

The Second Promised Land: Exploring the Secondary Migration  
of Soviet Jews from Israel to Canada

by

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## **Abstract**

Between 1989 and 2009, over a million Jews left the former Soviet Union and arrived in Israel. One in six later chose to leave Israel, with many arriving in Canada. This strong pattern of onward migration occurred despite Soviet Jews being well-integrated by standard measures. The pattern is only partially explained by existing theory and push factors in Israel, including security concerns or economic and socio-cultural factors. It is better explained through the addition of key characteristics of Soviet Jews as multipliers on push-pull factors, including low ties to Israel, high economic human capital, and human capital from previous migration experience. Examining the responses of Soviet Jews who engaged in onward migration to Canada contributes to the current understanding of Jewish identity, and to existing theory on migration, characterizing it not as a unidirectional process with a concrete terminus but as a lifelong, ongoing process with multiple possible outcomes.

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## **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

When exit visas finally made their way to Jewish applicants in the Soviet Union, they were put to use. While the departure of Soviet Jews was limited in earlier decades, largely due to government refusal to grant permission and emigration paperwork, from the 1970s onwards Jews in the Soviet Union departed their home country in rapidly increasing numbers. Early departures, between the 1970s and 1988, numbered approximately 291,000 people, with the majority (165,000) selecting Israel as their destination country.<sup>1</sup> This initial wave was dramatically eclipsed by the next wave of Jewish emigration from the USSR, which began to surge just two years before the Soviet Union's collapse in December 1991. In a twenty-year span between 1989 and 2009, over 1.6 million Jews left the USSR and the countries encompassed by the defunct union, with the majority again choosing Israel (1 million).<sup>2</sup> The sheer size of this later wave of movement led to significant impacts on all aspects of the diaspora. This included the Jewish communities in the former Soviet states, the population and development of Israel as a Jewish state, and the communities formed by emigrants in other countries, including Canada.

However, while the overwhelming majority of the Soviet Jews initially moved to Israel, a new trend emerged a decade later: they were leaving Israel, just as they had left the USSR. Some returned to the post-Soviet states, and thus returned 'home.' However, many others chose to migrate to a new, *third* country and go through the arduous process of moving countries and integrating a second time. This was caused by a variety of factors commonly found as struggles in immigrant communities: difficulties with language or career acquisition, struggles with the

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1. Mark Tolts, "Demography of the Contemporary Russian-Speaking Jewish Diaspora," in *The New Jewish Diaspora: Russian-Speaking Immigrants in the United States, Israel, and Germany*, ed. Zvi Y. Gitelman (Rutgers University Press, 2016), 23.

2. Tolts, 23.

competing interests of integration and assimilation, and cultural mismatches, among other factors. But while no single aspect of the experiences of Soviet Jews in Israel is unique to them, what is seemingly unique is the numbers in which they engaged in onward migration across high-barrier international borders and chose to take on those struggles again, despite having ostensibly integrated successfully in their new country. It is in the interest of investigating this unusual pattern – largely unexplained by existing literature and not studied as an example of onward migration – that this project sought to examine the experiences and perspectives of members of the Russian-Jewish diaspora in Canada.

### ***1.1 Research Question***

There were two research questions identified at the outset of the project. The first research question, primarily fact-finding, asked, “How did the factors influencing the decision-making of Soviet Jews compare between the decision to leave the USSR, and the decision to leave Israel?” Encompassed in that question are a variety of key factors, including commonly found reasons to leave a country described by immigrant communities across the world. The comparison of the causes behind the decision to leave the first home country and then the second provides a lens through which the Soviet Jews’ perspectives on life, their desires, and their homes can be discerned and understood.

The second research question, which directed the broader approach to the research project, was, “How did the background of Soviet Jews affect their decisions regarding emigration from Israel?” Whereas the first question was primarily focused on identifying key factors of both decisions to move, the second addresses the reason that this case group is of particular interest. The onward migration of Soviet Jews, disproportionately common in their population compared to others in Israel or elsewhere in the world, must be derived from

something that differentiates this community. It is in answer to this question that the project's hypothesis was formed.

The proposed hypothesis is that the onward migration pattern of Soviet Jews departing Israel is a relatively unique case combining both traditional push factors influencing their decisions to emigrate, including security, climate, and culture, and a secondary process of multiplying factors caused by their relatively high human capital and limited choice in destination when leaving the Former Soviet Union (FSU). More specifically, whereas immigrants with high levels of education and professional work experience typically have more agency regarding their migration decisions, it is hypothesized that the lack of choice presented to Jews in the FSU limited their ability to integrate and develop ties to a country they did not choose for themselves. Rather than being seen as a skilled group moving for better opportunities, many who left the FSU were seen as persons in need of protection, impacting the immigration paths open to them. The dynamic of high human capital in tandem with the limitations Soviet Jews experienced arriving in Israel arriving as displaced individuals is hypothesized to have acted as a set of multiplying factors on push factors in Israel, making those individuals more likely to leave than would otherwise be predicted.

## ***1.2 Research Rationale***

This research simultaneously addresses several interesting gaps in the available literature across two major themes: Soviet Jewish identity and onward migration. In both cases, while research has been done on similar cases and examples, relatively little (or none) has been brought forward about the Soviet Jews who left Israel, presenting an opportunity to address those blind spots in the understanding of core concepts of identity, belonging, and migration decision-making. With respect to the Soviet Jews, extensive literature exists on the development of the

Soviet Jewish identity before the collapse of the USSR. Similarly comprehensive research exists on the development of a ‘Russian’-Jewish identity in Israel following the waves of movements from the FSU.

