians.
These Israeli immigrants are required to learn the largely unspoken rules of Canadian racial classification and are expected to internalize the social norms and established patterns of behaviour, not only in the Canadian white Anglo-Saxon space, but also in the “whitened” Jewish spaces in Canada that are dominated by highly assimilated Ashkenazi Jews.

The participants’ narratives illuminate the complex, unstable, and contradictory nature of the post-war transnational identity of ‘Ashkenazi whiteness’. Their experiences also challenge the permanence, universality and authority of the white identity’s hegemony over ‘Jewishness’. In fact, even Ashkenazi Israeli immigrants do not “naturally” and easily assimilate into local hegemonic constructions of Ashkenazi Jewish whiteness. In some cases, Israeli identity itself functions as a competing ethno-racial identification to Ashkenazi Jewish whiteness. At other times, immigrants who are less phenotypically ‘white’ or who are not of European background are able to capitalize on class position and on religious affiliation with the assimilated (‘white’) Jewish Canadian community in order to enter the realm of Toronto’s multicultural context with privilege.

Ashkenazi Jewish whiteness is thus a slippery and contingent location of privilege and power. It relies on historical, political and cultural contexts, and does not solely depend on European descent or skin colour, as is often perceived in Israel. At the same time, it is clear that Ashkenazi whiteness is not a stable location/identity, but rather a product of constant negotiation and performance that intersects strongly with other axes of difference such as class, religion, religiosity, nationality, and ethnicity. The participants confound the process through which hegemonic Jewish, Zionist, Ashkenazi whiteness is made in Israel, in Canada, and globally, illustrating that there are many ways to be a Jew.

While these findings are specific to Jewish immigrants from Israel living in Toronto, they also speak to the broader debates around the situatedness of race and whiteness, and their variation from one place to another. The call to study the spatiality and transnationality of race and whiteness in this way, has been made by various scholars within and outside human geography (e.g., Bonnett, 1997; 2000; Winant, 2000; Pulido, 2006; Glick Schiller et al., 2006; Nayak, 2007; Twine and Gallagher, 2008; HoSang and LaBennett, 2012; Levin-Rasky, 2012). It is becoming increasingly clear that human geographers must study the lived experiences of immigrants
themselves, while also considering the complex political aspects of racial dynamics at multiple scales. In giving space to the real-life stories of a group of Israeli immigrants that exemplify these complex links and processes, it is my hope that this chapter has answered their call.

As Bonnett (1997: 196) asserts, what ‘white’ looks like depends largely on what one is looking at, where one is looking from, and what one is looking through. In order to continue to dismantle the hegemonic positions of local and global whiteness and to expose it for what it really is – a constructed and unstable location of privilege – geographers must highlight and engage with these kinds of diverse lived experiences of race and whiteness amongst different groups. As this study shows, such engagement can be particularly fruitful when conducted among transnational immigrants whose identities are subject to material and discursive re-construction. The process of mobility itself, as feminist and anti-racist geographers have noted, incorporates and blends experiences of multiple places and specific power relationships around differences of gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, and nation (Kobayashi et al., 2013; Silvey, 2013: 416, see also Roth, 2012). Social/Cultural geographers are in an ideal position to explore the (re)productions and transformations of race and whiteness upon migration: how the construction of space, place and scale overlaps with the construction of racial-ethnic and immigrant identities and with racism itself (Liu, 2000), as well as the political and social possibilities that are associated with migration. As this chapter demonstrates, members of one ‘whitened’ group, the so called Jewish white ethnic group in Canada, in fact have differential access to and experiences of both racism and white privilege based on multiple factors, including class, nationality, level of religious observance, and gender, to name a few. Far from demonstrating ‘perfect’ absorption into invisible whiteness, the experiences of white racial privilege differ qualitatively from one hyphenated “ethno-white” group to another (Kolchin, 2002), and between different subjects within particular groups as well. The participant’s narratives speak to the theoretical limitation of the overarching category of “white ethnicity” and the need to think about this category more critically (Ansgnustou, 2013).

The refusal or inability of many Jewish Israeli immigrants to identify as whites in Canada, as the narratives show, speaks to the growing cultural, geographical, and racial diversity of Jews in Canada. Moreover, access to and desirability of joining (or refusing to join) racial white “invisibility” are real issues that need to be part of the progressive project of opening the
construction of “whiteness” to challenge and destabilization (Mahtani, 2014). Geographers are positioned uniquely to illustrate the variations in racial identifications and lived experience of members (especially new immigrants) of white ethnic groups in relation to geographies of mobility (Bonnett, 2000; Liu 2000). The refusal to assimilate into Canadian Jewish Ashkenazi whiteness by some of the participants speaks to the liabilities of whiteness, which challenge the position of whiteness on top of the racial hierarchy (Mahtani, 2014).
Chapter 5:
Practices and Spaces of Transnational Citizenship in Toronto

Introduction

[N]ormative conceptions of citizenship and empirical observations from a distance do not adequately explain changes, values, and meanings of contemporary citizenship. The contemporary scholarly debates on citizenship, immigration, and transnationalism thus need to pay closer attention to the positionalities, experiences, and emotional attachments of migrants (Leitner and Ehrkamp, 2006: 1630).

Within the vast geographical literature on citizenship, immigration, and transnationalism, only a few studies have focused on the perspectives of transnational migrants and their perceptions of citizenship, and on national and global belongings. Moreover, qualitative research methodologies, such as interviews and observations, have been marginal in citizenship studies (Kern, 2011: 41). Helga Leitner and Patricia Ehrkamp (2006) assert that contemporary scholars tend to talk about immigrants and citizenship, rather than talking with migrants about citizenship (1630). They call on scholars to examine the imaginings of citizenship that migrants enact through citizenship practices in their local and transnational lives, particularly in the context of post 9/11 assimilationist-security environments (Ehrkamp and Leitner 2006: 1591), believing that such studies “will yield a much deeper understanding of the ways that citizenship is lived, practiced, and reshaped” (Leitner and Ehrkamp, 2006: 1630). Moreover, in recent years feminist and anti-racist geographers have pushed for the exploration of social and cultural geographies of lived experience that engage with the racialized politics of emotions (Nayak, 2011, 550). Drawing from their work, Nayak (554) asserts that in the post 9/11 context, social and cultural geographers living in the “West” must engage with emotions when studying citizenship, belonging and race, as many of our ideas around them are figured through emotions, in particular, fear (see also Ahmed, 2001; 2004).

In this chapter I answer their call by looking at the imaginings and performances of citizenship of Jewish-Israeli activists in Toronto during pro-Israeli events (protests, rallies, and marches) held in Toronto’s public spaces, paying attention to the complex links between citizenship, race, and emotions (particularly fear). In recent years, these public events have galvanized attention in the
wider media, as they have become sites of (occasionally violent) clashes with local pro-Palestinian groups calling for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel. These have included large solidarity celebrations on Israeli independence day (with hundreds of participants) and smaller ones during Israeli military confrontations. They also include fundraising marches such as the United Jewish Appeal’s annual ‘Walk with Israel’, and counter-demonstrations against pro-BDS groups (stand-alone and in the context of wider public events such as the annual Toronto Pride Parade). These events usually draw 100-300 pro-Israeli participants.

I illustrate the affective meanings that active members within Toronto’s Israeli community assign to their political memberships, as well as the ways in which they use pro-Israeli public events to perform their loyalties to Israel and Canada, and to Western civilization more broadly. In particular, I am interested in the role of racialized hegemonic discourses, both national and global, in shaping the participants’ imaginations of their transnational citizenship, their motivations to join pro-Israeli public events in Toronto, and their performances during these events. The participants mostly speak about their identity as Israelis, and their fear of threats to Israel and to Jews, as motivators for participating in spatial performances of citizenship in Toronto. In my analysis, I choose to recognize the participants’ own agency in ascribing personal meaning to their citizenship identities and practices, without ignoring the hegemonic power of both the sending (Israel) and receiving (Canada) nation-states in their lives. My contribution to the existing literature is adding an understanding of race, fear and emotions, exploring spatialized public expressions of national citizenship (via demonstrations and events). In doing so, I elaborate on the implications of the politics of fear on the construction of citizenship and national belonging in the West, emotional politics whose implications for transnational citizenship have yet to be fully unpacked in geography literature.

I begin this chapter with a brief outline of the debates around citizenship and transnational migrants and the post 9/11 affective racialized politics of citizenship and nationhood. I then move to the substantive part of the analysis, which is split into two sections. In the first part I

---

62The global movement for a campaign of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israeli firms, organizations, and institutions, is intended to remain in effect “until Israel complies with international law and Palestinian rights”. It was initiated by Palestinian civil society in 2005, and is coordinated by the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC), established in 2007 (http://www.bdsmovement.net).
discuss the meanings that Israeli activists assign to their political memberships within Israeli and Canadian societies, as well as their motivations to join pro-Israeli events in the city alongside non-Israeli pro-Zionist Jews. The second section of the analysis looks at pro-Israeli public events as racialized spatial performances of “Western citizenship”, aimed at external audiences comprised of Jews in Israel and whites in Canada.

**Citizenship and transnational migrants**

In recent years, geographers and other thinkers have argued that the civil, political, and social meanings of citizenship are being redefined by processes of globalization and transnational migration (e.g., Guarnizo and Smith, 1998; Isin and Wood, 1999; Sassen, 2002; Smith, 2003; Purcell, 2003; Leitner and Ehrkamp, 2006; Dickinson et al., 2008; Cohen, 2007; 2011 among others). The traditional normative conception of citizenship is based on consensual membership in a single, territorially-bound nation-state. Within this framework individuals are imagined as political actors who “agree to a 'social contract' with the state in which they consent to be ruled in exchange for certain privileges and protections” (Rousseau, 1987; Locke, 1988; Kant, 1991; Rawls, 1971; 1993; cited in Purcell, 2003: 565). Memberships and solidarities with other political communities are seen as secondary to membership in the nation-state, leaving little room for multiple allegiances (Isin and Wood, 1999: 50; Purcell, 2003).

However, the increasing flows of migration, the recent changes brought by globalization, including global media and instant communication, and the rising influence of supranational institutions such as transnational corporations and NGOs, complicate such normative conceptions of citizenship. Contemporary migrants imagine and practice citizenship transnationally and flexibly. Their emotional ties and political loyalties encompass multiple places, as they participate in political practices in two or more nation-states, claiming rights and responsibilities to more than one government (Guarnizo and Smith, 1998; Ong, 1999; Yuval-Davis 1999; Smith, 2003; Nagel and Staeheli, 2004; Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2003; Staeheli and Nagel, 2006; Leitner and Ehrkamp, 2006; Preston et al., 2006; Cohen, 2011; Kobayashi et al., 2011).
There is a debate over the extent to which globalization and transnationalism have decoupled citizenship, identity, and political loyalty from the space of the nation-state. Some theorists argue that national identities are becoming increasingly unimportant, and that the nation-state is no longer capable of regulating citizenship in a meaningful way. They discuss the “decentering the nation state as a homogenous and homogenizing ‘master identity’” (Isin and Wood, 1999: 48). In this view, national identifications are being replaced, and in some cases override, in favour of the formation of significant political communities at the local and global scales (Sassen, 2002: 227; Purcell, 2003; 575). Dickinson et al. (2008) suggest that this re-scaling of citizenship has a transformative potential due to “the openness it has afforded, as the global circulation of people has delinked identity from nationhood and disrupted the isomorphism of culture, people and place” (102).

Widening geographies of citizenship notwithstanding, some scholars are far more cautious of eulogizing the death of national identity. Michael Peter Smith (2003), for example, points to a paradox, whereby the growth in transnational connections has in fact strengthened the links between nation-states and their citizens in other parts of the world (19). In an attempt to sustain essentialist national ideologies, nation states are re-asserting control over the political identifications, attachments, affiliations, and participation of their trans-migrant citizens (ibid: Guarnizo and Smith 1998; Cohen, 2007). Moreover, critical race feminist scholars argue that despite growing globalization, the significance of national identities in Canada and throughout the West is being maintained and strengthened by the neo-liberal reintroduction of racialized ideologies of nationhood and by geo-political alliances forming along similar lines, particularly following the events of 9/11 and the initiation of the so-called ‘War on Terror’ (e.g., Cowen, 2005; Arat Koc, 2005; Razack, 2007).

Recent empirical studies in geography on transmigrants’ own perspectives demonstrate that the polyvalence of political identities, allegiances, and practices does not erase national-territorial identifications and meaning systems (Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2003: 144; Nagel and Staeheli, 2004: 14; Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2006: 1593). Migrants are often involved in complex negotiations between multiple and sometimes conflicting national identities, loyalties, and commitments. They express a desire to become formal national citizens in their new country of residence, while maintaining their “old” citizenship status, thereby participating in more than one national
community. Interestingly, national identity and commitment to the sending state figure prominently, even as migrants plan for a future in their host country (Staeheli and Nagel, 2006; Leitner and Ehrkamp, 2006). Nationalism thus remains a powerful imagery that frames people's perception of their social and political space and identity (Isin and Wood, 1999:155).

Israeli geographer Nir Cohen (2011) has found such sentiments to be strong among active members of the Israeli community in Los Angeles. His ethnographic study suggests that Israeli immigrants desire to be recognized as national citizens outside of state territory, and use the “Israeli Independence Day Festival” as a material space through which they negotiate their rights and duties associated with Israeli emigrant citizenship. Cohen describes an extra-territorial citizenship contract between Israeli emigrants and the Israeli state, according to which Israeli emigrants can enjoy rights and entitlements (e.g., educational and cultural services for them and their children, delivered abroad) in exchange to their uncompromising commitment, loyalty, and solidarity to the Israeli state through material displays of identification and active participation in events supporting and valorising the homeland.

What all of these studies suggest is that transnational spaces are not free from the hegemonic power of nation-states. At the same time, these scholars suggest that the notion of citizenship must be expanded beyond its formal, abstract, aspects, illustrating that citizenship is much more than simply a static legal or political status or a bundle of rights and responsibilities conferred by the state. Citizenship is also a social practice that individuals engage in beyond the institutions of the nation-state (Isin and Wood, 1999: 4; Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2006: 1594). Furthermore, while citizenship is understood as the primary formal indicator of national belonging, its granting by the state does not necessarily imply a communal will to include all citizens equally.

For transmigrants, citizenship is a process of claiming rights and negotiating between multiple national identities, loyalties, and commitments; it is a process that can be practiced through civic participation and actions (Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2006: 1594; Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2003).

