MULTIPLE IDENTITIES & MARGINAL TIES:
THE EXPERIENCE OF RUSSIAN JEWISH
IMMIGRANT YOUTH IN TORONTO

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Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement – Toronto
Multiple Identities & Marginal Ties: 
The Experience of Russian Jewish Immigrant Youth in Toronto

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Abstract

The brutal murder of a teenage boy in a Toronto park has stimulated both concern and interest in the youth experiences of one of Toronto’s smaller recent immigrant communities: Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Stimulated by this tragic event, this paper explores issues of identity, settlement, integration, and inter-generational relations within recently-arrived Russian Jewish families, particularly with regard to youth aged 16 to 20. Special attention is devoted to the context and character of inter-generational adaptation between Russian Jewish youth and their parents, drawing upon four sources: a literature review; 1996 census statistics; focus groups that were held among newcomer youth and immigrant mothers of the Russian Jewish community of Toronto, and an interview with the Director of Immigrant Services of Jewish Immigrant Aid Services (JIAS). What emerges is a portrait of a remarkably complex ‘community,’ comprising a multiplicity of identities and few attachments to either their new society or its established Jewish community. Sources reveal that male youth are more likely to experience greater migration adjustment difficulties than female youth. Factors accounting for this include gender differences in peer relationships; the more frequent absence of father figures; and differing cultural pressures and expectations of males and females.

Keywords: Russian Jewish migration, Immigrant youth identity, Secondary migration, Marginal identities, Immigrant youth settlement

I. Introduction

Sometimes, it takes a tragedy to focus attention on a social issue. The brutal murder of a teenage boy in a Toronto park in November 1999 has stimulated both concern and interest in the youth experiences of one of Toronto’s smaller recent immigrant communities: Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union. The youth killed in a park in north central Toronto was Dimitri ‘Matti’ Baranovski, a 15-year-old Russian Jewish immigrant who died of injuries inflicted in a swarming incident involving a throng of youths. Four male youths have subsequently been arrested.

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and charged with murder, two of whom are themselves of Russian Jewish origin. This tragic event has served to highlight a number of challenges and tensions within the Russian Jewish community, particularly as they impact on youth.

In the past decade, Toronto has attracted a significant number of immigrants from the Soviet Union, many of whom have arrived as secondary migrants via Israel. For reasons discussed below, quantifying these trends with precision has proven problematic. Estimates of the community’s size in Toronto vary greatly from 30,000 to 75,000; meanwhile some peg the proportion arriving after an initial settlement in Israel at 50 per cent of the community, while others suggest a rate closer to 70 per cent in recent years (Kraft 2000: 15; Voihanski 2000; UJA Federation Task Force Report 2000).

As ambiguous as the community’s numbers is its nomenclature: Russian Jews. Both labels are problematic. First, as we will see, many in this community were neither born Jewish, nor observe the Jewish faith or rituals. Rather they have married Jews who are themselves religiously non-observant. The Jewish character of this community is therefore subject to dispute. Second, the recent exodus of Jews from the former USSR has included migrants from Soviet Republics other than Russia – such as the Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Belarus. Accordingly, some refer to this immigrant community as Soviet Jews or Jews of the former Soviet Union. Our own preference for describing the community in Toronto as ‘Russian Jews’ stems from three primary considerations: 1) Russia is by far the most prevalent birthplace of these migrants; 2) the Russian language and culture are significant elements of their identity; and 3) most significantly the community in Toronto defines itself as Russian Jewish, as reflected in one of its leading local institutions -- the Jewish Russian Community Centre, which is located at 18 Rockford Road in the Bathurst and Steeles area of north-central Toronto. Anecdotal and other evidence suggests the community is residentially concentrated in a series of high-rise apartment buildings stretching along the northern corridor of Bathurst Street, the Jewish community’s prime settlement area in Toronto.

This paper explores issues of identity, settlement, integration, and inter-generational relations within recently-arrived Russian Jewish families, particularly with regard to youth aged 16 to 20. Special attention is devoted to the context and character of inter-generational adaptation between Russian Jewish youth and their parents, drawing upon four sources: a literature review; 1996 census statistics; focus groups that were held among newcomer youth and immigrant mothers of the Russian Jewish community of Toronto, and an interview with the Director of Immigrant Services
at Jewish Immigrant Aid Services (JIAS). What emerges is a portrait of a remarkably complex ‘community’ comprising a multiplicity of identities. To date, this group has forged few attachments to either their new society or its established Jewish community.

II. Background

Canada has long been regarded as a classic country of immigrant settlement. Since 1867, more than 14 million people have emigrated to Canada. The 1990s have brought more newcomers to Canada than any decade in our past, with the arrival of more than 2.3 million immigrants (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 1998: 2; 1999:6). Over the past decade, the Toronto city-region has consolidated its place as the country’s leading immigrant settlement centre. Between 1991 and 1996, for instance, fully 42% of all immigrants to Canada settled in the Toronto census metropolitan area, which has received close to 100,000 newcomers each year over the past decade (Doucet 1999: 5). As a result, immigrants now constitute 47.6 per cent of the City of Toronto’s population (Siemiatycki and Isin 1998: 75). In the local context, the Russian Jewish community is one of Toronto’s smaller distinct ethnic groups when compared, for example, to the area’s 450,000 residents of Chinese origin, 400,000 Italians and 250,000 Afro-Canadians (Troper 2000: 3). Conversely, Russians loom very large as a proportion of the world’s Jewish population. One in six Jews today either lives in the former Soviet Union (about 600,000) or has migrated and parented in Israel, the United States, Canada or Europe (about 1,600,000). The fate of these migrants will significantly influence the future of Judaism.

Our particular interest in Russian Jewish youth coincides with a growing interest in Canada, particularly among service providers and policy makers, in the experiences and needs of immigrant youth. A 1998 report on the progress of Canada’s children conducted by the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD), indicated that a growing number of youth in Canada, particularly those living in large urban centres, were born outside the country. In just five years, between 1991 and 1996, the number of immigrant youth in Canada has grown by 26 per cent. Furthermore, it was revealed in the report that immigrants accounted for 30 per cent of the youth population in Toronto and 28 per cent in Vancouver (CCSD 1998a: 9).