In contrast, the case of Soviet Jews who left Israel is one that is generally understudied, with limited research on their numbers and demographics, and even less on precisely why they left. There is also a gap in more recent analyses of the population. The bulk of the literature on Soviet Jews developed in the immediate aftermath, and as a direct response to, the largest waves of Soviet Jewish immigrants arriving in new countries, especially in Israel. With a relatively short-term focus on their integration in destination countries, most of the literature dates to the 1990s, with a drop in publications post-2000 that continued over time.<sup>3</sup> Relatively little has been written on the Soviet Jews with a longer-term view of their experiences and the outcomes of their integration, meaning those aspects are not captured in the existing literature.

Similarly, there is a wealth of research on migration decision-making, as understanding why migrants choose to leave and how they discern between available options is an ever-present and critical question for researchers and policymakers alike. Some research also exists on return migration, where immigrants spend some time in their destination country with the intent of doing so permanently, only to return to their country of origin.<sup>4</sup> This research, however, is somewhat limited and less expansive than that on first-time migration from one location to another, in part due to the difficulty of tracking specific individuals’ migration patterns over

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3. For example, a search of the keyword string “Soviet” AND “Israel” and “immigration” OR “aliyah” on the JSTOR database shows 3,471 journal articles between 1989-1990. By comparison, the same string returns 2,871 results for 2000-2010, of which the majority (1,625) fall between 2000-2005, demonstrating the decrease over time.

4. Jean-Pierre Cassarino, “Theorising Return Migration: The Conceptual Approach to Return Migrants Revisited,” SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, 2004), 254, <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=1730637>.

time. The phenomenon of onward migration to a third country, meanwhile, is one that is comparatively significantly understudied. This is likely due to the same barrier to research as in the case of return migration, with the lack of large-scale data further complicated by the need to track individuals across three countries rather than only two. The research available on onward migration is predominantly localized, addressing movement between communities within a country, or addressing case groups within the European Union, where movement between member-states is easier than between two unrelated countries. The case of the Soviet Jews has not been studied through the lens of onward migration and represents a gap both in terms of their unique characteristics and that of onward migration to a highly different, distant country.

In both respects, the Soviet Jews who resided in Israel and then chose to emigrate to Canada represent an extension of existing literature, research, and understanding to a new and mostly untouched space in the literature. Firstly, their experiences as immigrants to two different countries with vastly different cultures and immigration systems provide a view into how those contextual differences led to differences in outcomes, including cultural and economic adaptation. Secondly, the disproportionate rate at which Soviet Jews chose to leave the State of Israel and emigrate speaks to a schism between them and other groups within Israel itself, as well as potential flaws in the policy supports that greeted them upon their arrival.

As a trend which contravenes the conventional understanding of migration as a one-way process with integration as both an outcome and a marker of completion, the experiences of the mostly well-integrated Soviet Jews who departed Israel provide valuable information on migration decision-making that can be used to advance theoretical understanding of migration. Moreover, exploring their reasons for leaving, and their perceptions of their lives, allows for a better understanding of the unique Soviet Jewish identity, including how it interacted with others

in Israel and Canada. It also provides insight into the effectiveness of immigrant policies and supports in Israel as experienced by the Soviet Jews, with implications for policy design in the future. In summary, this project builds on existing literature with new primary research, offering an exploratory analysis of aspects of migration, migration policy, and Jewish identity that are currently understudied.

### ***1.3 Literature Review***

When examining the complex movement pattern of Jews from the former Soviet Union, it is necessary to define migration itself. As defined by Phillip Ritchey, migration is “the change in residence involving movement between communities,” identifying that migrants arrive in and become part of new communities.<sup>5</sup> What is missing from this definition, and what gave the term itself such flexibility, is a lack of defined distance between communities needed for them to count as separate. Ravenstein, developing the first ‘laws’ of migration, noted the importance of distance to analyzing migration, since leaving one community may involve a journey of as little as 25 miles whereas others may travel many times that.<sup>6</sup> As technological advances and globalization shrank the distances between communities, however, the focus shifted to a gradually broader scale, with a focus emerging on the movement of people between countries.

#### ***1.3.1 Migration: Explaining Movement***

The movement of people to a new country can have a significant impact on the economy and cultural landscape of the country in which they arrive. Immigrants, particularly those selected based on their economic potential, can be an “economic boon” and a “cultural asset,”

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5. P. Neal Ritchey, “Explanations of Migration,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 2, no. 1 (1976): 364, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.02.080176.002051>.

6. E.G. Ravenstein, “On the Laws of Migration,” *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* 48, no. 2 (June 1885): 168.

bringing with them both economic and human capital.<sup>7</sup> Conversely, too many emigrants contribute to much-feared “brain drain,” where high-skill, high-value residents of a country depart, taking their earnings potential with them.<sup>8</sup> The focus on desirable immigrants and the economic benefits of attracting and retaining them, which Gould and Moav note as a major theme in popular media and countries’ concerns from the 1990s onwards, bled over to the academic landscape of migration.<sup>9</sup> Early models of migration attributed migration flows to relative wage differences between areas in the latter half of the twentieth century, with people choosing to migrate in search of higher incomes, but failed to explain contradictory observations. This led to attempts to explain the results with additional variables following the same logic where migration occurs to maximize benefit.