---

63 In the last two decades Israel, as many with other sending states, has trans-nationalized citizenship and nationhood (Guarnizo and Smith, 1998: 8; Smith, 2003, Cohen, 2007). The Israeli state has initiated large number of new outreach programs and the provision of services in several points of settlement (including Toronto) in an attempted to ‘recapture’ the investments, remittances, and loyalties of its citizens living abroad, counterbalancing their affiliations in and identification with other, competing communities (Cohen, 2007).
Contrary to the abstract notions of citizenship as a static entity, such practices of citizenship have spatialities. For most transnational migrants, citizenship as a set of practices is, like most migrants themselves, grounded at the urban scale (Isin and Siemiatycki, 2002; Purcell 2003; Fenster 2005). Global cities, in particular, are key sites in which social relations are produced, reproduced, and transformed, and in which different groups negotiate, contest, and redefine citizenship (Holston and Appadurai, 1996:1; Isin and Wood, 1999:160; Sandercock, 1998; Isin, 2002; Staeheli, 2003; Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2003; 2006). As Isin (2002) notes,

The city is the battle ground through which groups define their identities, stake their claims, wage their battles, and articulate citizenship rights and obligations. The city as an object of thought and experience emerges out of these practices and has neither the unity, nor the cohesion, nor the shape that has been attributed to it. The city as a difference machine relentlessly provokes, differentiates, positions, mobilizes, immobilizes, oppresses, liberates. Being political arises qua the city and there is no political being outside the machine (50).

The public spaces of the city – such as the street and the square – are spaces for groups’ struggles over visibility, recognition, and rights associated with becoming ‘public’ citizens (Mitchel, 2003:129; see also Young, 1990; Ruddick, 1996; Kohn, 2004; Wood and Gilbert 2005; Watson, 2006). Public spaces are also where groups perform alignment with, and separation from, others in order to create solidarity and differentiation. Such spaces are where citizens “become political” (Isin, 2002: 44).

Immigrants’ appropriations of public space for transnational public events (e.g., patriotic demonstrations, national cultural festivals, and religious rituals) allow for the assertion and the performance of multiple political memberships and belonging in relation to dominant narratives of race and nation (see for example, Alamillo, 2003; Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2003:136; Veronis, 2006; 2007; Cohen, 2011; Ashutosh, 2013; Oosterbaan, 2014; Hatziprokopiou and Evergeti, 2014; Saint-Blancat and Cancellieri, 2014). In this view, public space is also an active arena in

---

64 The renewed focus on the relationship between citizenship practices and urban space is intimately linked to the *downscaling of citizenship* to the subnational scales such as municipalities, neighbourhoods, regions, and districts based on the right to the city. Geographers Mark Purcell (2003) and Tovi Fenster (2005) draw from Lefebvre’s (1996) definition of belonging to a political community as based on “the right to the city”, rather than on formal citizenship status. In the right to the city, all urban dwellers have a say in any decision that contributes to producing space in the city they inhabit (Purcell, 2003: 577). A related concept is *urban citizenship* which refers to individuals’ and groups’ enactment of everyday claims on the city and their sense of belonging and attachment to it (e.g., Isin and Siemiatycki, 2002; Fenster, 2005; Fenster and Visel, 2006; Veronis, 2006; 2007; Kern, 2011).
which scripted social racialized identities are negotiated, confirmed or challenged (Ruddick, 1996:141). Encounters in public spaces, in particular, are where people begin to understand themselves and their place in a racialized hierarchy through the gaze of others (136), and likewise where they confirm or challenge such appraisals by enacting “racial performances” (Mahtani, 2002a: 427-8). As such, encounters and performances in public spaces have enormous impact on the formation of subjective identities of individuals as being either “white” or “non-white” (Ruddick, 1996: 139). Yet, the kinds of work that geographers have, to date, produced on transnational spatial practices of citizenship in Western cities don’t engage with the significance of these racialized politics of emotion. As the following sections shows, this is an important gap, which I attempt to close drawing from interviews.

**Affective racialized politics of citizenship and nationhood**

Politics… has as much to do with the constitution and organization of affectivity, memory and desire as it has with consciousness and resistance. The embodied self, sexuality, memory and the imagination are crucial to the making of political subjectivity (Braidotti, 2000 quoted in Koivunen, 2000:7).

Group identities are invested in stories and histories that play out in emotionally volatile politics, but very rarely do we think about the space of emotions in politics and political relations (Georgis, 2007; 243)

In her book “The Cultural Politics of Emotions” (2004), Sara Ahmed offers a political reading of the sociality of emotions. Ahmed rejects the popular understanding of emotions as private psychological dispositions that reside positively within individuals, and then move outwards towards others. She argues that emotions run the other way around. They come from the outside and move inwards. This not to say that we should focus exclusively on the social, as Ahmed (2004:10) emphasizes that “emotions are not ‘in’ either the individual or the social”, nor they are “psychological and social, individual and collective”. Rather, emotions mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual (bodily space) and the collective (social space), by producing “the very surfaces and boundaries that allow the individual and the social to be delineated as if they were objects” (Ahmed, 2004: 10). The idea that emotions are political, rather than private, is central to the work of feminist and anti-racist geographers. Work
on so-called ‘geographies of emotions’ illustrates that we in fact live our social relations through emotions, such that “emotional relations shape society and space” (Anderson and Smith 2001: 9 in Nayak, 2011: 554). Ahmed asserts that emotions mediate the attachments that bind individuals to wider collectives. According to Ahmed (2004: 71-2), fear, in particular, is crucial for the formation of collectives and has a strong binding force (see also Georgis, 2007). Fear works to collect, or assemble bodies and nations into formation against other bodies that are perceived as potential threats (Ahmed, 2004: 64, 77). It does not only mediate the binding of communities, but also works to preserve their existing forms, in processes that play out at multiple and intersecting material and imaginative scales - local, regional, national, international and global (Nayak, 2011).

Emotions of hate and fear situate racialized immigrants/asylum seekers’ bodies as strangers to the Western national polity (ibid; Ahmed, 2001; 2004; Razack, 2007). In a particularly well known example of this process playing out, Nayak (2007) discusses the role of emotion in mediating such ‘strangeness’ through the response of Western nation-states following the September 2001 terror attacks in the United States: “(I)n the post-9/11 landscape it is futile to ignore how fear shape attitudes to nation-state policy and global security” (Nayak, 2011: 554). It is also difficult to ignore how fear in turn shapes everyday geographies in significant ways (see also Hopkins 2007). Indeed, the spatialized and racialized ‘doing’ of emotions (Ahmed, 2001, 2004; Nayak, 2011) is nowhere more apparent than in the Western political response to the 2001 attacks. Ahmed (2004:74) discusses the ways in which the generation and intensification of a threat moved individuals to align themselves with their nation being under attack. Not only the attacks themselves, but more so the responses to those attacks, mediated the ‘sticking together’ of industrialised Western nations and their allies - including Israel and Canada- in what was falsely framed as a morally just, rational, and ‘race-blind’ war of the enlightened ‘Judeo-Christian’ West against irrational / hateful Islamic terrorism (Ahmed, 2004: 78; Moreton-Robinson et al., 2008: xi; Frankenberg, 2005; Cowen, 2005:673; Abu-Laban and Bakan, 2008). Much has been written about the issues with such portrayal as regards global racial formations vis-à-vis Arabs and Muslims, but, as I will discuss, this framing also involves a number of novel and problematic constructions with respect to the framing of the role of Jews, and of Israeli Jews, which have been less explored.
On the domestic front, post 9/11 narratives of citizenship, nationality and security in policy discussions and media representations have portrayed Western liberal nations as vulnerable to abuse by their very openness to non-white, non-western Others. The transnational identities, allegiances, and practices of legal and illegal non-white and non-Western migrants have been linked to the threat of terrorism and the erosion of white and Western national culture (Ahmed, 2004; Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2006; Nagel and Staeheli, 2006; Dhammon and Abu-Laban, 2009:163). Such attitudes towards racialized Others in Western societies, though pre-dating the 9/11 attacks (Tesfahuney, 1998: 502; Isin and Wood, 1999), have come to be understood as something the Western state must do to preserve itself (Razack, 2007: 8), thus justifying the increased suspicion, hostility, and violence directed towards non-white, non-western bodies. Sedef Arat Koc (2005) describes a transnational retreat from multiculturalism, arguing that Canadian national identity and belonging is being “re-whitened”, or re-defined along civilizational lines, in accordance with an imagined set of common “Western” markers and values of rationality, morality, democracy, modernity and liberalism.

The re-whitening of Canadian identity is intimately linked to the notion of war, or a “clash” between two civilizations – the (supposedly ‘Judeo-Christian’) Western world and the mythologized Islamic world. Writers, politicians, and political commenters in “the West” explain the 9/11 terrorist attacks as an act of war by murderous Islamists against Western societies and their shared values of freedom and democracy (Arat-Koc 2005: 34; Thobani, 2007:177).

Within this framework, Muslims, Arabs, and people of Middle Eastern appearance are collapsed into a singular category of non-white otherness, representing a single geo-political mass, and associated with the terrorist threat and the demise of western cultural values in general (Ahmed, 2004: 75; Gilroy, 2004: 58-9; Mamdani, 2005; Rana, 2011; Razack, 2007; Abu-Laban and Bakan, 2008). In public, political and media arenas post 9/11, the national loyalty of Muslim-

---

65 Arat Koc (2005) views this trend as an explicit reassertion of Canadian white settler identity that is revealing of the racial hierarchies found within Canadian multiculturalism and citizenship (see also Kobayashi 1993, Bannerji, 2000; Mahtani, 2002b; Razack, 2002:2-4; Francis, 2011). Indeed, Western modern liberal national citizenship is intimately linked to imperialism and Orientalism and has always been based on hierarchies of people that “range from religious, to racial, to economic” (Isin and Wood: 50-56; Said, 1993; Isin, 2002: 3-4).

66 The ‘clash of civilizations’ thesis promoted by writers and political commentators such as Bernard Lewis (1990) and Samuel Huntington (1996), amongst others, gained popularity following the 9/11 attacks. The thesis was criticized by many anti-colonial scholars for reducing complex geo-political relations into a ‘cultural battle’ between homogenous racialized civilizations (Mamdani, 2005; Abu-Laban and Bakan, 2008), and for being a contemporary version of 19th century raciology (Gilroy, 2004:22).
Canadians is called into question and they became the chief targets of new national anti-terrorist measures as well as hate crimes (Arat Koc, 2005; Razack, 2007; Dhammon and Abu-Laban, 2009; Jiwani, 2010; 2012; Perigoe and Eid, 2014). The escalation in Anti-Muslim and Anti-Arab discourse throughout the west has contributed to the solidification of a tripartite racialized structure of religions, with Jews lodged in the middle, absorbed into the relatively new political amalgam known as ‘Judeo-Christianity’ (Kaye–Kantarowitz, 2001).

Re-alignment of Jewish citizenship

The idea of a ‘Judeo-Christian’ geopolitical camp has, for most of the history of the Jews in Christian spaces, been rather far-fetched. This is where Zionism – the hegemonic political movement associated with the Israeli state – has entered the picture in the last century or so. Zionism has, from its inception, embodied desires to ‘rebuild the Jew’ as a way of moving Jews from their current position of racialization in the Western Christian popular imagination towards one of citizenship in the ‘community of nations’ (Said, 1978; 1979 [1992]:68-9; Shohat, 1988; Goldberg, 2009: 115-17). One particular manifestation of this has been re-styling Jews, via links to and power in the Middle East, as a natural ally of the Christian West. This process has involved a re-calibration of Jewish identity vis-à-vis those (particularly Arabs and Muslims) with whom Jews were previously identified. As the Palestinian scholar Edward Said (1978) has noted: “by Zionism “Semitics” were split into two: one Semitic, the European Zionist Jew, became an Orientalist, and the other Semitic, the Arab, was forced to become the Orientalized” 68 (306).

With the establishment of the European-oriented Jewish settler state of Israel in the Arab Middle

---

67 The breeding of children, body hygiene, and physical activity were also means in rebuilding the new Jew (see Falk, 2006: 25; 78; Sand, 2009:2 48-252; Blum, 2008: 134; Yosef, 2004; Hirsch, 2008).

68 Palestinian-American literary theorist Edward Said’s (1978; 1979) work highlight Jews’ anomalous position vis-à-vis Orientalism after the rise of Zionism. He argues that while Jews were originally objects of Orientalist discourse, they became participants in the Orientalist project in the modern period. Indeed, as was mentioned in chapter 3, early European Jewish Zionists aspired to rebuild Judaism as consistent with Christian Western sensibilities, dispositions, and values (Goldberg, 2009: 115-116; see also Shohat, 1998; Yosef, 2004; Chinsky, 2002; Falk, 2006; Sand, 2009). For example, Theodore Herzl (1860-1904), popularly known as the founder and “father” of Zionism, called for the establishment of a Western-style capitalist-democratic state with the support of imperial patrons such as England or Germany (Shohat, 1988:23). Herzl wrote in his diary: “the Anti-Semitics will become our most loyal friends, the Anti-Semitic countries will be our allies” (in Segev, 2001:21). Yet, as Ella Shohat (1988; 2003) illustrates Arab-Jewish/ Mizrahi victims of Zionism, complicate this historical shift.
East in 1948, and the growing legitimacy of Zionism in Western hegemony over the next few decades, Jews overcame the Oriental Semitic Other-ness with which they were for so long associated (Kalmar –Davidson, 2013:504), and have become increasingly absorbed into the construct of a single “Judeo-Christian” identity that has permitted many into whiteness (Bakan, 2014; also see previous chapter). Yet, though the paradoxes outlined by Said are now history, another related paradox has emerged regarding Jews’ and Israelis’ racial position. This is the paradox that Israelis clearly occupy a structural position of whiteness in the racial hierarchy of the Middle East (Goldberg, 2009: 116-17) despite the fact that a majority of Jewish Israelis have their roots in the Arab/Muslim world.

A number of factors have contributed to the strengthening of new geo-political alliances with respect to Israel (and by extension, Jews). Building on the ‘whitening’ mission of Zionism, the contemporaneous incidence of a large number of Palestinian suicide bombings during the Al-Aqsa Intifada (the second Palestinian uprising from the fall of 2000) with the terrorist attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001, was an opportunity for the Israeli government to demonstrate to the Western public that Israel and the West share a common battle against Islamic terrorism. Successive Israeli government regimes have aligned themselves with the American-European West in the global ‘war on terror’ through the incorporation of the Israel/Palestine conflict as one of the forefront battles in the “clash of civilizations” between the constructed Judeo-Christian West and the Muslim World (Abu Laban and Bakan, 2008; Gregory, 2004; Thobani, 2010).

In a number of cases, this has meant that anti-Westernism has become discursively tied to (new) anti-Semitism. For example, in mainstream North American media, the victimization of Americans in the 9/11 terrorist attacks was often equated with that of Jews in Israel by the Israeli state, pro-Zionist lobby groups, and Western Feminists (see Joseph et al., 2008; Thobani, 2007; Perioge and Eid, 2014). In exchange for this solidarity, Israel and Jews were further incorporated into the narrative of Judeo-Christian Western identity, therefore affirming a central goal of the Zionist project to re-build a new and western white Jewish identity. Paradoxically, pro-Zionist Israelis adopt a Eurocentric Orientalist point of view about Muslims in order to affirm their superiority and heroism, at the same time that they assert their victimization by their Arab
enemies by drawing on Jews’ own historical experiences of Orientalisation and racial anti-Semitism.