While a considerable amount of literature dealing with issues related to the settlement and integration of adult immigrants exists, several studies have noted that the research and literature on immigrant youth in Canada is very limited (CCSD 1998a; Helm & Warren 1998). Immigration and settlement research has more typically focussed on the experience of adults and their newcomer
communities; with attention primarily devoted to the larger newcomer communities. In recent years however, there has been an increasing interest in the life experiences and social adaptation of newcomers and other youth. In a study of immigrant adolescents, Barbara Helm and Wendy Warren reported that, despite some progress in cross-cultural understanding, Canada still has a long way to go to ensure that research, policies and services truly meet the needs of Canadian families from various ethno-cultural origins (Helm and Warren 1998: 4). These researchers emphasised that “there is a need in Canada for more understanding about the home life and parental expectations experienced by immigrant adolescents who are juggling the culture of their family with the culture outside the home” (Helm and Warren 1998: 7). The death of Matti Baranovski has prompted academic and service agency researchers to take a closer look at the experience of Russian Jewish immigrant youth in Toronto. We begin with a literature review which reveals a number of strains, some generic to the immigrant experience, others specific to Russian Jews, which have emerged between parents and youth in this newcomer community.

III. Literature Review

The unstable political, social, and economic environment of the former Soviet Union (FSU) prompted a massive wave of emigration from the region during the last decade of the twentieth century. Most of those seeking admission to a new country have been Jewish individuals and families fleeing rising anti-Semitism in the FSU, and/or seeking improved economic well-being in a new land. It is now possible to speak of a modern Russian Jewish diaspora, with large recent settlements established in Israel, the United States, Canada, and other countries. As Iris Geva-May has noted in her study of Russian immigration to Israel, “immigration is a social phenomenon that has implications not only for immigrants, but also for the host country” (Geva-May, 1996: p. 2). Accordingly, a body of international literature has now emerged exploring the migration of Russian Jews, and issues associated with their settlement and integration in the receiving society. In this section of the paper, we draw from this scholarship insights and findings relevant to our particular interest in the adaptation of Russian Jewish youth to their new home in Toronto, Canada.

1. History of Russian Jewish Migration and Settlement in Canada

The migration of Russian Jews to Canada dates back to the 1890s when several thousand Russian Jews arrived in the country seeking relief from persecution and economic deprivation. Recurring pogroms against Jewish settlements in western Russia prompted waves of Jewish
migration to North America through to the start of the First World War. The disarray occasioned by war, revolution, and civil war in Russia prompted further migration during the 1920s by which time Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver, and other Canadian cities each were home to sizeable Russian Jewish communities. Canada’s doors were then virtually closed to immigrants for two decades through the Great Depression and Second World War. Russian Jews (mostly displaced persons of post-war Europe) again entered Canada from 1948 to 1953, when the chill of the Cold War closed entry and exit doors to Russians. During the 1970s and 1980s, approximately 1,500 Soviet Jews were permitted entry in Canada as refugees from religious persecution (Tulchinsky 1992; Speisman 1987; Abella and Troper 1982; Pierce, 1999: 2054).

The recent instability in post-Soviet Russia has prompted the greatest exodus of Jews ever. As Tanya Basok and Robert Brym have noted, rising Russian nationalist sentiment through the end of the 20th century “has become an important political force responsible for the growth of anti-Semitism and the persecution of ethnic minorities throughout the country” (Basok and Brym, 1991: xv). Jews have often found themselves blamed for the country’s economic, military, or political difficulties. Yet prejudice and persecution have not been the only prompts to migration. Many immigrants from the Soviet Union, Yaacov Glickman observed, were drawn to Canada as a promising land of economic prosperity and improved social mobility (Glickman, 1996).

There is a surprising paucity of literature exploring the ‘second lap’ migration experience of Russian Jews. As noted earlier, a substantial proportion of Toronto’s recently-arrived Russian Jews, first migrated from the former Soviet Union to Israel. Why did they then leave Israel to re-settle in Canada? A recent Task Force of the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) Federation, occasioned by the killing of Matti Baranovski, is suggestive. The Task Force brought together representatives from a wide range of municipal, educational, and Jewish community organizations to examine challenges facing Russian Jewish youth in Toronto. Its final report succinctly identified a number of important dynamics within this community. On the phenomenon of secondary migration, the report observed that families typically stayed in Israel between 5-7 years and “then mostly for economic and cultural/religious issues left for Canada.” Our focus group and community leader interviews identified a variety of factors which prompted this second migration. These included: aversion to the religious norms of Israeli life for Russian Jews who had not grown up in the Soviet Union with strong religious traditions; discomfort with pressures to assimilate into Israeli culture and society; difficulties encountered by Russian families in which (not atypically) one parent was non-Jewish; disappointment over economic or occupational difficulties; fears related to terrorism and war; and
anxiety over their children’s conscription into the army. After an initial settlement in Israel, concerns such as these have brought many Russian Jews to Toronto.

Canada now contains the third largest diaspora of Russian Jews, after only Israel and the United States. As noted earlier, however, the community’s size has been difficult to determine with precision. It should be noted that establishing the size of Canada’s entire Jewish community itself has been rather problematic. The Canadian decennial census conducted at the start of each decade includes both ethnic and religious identity questions. Data currently available from the last full census (1991) showed significantly more Canadians declaring their Judaism in ethnic terms (368,000) than in religious terms (318,000). Determining the number of Russian Jews in Toronto today has proven even more difficult. First, because many have arrived since 1996, they are not reflected in the most recent census numbers from that year. Period of migration is a further complication. Many in today’s Canadian Jewish community can trace their roots to an initial migration from Russia which occurred generations ago; are they still to be counted as Russian Jews? Perhaps most contentiously, there is considerable religious ambiguity over what constitutes a Russian Jew. As a religion, Judaism is a matrilineal faith, dependent on a Jewish mother and ritual observance. High rates of inter-marriage combined with minimal traditions of observance make it difficult to give religious definition to the community’s size. And in secular terms, the weak infrastructure of communal organizations exclusively serving this group has further impeded the ability to clearly determine the group’s numbers. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising, as we have seen earlier, that projections of this community’s size in Toronto vary widely. More evident than its size, are the settlement challenges facing members of the Russian Jewish community.

2. Challenges and Pressures Facing Russian Jewish Immigrants in Canada

The initial period of immigration can be regarded, and experienced, as a series of losses. During this phase, the migrants and their families have become disconnected from their familiar homeland, customs, social network, social status, and identity. The literature on Russian Jews in Canada identifies a number of variables which indicate that adjustment to such losses has been difficult for these newcomers.