One such attempt is the push-pull theory of migration. The push-pull model operates on the same logic of spatial disparity that has dominated migration theory since Ravenstein’s laws of migration, but expands beyond the economic lens taken by its predecessors.<sup>10</sup> In revising Ravenstein’s laws, Everett Lee helped establish the foundations of the push-pull model and its many iterations, identifying plus and minus factors that influence migration decision-making at both the destination and the origin.<sup>11</sup> Push and pull factors vary significantly between iterations

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7. Andrew Griffith, “Building a Mosaic: The Evolution of Canada’s Approach to Immigrant Integration” (Migration Policy Institute, November 1, 2017), 2, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/building-mosaic-evolution-canadas-approach-immigrant-integration>.

8. Eric D. Gould and Omer Moav, “Israel’s Brain Drain,” *Israel Economic Review* 5, no. 1 (November 1, 2007): 2.

9. Gould and Moav, 2.

10. Nicholas Van Hear, Oliver Bakewell, and Katy Long, “Push-Pull plus: Reconsidering the Drivers of Migration,” *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies* 44, no. 6 (May 2018): 928, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1384135>.

11. Everett S. Lee, “A Theory of Migration,” *Demography* 3, no. 1 (March 1, 1966): 56–57, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2060063>.

of the model, incorporating economic, social, and environmental factors in often-complex attempts to calculate the ‘most beneficial’ decision.

However, as noted by Hein de Haas, theories like the push-pull model, which operate from a functionalist perspective, assume that the individual is a fully rational actor like that assumed in economics. This fails to include the effect of structural factors such as class, policy, and networks on migration flows.<sup>12</sup> These structural factors, de Haas argues, add an important consideration to migration theory: inequality. Although holding all else equal facilitates model-building, it does not allow the models produced under an assumption of *et ceteris paribus* to explain why wealthier, more developed countries typically have higher migration flows in all directions and other similar trends that contravene the basic direction implied in functionalist theories of migration where migration is a rational choice.<sup>13</sup> De Haas’s other critiques of push-pull models lie in their static nature, which fails to take into account how migration reciprocally affects the structural conditions at play, and the unscientific method of aggregation, where push and pull factors are identified and ranked relatively arbitrarily.<sup>14</sup>

Since de Haas’s critiques, variations on the push-pull model have continued to emerge. For example, the push-pull ‘redux’ model presented by Van Hear et al. attempts to incorporate structural factors into the polarity and logic of the theory by introducing four categories of drivers of migration grouped according to structural categories and duration. In their updated

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12. Hein de Haas, “Migration Theory - Quo Vadis?,” Working Papers (Oxford: International Migration Institute, University of Oxford, November 2014), 9–10, <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.676.4151&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.

13. de Haas, "Migration Theory - Quo Vadis?," 8.

14. Hein de Haas, “Migration Transitions: A Theoretical and Empirical Inquiry into the Developmental Drivers of International Migration,” Working Papers (Oxford: International Migration Institute, University of Oxford, 2010), 4, <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:63b0a544-2b39-45a5-b9fe-cffdb5f4c654>.

push-pull model, predisposing drivers are structural factors that make migration more likely, including the relative disparities between countries found in other push-pull models.<sup>15</sup> Proximate drivers, meanwhile, are the short-term variant which operates on the predisposing factors, like an economic downturn.<sup>16</sup> Precipitating drivers take a more individual lens, triggering the decision, and tend to be linked to an event, like an *outbreak* of conflict.<sup>17</sup> Finally, mediating drivers are the conditions which make migration either easier or more difficult, such as the availability of transportation.<sup>18</sup>

In sum, the updated push-pull model attempts to cover some of the gaps in earlier versions by incorporating more structural factors and taking into account some amount of iteration and progression over time. While the groupings of the drivers remain arbitrary and scientific measurement remains impossible, the updated push-pull model addresses several lacking aspects of its predecessors, providing a base for further analysis. The expanded model also integrates personal perspectives at the individual level, allowing the model to explain outcomes purely systemic or extrinsic factors cannot. It should be noted, however, that the model is based on the definition of migration as a choice, rather than displacement, which in general terms involves people forced to move by conflict, climate, or other acute issues.<sup>19</sup> The model,

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15. Van Hear, Bakewell, and Long, “Push-Pull Plus,” 931.

16. Van Hear, Bakewell, and Long, 931.

17. Van Hear, Bakewell, and Long, 932.

18. Van Hear, Bakewell, and Long, 932.

19. Isabel Ruiz and Carlos Vargas-Silva, “The Economics of Forced Migration,” *Journal of Development Studies* 49, no. 6 (June 2013): 773–74, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2013.777707>.

then, may be of limited applicability to refugees, who are displaced and whose movements are dependent on countries' policies on defining who is displaced and who they will accept.<sup>20</sup>

### ***1.3.2 Onward Migration: Repeated Movement***

The emerging literature on onward migration is of potential relevance to the case of the Soviet Jews. Defined as a pattern of secondary migration, onward migration sees people go to a new location after their arrival, repeating the process to new destinations.<sup>21</sup> Literature on this topic is relatively recent, with one wave emerging in the early 1990s and another from 2016 onwards. Crucially, however, the literature on onward migration is limited in its applicability to the Soviet Jewish case not only by its temporal scope, but also by the difficulty of the migration studied, in terms of restrictions on the second or later movements. Notably, much of the literature on onward migration focuses either on sub-national movements, such as those between cities, provinces, or American states, or on movement between countries that are part of the European Union. In both cases, albeit to slightly different degrees, residents in one location can move with relative ease to another, with less financial costs and a process freer from government applications and acceptance when compared to most international migration.