The post 9/11 global racialized public discourses thus situate Muslims and Jews unequally in the Western national polity, and differentiate their symbolic and material access to citizenship rights and to urban public space (Ruddick, 1997; Ahmed, 2004; Razack, 2007). Moreover, as will be elaborated over the next two sections, the racialized politics of fear inform the values and meanings that Israeli activists assign to their national citizenship in Israel and in Canada; their motivations to join pro-Israeli public events in Toronto; and their performances during these events.

**Israeli activist’s imaginings of citizenship and motivations to join pro-Israeli events**

In what ways do collective histories of fear shape the meanings that active members of the Israeli community assign to their Israeli and Canadian citizenship and their participation in pro-Israeli public events in Toronto? When I asked Ron, a forty-five year old engineer, why he participates in these events, he states,

> I have left Israel. Now I am living here and I have my Canadian citizenship, and Canada has a great relationship with Israel, and most Canadians like the Jews, and really, everything is really nice for me here. But I know from our history that without Israel, my Canadian citizenship means nothing - I can throw it into the garbage. Israel is our back here if we want to admit it or not. My greatest fear is that we will lose Israel to the Arabs and will be back to square one, helpless, like in the period of the Holocaust. Who can promise that it won’t happen to us again? Where would we go? Who will accept us? Did you now that even Canada also refused to accept Jews during the Holocaust? What will happen if tomorrow Canada will have a Muslim prime Minister?

Ron, an Ashkenazi middle class skilled immigrant with dual citizenship, believes that Canadian citizenship is valuable (or valid) only when the existence of the Jewish state is fully secured, telling me that to be Jew in Canada requires Israel having our “back”. For Ron, the close political ties between the Canadian and Israeli governments are responsible for the fact that the majority of Canadians tolerate Jews living amongst them. Moreover, Ron is certain that Israel is the only state that can provide Jews with an immediate shelter in case they are persecuted again. Ron
refers to the Holocaust, and in particular, to the situation of European Jews at the height of their persecution by the Nazis as the ultimate proof that Jews would never be safe, regardless of their citizenship status, without the existence of a legally defined Jewish state (i.e. that citizenship status outside the Jewish state has proven to be precarious)\(^69\). He is convinced that if and when a second Holocaust occurs, Jews will remain without shelter as historically, “even Canada” refused entry of Jews into its national territories (Abella and Troper, 1983)\(^70\). Of particular interest to me is how Ron implicitly identifies the Arabs/Muslims as the future carriers of the Anti-Semitic threat. He fears that Canada will have a Muslim prime Minister in the future. With this statement, he connects what he has learned growing up in Israel to be the ultimate threat for Jewish survival to his life in Canada.

The connection that Ron draws between “Muslims” and the anti-Semitic threat is informed by the longstanding public discourse in Israel, which has connected the Arab-Israeli conflict both to religion and to the past trauma of the Holocaust. Indeed, the Holocaust functions as a filter through which Israelis interpret global and domestic political and social crisis. The memory of the Holocaust, still strong on a personal level amongst the dominant Ashkenazi minority in Israel, is also often utilized by official voices as a political tool to bond Jews and to explain the state’s security problems\(^71\) (Zandberg, 2006:66; Segev, 2001: 81-85). Introduced to children at an early age, the lesson of the Holocaust (as communicated in the education system and the army) is that a strong Jewish state is the only solution to the perpetual, even eternal danger of

---

\(^69\) Perhaps the most radical historical example of the precariousness of citizenship for Jews is in the context of the legislation that stripped Jews from their citizen rights and all of their assets following the rise of the German Nazi government in 1933; that this process culminated in the attempted extermination of ‘the Jewish race’ and the death of six million Jewish civilians undoubtedly adds considerable emotional weight.

\(^70\) In *None is Too Many*, Irving Abella and Harold Troper (1983) examine the measures taken by the Canadian government to prevent Jewish refugees from Europe from entering the country before, during, and after the Nazi Holocaust, and the general indifference of the Canadian public (especially in Quebec) towards the plight of the Jews in Europe. In 1938, Canada, along with 31 other countries, refused to accept any further Jewish refugees, justified by the economic depression conditions of the 1930s. In May 1939, Canada (as well as Cuba, Uruguay, Paraguay and the United States) refused entry to the 907 Jewish refugees aboard the S.S. St. Louis, forcing the ship to return to Nazi Europe. Abella and Troper (1983,xx) present a record of only 5,000 Jews entering Canada as refugees between 1933 – 1945, less than in any other large nations of immigrants outside Europe. By comparison, the US admitted 200,000 Jewish refugees during the twelve years of Nazi terror. Argentina accepted 50,000, Brazil 27,000, and Australia, 15,000 Jewish refugees at the same period.

\(^71\) A current example is Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu’s rhetoric about Iran’s nuclear project as a tool for carrying out a second Jewish Holocaust. See: [http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/netanyahu-iran-preparing-for-another-holocaust-1.496684](http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/netanyahu-iran-preparing-for-another-holocaust-1.496684)
global anti-Semitism, and that such a state must be preserved as an “insurance policy” to protect against such danger not only within Israel, but around the world⁷² (Balsam, 2011:86).

Such perspective allows us to see Ron’s beliefs as not merely a matter of trans-generational trauma, but as a reflection of the Zionist public Holocaust discourse within Israel as well. Ron, as with many other Israeli activists in Toronto, including those who didn’t have direct familial links to the Holocaust, perceives his participation in Pro-Israeli public events as part of his moral duty to guarantee that another Holocaust will never happen. The ethos of “Never Again” has long been “a discursive pillar among Jewish communities in Israel and around the world” (Georgis, 2005:255). Many Canadian-born Jews, a large proportion of whom have direct familial links to the Holocaust, are exposed to the Zionist public Holocaust discourse from an early age. They read the Israeli pro-Zionist narrative through a similar filter as their co-religionists in Israel⁷³ (Weinfield, 2001; 102-3; Habib, 2004; Fogell, 2006; Troper, 2010). For example, during the crisis of the June war/“the Six Day War” in 1967, both Jews in Israel (Segev, 2001:85) and Canadian Jews (Troper, 2010:164) expressed their fear of a second Holocaust pending, and a subsequent sense of moral duty to support the Jewish state.

Ron, among other Israeli activists interviewed for this study, struggles to identify with Canadian-born Jews. However, the shared fear of losing Israel, reflective of traumatic memories of Jewish

⁷² The message that the fate of the Jewish people is unique is central to Israeli public and educational discourse. This message is communicated by downplaying the 6 million non-Jewish victims of the Nazi Genocide (e.g., Russians, Gypsies, Slavs; socialists, disabled people, LGBT people, black and ‘mixed race’ people, and religious minorities), as well as on other genocides of racialized nations (i.e., Cambodians, Namibians, Rwandans, Congolese, Sudanese, and Armenians). The Armenian genocide is officially unrecognized by the Israeli state. Mahmood Mamdani (2005) explains that “the fate of the Jewish people was unique - but only in Europe” (7), as similar genocides in their magnitude have occurred in Colonial Africa, for example, during the early 20th century. Nevertheless, due to race and geo politics, these events have not gained the same attention in the Western Christian community (see also Howard-Hassmann, 2005: 491)

⁷³ Similar to the process that occurred in Israel, since the 1960s Holocaust memorialization has gradually become a central element of identity among Jewish communities in Canada (and elsewhere). Following the crisis-followed-by-victory of the 1967 war, Zionism and Israel became the focal point around which Canadian Jewish communal organizations rally in solidarity, and a source of national pride. Jewish institutions and public forums have made support of Israel a civic religion around which to build a modern secular Jewish identity and encourage connection to Israel through philanthropy, education, tourism, lobbying, and business ventures (Troper, 2010: 164; Tulchinsky 2008: 439; Mendes-Flohr, 2010; Ben-Rafael and Ben-Haim, 2006:261; Sheffer , 2012). Recent studies have theorized the active political and economic support of non-Israeli Canadian Jews for the maintenance of the State of Israel as a Jewish state as a special type of ‘Diaspora nationalism’ (see Habib, 2004), or ‘Diaspora Zionism’ (see Balsam, 2011).
loss (Georgis, 2009: 250), functions as glue that temporarily binds him to otherwise culturally different Jewish communities. As Ron stresses:

These [pro-Israel solidarity events] are the only occasions that Canadians [Canadian Jews] and Israelis really come together. It is sad, but I really do feel that way. We [Israelis] don’t really have much in common with them [Canadian Jews] when it comes to our culture and interest besides Israel […] When it comes to supporting Israel I think that they [Canadian Jews] are really great. I can feel their true love for Israel and it warms my heart. I feel more connected to them [because of this].

Ron argues that Canadian-born Jews have only a few things in common with Jewish-Israeli immigrants. However, during pro-Israeli events he feels a strong emotional bond with Pro-Zionist Jewish Canadians. For Ron, public events of joint Jewish support of the Israeli state are moments of unity, where intra-Jewish cultural differences become irrelevant.

Pro-Israeli public events in Toronto are also moments in which intra-Jewish racialized divisions and tensions are transcended. As Dina, a fifty-eight year old travel agent describes,

I go to every demonstration against Israel, like when [the BDS movement attempted to] ban Israeli wine [from the state-run liquor stores]. My friends and I came with our big bikes to the store with Israeli flags. We bought all the [Israeli] wine and danced outside the store.

She goes to argue that,

You know, many Canadian Jews remain silent, and silence is admitting that you are guilty, and there is also the image of the “weak Jew”. So we want to come from a place of power, to break this image of the Jew that is going to the concentration camp, to change the way that the average Canadian thinks of Jews […] We are demonstrating as Jews, before we are Israelis. You know, Hitler went four generations back. He didn’t care if you are an Ashkenazi Jew or a Mizrahi Jew.

Dina believes that when Jews don’t stand up and speak out against the claims made by Palestinian solidarity groups in Toronto (which she feels are false), they tacitly admit both their ‘guilt’ and their passivity. They verify the longstanding anti-Semitic Jewish stereotypes - that Jews are unable to stand up and fight against libelous claims. She explicitly refers to the image of the Jews during the Holocaust as people who were passively led by the Nazis’ to the gas chambers - “like a flock of sheep to the slaughter” (“Nechnesu K’tzon L’tevah”). This is an image that took hold among Zionist Jews in Palestine during and after the Holocaust, and that
still circulates among Jewish Israelis. Dina refuses passivity, seeing it as a sign of historical Jewish vulnerability. She participates in Pro-Israeli public events in order to demonstrate Jewish strength and evoke Jewish national (Zionist, masculine, and white) pride in Canada.

Of particular interest is that Dina explicitly refers to the fact that the Nazis didn’t distinguish between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews in applying their “Final Solution”. Earlier in her interview, Dina shared her everyday experience of racialization as a woman of a Jewish-Yemenite descent within the established Ashkenazi dominant Jewish community of Toronto. However, for the sake of resisting against what she sees as a common vulnerability, she suspends intra-Jewish racialized differences and divides (Shohat, 1988; 2001a; Train, 2006; Levine-Rasky, 2008; Haynes, 2013, Greenberg, 2013) by performing a Jewish identity that does not reflect her Mizrahi experience.

There are number of ways in which Dina’s refusal of vulnerability and performance of solidarity can be read. The first is related to Dina being a Mizrahi minority member within the Jewish minority in Toronto. Participation in Pro-Israeli events with other members of the local Jewish community, is a way for Dina to construct and perform her Jewish belonging. In order to be considered part of the Jewish national collective, Mizrahi Jews across the world are expected to partake in a mainstream Eurocentric historical narratives of the Holocaust and of Jewish identity more generally. Like many other Jews, and despite her non-European Jewish heritage, Dina’s solidarity involves internalizing visceral memories “of cattle cars packed to the top by our people” (Kaye/Kantarowitzh 1992:78), which informs her thinking “in terms of ‘my people’ and ‘our enemies’” (ibid).

In a second reading, Dina’s views can be related to her Israeli upbringing. According to Georgis (2009), within the Israeli nation’s logic, survival is imagined by way of aggressive resistance and refusal of vulnerability (250). Dina’s sense of solidarity links performance of defiance (such as dancing with Israeli flags in front of a BDS demonstration) with a desire to express strength in

74 The tragedy of the Holocaust barely affected Mizrahi Jewry, although the “Final Solution” did extend to both Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews in the parts of North Africa under Italian and French Fascist rule, including my own parents in Libya. Yet even this Mizrahi dimension to the Holocaust remains mostly absent from the culture surrounding Holocaust remembrance.
the face of a perceived existential threat, and to take ownership of the fight against anti-Semitism on behalf of all Jews.

Most of the activists that I interviewed explicitly referred to pro-Palestinian BDS groups as anti-Semitic, thus viewing their own political activities as defensive and morally justified. Many of these confrontations were described as playing out in public spaces. A well-known example of this has been the public debate surrounding the participation of the group ‘Queers against Israeli Apartheid’ (QuAIA), which strategically identifies Israel as an apartheid state (see Bakan and Abu-Laban, 2009), in the Annual Toronto LGBT Pride Parade since 2010.

When I asked Michael, a thirty-five year old insurance agent, about the reason for his involvement in pro-Israeli public events he stressed:

It all started when I read about these groups [BDS groups] in “Shalom Toronto” [a local Hebrew-language newspaper] a few years ago. It was around the time that the whole issue of the Pride Parade exploded and it was all over the news. I remember reading the article in Shalom Toronto and getting very anxious about these supposed Muslim “peace groups” going around telling people that Israel is an “Apartheid state”, doing everything they can possibly do to destroy us, as always. It suddenly hit me that…. you just realize that even here in Toronto, walking among us, are very dangerous anti-Semitic groups. They are all over the place. As a Jew living in Canada, I felt that it is my duty to go out there and confront them so they won’t gain more power.

The 2010 Annual Pride Parade was marked by wide public debate surrounding the participation of QuAIA. In May of that year, “Pride Toronto” announced that it would censor the term ‘Israeli apartheid’ from the parade in response to pressure from the municipality (which funds the parade via an annual cultural grant) and from pro-Israeli lobby groups. A wave of resistance from the LGBTQ community and allies succeeded in reversing the ban during that year, and QuAIA were in the end permitted to march without censorship. In response, local pro-Israeli Jewish organizations (including the LGBTQ Jewish group Kulanu) mobilized around 250 pro-Zionist members to march in support of Israel. Michael was one of the marchers in the pro-Israeli group that year.

Though he does not identify as LGBTQ, Michael chose to join a pro-Zionist group in the Parade in part because he recognized the public visibility of this event, and thus its significance in the fight for public opinion. In his interview, Michael explained that Pride was an opportunity for
him to show the broader Torontonian public that Israel is not an Apartheid state, but rather a tolerant and liberal country to its minorities, “as much as Canada”. Participation in Pride – a mega-event that draws one million people to the streets of downtown Toronto and widely covered by the media - was seen by Michael (as well as by other participants) as a platform to “inform the public that Israel is the only country in the Middle East that protect LGBTQ rights”.

As Alon, a forty-four year old interior designer and self-identified gay man told me:

People need to know that we are the good guys here, and that Tel Aviv is the only place in the Middle East in which one can be openly gay.