First, high unemployment and under-employment have been experienced by Russian Jews. In her study of Soviet Jewish immigration to Canada, Tanya Basok discovered that “Soviet refugees admitted between 1978 and 1987 had the highest level of educational attainment of refugees from
the major refugee producing countries.” Over half the Soviet Jews who settled in Toronto during that time were university educated (Basok, 1991: 150-151). Moreover, as Yaacov Glickman recently concluded, the occupational status of many Russian Jews was precarious and beneath their educational achievement. The unemployment rates for survey respondents in the mid 1990s was 23 per cent, with fewer occupying high-status employment positions in Canada than they had left behind in Russia (Glickman, 1996). Similar patterns have been identified by researchers examining the experiences of Russian Jewish immigrants in Israel (Heitman, 1991; Cohen, 1991; King, 1998; Haberfeld, Semyonov, and Cohen, 1998).

Second, the research of Elazar Leshem and Moshe Sicron on family structure among Russian Jews in Israel is significant. Their research identified single-parent families and small households as disproportionally prevalent in this community (Leshem and Sicron, 1998). As we will see below, Canadian census data indicate similar patterns in newcomer families, yielding common results such as lower family income and reduced parental supervision of youth.

Third, researchers have noted a relatively weak attachment of Russian Jews to their Jewish identity. This first emerged in the study by Roberta Markus and Donald Schwartz of Soviet immigrants during the 1970s and 1980s. Survey respondents claimed to identify strongly with both Slavic and secular characteristics of Soviet society; Russian was the language spoken at home; and the desire to live as Jews and identify with the Jewish community did not play an important role in their decision to migrate to Canada (Markus and Schwartz, 1984).

This lack of strong Jewish identification also has been a feature of more recent immigrants, and has created some tensions between the newcomers and Toronto’s established Jewish community. While the latter group, as Mindy Avrich-Skapinker notes, was largely economically affluent, socially comfortable about the assertion of minority rights in multicultural Canada, and anxious about the continuity of its religious identity, the Russian newcomers were not only economically vulnerable but also burdened by, and detached from, their Jewish minority position in Russia. Not surprisingly, relations between the Soviet migrants and the established Toronto Jewish community during the 1970s and 1980s became strained as each side failed to live up to the other’s expectations. Canadian Jews thought Soviet Jews would become full participants in their religious community, while the Soviet Jews expected more assistance in successfully adapting to their new life in Canada (Avrich-Skapinker, 1993). Later research by Yaacov Glickman reinforces the continuity and intensity of these divisions. Glickman concluded that “the established community expected immigrants to accept
mainstream indicators of Jewish identity in exchange for support and services, but immigrants brought their cultural baggage that emphasized socio-economic mobility, a largely secular orientation and a strong attachment to Russian culture, tradition and language” (Glickman, 1996: 194). Most Russian Jewish respondents interviewed for this study, for instance, considered themselves secular, with 69 per cent expressing a weak exposure to their Jewish identity in the former Soviet Union.

Thus, recently-arrived Russian Jews in Toronto brought with them less of the Jewish cultural capital which had served earlier waves of Jewish immigrants so well in their adaptation to a new country, and they were regarded with some scepticism and suspicion by the established Jewish community. Russian Jews, therefore, have had difficulty adapting not only to Canadian society, but also to the established local Jewish community. Provocatively perhaps, one leader of Toronto’s Jewish community, Igor Korenzvit of the UJA integration committee, recently asserted that of more than 30,000 Russian Jews in the city, “you can count on one hand the number of people integrated into the larger Jewish community” (Kraft, 2000: 5).

Finally, the emotional impact of the experience of immigration and settlement has been studied by several Canadian researchers. A study conducted by Tatyana Barankin, M. Mary Konstantareas, and Farideh de Bosset examined the prevalence of depression and psychosomatic disorders among Soviet-Jewish immigrants, and how such problems may have affected their children’s adaptation. They concluded that “immigrants with depression and psychosomatic illness reported greater behaviour, academic, peer interaction, and child-parent difficulties in their children” (Barankin et al, 1989: 512).

Some years earlier, Mary Ashworth studied the integration experiences of immigrant children in Toronto. Half of all Jewish immigrant parents surveyed reported having experienced psychological depression upon arrival in Canada, and further reported significant difficulties in their children’s adaptation. Ashworth suggested that parents suffering from depression might have been able to provide less support and guidance to their children, thereby magnifying their potential for adaptational problems. Particularly challenging for children was reconciling differences arising from cultural conflicts (Ashworth 1975).
3. Youth Culture

The integration of immigrant youth, and the development of an immigrant youth culture, have become important research issues in Israel. The level of detachment and alienation experienced by immigrant youth was examined in a study produced by the Unit for the Advancement of Youth in 1994. It was discovered that immigrant youth created a subculture characterized by loitering in public parks, early school drop-out, vagrancy, marginal employment, alcoholism, violence, and juvenile delinquency (Horowitz, 1998). In their research, Leshem and Sicron similarly found that “many high school aged children developed symptoms of psychological stress manifested in longing for home, feelings of isolation and absence from school,” ending with “many finally dropping out,” and a sharp rise in criminal activity among immigrant youth (Leshem and Sicron 1998: 442-62).

Youth values and behaviour were shaped by their experiences in both the Soviet Union and in Israel. Immigrant youth believed that academic achievement, permanent employment and a good family life were highly important, while they attributed less significance to civic engagement in public activity, membership in social organizations, or religious identity and practice. Such prioritization has been regarded as indicative of an individualistic, rather than collectivist, orientation (Horowitz). When it became apparent to some that their goals were becoming increasingly difficult to attain as a result of their immigrant status, many turned to a youth subculture. Adolescents with similar ethnic backgrounds and values could now rebel against their integration into the host society by adopting their own code of values and conduct.

The UJA Federation Task Force Report identified a number of pressure points for Russian Jewish youth in Toronto. Without elaborating, the Report suggestively observed that secondary migration to Canada from Israel frequently triggered family tension and difficult adjustment challenges for youths in particular. Typically, we may presume, the decision to migrate to Canada was made by parents; youths already may well have established close friendships and meaningful activities which had to be left behind. The Report contended that many of these youth in Toronto have little else in abundance but spare time. Given the prevalence (we will see) of single-parent families and over-worked parents, these youths are often unsupervised, “left to their own devices after school to take care of themselves.” There are few social and recreational programs available in their densely-populated, apartment-complex corridor. Spending money is typically scarce in this struggling newcomer community. The Report further acknowledged that “There is no real integration of immigrant youth into the Jewish community” (UJA Task Force Report 2000: 3). Instead this youth
group’s social network has reached out to embrace non-Jewish Russians who have also moved into the area. Hanging out at the plaza appears to be the prevalent activity of many, the Report notes; and Russian is their most typical cultural and linguistic affinity.