Studies of sub-national onward migration tend to date from an earlier period than those examining international onward migration. These studies are usually clustered around those countries where populations have shown high mobility, such as the United States and Canada, but observe interesting trends with relevance to Soviet Jews based on the characteristics of the population summarized in the next section. In these studies, onward migrants have been

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20. Gemie Sharif, "Re-Defining Refugees: Nations, Borders and Globalization," *Eurolimes*, no. 9 (2010): 6–7.

21. Laura Jeffery and Jude Murison, "The Temporal, Social, Spatial, and Legal Dimensions of Return and Onward Migration," *Population, Space and Place* 17, no. 2 (2011): 132, <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.606>.

characterized as more motivated by pull factors like high income or employment growth, and less motivated by those factors like existing networks or kinship ties, than return migrants who returned to their original home regions.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, this area of the literature has produced interesting conclusions about the impact of *nativity*, or where an individual was born relative to the location in which they live. One interesting conclusion in Canadian research, for example, found that while those individuals living in a province different than where they were born were less economically incentivized, foreign-born Canadians who arrived in Canada from another country and then migrated onwards within Canada were more affected by economic incentives.<sup>23</sup> American migration data, meanwhile, showed that onward (or repeated) migration decreases less with age than general migration, and that the most educated individuals were both most likely to migrate and to choose a new destination altogether.<sup>24</sup> Given the high education levels of Soviet Jews, and their complex identities in Israel, these trends may be informative in understanding their decision to leave.

The other major cluster of literature on onward migration is focused on that which has occurred in Europe, and more specifically, within the European Union (EU). Twenty-two EU member-states, alongside several neighbouring states, participate in the Schengen Area, which permits movement of persons between participating states without passports or other border

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22. K. Bruce Newbold, "Primary, Return and Onward Migration in the U.S. and Canada: Is There a Difference?," *Papers in Regional Science* 76, no. 2 (1997): 193–94, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1435-5597.1997.tb00688.x>.

23. Kao-Lee Liaw, "Joint Effects of Personal Factors and Ecological Variables on the Interprovincial Migration Pattern of Young Adults in Canada: A Nested Logit Analysis," *Geographical Analysis* 22, no. 3 (1990): 206, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1538-4632.1990.tb00205.x>.

24. Julie S. DaVanzo and Peter A. Morrison, "Return and Other Sequences of Migration in the United States," *Demography* 18, no. 1 (February 1, 1981): 94, 96, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2061051>.

controls.<sup>25</sup> In this regard, movement between participating states is relatively easy, when compared to other international movement, and is similar to the sub-national movements described in other countries. Notably, the research on this form of onward migration identifies economic drivers in the new host country as the strongest drivers for those who had arrived in the EU as migrants, rather than as refugees. Latin Americans arriving in the EU, for example, tended to leave the EU member-state in which they had acquired citizenship and migrate to other EU member-states in response to deteriorating economic conditions and in search of better employment.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, research of onward emigrants from Sweden found positive associations between education and expected incomes and onward migration, suggesting that skilled immigrants are pushed to migrate to new, third countries for higher earnings opportunities.<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile, social drivers have been identified as playing a larger role for those who arrived in the EU as refugees. Whereas the expected result of refugee arrival is either successfully integrating or returning to their country of origin, a ‘culture of mobility’ developed among refugees in the EU, with example groups like Somali and Sri Lankan Tamils found to have moved onwards within the EU.<sup>28</sup> Later research on asylum-seekers in the EU delved into the reasons for their decision to move onwards – whether legally or not – from their first EU point of arrival, identifying disparities in both economic opportunities and social conditions as

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25. “Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council Establishing a Community Code on the Rules Governing the Movement of Persons across Borders,” Pub. L. No. 562/2006, OJ L 105 (2006), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:02006R0562-20131126&from=EN>.

26. Rosa Mas Giralt, “Onward Migration as a Coping Strategy? Latin Americans Moving from Spain to the UK Post-2008,” *Population, Space and Place* 23, no. 3 (2017): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2017>.

27. Lena Nekby, “The Emigration of Immigrants, Return vs Onward Migration: Evidence from Sweden,” *Journal of Population Economics* 19, no. 2 (June 1, 2006): 214–15, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-006-0080-0>.

28. Anna Lindley and Nicholas Van Hear, “New Europeans on the Move: A Preliminary Review of the Onward Migration of Refugees within the European Union,” Working Paper (Oxford: Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, 2007), 19–20, [https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/7474/1/Lindley\\_NewEuropeanOnTheMove.pdf](https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/7474/1/Lindley_NewEuropeanOnTheMove.pdf).

drivers for their choices.<sup>29</sup> Discrimination, including in civil society and state policies, was identified as a primary driver of onward migration for Nigerian, Iranian, and Somali-born EU citizens, who primarily entered the EU as refugees or other restricted migration channels.<sup>30</sup> This area of the literature appears highly applicable to the case of Soviet Jews' case, in that they were similarly arriving in Israel at least in part to escape discrimination and were, like the EU refugees, not able to choose their first country of residence because of selective immigration policies.<sup>31</sup> However, the key difference in the second leg of their movement patterns remains, with the primary barrier of an international border limiting movement much more severely for Soviet Jews looking to Canada than refugees in the EU changing their residence to another EU member-state.

### ***1.3.3 Soviet Jews: Departures from a Hostile Home***

Another important area of the literature relevant to the study is that which examines the departure of Jews from the USSR. Once they were able, Jews from the FSU left the Soviet Union (and later, post-Soviet states) in numbers unseen by both source and destination countries at any prior point in their respective histories. Comparing the 1989 Soviet census, which had information on the ethnic demographics at the republic level, and later census from post-Soviet states between 1992-2002 showed enormous decreases in their Jewish populations, ranging

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29. Marianne Takle and Marie Louise Seeberg, "All European Countries Are Not the Same: The Dublin Regulation and Onward Migration in Europe," NOVA Rapport, NOVA Rapport (Oslo: Velferdsforskningsinstituttet NOVA, 2015), 166, <https://doi.org/10.7577/nova/rapporter/2015/12>.