Messages that treat LGBTQ rights as signifiers of Israel as a modern, liberal, democratic. Western country in an otherwise primitive, homophobic, sexist, and non-democratic region are in line with public relations campaigns sponsored by the Israeli foreign ministry in recent years which have branded Israel as gay-friendly state. Israel is positioned as a safe haven for Palestinian queers, and Tel Aviv as a gay travel destination. Such branding efforts have in turn been criticized by BDS activists as examples of “Pinkwashing”, of sanitizing of Israel’s image by use of progressive-seeming narratives (Schulman, 2011; Puar, 2013). Puar (2013), in particular, connects this to a global trend she names “homonationalism”. She uses this term to refer to “the historical convergence of state practices, transnational circuits of queer commodity culture and human rights paradigms, and broader global phenomena such as the increasing entrenchment of Islamophobia” (2013:337). As Puar (2013) argues, Pinkwashing only makes sense as a political strategy within the Islamophobic discourse of a ‘clash of civilizations’.

Claims to gender equality and LGBTQ rights are part of ideological attempts to define the civilizational distinctness of "the West" from the Islamic world, with the latter often depicted as uniquely patriarchal and violent. Such claims serve as emblems of Western values of freedom and democracy, often in the service of imperialist and colonial projects and policies, including in Israel/Palestine (Thobani, 2010; Puar, 2013; Abu-Laban and Bakan, 2008; see also Arat Koc, 2005; Razack, 2007). As many have pointed out, behind Israeli Pinkwashing stands an imperfect record of defending and legislating LGBTQ rights and treatment of Palestinian asylum seekers,
and a narrow, reductive framework of human rights that disconnect forms of violence, oppression and struggles from each other\(^7\) (Puar, 2013: 338).

All of the above has certainly played a role in the participation of Israeli immigrants such as Michael and Alon in public events such as Pride. But, as Michael made clear in our interview, his participation was originally sparked not by a desire for promotion of his homeland, but rather by fear. His participation is motivated by a sense of anxiety over the growing public presence of pro-Palestinian solidarity groups in Toronto, which Michael believes represent a new and dangerous form of anti-Semitism. His participation is also motivated by a sense of moral duty to combat such groups. For Michael, the pro-Palestinian BDS groups are not legitimate peace groups, but anti-Semitic propagandists. In his view, their demand for the deconstruction of Israel as a Jewish State is in fact an attempt to destroy the Jewish collective, not only in the Middle East, but altogether. This logic can be found in the writings of some Canadian Jewish scholars, who support the idea of anti-Zionism as a form of “New anti-Semitism”\(^7\)\(^6\). For example, in his essay entitled “The Changing Dimensions of Contemporary Canadian Anti-Semitism”, Montreal-based historian Morton Weinfeld (2005: 44) argues that anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism are forever linked. Support for anti-Zionist positions, as advanced by BDS groups, “leads to the defence of positions that are devastating to the well-being of Israeli Jews”, even their total demise (45). He stresses “The continued, aggressive advocacy of the anti-Zionist position – through debate, boycott, and terror - aids and abets the potential genocide of the Jewish Israeli population” (45). Here again, the underlying idea is that Jews everywhere rely on Israel’s existence as a Jewish state for their very survival. Since for many, Zionism represents, and is represented as, the right of Jews to exist freely anywhere in the world, anti-Zionism is understood to signify Jewish enslavement, destruction, and genocide. Regarding Israel as the

\(^7\) Although on the surface queer rights in Israel are relatively progressive, the reality of these rights is fragile and unstable. Most human rights granted to the queer community in Israel are based on legal precedents and not on legislation or popular initiative, and some of these rights are still not officially endorsed by the state. In addition the attitudes towards homosexuality and queerness vary across the country (Amnesty International. (n.d.). Short history: LGBT in Israel. Retrieved from: http://www.amnesty.org.il/?CategoryID=420andArticleID=877). Also, despite branding itself as a safe haven for gays, Israel generally prohibits persecuted Palestinian gay men living in the Occupied Palestinian Territories from filing asylum applications (see Kagan and Ben-Dor, 2008).

\(^7\)\(^6\) The mixing between racial Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism is a highly contested topic among scholars. Progressive feminist Jewish scholars argue that such mixing is instrumental in avoiding any criticism of Israeli policies and of Zionism in general (e.g, Tessman, 2001; Butler, 2004; Bakan, 2014). In particular, the mixing between Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism is part of the institutional delegitimization efforts to silence the public visibility of BDS movements in Toronto (Nadeau and Sears, 2010).
perceived eternal guardian of the ‘Zionism as freedom’ narrative, “the fear is that if the anti-Zionists get their way, a Muslim majority will quickly emerge, leading to the mass killing, subordination, and/or expulsion of Israeli Jews” (Balsam, 2009: 120). This will mean an end to the safety of Jews elsewhere in the world. As Balsam (2009, 86) explains, fear of a second Holocaust creates a sense amongst Jewish communities that they must remain vigilant to the threat of anti-Semitic narratives and ‘blood libels’ (false accusations against Jews as a group or as individual members of that group).

As both historical and present anti-Semitisms have often started with the spread of libellous rumours about Jews (e.g., that they are guilty of killing Jesus, that they drink non-Jewish blood, that they control the world), many Jews believe that vigilance starts with zero tolerance for criticism targeted at the Jewish community. For Michael, this means that Jews living outside of Israel are obligated to support Israel’s policies on any occasion and at any cost, downplaying internal differences - even political ones. As he states,

In Israel you can demonstrate against [current right-wing Prime Minister Binyamin] Netanyahu and against the settlements or against whatever. You can be as “leftist” (Smolan ’i) as much as you please, I don’t care. You are in Israel. Don’t get me wrong; I am not right-wing (Yemin ’i) or anything. I don’t support the [West Bank] settlements. I don’t like Netanyahu. But here [in Canada] I support Israel no matter what because I am a minority here. Left, right, who cares. It is a totally different scenario. Here it is about being a Jew, and it comes with greater responsibility.

For Michael, this greater responsibility is tied to vigilance. Michael, who self-identifies as a “leftist”, liberal Zionist, believes that public expressions of political dissent against the current Israeli government policies are a luxury that Jews can only afford while living within the Jewish state, surrounded and secured by a Jewish majority. The fear is of not being able to tell, outside of Israel, who is interested in taking part in a civil political discussion, and who is actually an anti-Semite looking for any excuse to despise Jews. In other words, once an Israeli citizen leaves the space of Jewish Israel, his/her personal political identifications and inclinations are replaced by an obligation to protect the existence of the Israeli state space. Michael equates Jewish descent with a Zionist political subjectivity and a moral responsibility of public support and obedience to the Jewish state, regardless of one’s personal biography and moral and political views, assuming that his Jewish identity includes “a naturalized identification with and support
for the policies, practices, and historical claims of the Israeli state” (Abu Laban and Bakan, 2008:640).

The narratives of Israeli activists in Toronto interviewed in this section illustrate how collective emotional histories of fear and trauma are both powerful motivators of political action and effective means of uniting people (Ahmed, 2004; Georgis, 2006). Fear, as Ahmed suggests, is an active component in ‘sticking’ subjects together into political collectives of shared affective experience and of shared practices, while designating their boundaries. For Ron, Michael, Dina, and other Israeli activists, the inter-generational trauma of the Holocaust reflects both generalized fears of weakness, statelessness, and oppression, as well as the specific prospect of a second Holocaust being instigated by Muslims under the veil of anti-Zionism. The ethos of Jewish solidarity in the face of fear ‘moves’ Israeli activists in Toronto to temporarily align their individual bodies and experiences with the body of the local pro-Zionist Jewish community against the pro-Palestinian BDS solidarity groups, imagined as being non-white Muslim immigrants and their anti-Semitic white allies. At the same time, Canadian multiculturalism policy contributes to this by reinforcing the idea of ethnicity as a primary marker of identity, effectively ‘regulating’ and homogenizing immigrant ethnic and racial groups (as well as homogenizing an Anglo-Celtic centre, see Kobayashi 1993; Li, 1999). This creates an umbrella “ethnic” box for Jews that naturalizes solidarity between various Jewish and Israeli bodies.

The temporary alignments described in this section involve strategically suspending intra-Jewish cultural, political, racial, and sexual differences in order to perform their belonging to the idea of a unified white, Western and Zionist Jewish collective. In the next section I focus on Pro-Israeli public events in Toronto as racialized spatial practices of citizenship through which Jewish-Israeli activists imagine and perform their multiple political memberships and loyalties. I illustrate how the activists negotiate their multiple, and sometimes contradictory, loyalties and beliefs by assuming the role of defenders of Western civilization.
The performance of Western citizenship

The notion of “Western civilization” is part of a longstanding, imaginary and material construction of identities (Said, 1978; Gregory, 2004). These imaginative dualistic geographies (usually discussed in paired labels like West / East, First World / Third World, Global North / Global South, and Core / Periphery) originated in the colonial era, as part of the discursive homogenization of colonized populations (see Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1996)77. Today, as Hall (1996; 186) writes, any society “that is developed, industrialized, urbanized, capitalist, secular, and modern”, wherever located on the geographical map, belongs to "the West", including Israel under its hegemonic Western-Ashkenazi culture (Shohat, 1988; Chinsky, 2002; Ram, 2010).

The participants interviewed in this section participate in pro-Israeli public events as expressions of extra-territorial Israeli citizenship (Cohen, 2011), and as public performances of membership in ‘white’, Canadian, and Western identities. By conveniently aligning the perceived threat of anti-Western Muslim terrorism with the perceived threat by the same group against Jews inside and outside of Israel, they are able to stake a claim in Canadian, and Western, society without abandoning their perceived obligations to fight anti-Semitism (as they may have had to do in the past when Jews were perceived as an Oriental ‘threat’ against the ‘enlightened’ West).

For example, Elad explicitly links the local conflict in Israel-Palestine and the mythical global clash between the West and the Muslim world:

I am scared of where the world is heading to. The world is changing. In Israel you see the conflict from the point of view of an Israeli, and here you look at the conflict from a more global perspective, with all the changes that are going on in the world today - especially in Europe, where Muslims have already took over. It is becoming scary because there is no place safe anymore against terrorism.

---

77 According to Homi Bhabha (1994, 101), the objective of colonial discourse is “to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction”. Even with the end of colonialism, Colombian-American anthropologist Arturo Escobar (1995) has argued that such colonial discourses still exist, and that they have simply been reworked into the ‘development’ doctrines pushed by powerful nations of Western Europe and North America since 1945. These discourses support an efficient apparatus for producing knowledge about, and the exercise of power over decolonized nations in the “Third World”. 
Elad believes that the world is becoming a more dangerous place due to the supposed “creeping penetration” of Muslim immigrants and terrorism into the West, and that the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is just one battle in a global confrontation between two incompatible sides. Elad’s fear of Muslim conquest of the West is informed by the hegemonic political and media discourses in Israel, Canada, and elsewhere in the post 9/11 era. As was mentioned earlier, in media outlets and political speech, Muslims are often represented as supporters of Islamic terrorism who comprise both a cultural and demographic threat to white/Western national culture and society (Ahmed, 2004: 75; Rana, 2011:241; Razack, 2007:20; Arat Koc, 2005; Dhammon and Abu-Laban, 2009; Jiwani, 2010; 2012; Perigoe and Eid, 2014).

Traditionally, the longstanding myth of a secretive Oriental plot to penetrate and conquer the Euro-Christian civilization engenders hostility and suspicion towards Europe’s’ two significant non-Christian Semitic racialized “others”—the Muslims and the Jews (Said, 1978; 1979 [1992]; Baum, 2006: 31-32; Rana, 2011; Kalmar –Davidson, 2013). Pro-Zionist Israelis like Elad, de-associate Jews from this Oriental myth by associating Muslims as the true ‘Semitic’ threat to a cohesive Judeo-Christian civilization, and Israelis as the frontline soldiers:

We (Jews and Christians) have the saying ‘ve’ahavta lere’acha kamocha’ (love your neighbor as yourself”), and they (Muslims) have Jihad and Shaheed. They don’t value life as we are. All they care are about is destroying Israel. Canadians don’t get that because they don’t know them as well as we do. If Canadians knew who the Muslims really are they wouldn’t let them do protests against Israel […] It’s our (Israelis) job to let them (Canadians) know how dangerous the Muslims are really are.

Elad selectively employs theological phrases to position ‘Judeo-Christian’ culture as humane and rational as opposed to Muslims who have a natural propensity towards violence and a dangerous culture of martyrdom. In doing so, he reflects the Zionist erasure of Judeo-Islamic culture (Shohat, 1988; 2003), and the framing of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a cultural conflict. Political theorist Mahmood Mamdani (2005, 17) refers to such public discourse as “Culture Talk”. According to Mamdani, culture talk “assumes that every culture has a tangible essence that defines it” (17) and that it is possible to explain political conflicts as consequence of that essence (ibid). “Culture Talk” is thus used to de-politicise and de-historicize the military campaigns of the “global war on terror”, and more particularly the campaign in Palestine, from
the historical legacies and contemporary realities of colonialism (see also Abu Laban and Bakan, 2008; Gregory, 2004).

Elad affirms the civilizational superiority and innocence of the Judeo-Christian “West” by the different essence of their cultural values. By dividing the political terrain along cultural lines, pro-Zionist activists like Elad are able to deny accountability and place themselves in a position of victimhood and innocence as Western subjects vulnerable to the Islamic terrorist threat (see Frankenberg, 2005: 568; Razack, 2007; Rana, 2011; Thobani, 2007; Arat Koc, 2005; Francis, 2011). The same logic is apparent in the slogans that have circulated during various Pro-Israeli public events that I have observed in Toronto (e.g., “Israel’s values are Canadian values”; “Israel: Where freedom and tolerance live”; Support for Israel is support for Canada”; “Israel: Where freedom and tolerance live”). Culture talk is central to Israeli activists’ “race to innocence” (Fellows and Razack, 1997).

Western media and political discourses have often stressed Israel’s defensiveness and victimhood in the face of imminent threat from the irrational hate of Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims in general (Joseph et al., 2008; Thobani, 2007; Perioge and Eid, 2014). At the same time, Israel positions itself as a hero at the forefront of the global battle of the West against Islam (Said, 1978; 1979[1992]; Shohat, 1988; 2003; Goldberg, 2009; Gordon 2011). In a similar way, the Israeli activists also profess an almost heroic mission to protect Western values in the face of supposed Canadian naïveté. For example, Elad feels that it is his job to inform “Canadians” who “the Muslims” “really are” - to open their eyes to the threat of Islamic conquest and terrorism before it will be too late, like in Europe. This is his duty not as an Israeli citizen, but as a Western citizen. However, his views are informed by his supposedly authentic experiences as an Israeli. In the interview, Elad referred to his military service in the IDF and experience as a witness to a terrorist attack in Tel Aviv, as proofs that he, as an Israeli, really understands the dangers of Islamic terrorism.