IV. Demographic Profile

The most recent (1996) census data presently available, identify a number of distinct characteristics of the Russian Jewish community. Our primary data are shown in Table 1, which provides a profile of the 562,400 youth aged 15-25 residing in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area in 1996. This youth population includes 2,867 persons born in the USSR; 385,000 born in Canada and 174,533 born in other countries. For our purposes, Table 1 provides crucial insights into Russian Jewish youth in Toronto, though two qualifications to the data should be noted. First, youths who were born in Canada to Russian Jewish immigrants are placed into the ‘Born in Canada’ column of Table 1, where they are ‘lost’ amidst all other born-in-Canada Jewish youths. Thus, the data do not permit a distinct portrayal of second generation Russian Jewish youth in the Toronto area. Conversely however, the great value of the classification provided in Table 1 is its clarity in comparing Toronto’s Soviet-born immigrant youth, with both Canadian-born and other foreign-born youth, along the lines of Jewish and non-Jewish identity. Second, and similarly, there are both advantages and disadvantages to the data’s aggregation of all non-Jewish youth into either the ‘Born in Canada’ or ‘Born Other’ column. Regrettably, such classification does not permit comparisons between Russian Jewish youth and youth from other specific newcomer communities (e.g. Somalis, Tamils, Poles, Chinese). However, it does usefully permit comparison of Soviet-born Jewish youth with the aggregate of all other Jewish and non-Jewish youth in the Toronto area. Let us examine, then, the demographic profile of Russian Jewish youth as depicted in Table 1.

1. Immigration and Citizenship

Table 1 reveals that the proportion of Jewish youth born in the Soviet Union who migrated to Canada before 1990 (50%) was virtually identical to the percentage of all immigrant youth in the city-region who had arrived before 1990 (51%). As we have seen, most of these Russian Jews arrived in the late 1970s and 1980s. Significantly then, Russian Jewish youth constitute a recent addition to Toronto’s multicultural mosaic. Half the cohort living in Toronto in 1996, had been in Canada six years or less. Relatively few among them had migrated either as young children before the age of 5 (16 per cent), or as adults older than 19 (8 per cent). One implication is that most Russian Jewish
youth arrived in Toronto with a significant exposure to Russian and/or Israeli culture, with much of their adolescent development to be experienced in Canada.

Jewish youth and their parents appear to place great significance on claiming Canadian citizenship. Similar proportions of Russian Jewish youth (50%) and non-Jewish immigrants “Born Other” than the Soviet Union (49%) arrived in Canada before 1990, thereby establishing comparable pools with sufficient residency in Canada to claim citizenship. While two-thirds of the former group had done so by 1996, barely half the latter had.

2. Family Situation

Many Russian Jewish youth in the Toronto area grow up with limited family support resources. Single-parent families are common, and poverty rates are high. A disproportionately large number of Russian Jewish youth reside in small household units led by a single mother. Thus Soviet-born Jewish youth have twice the rate of female-led, single-parent families of any other group identified in Table 1. Fully 25% of Soviet-born Jewish youth in 1996 lived in such families, and 20% lived in households with under 3 persons. Russian Jewish youth, therefore, are far more likely than other youth in Toronto, to grow up without a father or siblings. Undoubtedly, for many youths, this can leave a deficit of emotional and nurturing support. The financial and material implications are more evidently quantifiable.

The family income and housing circumstances of Soviet-born Russian Jewish youth are problematic. The percentage of youth in this community living in families with below-median income is 71%. This compares with 50% for all youth, and 29% for the families of Jewish youth born in Canada. More ominously, 42% of these Russian Jewish youth live in families with income below the poverty line, compared with rates of 25% for all youth and 10% for Jewish youth born in Canada. Despite their high poverty rate, Russian Jewish families, interestingly, reveal a relatively low reliance on government for income support, with just 9% relying on government for their major source of income. This could stem from such factors as lack of familiarity with government programs, lower eligibility for employment-related benefits or greater dependence on support from within Toronto’s Jewish community. Given the income shortfall among Russian Jews in Toronto, it is hardly surprising that their rate of home ownership is particularly low, and that most live in high-rise apartment complexes in the northern part of the city.
3. Language and Education

As Table 1 indicates, Soviet-born Russian Jewish youth in Toronto tend to live in families in which English is not the home language. Indeed, with 72 per cent of Russian Jewish youth in such households, they comprise the largest non-English speaking group listed in the Table’s aggregated format. Yet the group’s educational record is strong, with 78 per cent of these age-eligible Russian Jewish youth possessing some post-secondary education. As we will see next, however, their educational achievement has not automatically brought economic success.

4. Labour Force Activity

Russian Jewish youth appear to have polarized experiences in the labour market. While relatively large numbers (60%) enjoy full-time employment, unemployment is very high (24%). Indeed, Russian Jewish youth experience greater unemployment than any other group considered in the aggregated format presented in Table 1. Given the below-median and below-poverty line incomes of their families, full-time employed Jewish youth would appear to be concentrated in lower-paid occupations. For youth enrolled in school on a full-time basis, we find disproportionately greater proportions of Jewish than non-Jewish youth employed on a part-time basis. The difference is particularly pronounced among youth born in the former Soviet Union and born in other countries but negligible for Jewish and non-Jewish youth born in Canada.

Both the preceding literature review and our analysis of census data suggest that family life and inter-generational relations among Russian Jewish youth will be framed by a number of distinctive factors not shared by either Canadians generally or Canadian-born Jews. Among the challenges facing significant numbers of immigrant Russian Jewish youth and their families are: 1) parental underemployment and loss of status; 2) high incidence of divorce, single parenting, sole child families; 3) low family income; 4) arrival in Canada representing a second immigration adjustment; 5) weak attachment to Jewish identity and cultural capital; 6) strained relations with Canadian Jewish community; 7) individual stress, depression and alienation; 8) lack of parental supervision and siblings for many youth; 9) high youth unemployment.
V. Focus Groups with Newcomer Youth and Mothers

In this section, we report on the findings derived from a series of focus groups conducted with Russian newcomer youth and mothers that comprised part of a larger research project that was carried out by the Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement – Toronto (CERIS) for the Settlement Directorate, Ontario Region, Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The project, entitled ‘Best Practice’ Services to Newcomer Youth, was designed to identify both the needs of newcomer youth, aged 16-20, from diverse cultural and racial backgrounds, and the ‘emergent best practices’ by service providers attempting to meet those needs and thus support the integration of such youth into Canadian society. A combination of different research strategies was employed in this project including: an extensive literature review; interviews with key informants in the service provider community; telephone surveys conducted by the Institute for Social Research (ISR) at York University to gather information from 150 service providers on effective programs and gaps in existing programs and service delivery infrastructure; and the use of focus groups with newcomer youth in the 16-20 year age group and immigrant mothers reflecting gender, ethnicity, and cultural and racial diversity that afford a sense of the needs, concerns, and issues encountered by newcomer youth. The ethnic groups that were included in this CERIS study were Jamaicans, Koreans, Somalis, Africans, Iranians, Portuguese, and Russian Jews.