30. Jill Ahrens, Melissa Kelly, and Ilse Van Liempt, "Free Movement? The Onward Migration of EU Citizens Born in Somalia, Iran, and Nigeria," *Population, Space and Place* 22, no. 1 (2016): 96, <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1869>.

31. Ahrens, Kelly, and Van Liempt, 96.

between 54% and 98.5%.<sup>32</sup> In numerical terms, modeling of the population shows that during the highest period of Jewish emigration from the FSU and later independent states (1989-2002), the total of core Jews identifying as such dropped from approximately 1,480,000 to about 412,000. This decrease was caused primarily by emigration rather than negative birth rates.<sup>33</sup> Emigration in that period was predominantly to Israel (about 940,000 or 62%), with important structural factors contributing to spikes in movement, including the 1991 collapse of the USSR and the financial crash of Russia in the latter half of 1998.<sup>34</sup>

The destination countries chosen by the Jews leaving the USSR follow a specific pattern. Between the late 1960s, when emigration visas first began to be approved in highly limited numbers by Soviet authorities, and 1975, almost all Soviet Jews emigrated to Israel, braving KGB intimidation, economic and employment costs, and social ostracization.<sup>35</sup> These individuals, the earliest to leave the USSR, tended to be the most religious, most Zionist, and least assimilated Jews in the population.<sup>36</sup> They also disproportionately came from smaller, periphery republics, rather than those with higher Jewish populations like Ukraine and Russia.<sup>37</sup> In particular, their movement was influenced both by push drivers in their country of origin, but

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32. Mark Tolts, "Demographic Trends Among the Jews of the Former Soviet Union" (International Conference in Honor of Professor Mordechai Altshuler on Soviet and Post-Soviet Jewry, Jerusalem, 2003), 3.

33. Tolts, 6–9.

34. Mark Tolts, "Mass Aliyah and Jewish Emigration from Russia: Dynamics and Factors," *East European Jewish Affairs* 33, no. 2 (December 2003): 71, 73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501670308578002>.

35. Annelise Orleck, *The Soviet Jewish Americans* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999), 58.

36. Orleck, *The Soviet Jewish Americans*, 57–58.

37. Orleck, 58.

also by significant pull factors caused by Zionist ideology, including the belief in Israel as a Jewish State and rejection of Jewish life outside it.<sup>38</sup>

This was not the case for those who emigrated later, for whom leaving the USSR was the primary concern rather than arriving in Israel. Soviet Jews who departed the USSR in a later wave from the late 1980s onwards tended to come from large centers of Jewish population, and had a different set of priorities, demonstrating less attraction to Israel specifically and a much stronger desire to escape antisemitism and the economic crisis of the failing USSR.<sup>39</sup> Surveys of emigrants in Israel who came from Russia and Ukraine found that attachment to Israel was not based on Zionist ideology, but rather on a pragmatic assessment of the country as a more prosperous one that was safer for Jews.<sup>40</sup> In this way, the drivers of migration were highly multifaceted and different over time, reflecting the complicated history of the Jewish identity in the USSR.

The experiences of Jews in the USSR, which often involved antisemitism, combined social and economic factors. This meant that push factors included both the economic crisis, ensuing social issues like increasing crime and insecurity, and political concerns like rising

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38. Eliezer Schweid, "The Rejection of the Diaspora in Zionist Thought: Two Approaches," *Studies in Zionism* 5, no. 1 (March 1, 1984): 43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13531048408575854>; Christian Joppke and Zeev Rosenhek, "Contesting Ethnic Immigration: Germany and Israel Compared," *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 43, no. 3 (December 2002): 308–9, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975602001121>.

39. Tanya Basok and Robert J. Brynn, "Soviet-Jewish Emigration and Resettlement in the 1990s: An Overview," in *Soviet-Jewish Emigration and Resettlement in the 1990s*, ed. Tanya Basok and Robert J. Brynn (Toronto: York Lanes Press Inc., 1991), xiv–xv.

40. Zvi Gitelman, *Jewish Identities in Postcommunist Russia and Ukraine: An Uncertain Ethnicity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 238.

nationalist sentiment sparked by the failing state apparatus.<sup>41</sup> It is important to note that these drivers, amplified by the “profoundly antisemitic nature of Soviet Society,” led to the admission of Soviet Jews to the United States as refugees, providing another destination country until refugee eligibility requirements were revised to mandate that applicants demonstrate “a well-founded fear of persecution”.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, the antisemitism rampant in Soviet society represented an impetus for the admission of Soviet Jews as refugees to Canada, although that route was also closed by changing refugee requirements before the departures hit their peak.<sup>43</sup> The same push factors that were driving the emigration also provided the migration path for some migrants, reflecting the complex structural factors at play as noted by De Haas.

The dominant presence of antisemitism in the Soviet Union belied the continued strength of the Jewish identity under communist rule. Assimilatory policies that took hold shortly after the Second World War banned Jewish institutions like cultural centres, schools, and publishing houses, severely limiting Jewish cultural life.<sup>44</sup> Nonetheless, the Soviet Jewish identity remained strong, with high census reporting and high affinity for Jewish languages (20% in 1979), with many who did not speak a Jewish language declaring it as their native tongue as a means of

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41. Mikhail Tillman, “Forced Emigration in and from the USSR: Causes and Trends,” in *Soviet-Jewish Emigration and Resettlement in the 1990s*, ed. Tanya Basok and Robert J. Brynn (Toronto: York Lanes Press Inc., 1991), 18.