Rona, a fifty-two year old real estate agent also feels that it is her citizen’s duty is to protect Western values, and she connects this duty to Jewish ethics:

Judaism is about Tikkun Olam (repairing the world). But Muslims only care about Muslims […] We must inform the public. Yes, the (Canadian) government is
wonderful. There is no doubt about that. Steven Harper is a dream. But there is one thing that I don’t like. The positioning. They (the Canadian Government) say that they are Pro-Israeli. I would prefer that they will say that they are “Pro” what is right and only then defend Israel […] It is better if he will say “we are pro what is right for democracy”, that this battle is about democratic values and that Canada stands beyond these values, and only after saying that, they can mention that Israel also represents the same values.

Two interesting things stand out for me in Rona’s statement. First, Rona believes that part of the Jewish mission in the world is what is known to Jews as “Tikkun Olam”. The classical rabbinic idea of “Tikkun Olam” suggests shared responsibility to heal, repair and transform the world for the better. However, Rona’s specific employment of the term in the context of the global “war on terror” is meant to demonstrate compatibility between Jewish culture and the ‘civilizing mission’ of Western powers in delivering the gifts of democracy, modernity and freedom to the Muslim world (Gilroy 2008:58-9; Razack 2007). Rona evokes the present political alliance between the Harper government in Canada and the Netanyahu administration in Israel78. Yet, while praising Canada’s support of Israel, Rona wishes that the representation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by the Canadian government would first and foremost be framed in terms of defending global values. Rona implicitly reframes the Canadian government’s support of Israel, from being a possible burden on Canada’s reputation to being a natural, and even necessary element of Canada’s role in ensuring the survival and promotion of Western democracy. Like Elad, Rona also participates in pro-Israeli public events in Toronto in order to inform the “Canadian public” about the Islamic threat to Western values, such as democracy. The Canadian citizens to be informed are imagined by Rona to be generally non-Islamic and, ostensibly, white and Western.

Both Elad and Rona perceive the pro-Palestinian BDS groups to be representative of the threat of global Islam in Toronto, a point of view that bears obvious comparison to what Gregory (2004) describes as post-9/11 imaginative geographies of fear, violence and security, which have rekindled and increased demarcation of “the same” (Western) from “the other” (Arab/Muslim), sustaining images of war between good and evil/barbaric and civilized and contributing to the

78 Indeed, in recent years, the Harper Conservative government has stated and demonstrated its unquestioning support and commitment to Israel and Zionism. Canada is also leading an international movement of states to challenge criticisms of Israel and Zionism (Abu Laban and Bakan, 2008:642).
legitimisation of violence and exclusion (see also Graham, 2006). Indeed, most participants imagined the pro-Palestinian protestors as (non-white) Arab and Muslim immigrants with hidden anti-Western sympathies, and the BDS campaign itself as an anti-Semitic and anti-Western campaign run behind the scenes by terrorist organizations and Muslim governments. Only a few participants acknowledged the participation of either ‘white’ Canadians or Jews in local pro-Palestinian solidarity groups. Those who discussed the participation of white non-Jewish Canadians tended to describe them as either naïve and brainwashed, or as secretly anti-Semitic.

For example, Natasha, a thirty-five year old secretary asserted that:

White Canadians have no clue what is going on. They live in this nice country and peaceful, sheltered surroundings [and] don’t know anything about the region, about the history of the conflict. They only know from something that they saw over the news, or one book that they have read. This is what they base their opinion on, and this is what irritates me.

Meanwhile, Jewish participants in pro-Palestinian protests were deemed to be self-haters (see Abu Laban and Bakan 2008: 640; Butler, 2004).

By imagining the BDS protestors as sympathizers of radical Islamic terrorism who exploit and endanger Canadian democratic values, BDS activists are perceived as being less loyal to Canada than Israeli groups, as Eran implies when he remarks that the pro-Palestinian activists “carry Palestinian flags. We carry Israeli and Canadian flags, and that is the whole difference between us and them in a nut shell” (interview). The belief in a connection between Zionism, Jewish identity, and liberal Western values, a belief whose construction was discussed earlier, is both strong and implicit. This implicitness allows the Israeli activists to achieve a coherent Western citizenship.

Through their framing of pro-Israeli public events in Toronto as defensive acts of Western civilization, those interviewed in this study are able to claim a place in Canadian nation and in

---

79 Since its inception in July 2005, the BDS movement has gained increasing international attention, and it has also elicited criticism from a variety of pro-Israeli groups, including public shaming of a number of Jewish and white non-Jewish intellectuals for supporting pro-Palestinian groups and anti-boycott legislation in Canada (and other Western states). Supporters of BDS have referred to this as a “silencing campaign” against the campaign (see Bakan and Abu Laban, 2009: 37; Nadeau and Sears, 2010), while opponents of BDS claim that the movement is either anti-Semitic, counterproductive, or otherwise misguided.
the city, while at the same time proving their allegiance to both the local pro-Zionist Jewish community, as well as to the Israeli and Canadian states simultaneously. Indeed, many of the participants expressed their desire to be a recognized as loyal Israeli nationals while still living and building a life outside Israel (to be “extra-territorial Israeli citizens”, see Cohen, 2011). By pointing to the benefits for the Israeli state of their extra territorial position, some Israeli activists were able to fulfill this desire.

For example, Sigal, a thirty-six year old teacher believes that her contribution to the existence of the Jewish state is greater in Toronto than it would be if she were living in Israel:

> Our battle here over world opinion, against those who are trying to ostracize us, is as important [as the actual fighting taking place in Israel/Palestine]. I contribute more there [in Canada] than some ‘leftists’ I know who live in Israel, but who spread negative things about the occupation all over Facebook.

Sigal views herself as representative of Israel in the war of world opinion, and as a more loyal Israeli citizen than some “leftist” Israeli Jews even though they actually live in Israel.

Similarly, Ilan, a forty-three year old optometrist imagines himself as an ambassador of the Jewish state abroad, viewing his diplomacy as a more contemporary form of Zionism than actual presence in Israel:

> My world-view is that once you [an Israeli citizen] leave Ben-Gurion Airport, you are becoming an ambassador of the State of Israel […] For me, this is patriotism or Zionism, not what we have learned as children in school. That is old-fashioned Zionism. It is no longer needed today.

Participants such as Sigal imagine and represent their civic action during pro-Israeli public events as defensive acts of Western civilization (Israel and Canada, in their estimation, being equal parts of this civilization). By assuming the role of defenders of Western civilization, they negotiate their multiple, and sometimes contradictory, loyalties and beliefs to two different countries.

The Israeli-Canadian activists interviewed in this section use pro-Israeli public events as symbolic and material spaces through which they imagine, perform, and claim their political memberships to Israel, Canada, and ‘the West’. The public events that they attend are indeed spatial performances that are strategically aimed at external audiences, comprised of Jews in
Israel and whites in Canada, through which Israeli activists achieve coherence between their multiple political memberships that encompass multiple racialized collectives in Israel, Canada, and globally.

The selectively transnational, and thus still territorial, form of Western citizenship that the participants above profess can only be understood in the context of the “global war on terror” the discourse of “clash of civilization”, and the assimilationist-security material environment in neoliberal Western states, and particularly in urban settings. It is a ‘militarized’ form of citizenship based on a commitment to the defence of Western identities and territorial borders against a perceived global Islamic terrorist threat (with BDS groups imagined and represented as local manifestations of this threat).

The participants’ ‘Western citizenship’ reflects what Australian-Lebanese scholar Ghassan Hage (2003) calls a ‘paranoid nationalism’: a form of nationalism that is obsessed with border politics. Hage (2003) describes a culture of white/Western anxiety linked to the paranoid fantasies about the ability of external and internal non-Western and non-white ‘Others’ to seize control of Western countries. Worrying thus becomes the dominant mode of expressing one’s attachment to the nation (valued and valorized more than ever before). The irony of Jews’ former role as an antagonist to, and indeed victim of, such value-laden nationalism is, despite the presence of the Holocaust in their narratives, apparently lost on the participants.

**Conclusion**

[G]lobality works as a form of attachment, as a love for those others who are ‘with me’ and ‘like me’ insofar as they can be recognised as worldly humans. […] [World Citizenship] merely shifts ethnocentrism from a local or national to a global level:

---

80 Some scholars argue that post-9/11 Western neo-liberal democracies are moving towards being security states and “surveillance societies” (Coaffee and Murakami Wood 2006: 515), constructing their cities as the “domestic front” in the “global war on terror” (Graham 2006: 256). Racialized campaigns of urban security, law-and-order and privatization (some pre-dating 9/11), reflect growing anxieties and intolerance for difference in North American cities, and are being used to “clean” the cities’ public spaces of ‘undesirable’ people and activities (including public protest). As result, public spaces (and consequently the public realm) have vanished or been abandoned (see for example Davis, 1992; Mitchell, 2003; Kohn, 2004; Teeluksingh, 2006; Beckett and Herbert, 2008; Kern, 2011).
others become loved as global citizens insofar as they, like me, can give up their local attachments and become part of the new community (Ahmed 2001:20).

In this chapter I addressed the limits of our understanding of how citizenship is imagined and practiced by migrants and host societies in the post 9/11 era (Leitner and Ehrkamp, 2006:1630). Moreover, following Ahmed (2001; 2004) and Nayak (2011), I have highlighted ways in which global, racialized politics of emotions have informed the participants’ ideas around their citizenship, belonging and race (554) in Toronto, in Israel, and globally.

As was mentioned in the critical literature review, scholars within and outside geography have assumed a ‘post-national’ phase, in recognition of the shifting geographies of citizenship. In this perspective, national identity and loyalty are seen as becoming increasingly irrelevant, a feat that supposedly marks progress for a counter-hegemonic political agenda. However, there is a need for greater engagement with the perspectives of migrants themselves (ibid, Kelly and Lusis, 2006:831). By focusing on the narratives of a particular group of Israeli-Canadian migrants, I illustrate that in spite of the post-national ideal, transnational citizenship imaginations and practices can still be saturated with affective- racialized nationalistic meanings.

By paying attention to “the work that emotions do” (Ahmed, 2001; 2004), we can see how collective emotional histories of fear and trauma, and the Nazi Holocaust in particular (Georgis, 2006), motivate Israeli activists to join pro-Israeli events in the city alongside non-Israeli pro-Zionist Jews, while conforming to the constructed ideal of a unified white, Western and Zionist Jewish collective. Fear and trauma thus work to fortify communal borders and to confirm the Jewish collective’s categorisation by the Canadian policy of multiculturalism as a homogenous racialized group. This strategic essentialization of Jewish identity is instrumental in forging “cohesion and solidarity as a united community” (Veronis, 2007: 466), as well as a communal material forum through which they perform and make claims to citizenship and belonging in both Israel and Canada. Being publicly exposed alongside pro-Zionist members of the local Jewish community during these events, many of the participants experience having ‘a singular history’ (Nancy, 1998, in Watson, 2006; see also Isin, 2002) - a Jewish history that is racially and politically hegemonic and monolithic.
The participants’ narratives demonstrate that while transnationalism promotes the potential for migrants to re-imagine and subvert dominant conceptions of citizenship, it nonetheless also links the affective power of hegemonic racialized national projects across territorial boundaries. While the imaginations and performances of citizenship by Israeli activists in Toronto subvert the conventional conceptions of citizenship (as an identification with a single and territorially defined nation state), they nevertheless confirm the affective and racialized rhetoric of citizenship and nationhood in both the sending (Israel) and receiving (Canada) states.

The participants interviewed in this chapter understand and perform their citizenship in civilizational terms (i.e, as ‘Western citizenship’ – a product of the “global war on terror”, “culture talk”, and the discourse of “clash of civilizations”), further pointing to the limits of transnational, cosmopolitan, and counter-hegemonic forms of citizenship in the post 9/11 era. The “culture talk” prevalent in the public sphere in North America is instrumental in allowing Israeli activists to imagine and represent themselves as heroic innocent defenders of democratic values, and the BDS pro-Palestinian protestors as radical, hateful supporters of terrorist ideology, who wish to operate outside of Canadian cultural norms and to abuse the democratic right to protest their dissent of Canada’s foreign policy. The pro-Israeli protesters use public space in Canada to build their multi-national citizenships, while viewing appropriations of space for political expressions by pro-Palestinian groups “as transgressions that challenge the identity of the native majority” (Ehrkamp, 2006: 1678; Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2003).

As discussed in this chapter, the post 9/11 global racialized public discourse also situates Muslims and Jews unequally and differentially in Western national spaces, underlining the long-term project of ‘whitening’ the Jews and reproducing white spatial privilege (Shaw 2006) and domination in public spaces (and public spheres) – especially in settler colonial societies such as Canada (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000: 392; Razack, 2002; Teeluksingh, 2006; Abu-Laban and Dhamoon, 2009; Razack et al., 2010).

By employing global discourses of “culture talk” and by assuming a self-image of Western whiteness (despite historical experience to the contrary), Israeli activists are able to disregard the severity of Israel’s colonial violence, and in some cases even their own marginalisation by the Israeli state, while delegitimizing and othering the pro-Palestinian BDS movements in Canada.
The pro-Israeli activists thus use such discourses as an “entry point” into simultaneous Canadian and Israeli (extra-territorial) nationhoods, and into an imagined Western citizenship. The participants’ imagination and performances of Western citizenship thus suggest that forms of privilege and domination are reproduced transnationally. As geographers have asserted, the ways that migrants imagine, articulate, perform, and make belonging and citizenship is tied to the circumstances presented by political and ideological contexts (Staeheli and Nagel 2006:1603) and the symbolic and material practices of `othering’ immigrants and discourses in host and receiving societies (ibid; Ehrkamp, 2006: 1676).
Chapter 6: Conclusion

This dissertation has explored the complicit terrain and intersections between migration, race and religion by focusing on the stories told to me by Jewish-Israeli immigrants in Toronto, Canada. I have presented an analysis of ways in which Jewish migrants from Israel living in the Greater Toronto Area (the GTA) understand, (re)construct, negotiate and perform their identities, belongings, and citizenships upon migration, both individually and collectively. Working from a series of forty-eight interviews and a set of participant observations at public events, I discussed how the discourses and material realities of life in Israel and in Toronto inform complex attachments, identities, and claims of belonging, that in many cases transcend simple divisions in space (such as national boundaries), time (such as learned/received schisms in personal and communal histories), and ideology.

In part, this work is an attempt to map new intersections between Jewish studies and critical theories of race in order to illuminate the spaces for potential critical geographical analyses in the future. But more than that, I see this project as answering a troublesome lack of critical research on the three-way intersection of religion, race, and migration. Social and cultural geographers, a number of whom have explored migrants’ experiences and negotiations of religious identity (see Kong, 2010: 769; Kong, 2001; Holloway and Valins, 2002: 8; Yorgason and Della Dora, 2009) have tended to underplay the co-constitutive relationship between race and religion. Though a number of them have written about the geographies of religion, race, and racism together (Hopkins 2007), they have been limited in scope, choosing the apply experiences of Muslims living in Western cities as exemplars of the race-religion nexus (e.g., Peek, 2003; Hopkins 2007; Phillips et al. 2007; Listerborn, 2015). This has certainly been valuable and illuminating, but it is not enough. Indeed, reviewing the narratives that I have collected in this research, it is clear that this intersection is not exclusive to Muslims, and that there are other categories of identity that intersect with religion and race.