To explore the experiences of Toronto’s Russian Jewish youth, three separate focus groups were arranged with male newcomers, female newcomers, and immigrant mothers of newcomer youth aged 16-20. In conducting focus groups with the newcomer youth, a number of questions were raised within each group. The questions that were raised form the basis of our discussion in this section and include the following:

(1) As a young person who immigrated to Canada with your family, some of you may have had a variety of needs to be met, whether assistance with language, or an understanding of the school system, or just how to fit in. Everyone's experience is unique, and we are interested in learning more of your personal experiences since coming to Canada. Can you tell us what it was like when you first arrived in Canada and what have been some of the major issues you have dealt with?

(2) When people move to an new place, they often find that they have to adjust to new ways which are different from their home country. Young people in particular are often caught
between the way things are done in their home country and in Canada. We are interested in learning more if this has affected your relationship with family members and peers.

(3) Can you tell us if there are people or organizations that have been particularly helpful in your attempt to face any of your needs and concerns. For example, your family or friends, a school counsellor, your religious organization (e.g. church, synagogue, your community centre, or a social service or settlement agency etc.) What did these people or organizations actually do that helped you or your friends? Can you give us examples of this help?

(4) In thinking about the many needs and concerns encountered by young people who’ve recently moved to Canada, what kind of services and/or supports, would you suggest be put in place to help them settle in?

It should be noted that the questions asked of immigrant mothers were very similar to those asked of youth, except, in the case of the mothers, we were interested in eliciting their views of the experiences, needs, and concerns of their children, aged 16-20.

1. Youth Newcomers

Two focus groups were held with Russian Jewish newcomer youth. All of the participants, both male and female, were very recent immigrants, having come to Canada within the previous two years. The female group consisted of five women ranging in age from 15 to 19. Three of the five female participants and five of the six male participants had come to Toronto from Israel. The female group appeared to be fairly homogeneous. All were from relatively-small, two-parent families and had either a brother or sister. All the participants in both focus groups were landed immigrants. All the female participants were attending school full time, while half the male participants were attending part time and the other half were enrolled full time. Almost all participants were in high school with the exception of one female and one male who were in a community college. Though none of the male participants was employed part-time, one female worked full time and two worked on a part-time basis. Interestingly, none of the males was employed. Most of the participants in both groups appeared to be from highly-educated families, where both the mother and father had some form of post-secondary education. It is important to note, however, that half of the male participants failed to note the level of education completed by either their mothers or fathers. None of their
families had been sponsored by relatives, though all but one had friends living here who helped them out when they arrived.

(a) Problems Faced by Youth Upon First Arrival

Many of the male youth remarked that they had difficulty expressing themselves in English when they first arrived in Canada. They noted that this led to difficulties in both their ability to communicate with Canadians and to understand English speakers. Many youth stated that their lack of English language skills made it difficult for them to make new friends and to excel in school. Overall, all of the youth described their language problems as constituting a tremendous source of frustration and anxiety.

In order to deal with loneliness, participants employed a variety of strategies. Some maintained relationships with people back home. One female participant solved this problem by getting on the Internet and striking up new relationships. Another female participant decided on staying close to her Israeli roots and the Hebrew language by working at a Jewish Community Centre.

One female youth spoke of the language difficulties she experienced upon coming to Canada. Although she had taken some English at school in Israel, it was minimal. She had completed high school and planned to attend a community college in Toronto. First though, she was obliged to take English classes. Initially, she enrolled in a night school where she learned very little because many of the other students were, themselves, Russian-speaking. As a result, she did not practice English and thus made very little progress in the improvement of her English-language proficiency. As she put it, “If you have people from the same background, it’s hard to learn English when you know you can speak another language that would be much easier.” Subsequently, she attended a high school ESL class, where most students were closer to her age, but were predominantly Spanish. Consequently, they were forced to speak English as that was their common ground. She is now attending a college program in computer sciences.

Many of the youth reported that their low English-language skills led to their inability to understand their teachers. Several youth spoke about their difficulties with English teachers. Unable to communicate in English with these teachers, the youth argued that their grades were often lower than what they felt they were capable of doing. This led to considerable frustration on the part of the
youth. One male youth pointed out that he was especially baffled with his teachers. Several of them, he contended, did not believe that he, as a white youth, could not speak English. Unlike other youth in the group, this participant, referring to his own experiences and difficulties, implicated the school system and not just individual teachers. All of the youth reported that they did not go to see guidance counsellors very often as they felt that these staff members did not understand them. Some of the youth even reported not knowing that their schools had personnel designated as guidance counsellors.

Not all Russian newcomers reported negative experiences in Toronto schools; this was particularly true for female participants. Initially, they found school to be very confusing because the onus was on them to select courses. This was an unfamiliar experience since, in Israel, they were assigned to courses. Their workloads in the Israeli system had been exceptionally heavy and, as a consequence, they felt pressured. With time, many of these youth adjusted effectively to the Canadian system of education and found it less confusing.

The participants, particularly the male youth, reported that they had and were still having difficulty finding part-time jobs. They wanted to secure employment in “a good place”, for example, a supermarket, but they simply could not locate such positions. One participant said, “Teenagers come from Israel and Russia and the employers here—they look for at least some Canadians. And it’s hard to find an okay job, not a good one, but an okay job.” To get a supermarket job, one participant claimed, one needs experience. At a job interview, he was asked whether he spoke English well and when he admitted that he could not, he was refused employment. Many of the female participants found it less difficult to find part-time jobs. One participant told us of combining babysitting with telemarketing in order to earn the money she needed. Another participant worked as a counsellor at a Jewish Community Centre.