42. Gregg A. Beyer, “The Evolving United States Response to Soviet Jewish Emigration,” in *Soviet-Jewish Emigration and Resettlement in the 1990s*, ed. Tanya Basok and Robert J. Brynn (Toronto: York Lanes Press Inc., 1991), 120, 126; Minton Goldman, “United States Policy and Soviet Jewish Emigration from Nixon to Bush,” in *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union*, ed. Yaacov Ro’i (Essex, England: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1995), 349.

43. Tanya Basok, “Soviet Immigration to Canada: The End of the Refugee Program?,” in *Soviet-Jewish Emigration and Resettlement in the 1990s*, ed. Tanya Basok and Robert J. Brynn (Toronto: York Lanes Press Inc., 1991), 150–51.

44. Petrus Buwalda, *They Did Not Dwell Alone: Jewish Emigration from the Soviet Union, 1967-1990* (Washington, DC: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 30.

identification.<sup>45</sup> Synagogues were sometimes built without government approval, and non-registered and therefore illegal groups of believers called *minyanim* continued religious observance in private, despite widespread crackdowns and arrests.<sup>46</sup> Nikita Khrushchev's campaign against religion from 1957 onwards similarly failed to stamp out the Jewish identity, with Jewish cultural and religious movements persisting in strength.<sup>47</sup> After the Six-Day War in 1967 and violent crackdowns on Zionism in the USSR, the Jewish movements forbore advocating for internal reform and turned instead to pushing for the right to emigrate to Israel, which they viewed as their national homeland.<sup>48</sup> In this way, the Jewish identity not only persisted, but also influenced decisions to move even though later waves were, at first glance, ostensibly assimilated on the basis of culture, religion, and language.

Interviews with Soviet Jewish emigrants suggested a common thread to the persistence of their identity and its role as a driver of movement. Firstly, no matter the level of integration or assimilation they achieved, Jews in the FSU were nonetheless identified as a separate population, with official documentation noting their nationality<sup>49</sup> as Jewish. For example, one participant provided a copy of their Soviet birth certificate, shown in Figure 1. While surnames and

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45. Mordechai Altshuler, *Soviet Jewry Since the Second World War - Population and Social Structure*, Studies in Population and Urban Demography 5 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1987), 196–97.

46. Yaacov Ro'i, "Jewish Religion After World War II," in *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union*, ed. Yaacov Ro'i (Essex, England: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1995), 266–69.

47. Gitelman, *Jewish Identities in Postcommunist Russia and Ukraine: An Uncertain Ethnicity*, 93–94.

48. Gitelman, 94.

49. It should be noted that the Russian *национальность* does not clearly translate to English terminology. The literal translation of *nationality* obscures some of the Russian meaning, which corresponds more closely to *ethnicity*. *Национальность* does not refer to citizenship as the English *nationality* implies. However, other 'nationalities' identified in the Soviet system – for example, Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians – correspond to nationalities in the territorial sense. This complication is another factor in the complexity of the Jewish identity in the USSR, which simultaneously operated as both an ethnic and national category.

identifying details such as patronymics and birthdates have been removed, the birth certificate is evidence of the use of official paperwork to identify Jewish individuals. The participant’s parents’ nationalities are listed in the highlighted sections, identifying both as Jewish (еврей/еврейка, or literally translated, Jew) by nationality. Nor is this an artefact of earlier periods in Soviet history: the birth certificate was issued in 1990 as the participant collected documents for their departure from the Soviet Union, demonstrating that the classification of Judaism as a nationality persisted through the entire period of Soviet rule. That participant also noted that he himself was labelled as a Jew in his internal passport, which Soviet citizens had to carry and provide as identification on a regular basis, although he was forced to surrender it upon his departure from the USSR.<sup>50</sup>

Figure 1: Soviet Birth Certificate Provided by a Study Participant

**СВИДЕТЕЛЬСТВО О РОЖДЕНИИ**

Гражданин (ка) .....  
*Владислав Анатольевич*  
(фамилия, имя, отчество)

родился (лась) .....  
(число, месяц, год — шифры и пропись)

Место рождения *Украинская ССР*  
(республика, край, область, город)  
*Крымская область*  
*город Симферополь*

Регистрация рождения произведена в соответствии с Законом 1964 года  
*декабря* ..... месяца *26* числа

**РОДИТЕЛИ:**

Отец .....  
*Анатолій*  
(фамилия, имя, отчество)  
 национальность *еврей*

Мать .....  
*Терта*  
(фамилия, имя, отчество)  
 национальность *еврейка*

Место регистрации *Отдел ЗАГСа исполкома Симферопольского городского Совета народных депутатов Крымской области Украинской ССР*  
(г. Симферополь, ул. Гайдук, 11)  
*14 сентября 1990 г.*

Исполнительный директор актов гражданского состояния *А. Косиц*

№ 001326

50. Interview with Study Participant, February 17, 2022.

This demonstrated the national and ethnic basis of Jewish identity that assimilation did nothing to diminish.<sup>51</sup> Despite limitations on Jewish religious education and cultural practices that had been in place for decades, interviews held in Russia in 1991 showed that 38% of respondents observed at least some Jewish holidays, like Simchat Torah, 75% owned books written by Jewish authors (albeit in Russian), and 20% owned books in Yiddish or Hebrew<sup>52</sup> Notably, those traditions were identified by the researcher as traditions of the culture, rather than the religion, as the Jewish identity was not religiously-defined. Because assimilation was never complete and could never be complete due to continuing ties to Jewish culture, antisemitism was inescapable, a constant experience as Soviet Jews moved through life. Antisemitism, activists said, was found in the admissions process to universities, where the quota system meant Jews were excluded, in the workplace, where Jews were barred from higher positions, and even in government approvals, where colleagues received approvals for travel Jews could not.<sup>53</sup>