The interdependent relations that have existed, and still exist, between race and religion are particularly evident for Jews - an understudied group in geography. Moreover, study of a large,
diverse set of Jews, of different racial and cultural backgrounds and with diverse identifications, also highlights the presence of *ethnicity* as a third factor in the race-religion nexus. I view this project as a first step in revealing that three-way relationship, and how it is illuminated and transformed by processes of international migration, particularly for Jews. Focusing on the potential expansion of three key theoretical concepts that reign in the field of human geography at present - diaspora, whiteness and citizenship - I have tried to introduce a critique and extend these concepts towards a more truly inclusive, politicized anti-racist geography.

After introducing the study, the discursive and empirical methods used, and my positionality in conducting the work, I proceeded to explore three broad themes, each constituting a freestanding empirically-based chapter. The first chapter explored and problematized the notion of an ‘Israeli diaspora’ as it is conceived in the mainstream Zionist discourses and Zionist-oriented literature on Jewish and Israeli identity. Using the diverse narratives of the migrants interviewed in this chapter, I challenged a number of premises of these discourses, discussing ways in which Jewish identities and belongings have changed over history, and how they change during contemporary migration. In particular, I introduced challenges to the depiction of Jews as a monolithic “white ethnic” group prevalent in the literature, and critically explored discussions of “how Jews became ‘white’” (e.g., Jacobson, 1998; 2006; Brodkin, 1998; Goldstein, 2007), “non-visible minorities” in Canada, using the experiences of racialized Jewish immigrants to counter these broad narratives. What became especially clear in my study of Jewish-Israeli immigrants in Toronto, is the fraught relationship between ethnicity, race, and religion – a convergence that is under-discussed in the discipline, particularly in relation to Jews. Based on this critical look at the narratives of real, diverse Israeli migrants vis-à-vis existing literature, I concluded that the notion of a single, homogenous “Israeli diaspora” is at odds with the actual lived experiences of many migrants from Israel.

In the second empirical chapter, continuing the discussion on the complications of diasporic Jewish identity, I explored the issue of Jewish racialization, an important underlying theme in many of the narratives that I have collected, in more detail. Centering the discussion on an academic field known as critical whiteness studies (CWS), and on a historicized review of Jewish racialization, I highlighted both the refusal as well as the inability of many Israelis, and of
some otherwise assimilated Jews, to identify as white in Canada, and the tensions that this causes with both ‘whitened’ assimilated Jews and with non-Jews. On a deeper level, I discussed how the conflation of whiteness and Jewishness, and of race and religion, in the Canadian imagination - which is in many ways linked to long term geopolitical realities - has shaped the material everyday geographies of Jews in Toronto. For example, in the interviews that I presented in this particular chapter, I revealed how some Jewish immigrants from Israel can be forced into negotiating between their racial, cultural, and religious identities in order to confirm Western stereotypes about Jewishness and to activate the solidarity of other Canadian Jews. I contrasted this with existing discussions of the race-religion intersection, which has so far mainly studied the racialization of Muslims, arguing that it can equally be applied to the racialization of Jews. Indeed, for some of the participants, their “Jewishness”, while religious, was also seen as a racial identity, while for others, their racial identity tied them equally or more to non-Jewish people. Ultimately, I used the narratives to both confirm and challenge a number of central tenets of the CWS approach, and to deepen the problematization of homogenous Jewish identity that I began in the first chapter.

Finally, in the last empirical chapter, I began to weave together the spatial and social components of the study in a discussion of multiple scales of citizenship as they are understood and performed by the study participants. I paid particular attention in this chapter to the ways in which transnational citizenship is performed *publicly and communally*, and how it reflects the intersectionality of geopolitics, race, and identity based on other aspects such as religion, ethnicity, and nationality. Many of the personal perceptions and performances of national (Canadian and Israeli) citizenship and global (‘Western’ or ‘Judeo-Christian’) belonging that I described in this last chapter, on the surface seem to subvert the conventional conception of identification with a single and territorially defined nation state. Yet, I explored how, on a different level, these imaginations and performances actually confirm much of the problematic affective and racialized rhetoric of citizenship and nationhood in both the sending (Israel) and receiving (Canada) states, and in the modern conception of the ‘nation state’ more broadly. I concluded that, in spite of post-national ideals that are professed by many to be progressive, the ways in which people imagine and practice belonging across national boundaries are still saturated with affective, racialized nationalistic meanings.
Although this study is divided into three independent empirical chapters, nominally on Jewish/Israeli diaspora, Jewish whiteness, and citizenship, the theme that ties all of the narratives together is that of the intersectionality and multi-scalar nature of racial formation. I have attempted to provide a more complex understanding of “the global” in relation to race and religion, and in particular, a transnational understanding of the religion-race nexus that has otherwise been missing in human geography. As I have explained in the discussion of my personal background and positionality (Chapter 2), this nexus, and the ways in which migration from Israel to Canada affect it, are of personal significance to me as a Mizrahi Jew, of Libyan Arab Jewish descent, who has migrated to Canada from Israel.

In fact, the multi-dimensional and diverse nature of Jewish identity is, by design, a strong secondary theme throughout this study, and one that I wish to emphasize. Jews, when considered as a group, are often simultaneously and sometimes interchangeably, associated with numerous categories of identity such as ethnicity, religion, culture, nation, and race. Yet, there are markedly differential histories and experiences of racialization amongst Jews. This includes the lingering effects of racial anti-Semitism (reflected in the awareness of difference between Whitened, Westernized Jews and the historically hegemonic Canadian Christian White majority), but it also includes deep issues of intra-Jewish racism, particularly experienced by those Jews who are racial and cultural minorities within economically and politically dominant Ashkenazi communities in Israel and in North America. As many of the narratives demonstrate clearly, despite many clear common religious bases for identity and a broad desire for Jewish solidarity, Jews do not share one culture or a monolithic racial experience either in Israel or North America, not with respect to other Jews nor with respect to non-Jews. I believe that the narratives in this study highlight how issues of racism in the Jewish community in Canada need to be taken into serious consideration in future studies of Jewish Israeli immigrants, and more broadly, in discussions of Jewish communities, especially of Jews who not fit to the racialized image of the Jewish community (see Train, 2006).

In this respect, I make a strong effort to foreground Jewish multiculturality and multiraciality in Canada (as well as in Israel). A key challenge, which I have begun to take up in this study, is to promote new conceptions of Jewish anti-racist diasporism that embrace diversity and put an end
to the trope that the authentic Jew is exclusively white, Ashkenazi, of European descent, and a supporter of Zionism (Kaye/Kantrowitz, 2007).

On a theoretical level, by collecting, sharing, and exploring the experiences of migrants who are racially and culturally diverse yet are members of supposedly homogenous global and local Jewish communities, I have paid attention to the formation and re-formation of racial, religious, and national identities, not in one particular country (Canada/Israel) or even at the global scale, but across multiple scales. That is what makes studying migrants and migration so interesting: it allows us to explore not only multiple local racial formations, but their complex relations to global racial formations (historical and contemporary), and their interconnectivity with other axes of difference, such as religion.

In this dissertation I have chosen to emphasize the under-studied intersections of racial formation and religious identity primarily, thus placing less emphasis on other axes of difference such as gender and sexuality, which require further consideration. Obviously, intersectionality matters and influences the data I gathered in significant ways. However, my intention has been to present this work as a “building block “to generate, or open up new questions for future research in the “Israeli diaspora” scholarship, as well as in the study of race, religion, migration/transnationalism, and urban space in human geography. More empirical work is obviously also needed on the intersectionality of race, religion, and migration with gender, sexuality, and socio-economic class.

Canada offers a unique location to have conducted this study. On the one hand, it is a country of massive immigration shifts, with an official policy of “multiculturalism” that encourages the retention of different cultural identities. Yet, there is very little Canadian scholarship / empirical work about the lived experience of race among immigrant groups in Canada, and in general, race studies in Canada remain far too abstract and some even claim too theoretical, although that is up for debate (see Hier and Bolaria, 2007:15-16). What studies have shown is that the official policy and discourse of multiculturalism in Canada tend to homogenize ethnic, racial, and religious groups such as “the Jews” as monolithic ones (Kobayashi 1993; Li, 1999; Mahtani, 2002b).

Similarly, in this vein, Jews in Canada are represented by their most established aspects – Ashkenazi Jewishness in particular - and are depicted and officially handled as a racially and
culturally homogenous unit that is necessarily distinct from other groups. Cross-cultural identities, such as the Arab-Jewish identity of Jews from Arab countries, are thus rendered illogical.

The discussions that I have presented on the religious-racial binary and on intra-communal racism through the eyes of the study participants call on us to critically examine multiculturalism, and the place of other classifications like “white ethnicity” (applied to Jews in North America along with other groups such as Greeks and Italians) more carefully, and to engage with many variations in the lived experience of members of white ethnic groups – minority groups such as Jews that have supposedly become accepted into whiteness. These diverse narratives emphasize the centrality of intra-communal racism and exclusion. I have shown that the achievement of homogenous whiteness has not been available to all Jews – particularly Jews (of all backgrounds) who are phenotypically darker / “black” or are religiously observant vis-à-vis members of the Jewish community (as well as broader society). This, in fact, is where the historical parallels between the Jewish and Muslim experiences – both of which are in reality much more racially and phenotypically diverse than portrayed in the West – resurface.

Indeed, while my material presents a very historically and geographically specific portrait of Jewish immigrants from Israel living in Toronto, the contribution of this study is not limited to the Jewish audience, nor to the body of literature on Jewish and Israeli diasporas. It is my hope that the content and application of the case studies that I have presented can be made relevant when studying other minority communities in the Western city, by opening up the question of what migrants’ personal experiences tell us about larger relationships between race and religion, and to reveal patterns of how racialized members of religious minority immigrant groups (individually and collectively) contemplate, negotiate, and perform their racialized (transnational/diasporic) identities and belongings in and through urban space in Canada today. Ideally, a deeper understanding of these patterns and lived experiences, can impact in positive

---

81 Ashkenazi assimilated Jews are the hegemonic force within the Jewish minority group in Canada, and thus the politics and identity of Jews in Canada are often assumed to reflect the interests of this group. This is linked to the demographic, economic and political dominance of Ashkenazi Jews in Canada, especially in Toronto, as result of historically racially-selective immigration policies in Canada that, after finally allowing Jews to immigrate in the first place, for many years discriminated based on their countries of origin (see Levine-Rasky, 2005; Train, 2000; 2006).
ways the political development of the relations and coalitions within and between such migrant groups.

On a final, related note, I wish to address two important gaps in the research, which I see as openings for future work. Importantly, both relate to the question of indigeneity, and of how we apply binaries such as settler vs. native, or migrant vs. colonist.

First, it is important to note that in anti-racist, anti-colonial analyses of settler colonial societies (such as Canada), there is a strong case that all non-Indigenous communities (whether they are “white settlers” or “immigrant communities of colour”) should be considered settlers, complicit in the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous populations (see Lawrence and Dua, 2005; also, Smith, 2012; Razack, 2002; Gunew, 2007; Sharma and Wright 2008; Haig-Brown, 2009; Razack et al., 2010). Given such questions, Canadian scholars are required to ensure at least in small part some transparency around our responsibility in recognizing Indigeneity when we commit to anti-racist and decolonizing practices in the academy. Interestingly, and perhaps sadly, the question of Jewish migrants’ place in Canadian colonialism, and of their relationship to Canadian First Peoples, did not come up in any of the forty-eight interviews discussed here. While hinting at these migrants’ preoccupations with their own immediate spheres of life in Toronto (where indigenous politics are under-represented) and Israel (where North American indigenous politics are virtually unknown), this also reflects a broader lack of engagement by migrants and those who study them with the question of indigeneity. Further work could go far in revealing the many likely hidden aspects of this relationship, and could in turn help to build new anti-racist and anti-colonial alliances along those lines.

The second opening provided by this work is also related to the question of indigeneity, more specifically in Israel/ Palestine and the broader Middle East. It is also an issue that I intend to pursue in further work. While the notion of a ‘white settler society’ certainly applies to Israel to some degree, Jewish Israel is even within itself rife with internal contradictions over intra-Jewish racial diversity and hybridity, in particular Arab Jewish and Mizrahi histories, geographies and struggles such as those discussed in this study. I bring this up here, as my last point in this project, to highlight a key lesson of this research: that scholars need to think more critically about binaries and categories (such as migrant-settler, indigenous-coloniser) in relation to
circumstances of mobility and agency, and in wider historicized context. The majority of Israeli Jews, while not of Palestinian Arab ancestry, are the children of natives to the Arab, Muslim, and former Ottoman worlds, and some are descendants of inhabitants who have continuously inhabited the lands of Palestine and Israel for thousands of years. Their non-Western Jewish histories, geographies, and identities deeply complicate the notion of the Israeli Jewish populace as non-native white / European colonisers in the Middle Eastern cultural and geographic space, just as they complicate essentialized homogenized images of “Jewishness” in the West.

Reflecting on this, a key recommendation that I wish to close with, and one that resonates with me personally, is for globally-focussed work (particularly work on the question of Israel/Palestine) to find resonance with local anti-racist and anti-colonial histories and struggles that exist and are important in that space. The fact that many of these histories and struggles are relatively unknown outside of Israel, even amongst Jews, should not be a reason to ignore them. On the contrary, it should provide a hint that a historicized understanding of Jewish identities and politics (as well as Palestinian ones) can open new avenues for more critical anti-racist and anti-colonial solidarities (such as Palestinian-Mizrahi solidarities) that are yet to even be explored. This, ultimately, is the strongest potential of such work.
Works Cited


Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Approvals

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT, RESEARCH

PROTOCOL REFERENCE # 27277

February 15, 2012

Dr. Deborah Leslie
DEPT OF GEOGRAPHY
FAC OF ARTS & SCIENCE

Mr. Tamir Arviv
DEPT OF GEOGRAPHY
FAC OF ARTS & SCIENCE

Dear Dr. Leslie and Mr. Tamir Arviv,

Re: Your research protocol entitled, "Jewish-Israeli immigrants in the GTA: Identity, belonging and transnational citizenship"

ETHICS APPROVAL

Original Approval Date: February 15, 2012
Expiry Date: February 14, 2013
Continuing Review Level: 1

We are writing to advise you that the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board (REB) has granted approval to the above-named research protocol under the REB's delegated review process. Your protocol has been approved for a period of one year and ongoing research under this protocol must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

Any changes to the approved protocol or consent materials must be reviewed and approved through the amendment process prior to its implementation. Any adverse or unanticipated events in the research should be reported to the Office of Research Ethics as soon as possible.

Please ensure that you submit an Annual Renewal Form or a Study Completion Report 15 to 30 days prior to the expiry date of your current ethics approval. Note that annual renewals for studies cannot be accepted more than 30 days prior to the date of expiry.