A few male youth reported that they had experienced many problems trying to fit into Canadian society. These youth asserted that their likes and dislikes were different from those of Canadians. One youth noted that it was hard for him to communicate with Canadians and to fit in, since they could not understand his jokes. In addition, peer pressure to wear fashionable clothing was also a source of struggle for youth, as they attempted to ‘fit into’ Canadian society.

The process of acculturation did not appear to be a significant issue for any of the young female participants. In fact, only one appeared to have had any difficulties with the move to Canada. She told the focus group that, while resistant to the move initially, she was finding the Canadian
experience a positive one, and felt she was settling in well. Moreover, many of the female participants expressed the feeling that Canadians were very pleasant and polite. Thus, all spoke of how much Canadians smile, and one participant mentioned how very unnerved she was by this when she first came to Canada. She said that, “If a Russian is in a bad mood, it’s written all over his face.” They all agreed that they didn’t like it; they were much happier with the Canadian way of trying not to show it to others. Another participant told us that “in Canada they respect all the cultures.” For her, this contrasted sharply with her experiences in Israel, where “they expect you to change your values to theirs.”

Gender variations with regard to the perception of cultural differences and the impact of these differences in fitting in to Canadian life also surfaced during the focus groups. All, however, appreciated the Canadians’ apparent acceptance of diversity. Many of the young female participants felt that newcomers, or anyone who was “different,” were treated with respect by Canadians and that their cultural values and beliefs were valued. In contrast, they all felt that there was little tolerance in their home countries for anything that strayed from the norm. They spoke of how similar the Israeli and Canadian cultures were, particularly in the area of peers. They all perceived, however, that there is less pressure in Canada to conform to peer “norms,” at least at their age. In contrast, many of the male youth stated that cultural differences between Canada and Russia created problems that required adjustment soon after their arrival. One participant, for example, remarked that adjusting to differences in food and the overall Canadian environment was a personal challenge. The same male participant stated that the problems faced by youth like himself were exacerbated by Canadians’ general lack of understanding and knowledge of other cultures and politics. When pressed further, he alluded to the general ‘depoliticised’ nature of Canadians. In addition, many of the male youth (in contrast with the females) found that Canadians were a very cold people, and that feature made it difficult for them to make friends in Canada.

When asked whether they felt discriminated against, the participants were all in agreement that they felt no discrimination that was particularly directed toward them because they were Russian. One participant said that anyone who is not considered ‘Canadian’ is treated differently. No one reported conflicts that could be categorized as being picked on, only problems of adjustment. One participant said, “In Israel it was worse. They always picked on Russians, but in Canada, no. That’s why I said that discrimination is not a problem. They don’t care here.” When asked why the participant was picked on in Israel, he mentioned that Russians had more old-fashioned styles than the Israelis, who acted and dressed like Americans.
(b) Family Relations

One major source of conflict between participants and parents concerned clothing styles. One participant mentioned that his parents were old-fashioned, and when he wanted to dress in Canadian fashions (e.g., baggy pants), his parents thought it looked horrible. He said that it was not the cost of these clothes that was the issue; rather it was the way the clothes looked. “In Russia, my parents bought my clothes and I didn’t have a problem with that. But here it’s a different style. I pick my own clothes and they say it’s horrible.”

At times, peer relationships and dating provided a basis for friction between parents and youth. One female participant indicated that her parents, unfamiliar with the English language, were not favorably disposed to their children relating to peers who only spoke English. “They don’t understand a lot of things, and that was a problem for them because they couldn’t understand my friends, couldn’t talk about my schedule.” In discussing the relationship of boys and girls, one female participant pointed out that in Russia “until girls turned 16 there was no interaction between boys and girls.” As a result, she experienced problems with her parents over dating in Israel. However, she finds that her parents’ attitude has changed in Canada, more closely approximating the attitudes held by parents of friends born in Canada.

Another major source of conflict was employment related. Many of the participants’ parents came to Canada with professional degrees, but subsequently found that they could not find suitable jobs. One male participant, whose parents had jobs as a jeweler and a designer in Russia, indicated that his parents had to study English for a year before they could find employment. Another participant said that his mother, an editor, still can not find a job in her area, and his father, an architect, can not find employment because he lacked computer and English skills. Many parents had to find jobs in other than their chosen professions. Another participant said that when they arrived in Canada, his parents could not find a job for six months. They all became “nervous” and family relationships deteriorated.

2. Mothers of Immigrant Russian Youth

This group consisted of six women. Four had immigrated recently, within the past two years, directly from Russia. Two emigrated to Canada from Israel, having originally left Russia some years earlier. All these women were married and living with their husbands, and it should be noted that
these are not the mothers of the youths whose views we have just presented. Yet, in many respects, these mothers’ comments about their own children’s experiences in Canada reinforce, from a parental perspective, the views expressed by the Russian Jewish youths above.

(a) Adaptation Challenges Faced by Youth Upon First Arrival

Russian youth, like most immigrant children, arrive in Canada through a great investment of parental expectations. All the mothers in the group stated that the reason they emigrated to Canada was for their children. All regarded Canada as a safe and economically prosperous country, providing their children with more opportunities, and a better future. Yet, opinions were divided on whether Canadian reality lived up to their aspirations. While some mothers of boys particularly appreciated removing their sons from conscription and war in Chechnya, others were clearly disappointed. One mother stated: “Only, only for our children. That’s the only reason for our immigration to Canada. But now I am not sure it was the right decision.” Among the difficulties facing their youth, the mothers emphasized loss of friends, isolation, poor English language skills, and the adverse impact upon children of their parents’ adjustment difficulties. Bouts of sadness, crying, and withdrawal were not unusual for their children, the parents recounted. Among the burdens some parents carry is the feeling that their migration decision has actually made life more difficult for their children. As one mother lamented: “We broke their childhood. So I want my daughter to be happy and feel at home here, and to have as many close friends as back home.”

The women clearly regarded schools as the most important institution affecting their children’s immediate well-being and long-term prospects. All emphasized the importance of their children receiving a good education, and performing well academically. Yet, they expressed considerable reservations over how well the schools were serving their children. All the mothers felt that the Russian school system was better than the Canadian system, both academically and socially. They particularly noted the superior after-school programs available in Russia as providing both academic enrichment and safe opportunities for socialization. In addition, some mothers complained of the school system’s requirement for children to attend in-neighborhood schools. This, they believed, kept their children out of the city’s best schools. Significantly, mothers with sons believed that boys experienced more difficulty adjusting and succeeding in Toronto schools. They had difficulty accounting for this gender gap, suggesting it might be related to more basic inter-personal behavioral patterns. As one mother observed: “I can say that the girls tend to discuss their problems
with their friends. They are happy to share with each other. The boys keep everything to themselves.”