#### ***1.3.4 Arriving in the Promised Land: The Russians in Israel***

The other half of the question of movement concerns what happens to newcomers after they arrive at their destination. Much research has been done on immigrant integration to determine how to help immigrants become, ultimately, indistinguishable from the whole of the community either economically or culturally. For instance, cultural integration – or ‘acculturation’ – where the minority group of immigrants takes on and adopts the cultural patterns of the host society – was once thought to be both necessary and inevitable in Israel,

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51. Orleck, *The Soviet Jewish Americans*, 60.

52. М.Э. Коган, “Специфика Исследований Этнической Группы в Городе (По Результатам Опроса Петербургских Евреев в 1991 г.) // Материалы Полевых Этнографических Исследований, 1990–1991 Гг.” (Санкт-Петербург: МАЭ им. Петра Великого (Кунсткамера), 1993), 135–37.

53. Buwalda, *They Did Not Dwell Alone: Jewish Emigration from the Soviet Union, 1967-1990*, 34.

which saw the goal of ‘absorption’ as part of the state’s immigration policy and nation-building exercise.<sup>54</sup> Economic integration, meanwhile, is often highly associated with immigrants’ skills, education, and other aspects of human capital upon their arrival, as shown by the differing outcomes achieved by new arrivals in Israel with different levels of education, different professions, and even marital status.<sup>55</sup> This necessitates adequate information on demographics and characteristics of the immigration population before a push-pull model can be enabled in using their integration outcomes as a factor.

In the case of Soviet Jews, a large body of literature exists, much of which focuses on their integration outcomes in Israel and seeks to assess a perceived success or failure thereof based on determining factors such as level of education, age, and language fluency. Research in 2016 suggested that most Soviet Jews who had been there for decades were far from achieving economic parity with native Israelis, with rampant occupational downgrading and low satisfaction ratings on wages and ‘life’.<sup>56</sup> The difficulty of integration to the Israeli society involved multiple factors, including both social and economic. At the time when many Jews from the FSU were starting to leave, surveys of new immigrants to the country found that 64.2% of respondents reported frustrations and issues with economic integration.<sup>57</sup> A similar study run

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54. Amandine Desille, “Jewish Immigrants in Israel: Disintegration Within Integration?,” in *Politics of (Dis)Integration*, ed. Sophie Hinger and Reinhard Schweitzer, IMISCOE Research Series (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 145, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-25089-8\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-25089-8_8).

55. Zvi Eckstein and Yoram Weiss, “The Integration of Immigrants for the Former Soviet Union in the Israeli Labor Market,” *Foerder Institute for Economic Research Working Papers*, Foerder Institute for Economic Research Working Papers (Tel-Aviv University > Foerder Institute for Economic Research, October 1999), 3, <https://ideas.repec.org/p/ags/isfiwp/275639.html>.

56. Gur Ofer, “The Economic Integration of Soviet Jewish Immigrants in Israel,” in *The New Jewish Diaspora: Russian-Speaking Immigrants in the United States, Israel, and Germany*, ed. Zvi Y. Gitelman (Rutgers University Press, 2016), 164, 167.

57. Mikhail Ben-Yakov, “‘Русские’ В Израиле: Проблемы адаптации,” *СоцИс (Социологические Исследования)* 3 (2006): 79.

by the Israeli government was specifically targeted the Russian-speaking community in Israel which was predominantly made up of recent immigrants from the FSU at the time. This study found a similar percentage (62%) naming financial problems as their primary issue in their new country at that point in time.<sup>58</sup>

Some authors attribute the economic struggles of Soviet Jews in Israel to a lack of government preparedness. Government support was highly limited for much of the earlier immigration period, with initiatives to support Soviet Jewish arrivals only starting to emerge in late 1990, after several hundred thousand had already arrived.<sup>59</sup> Housing, for example, presented a major challenge, with limited public housing development. The Israeli government ordered the building of 45,000 housing units in 1990, but had only started to build 4,000 by 1991. This caused severe shortages, overcrowding, and a severe shock to the Israeli rental market as hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews arrived.<sup>60</sup> A similar situation occurred in the labour market. By 1990, only about half of Soviet immigrants seeking high-skill jobs had found employment in their fields; of 3,000 Soviet scientists who had arrived by that time, only 160 were employed in science-related positions, with the rest turning to menial jobs that unemployed Israelis refused to take.<sup>61</sup>

The difficulty with economic integration and dissatisfaction with its outcomes – particularly occupational downgrading – is notable because of the Soviet Jews' high levels of

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58. Ben-Yakov, 79.

59. Roberta Cohen, "Israel's Problematic Absorption of Soviet Jews," in *Soviet-Jewish Emigration and Resettlement in the 1990s*, ed. Tanya Basok and Robert J. Brynn (Toronto: York Lanes Press Inc., 1991), 68.

60. Sabra Chartrand, "Israel Lags in Housing for Soviet Jews," *The New York Times*, November 2, 1990, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/11/02/world/israel-lags-in-housing-for-soviet-jews.html>.