If your research is funded by a third party, please contact the assigned Research Funding Officer in Research Services to ensure that your funds are released.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Schneider, Ph.D.,
C.Psych
REB Chair

Dean Sharpe, Ph.D.
REB Manager
PROTOCOL REFERENCE # 27277

February 25, 2013

Dr. Deborah Leslie  Mr. Tamir Ariv
DEPT OF GEOGRAPHY  DEPT OF GEOGRAPHY
FAC OF ARTS & SCIENCE  FAC OF ARTS & SCIENCE

Dear Dr. Leslie and Mr. Tamir Ariv,

Re: Your research protocol entitled, "Jewish-Israeli immigrants in the GTA: identity, belonging and transnational citizenship"

ETHICS APPROVAL

Original Approval Date: February 15, 2012
Expiry Date: February 14, 2014
Continuing Review Level: 1
Renewal: 1 of 4

We are writing to advise you that you have been granted annual renewal of ethics approval to the above-referenced research protocol through the Research Ethics Board (REB) delegated process. Please note that all protocols involving ongoing data collection or interaction with human participants are subject to re-evaluation after 5 years. Ongoing research under this protocol must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

Please ensure that you submit an Annual Renewal Form or a Study Completion Report 15 to 30 days prior to the expiry date of your protocol. Note that annual renewals for protocols cannot be accepted more than 30 days prior to the date of expiry as per our guidelines.

Any changes to the approved protocol or consent materials must be reviewed and approved through the amendment process prior to its implementation. Any adverse or unanticipated events should be reported to the Office of Research Ethics as soon as possible. If your research is funded by a third party, please contact the assigned Research Funding Officer in Research Services to ensure that your funds are released.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Wakefield, Ph.D.
REB Chair

Dean Sharpe
REB Manager

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ETHICS
McMillan Building, 12 Queens Park Crescent West, 2nd Floor, Toronto, ON M5S 3H8 Canada
Tel: +1 416 946-3273 • Fax: +1 416 946-3743 • ethics.review@utoronto.ca • http://www.research.utoronto.ca/research-administrators/ethics/
Appendix B: Letter of Information

I am currently conducting research for a project entitled, “Jewish-Israeli Immigrants in the GTA: Identity, Belonging, and Transnational Citizenship”. The purpose of the research is to examine the following topics:

1. Attachments to national, religious and ethnic identities.
2. Attitudes towards emigration from Israel and Zionism.
3. Ties and networks with Israel.
4. Participation in local community (Israeli/Jewish) activities and events.
5. Spaces of belonging and comfort in the city.

Your participation is greatly appreciated and will help to further my understanding of the experience of Jewish-Israeli immigrants in the GTA. I am conducting interviews with approximately 60 members in the Jewish-Israeli community in the GTA. The interviews will focus on the experience of being a Jewish-Israeli immigrant in the GTA today. The interview will be very informal and conversational in nature, meaning that they will be direct by you as much as by the researcher. I have a set of issues I want to address, but I want to hear your thoughts about your experiences, so you are encouraged to introduce issues that you feel are important or to end a line of conversation as you see fit. You are entitled to end the interview at any time.

The interviews and focus group will be taped recorded with your permission. All information you provide will be treated confidentiality, and your name will not appear in any publications stemming from the research. The result of the study will be used in the writing of my PhD dissertation and when the research is complete you will receive a summary of the findings if you would like it.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact either myself, or my research supervisors: Prof. Deborah Leslie (leslie@geog.utoronto.ca, (416) 978-8467), and Prof. Minelle Mahtani (mahtani@utsc.utoronto.ca, (416) 287-7302).

Sincerely,

Tamir Arviv, PhD Candidate, Department of Geography, University of Toronto, (416) 558-8462, arvivt@geog.utoronto.ca
Appendix C: Recruitment flyer

What does it mean to be a Jewish Israeli immigrant in Toronto?
My name is Tamir Arviv. I am a doctoral candidate of the Department of Geography at the University of Toronto. I would like to invite you to participate in my research project.

WHO?
• Adults who grew up in Israel.
• Have lived in the GTA for at least two years.
• Have legal status in Canada.
• Speak fluent Hebrew.

WHAT?
• A research study exploring the identities, attitudes, and everyday experiences of Jewish Israeli immigrants in the Toronto area (the GTA).
• Participants are encouraged to discuss issues as they see fit.

HOW?
• A 90 minutes face to face interview.
• Participation is voluntary and you may end the interview and /or withdraw from the study at any time.
• All information will be kept confidential - your name will not appear in any publications stemming from the research.

Please email or call me if you wish to participate in or learn more about this dissertation study. I may be reached at arvivt@geog.utoronto.ca or at (416) 558-8462.

Sincerely,
Tamir Arviv,
Doctoral Candidate, University of Toronto
Appendix D: Interview Guide

Briefing
- Introduction to Research Goals, Nature of Participants’ Involvement and Rights of Participants.
- Procurement of Informed Consent

Research themes:

1. **Background Information** (*Tell me about yourself)*:
   - What year were you born? Where were you born?
     - If you were born outside Israel, what year did you come to Israel? How old were you when you came to Israel?
     - If you were born in Israel, where did your parents/grandparents come from?
     - When did your parents/grandparents come to Israel?
   - Where were you/they settled in Israel and where were you raised?
   - How old were you when you left Israel? When you left Israel, did you come directly to Canada? Was Toronto the first place you settled in? Which relatives accompanied you?
   - Education? Occupation in Israel? Occupation in Toronto?
   - Do you plan on staying in Canada/Toronto permanently?

2. **Attitudes towards emigration from Israel and Zionism**:
   - How do you feel about the label *Yored*?
   - Do you think that this label is still relevant today? Why?
   - What is Zionism/ what does ”being a Zionist” mean to you?

3. **Ties and networks with Israel**:
   - How often do you visit Israel? Call friends and relatives in Israel? E-mail friends, etc.
   - How often do you read/watch/listen to Israeli news? Follow Israeli sports? Listen to Israeli music? Watch Israeli movies or television programs?

4. **Identity and experience**:
   - What does being Jewish means to you? Is it a religious, secular, Zionist/national, or cultural identity? Is this identity tied to a Sephardic/Mizrahi/Ashkenazi Jewish identity? Do you find your identity to be different that of other Jews in Toronto? If so, how?
   - Do you consider yourself religious (*Dati*), conservative (*Masorati*), or secular (*Hiloni*)?
   - What Jewish rituals and holidays do you practice? Is it more or less than you used to attend in Israel, and did you notice differences in the services here? Why do you attend, and are the reasons different than they were back in Israel?
   - If you ever go to a synagogue, do you go to a Sephardic/Ashkenazi synagogue? Do you feel that you belong? Do you feel welcome? Are their divisions among the synagogues attendants based on nationality, language, culture, or other factors?
   - Who comprise “your community” in Toronto? Are you friends primarily Israeli Jews (and if so, are they primarily Mizrahi or Ashkenazi Jews)? Who do you feel most comfortable with? Why?
• When someone asks you who or what you are, how would you usually describe yourself/your identity? (e.g., I am ‘Jewish’, ‘Israeli’; ‘Ashkenazi’/’Mizrahi’, etc.). Is the answer different depending on whether the person asking you is Israeli or non-Israeli; Jewish or non-Jewish?
• Have you ever had to prove your Jewishness to other Jews and/or non-Jews? How do you respond?
• Have you personally experienced any form of racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, hatred, or discrimination since you arrived in Canada? If yes, have these experiences affected your feelings of comfort and security in the city?
• How these experiences affected your belonging to Israel, the Jewish community, and the Canadian society?

5. Participation in local community (Israeli/Jewish) activities and events:
• Are you involved in local Israeli and/or Jewish institutions and organizations in Toronto? If so, why is it important to you to be involved?
• In what kinds of public community (Israeli/Jewish) activities/events do you participate? Why? If you ever go to events of the local Jewish community, do you feel that you belong? Do you feel welcome? Are there divisions among the attendants based on nationality, language, culture, or other factors?
• How do you feel about the criticism against Israel among local /Toronto-based communities and organizations? Are you involved in this public debate? In what ways?

6. Spaces of belonging and comfort in the city
• Where do you live? Was it important to you to settle in a city or a neighbourhood where other Israelis live? Or more generally, where other Jews live? Why?
• What are the advantages and drawbacks in living with other diaspora communities?
• Where do you feel most that you belong, are comfortable and secure in Toronto? Why?
• Do you think there is a distinct “Israeli community” in Toronto? Why?
• Is there an area or a place in the city that can be considered as “Israeli”? If yes, where?
Appendix E: Interview Participants

Below is a brief ‘thumbnail sketch’ of each participant that I interviewed for this study. All names are pseudonyms. Along with noting the age (at the time of our interview), gender, occupation, ancestry/ethnicity, and place of birth of each participant, I have also included a short, representative anecdote for each.

Abigail is forty-three years old. She was born in Israel and grew up in a kibbutz located in southern Israel, in the Negev Desert region. She met her husband (a Toronto-born Jew) on the Kibbutz, where he was studying Hebrew. She is a high school graduate. Abigail “never liked the Kibbutz [socialist] lifestyle”, and always knew that she would “eventually live someplace else”. The couple moved back and forth from Israel to Toronto. They finally settled in a middle-class suburb north of Toronto where their children were born. She believed that “yerida is no longer an issue” because “these days people constantly move back and forth” and given the economic and political situation in Israel, “most people in [her] age group living in Israel are waiting for the opportunity to leave”.

Alex is a forty-five year old electrical engineer with a masters degree. He was born in Kiev, Ukraine (then the USSR) and immigrated to Israel in the mid-1970s with his family, where they settled in a medium-sized city southeast of Tel-Aviv. He differentiates himself from Russian immigrants who arrived in Israel in the 1990s by claiming to be more Israeli. Eventually, Alex left Israel with his wife in the late 1990s and went straight to Toronto because “life in Israel became too hard”. They bought a house in a northern suburb of the city. Alex now works in a high tech company nearby. He and his wife have two children.

Alon is a forty-four year old interior designer. He was born in Israel and grew up in a middle-class, medium-sized city east of Tel-Aviv. Both of Alon’s parents arrived in Israel from Iraq at a young age. They met in the temporary ma‘abara (refugee camp) in which they were received in central Israel. Alon moved to Canada with his same-sex partner five years before our interview. They married in Toronto. He describes being proud of his Israeli identity, but feels that the opportunities for same-sex couples are better in Canada.

Batia is fifty years old. She was born and raised in Jerusalem, which is also where her father was born (to a Syrian-Jewish family). Her mother was born in Iran. Batia describes her upbringing as were masorti (traditional). She met her (Canadian born) husband in Israel and they moved to Toronto after their marriage, and claims that she “always knew that I will marry with a non-Israeli”. Batia is active in the local Israeli and Jewish community.

Benny is a sixty-three year old private business owner. He has lived in Toronto almost half of his life. Benny was born in Israel and grew up in a middle-class, medium-sized city east of Tel-Aviv. His mother, a Holocaust survivor, was born in Hungary and arrived in Israel after the war. His father was born in Algeria and arrived in Israel in the early 1950s. Benny’s parents met in Israel and got married in a period when “mixed marriages” between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews “were rare and socially unacceptable”. He speaks very proudly of his parents. Benny proudly describes “making a life” for himself despite immigrating to Toronto with “60$ in my pocket”, and with no higher education. He is married with children and grandchildren.
Charlie is a sixty-five year old self-employed barber. He was born in Casablanca, Morocco, and immigrated to Israel in the mid-1960s with a youth program of the Jewish Agency for Israel. His parents moved about one year later. After immigration, Charlie’s family was housed in a Mizrahi-dominated public housing project near Tel-Aviv. He moved to Canada in his early 40s “in search of a better life” and for better prospects of socio-economic advancement (he had successful relatives living in the city). Charlie speaks French, Hebrew, and Moroccan Arabic fluently, and describes these as “his greatest assets in Toronto”.

Dan is a sixty year old electrical engineer. His father was born in Hungary and emigrated to Palestine with a “Youth Aliyah” (a Jewish organization that rescued thousands of Jewish children from the Nazis during the Third Reich). The Youth Aliyah arranged for his resettlement in a Kibbutz located in the Jordan Valley, where he grew up. Dan’s mother is from a fifth-generation religious Jewish family that settled in Safed during the 19th century. He served in the Nahal unit of the IDF (a program that combines military service with the establishment of agricultural settlements), and participated in many wars. In the late 1980s he moved to Canada with his wife, a teacher, to pursue masters-level studies (“a friend told me that Canada is friendlier and less capitalist than the US, and that I wouldn’t feel like an immigrant for seven generations like in Britain”). Dan described deciding to prolong his family’s stay in Canada as a series of unforeseen events: “the first intifada started so we stayed; then I found a good job so we stayed more; and so on…”.

Daphna is a thirty-eight year old teacher. Her parents were born in Kochi, India. She describes her father, who is originally from Iraq, as “white”, and her mother, originally from Kochi, as “black”, recounting how her father’s side of the family “did not approve of” her parents’ marriage. Daphna was born in Israel and grew up in a Mizrahi dominated “Development Town”. She immigrated to Toronto with her husband five years prior to the interview. She has one child, who was born in Canada two years after her immigration.

Dikla is a thirty-eight year old writer. She was born in a city east of Tel-Aviv, in a predominantly Yemenite-Jewish neighbourhood. Her parents were both born in Israel to a masorti-dati (traditional and religious) Yemenite Jewish family (her parents met in the neighborhood). After her military service, Dikla travelled to India, where she met her first husband (a Canadian). She moved to Canada with him, later divorced, stayed, and eventually got married again to another Canadian. Dikla and her husband live downtown.

Dina is a fifty-eight year old women who works in tourism. She was born in Jaffa, south of Tel Aviv, to a family of Yemenite Jewish descent. Dina describes experiencing racism based on her family’s Yemenite background: “I remember one time when the teacher said to my brother, who is very smart and is now a professor of environmental science in the U.S., that he would ‘never amount to anything’ because he is Mizrahi. That he would only be a cab driver.” Dina moved to Canada in the mid- 970s with her family. They settled in a predominantly Jewish neighbourhood (Bathurst and Sheppard) when the Israeli community was small “and everyone knew each other”. She got married in Toronto to an Israeli immigrant, and they had children together and further up north. Dina’s family is active in the local Israeli community.
Elad is a forty-three year old accountant. He was born in Israel and grew up in Jerusalem. Eran’s father was born in the former Yugoslavia and his mother in Turkey. He graduated from a university in Israel, got married, and has three children. Eran decided to move to Toronto ‘to try his luck’ about seven years ago, as he knew some people here and had a job opportunity. He visits Israel very often, follow the news, describes caring very much about ‘what’s going on’ in Israel.

Eran is a thirty-nine year old man and a father of two. His parents were born in South America, immigrated to Israel in the early 1970s, and settled in a city in southern Israel, where he was born and raised. Eran moved to Toronto with his partner ten years prior to the interview. He works in an NGO, and views Toronto as his home. He believes that Jewish-Israeli immigrants in Toronto must avoid using the sentence “next year in Jerusalem” (a common phrase in Jewish liturgical tradition) when they pray, because he feels that “no one is really planning to go back to live there in his lifetime”.