In a more positive vein, all the mothers expressed the view that teachers in Canada were superior to those in Russia. They agreed that, overall, the teachers were "great – more attentive, caring and open” than Russian teachers. Also, families were clearly prepared to take pro-active steps to improve their children’s education. At least two of these families had moved within the Toronto area to be within the district of a particular school. Each had done considerable research to find a school they believed best suited for their children, and then moved accordingly, in both cases surmounting the challenge of finding affordable housing. Additionally, most mothers spoke very highly of the assistance their family had received from the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society (JIAS). These newcomers were tremendously grateful for the support JIAS provided in sending youth to summer camp, finding youth employment, and securing free dental care.

(b) Family Relations

The immigration experience has affected inter-generational relations within families. Some mothers commented on the transformed power relationships within the family unit. With youth often acquiring language and information about their new country more quickly, parents often could be rendered dependent on their children. As one mother noted: “It is not easy to come to our daughters for help all the time and have her teach us things.” In addition, working youth, in households where immigrant parents were underemployed often experienced newfound economic independence, thus creating a new basis for potential conflicts. One mother observed that as a result of her daughter’s job: “She goes out and buys clothes for herself. We cannot give that to her.” With youth earning their own income, usually through service sector employment, there is also a greater potential for “clothing wars” to erupt at home, as children defy their parents’ dress code preferences.

Canadian youth culture was clearly something which troubled the mothers, and was straining relations with their children. The women said they often worried about their children when they were "hanging out" with Canadian youth. Canadian parents are seen as having different, more permissive, expectations for their children. The mothers told of their children staying out past curfew because “all the kids do,” leading to conflicts with their children. However, most mothers also declared that their own parenting style was liberalizing since arriving in Canada. “Of course,” one mother claimed, “we have to change our method of raising children. We need to be softer as our children were traumatized by immigration.” Another mother commented: “We are more careful not to push them
as much and give enough space.” Another stated: “I would say I need to be more democratic and less authoritarian. Besides I have also changed after two immigrations.” The greater independence accorded women in Canada than in Russia was particularly striking and positive in the estimation of several mothers. Yet, at times, the women also were unsettled by their children’s claims on greater latitude for themselves. Clutching and letting go are not mutually exclusive parental inclinations in these immigrant households.

VI. Community Outreach Perspective

It is clear from our focus group respondents that the Toronto Jewish organization which they hold in highest regard is the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society (JIAS), whose outreach services to Jewish immigrants to Canada date back over 100 years (Tulchinsky 1992, 111; 274). Offering a wide array of program, counselling, and information support, JIAS has established close links to Toronto’s growing Russian Jewish community. Mila Voihanski is Director of Immigrant Services at JIAS and has been working at JIAS for 25 years. Through an in-depth interview, Ms. Voihanski defined a number of key characteristics and challenges facing this community. The following section of this paper summarizes her comments. Ms. Voihanski’s insights add nuance and complexity to our understanding of the experiences of Russian Jewish youth in Toronto.

Contemporary youth of Russian Jewish origin in Toronto may be classified into three categories: the first consists of Canadian-born children of immigrants who arrived directly from the Soviet Union between the late 1960s and early 1980s; the second contains Russian-born individuals whose families migrated to Canada in the 1980s and 1990s; and the third refers to Russian- or Israeli-born youth whose families migrated from the Soviet Union to Israel, before emigrating again to Canada. None of these migrant groups has had an easy time establishing a coherent identity since their arrival in Canada.

Ms. Voihanski believes that the Canadian-born cohort tends to feel “segregated and alienated” from both Canadian society and the more recent foreign-born Russian Jewish youth. “They don’t see themselves as Canadian, nor do they see themselves as Russian, so they don’t really know who they are.” As for the more recently arrived foreign-born youth, their strongest attachments are either Russian or Israeli – more so than Canadian or religiously Jewish. Those who arrived directly from the former Soviet Union have Russian language and culture as their strongest identification.
This has been reinforced by the significant settlement of non-Jewish Russian immigrants in the same high-rise Bathurst Street corridor. Interestingly, close friendship networks have been established between Jewish and non-Jewish Russian youth in Toronto, transcending the strong anti-semitic feelings and tradition prevalent in the former Soviet Union.

Finally, youth who had lived in Israel may have had the greatest difficulty in developing an identity. While their parents have (for a variety of possible reasons cited earlier) decided to quit Israel, this second uprooting can be particularly trying for youth, especially when close friends have been left behind. Ms. Voihanski identifies this group’s quandary well: “They no longer know who they are. Are they Russian? Are they Israeli? Are they Jewish, and, if so, what part of their identity does that take? It becomes very difficult for them.” Typically, their attachment to Israel is the strongest bond these youth feel. Many of these youth return to Israel to serve in its army. Often this is done against the wishes of their parents, and this generates considerable strife and stress within families. Clearly the willingness of Russian Jewish youth to leave Toronto for the Israeli army reflects their general detachment from Canadian society.

Ms. Voihanski identified several factors impeding these youths’ smooth Toronto settlement. Ever in focus are the strained relations between newcomers and the city’s established Jewish community. She contends that “the Russian community doesn’t feel accepted and the established community doesn’t feel appreciated.” In the city’s Jewish day schools “the tension is very high,” as Russian-origin youth are treated as second-class foreigners, and regarded as excessively aggressive and, perhaps, insufficiently ‘Jewish.’ Bullying, drugs, and peer pressure have been sources of intimidation for some youth. Financial and employment strains have been a source of conflict between youth and their parents. While student employment was generally frowned upon by parents in the Soviet Union, (in favour of an emphasis on homework and academic achievement), in Canada the combination of consumerism, peer pressure, and low family income has prompted more youth to seek work, despite their parents’ concerns. In sum then, many Russian Jewish youth in Toronto can be defined by their deficits. They possess little sense of belonging, fragmented identities, limited financial resources, and uncertain common ground with their parents’ priorities and aspirations.

VII. Conclusion

This paper has provided a context and voice to the recent experiences of Russian Jewish immigrant youth in Toronto. Based on a review of related literature, demographic analysis, and focus
group and community interviews we have identified a number of challenges facing this newcomer community and its youth. Some of the adaptation difficulties identified are inherent in the migration experience, and may well be shared by many different newcomer communities. As the title of our paper suggests, what we regard as distinctive among Russian Jewish youth is the tension between the multiplicity of fragmented identities they struggle to reconcile in the face of the minimal and shallow (marginal) ties they have so far been able to forge in their newest homeland.

Before summarizing our findings, it is worth remembering that Russian Jews constitute a very recent immigrant wave to Toronto. Most youth arrived as children who had acquired a mother tongue and formative values elsewhere. Many were now making a second major migration, forsaking friends and the familiar one more time. Under these circumstances it would be most unusual for Russian Jewish immigrant youth not to face some adaptation challenges.

Family formation, economic circumstances, and residential settlement patterns clearly play an important part in framing Russian Jewish youth experiences in Canada. We have identified a disproportionately high incidence of single-parent, female-led families within the Russian Jewish community, which has negative implications for family income and levels of parental supervision. Even more significant are the employment difficulties that adults in the community have suffered. Many Jews from the former Soviet Union have come to Canada with advanced educational and technical backgrounds, and yet, as our data suggest, frequently have experienced uneven employment patterns and limited sources of income. Poverty rates among youth in this community were considerably above the Canadian average. These parental labour market experiences appear to have had negative implications for the social and economic integration of their children, as evidenced in the remarks made by newcomer youth aged 16-20. For these youth, the pace of settlement and integration is affected by economic insecurity and the anxiety that accompanies having a lower socio-economic status in Canada. The Russian Jewish community’s dense residential concentration in a rather bleak high-rise apartment corridor has served to intensify youth anomie, and the absence of accessible recreational and social programs has exacerbated this situation.

The uneasy ties between Russian Jewish immigrants and Toronto’s established Jewish community constituted another liability for these newcomers. A variety of factors have impeded closer bonds. These include the Russians’ minimal exposure to Jewish identity and traditions in their native Soviet Union; the high rates of inter-marriage among the newcomers; linguistic and cultural differences; and significant income/status differentials. As a result, the Russian Jewish newcomer
community has not bonded well with the city’s large and generally affluent Jewish community, nor have they fully benefitted from the broader Jewish community’s cultural and institutional capital. Instead, a measure of distance and suspicion divides the two. But we have also seen that Russian Jewish youth in Toronto are themselves a fragmented group. Some were born and raised in Canada; some migrated recently from the former Soviet Union; others have come after a significant earlier migration to Israel. Given these diverse pathways to Toronto, neither a strong collective bond among these youth, nor a firm sense of belonging to Canada, has yet emerged. One of the strongest commonalities across all three groups is their limited exposure to religious learning and upbringing.

Clearly, Russian Jewish parents place great hope in the future of their youth. Building a better future for their children was their primary motivation for coming to Canada. And, as Hiebert (1998) has noted, immigrant families often equate their hope for the future with the education of their children. Yet, Russian youth have experienced frustration fitting into both these spheres. Youth unemployment is high among Russian Jews, and a variety of educational problems have been identified. In addition, family relations frequently become more contentious as the children’s embrace of Canadian youth culture runs counter to the more traditional values of the Russian Jewish community. In other instances, parental norms altered in response to mothers’ reported attempts to accommodate their children’s adjustment to Canadian expectations. Both Russian Jewish youth and their mothers contend that male youth are more likely to experience greater migration adjustment difficulties than female youth. Many factors are likely to influence this pattern, including gender differences in peer relationships; the more frequent absence of father figures in the family; and differing cultural pressures and expectations of males and females. More research is required to probe these dynamics and how their negative impact on both male and female youth may be mitigated. Certainly, like other earlier groups of newcomers, the new Torontonian Jews from the former Soviet Union show every sign of readiness to sacrifice and sweat to achieve successful integration in their new homeland.

As we mentioned in the introduction to this paper, the killing of Matti Baranovski in November of 1999 mobilized efforts by the Canadian Jewish and Russian Jewish community to address concerns around the settlement and integration of newcomer youth. By way of illustration, a new Russian Jewish Initiative Community Organization, consisting mainly of women, was formed in December 1999. This group is mainly concerned that the needs of the children of newly-arrived immigrants are not being met and that these youth require much more support than they currently receive (Blackman, 2000:21). In addition, a comprehensive program addressing the needs of Russian
Jewish youth, in an area of Toronto populated with recent Russian Jewish immigrants, is being implemented under the auspices of JIAS. This initiative will fine tune existing programs but also introduce new ones. According to Jack Kugelmass, Executive Director of JIAS, among the youth’s concerns is the feeling that they are not accepted, liked, or respected by the established Jewish community. “They feel people are afraid of them, and that many of the existing Jewish organizations don’t go out of their way to make them feel comfortable.” JIAS also plans to work with other existing organizations to teach them “more about how to relate to a diverse Jewish population. This means that rather than looking at integration as making these people look like us, we have to learn how to accept the newcomer community for what they bring to us.” (Kraft, 2000:15).
### Table 1

Comparisons of Toronto Jews and Non-Jews aged 15-25, born in SOVIET, CANADA & OTHER countries in 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Toronto All Aged 15-25</th>
<th>Born in SOVIET</th>
<th>Born in CANADA</th>
<th>Born OTHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>Non-Jewish</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>Non-Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>616678</td>
<td>1429</td>
<td>1643</td>
<td>15964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>per cent</td>
<td>per cent</td>
<td>per cent</td>
<td>per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrated before 1990</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrated before the age of 5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrated after the age of 19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian Citizens</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household: under 3 persons</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Lone Male Parent Families</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Lone Female Parent Families</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Source Income: Government</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Income below Median</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Income below Poverty Line</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Owned Homes</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English not Home Language</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in School in past 8 months</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Secondary Education</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Labour Force Full-time 1995</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Labour Force Part-time 1995, Attending School Full-time</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Labour Force but Unemployed</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Canada, Public Use Microfiche Files

Notes

1. All information refers to 15-25 year olds. Family information thus refers to families in which these people were living.

2. NA = Not applicable. Citizens: The 84 per cent in column 1 applies to all, irrespective of Immigrant status.

3. All sub-groups are compared to the Median Family Income of ALL 15-25 year olds in Toronto ($57,500). Poverty Line is one set by the Census.

4. Education beyond Grade 13 and Labour Force activity would be influenced by the actual age distribution within each group of 15-25 year olds.

5. Born in the Soviet Union include transmigrants from Israel and the United States.

6. Born OTHER includes those who were born in Israel.
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