Galit is a thirty-seven year old woman. She was born in Israel and grew up in a middle-class, medium-sized city north of Tel-Aviv. Galit’s father was born in Hungary and her mother in Libya. Both arrived in Israel soon after its establishment. Galit spoke very proudly of her parents and her “mixed” identity. Carrying the Ashkenazi last name of her Hungarian father, she always felt “the need to emphasize her Mizrahi side” in the predominantly Ashkenazi neighbourhood in which she grew up. She has a masters degree in education from an Israeli university. At the time of our interview, she had lived in Toronto for five years. She is married with no children.

Gur is a twenty-eight year old and is the youngest of my interviewees. He was born in Israel, and grew up in an upper class neighbourhood in medium-sized city north of Tel-Aviv. Gur’s parents were also born in Israel, and his grandparents from both sides arrived from Poland. Gur self-identifies himself as a “Yeled Shamemet” (“born with a silver spoon in his mouth”). He arrived in Toronto three years prior to our interview to pursue academic studies. At the time of interview Gur was single with no children.

Hanan is a forty-nine year old man who works in consulting. He was born in Israel to parents from Poland, and grew up in Kibbutz in northern Israel. Hanan immigrated to Toronto and settled in the suburb of Thornhill with his family eight years ago because “life in Israel did not suit the way we wanted to raise our kids”. He recounts how “In Israel, all of my friends said that I don’t have an Israeli character; but, in Toronto, all of the Canadian Jews see me as the typical, impolite Israeli”.

Ilan is a forty-three year old optometrist. He was born in Israel and grew up in a town east of Tel-Aviv. His father was born in Poland and his mother in Bulgaria. Ilan is married with two children. He moved to Canada in the early 2000s (12 years prior to our interview), and settled in Thornhill. He has since been active in the local Israeli community.

Iris is a forty-one year old chemist. She was born in Israel to parents born in Greece (father) and Israel (mother – of Polish descent). Iris grew up in a Moshav (communal agricultural village) in the Sharon Plain area in what she described as a “very Zionist” home. She discusses how she once belonged to the “Bene Hamoshavim” youth movement. Iris moved to Toronto 18 years ago.
with her then partner (now husband) for their studies. “We planned to go back after, but we got good jobs, one thing led to another and we decided to settle”. Their two sons were born in Toronto.

**Lev** is a thirty-five year old software engineer. He was born in Tashkent, Uzbekistan (then the USSR) and describes being singled out there as “the Jew”. He migrated to Israel with his family in the late 1980s, and they settled in the coastal city of Bat–Yam, where he describes becoming “the Russian” (a label applied to most immigrants from the former USSR). Lev left Israel for Toronto at the age of 30 in search of “peace and better job”. In Toronto he feels that he can be “whatever I want- a Jew, Russian, Israeli or Canadian- no one cares, it is multicultural society”. Lev lives in downtown Toronto and is single.

**Lior**, is a fifty-one year old psychotherapist. He describes himself as a son of “Ashkenazi kibbutz-born-communists Sabras”. Lior grew up in Tel-Aviv with the values of “The Youth Guard” (“Ha-shomer ha-Tsa‘ir”) a socialist-Zionist secular Jewish youth movement (which advocated “Stalinist socialism” in Lior’s words). He served in the Israeli navy commando unit. Lior immigrated to Toronto in the mid-2000s with his wife and kids because of “the growing violence and narrow mind-ness in Israel”.

**Liora** is a forty-seven year old woman. She was born in Israel, and grew up in a city near Tel-Aviv (Rosh Ha’ayin) to a traditional-religious Yemenite family with many children. Her parents arrived to Israel in the early 1940s. Liora has a masters degree in business management from an Israeli university. She moved to the United States due to her husband’s temporary job in the 1990s, and another job opportunity brought them about 10 years ago to Toronto, where they have remained. Liora and her husband have two children and visit Israel very often.

**Mali**, is a thirty-five year old artist. She was born in Israel and grew up in a suburb of Haifa (Kiryat Bialik). Her father was born in Tunis and immigrated to Israel as a young child. Her mother was born in Israel to a Moroccan family. She moved to Toronto five years prior to our interview to pursue her studies, and had relatives (an uncle) living in Thornhill.

**Michael** is a thirty-five year old insurance agent. He was born in Kharkov, Ukraine (then the USSR). He migrated to Israel with family as a toddler and “doesn’t remember much of life in Ukraine”. He arrived to Toronto six years prior to our interview to visit family in Toronto and decided to stay. Since then, he got married and settled in a predominantly Jewish/Israeli area (Thornhill).

**Miri** is a fifty-eight old artist. She was born in Israel, and grew up in Be’er Sheva. Her parents were born in Poland and arrived in Israel in 1949. She visited family in Toronto thirty years ago, where she met her husband (Canadian born, not Jewish). She has three children, and speaks proudly of her children’s hybrid Israeli- Canadian identity: “They are 100 percent Canadian, but they also speak Hebrew and visit family in Israel often”.

**Moti** is a fifty-two year old teacher and musician. His father, a Holocaust survivor, was born in Belgium, and immigrated by himself to Israel in 1944. His mother was born in Israel (the daughter of “Polish pioneers”). He was born in Haifa, where he also grew up. After his marriage he moved with his wife to Tel-Aviv where their children were born. They decided to immigrate
to Canada as a family following the collapse of the peace process (“we lived in “the Tel-Aviv bubble [presumably safe and progressive Tel Aviv], but felt that ‘the bubble’ was about to explode in our faces any minute now”).

**Natasha** is a thirty-five year old woman. She was born in Moscow, Russia (then the USSR) and immigrated to Israel during the 1990s. Fluent in Russian, Hebrew, and English, Natasha declared that she was doing all in her power to avoid the “Russian ghetto” (in her words), both in Israel and in Toronto.

**Nati** is a forty-three year old man. He was born in Israel and grew up in a working-class coastal city south of Tel-Aviv. Nati’s father was born in Germany and his mother in Hungary. He graduated from a top-ranking technology institute in Israel (The Teknion). Nati is married with children. He moved to Canada to work as high-tech consultant in high-tech company based in Vancouver, BC, and had been relocated to Toronto about three years prior to our interview.

**Nirit** is a thirty-four year old woman of Polish descent. Her parents were born in South Africa and immigrated to Israel in mid-1970s “out of pure Zionist motives”. She grew up in an upper-class city in Israel and was active in the Israeli scouts youth movement. She moved to Canada following her husband’s work-related relocation in 2008. Nirit spoke proudly about her Israeli identity and about what she described as “old fashioned Zionism”, and emphasized her plans to return to Israel with her partner and children in the future.

**Nitza** is a forty-year old woman. Her father was born in Alexandria, Egypt and migrated to Israel with his family at a very young age. Her mother was born in Israel to a family of Tunisian descent. She was born in Israel and grew up in a small Mizrahi-dominated working class “development town” in the Galilee (northern Israel), where most of her family and friends still live. Nitza is a graduate of Haifa University. She is married with two children and has spent 6 years in Toronto. She describes visiting Israel often.

**Oded** is a forty-year old software engineer. His mother was born in Cairo, Egypt and his father in Basra, Iraq. Both parents arrived in Israel in their adolescence and met in a ma’abara (refugee camp). They later got married and settled in a working class suburb south of Tel-Aviv where Oded was born. At the age of eight, Oded’s family moved to a high-income Ashkenazi dominated northern suburb of Tel Aviv (Hod Hasharon), and Oded describes this as “a traumatic transition”. After his military service and university studies, he moved to New York City. He “came out” as gay and met his life partner in New York. Oded and his partner first moved from New York back to Israel but he recounts that the move “didn’t work out”. They then moved to Toronto [six years prior to the interview] because of job opportunities and because of “the tolerant environment” of the city.

**Pini** is a fifty-two year old architect. He was born in Romania and immigrated to Israel at the age of seven. Pini’s family settled in a middle class north suburb of Tel Aviv (Kefar Saba) where he grew up. He moved to Toronto seven years ago with his wife and three children because he wanted to show them “that there is another world” beyond Israel, and because he felt that life in Israel was too difficult and not conducive to raising a family.
**Reuven** is seventy-two years old and was the oldest of my interviewees. He was born in Israel to parents who arrived from Poland in the early 1930s and settled in an agricultural town (Nes-Ziona), where Reuven grew up and lived until immigrating to Toronto about 20 years ago (settling in Thornhill). Reuven describes reading the Israeli news every day, and once a week he meets with a group of other Israeli men around his age (colloquially called “the parliament”) to debate Israeli politics.

**Rinat** is a thirty-four year old psychologist. She was born in Israel to a Polish-born mother and Bulgarian-born father. Rinat grew up in an upper-class neighbourhood in northern Tel Aviv and also lived in other places in the world (due to her father’s job). She moved to Toronto with her partner in 2007, and they “fell in love and decided to stay”. Rinat and her partner settled in mid-town, and describes wanting “to mix with the Canadians, in a mixed neighbourhood, with a mixture of people”.

**Ron** is a forty-five year old engineer. His father was born in Poland and fled to Palestine as a young child before the Holocaust. His mother was born in Israel to “Russian pioneers”. Ron grew up in an upper-middle-class suburb of Jerusalem. He moved to Toronto eight years prior to the interview, and he is married with two children. Ron describes himself as being active in the life of the local Jewish and Israeli communities.

**Rona**, a fifty two year old woman, works in a real estate agency. She was born in Israel to parents of Moroccan decent who immigrated to Israel but also had French citizenship. During her adolescence she lived in Israel and France (on and off). She identifies as traditional (masortit) and as “passionately Zionist”, and is involved in many Jewish Zionist organizations in Toronto since she arrived 15 years ago.

**Sagie** is a fifty-two year old plumber. His parents were born in Morocco, and they immigrated to Israel and settled in a medium-sized city south-east of Tel-Aviv (Lod), where Sagie grew up with five brothers and one sister. Sagie immigrated to Canada in the mid-1990s with his family, and settled in Thornhill. Sagie recounts that he “doesn’t speak/use much English”, but that his children “are full blown Canadians”.

**Sarit** is a forty-two year old illustrator. Her parents were born in Poland (father) and in Israel (mother – with roots in Romania and Iraq). She grew up in a small town south of Haifa. She immigrated to Canada with her life partner 10 years before our interview, and settled in the east end of Toronto (deliberately outside of the “Israeli/Jewish ghetto”). Sarit and her partner have one child, born in Canada.

**Shira** is a thirty-six year old stay-at-home mother. She is a second-generation Israeli (with parents born in Israel, and grandparents from Tunisia and Poland). She speaks proudly of her “mixed” (Ashkenazi-Mizrahi) heritage, recounting that this “was generally non-issue for me, although I admit that being a blond haired, blue-eyed girl with a Mizrahi last name sometimes raised interesting questions”. She moved to Toronto nine years prior to the interview, was married, and had one child born in Toronto.
**Sigal** is a thirty-six year old teacher, teaching in a Jewish school in Toronto. She was born in Israel and grew up in working-class neighbourhood south of Tel-Aviv. Her parents are of Iraqi descent, and she described them as “very traditional people”. Sigal immigrated to Toronto eight years before our interview following love (she first met her husband, a Canadian Jew, in Israel). Her children were born in Toronto, and she describes making great efforts to bring “Israel” into her home. Sigal lives in the northern Toronto suburb of Thornhill, and is involved in the local Israeli and Jewish communities.

**Shlomo** is a sixty-six years old private business owner and a mechanic. He was born in Baghdad, Iraq and migrated to Israel with his family at a very young age, the family settling in Jerusalem. Shuki describes being very poor growing up. He never graduated high school, and served in a few wars in the IDF. Shuki opened his first business (a garage) in his mid-20s. He moved to Toronto in the late 1970s with his wife and daughters, and lives in Thornhill.

**Sima** is a fifty-eight woman. She was born in Israel to parents from Turkey. Sima grew up in a small suburb of Haifa. She moved to Toronto twenty years ago with her husband, a private business owner, and their two children, “in search of a more peaceful life”.

**Tidhar** is a twenty-nine year old student. He was born in Israel and grew up in an upper-class neighbourhood in Tel Aviv, and his ancestry is Polish-Hungarian on the father’s side, and Iranian-Romanian on the mother’s side. Tidhar had extended family living in Toronto and used to spend many summers there. Eventually, he decided to move to Toronto to pursue masters studies. Tidhar has a Canadian girlfriend.

**Victor** is a sixty-five year old man. His parents were born in Morocco, and he was born in Israel right after they arrived (“so basically they conceived me there”). Victor grew up in a medium-sized city southeast of Tel-Aviv (Holon), in a traditional (*masorti*) household. He emigrated to Canada in the late-1970s with his wife and young child, and they live in Thornhill.

**Ya’akov** is a sixty year old bus driver. He was born in Bulgaria and arrived in Israel with his parents when he was a young child. They settled in Tel Aviv, where he graduated high school. Ya’akov and his wife decided to immigrate to Toronto after the crisis that followed the 1973 Yom Kippur war. They settled in the suburb of Thornhill amongst “many other Israelis”. His children and grandchildren were all born in Toronto.

**Yael** is a fifty year old pre-school/kindergarten teacher. She was born in Israel to parents of German Jewish descent. Married with children, she has lived 15 years in Toronto. She describes choosing to come to Canada because “Israel is no paradise”. Although her father immigrated to Israel from Germany to escape anti-Semitism, and was originally strongly Zionist, Yael discusses how he became disillusioned after living in Israel. She is not fond of Israel.

**Yossi** is a thirty-five year old design engineer. His father was born in Turkey, and his mother was born in Israel to a family from Yemen. He was born in a medium-sized city south-east of Tel-Aviv, where he also grew up. Yossi graduated from a top-ranked technology and science institute in Israel (Weizmann Institute). He decided to immigrate to Canada in his mid-twenties
following a job offer, and since then, “he never looked back”. He is not very active “in Israeli/Jewish stuff” in Toronto, but visits family and friends in Israel often.

**Yoram** is sixty-three years old. His parents were born in Poland, and they settled in a medium-size city south of Tel-Aviv, where he grew up. Yoram emigrated to Canada in the mid-1980s with his family, and settled in Thornhill. He used to work “in different jobs”, but now describes himself as “mostly retired”. He boasts knowing “all the vaticim” (the “old-timers”) in the community.

**Zehava** is a fifty-seven year old woman, who describes herself as a “stay at home mom, now a stay at home grandmother”. She was born in Israel and grew up southeast of Tel-Aviv (Rishon LeTzion). Zehava’s parents emigrated from Morocco and she was born right after their arrival in Israel. She describes her family as very traditional, and herself as masortit (traditional). Zehava moved to Toronto with her husband and two kids in the 1970s for economic reasons. She visits Israel often, and her three children speak Hebrew fluently and all are married to Jewish/Israeli partners in Toronto, which she describes as her and her husband’s “greatest success in life” (to raise her children masorti-Jewish and to pair them with Jews).
Appendix F: Toronto Map