61. Cohen, "Israel's Problematic Absorption of Soviet Jews," 69.

education and professional experience, regardless of their destination. For example, Lewis-Epstein et al. identified years of education as one of the key identifying characteristics of FSU Jewish emigrants arriving in Israel and the United States, with Soviet Jews' average years of education being higher than the population of their destination countries.<sup>62</sup> The extremely high level of educational attainment remains a constant across the literature. Soviet data, for example, showed that in 1964, 18.8% of Soviet Jews had some form of post-secondary degree, compared with 7.6% of Russians and 3.5% of Ukrainians.<sup>63</sup> Israeli government data looking at new arrivals in the so-called Russian *aliyah* – Hebrew for Jewish return to Israel – noted an average of 13 years of education among new immigrants from the FSU, with 30% of that population holding post-secondary degrees in 1999.<sup>64</sup> Eckstein and Weiss similarly observed that their sample from the same *aliyah* to Israel had an average of 14.5 years of schooling, with over half holding academic positions or those requiring such a high level of education.<sup>65</sup> This was also true of those who arrived in the United States, with Chiswick noting a disproportionately high average level of education and percentage occupying professional jobs.<sup>66</sup> Yet, despite education's value as a tool for selecting immigrants likely to provide economic benefit to the destination country, it

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62. Noah Lewin-Epstein et al., "Institutional Structure and Immigrant Integration: A Comparative Study of Immigrants' Labor Market Attainment in Canada and Israel," *International Migration Review* 37, no. 2 (2003): 403, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2003.tb00142.x>.

63. Paul Novick, *Jews in the Soviet Union: Report of a 2 Months' Stay in the USSR* (New York: Morning Freiheit, 1965), 8.

64. Ben-Yakov, "‘Русские’ В Израиле: Проблемы адаптации," 79.

65. Eckstein and Weiss, "The Integration of Immigrants for the Former Soviet Union in the Israeli Labor Market," 349.

66. Barry R. Chiswick, "Soviet Jews in the United States: An Analysis of Their Linguistic and Economic Adjustment," *The International Migration Review* 27, no. 2 (1993): 261, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2547125>.

was not sufficient in helping Soviet Jews integrate into the Israeli economy, and contributed to their frustrations.

Importantly, much like the socio-economic overlap of push factors that drove Jews away from the FSU, the economic difficulties experienced by Soviet Jews in Israel also had social impacts. Native Israelis struggling to find homes and jobs were pit against Soviet newcomers, leading to frictions between them and other populations in the area.<sup>67</sup> This in turn led to a fracturing of the transnational Jewish identity that had previously been held to be a universal connection, and the development of a separate, ‘Russian’ Israeli identity in Israel.<sup>68</sup> Jews from the FSU, who had been identified first as ‘Jews’ in the FSU, were instead identified as ‘Russians’ in Israel to differentiate them from native Israelis. The combination of the separate grouping and an adversarial relationship between the newcomers and existing populations contributed to the development of a new Russian Jewish identity defined by language and cultural norms brought from the USSR.<sup>69</sup>

Some researchers have predicted that that identity, as a transitional one defined by its surroundings, would eventually be subsumed into the Israeli identity through assimilation.<sup>70</sup> However, others define it as a ‘sub-ethnic’ group of people with a unique set of cultural values,

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67. Cohen, “Israel’s Problematic Absorption of Soviet Jews,” 69.

68. Fran Markowitz, “Emigration, Immigration and Culture Change: Towards a Trans-National Russian Jewish Community?,” in *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union*, ed. Yaacov Ro’i (Essex, England: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1995), 408–9.

69. Светлана Викторовна Коник, “«Русская Улица» Израиля Как Часть «Русского Мира»,” *Мониторинг Общественного Мнения: Экономические и Социальные Перемены*, 3, no. 103 (2011): 98–99.

70. Наталья Юхнёва, “Русские евреи как новый субэтнос,” *Ab Imperio* 2003, no. 4 (2003): 494–95, <https://doi.org/10.1353/imp.2003.0013>; Елена Носенко, “Русские евреи: ‘Реальное’ или ‘изобретенное’ сообщество?,” *Ab Imperio* 2003, no. 4 (2003): 513–15, <https://doi.org/10.1353/imp.2003.0034>.

language, and history, which has resisted assimilation for decades without being absorbed.<sup>71</sup> Key factors that support the persistence of a separate Russian Jewish identity in Israel include the size of the population (15-20% of the Israeli population) and the accordingly strong Russian subculture, which comprises Russian stores, services, media, and effectively all factors of daily life, creating closed social networks and extremely limited exposure outside the Russian-speaking community.<sup>72</sup> The idea of resisting assimilation is further complicated by the cold welcome Jews from the FSU received. Whereas many Soviet Jews had considered themselves Jewish their entire lives, and were treated as such in their source country, they arrived to find that much to their frustration, their Jewishness was in question, and had to be validated by a rabbinical court extensively reviewing documents, witness statements, and attestations.<sup>73</sup>

What research/data shows, however, is that Soviet Jews are leaving Israel, and have been for decades. The departure of Soviet Jews from Israel represents a rare case of secondary onward migration to a new, third country and, hypothetically, attributable to failed integration, both economic and social. Research on emigration from Israel is comparatively sparse when compared against research on immigration to Israel, largely due to political and cultural differences from the Israeli perspective. Whereas much of the research on global migration flows is predominantly statistics-driven and universal, the Israeli discourse on emigration (in Hebrew,

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71. А.М. Гуревич, *Мотивация Эмиграции* (Санкт-Петербург: Речь, 2005), 69; Коник, “«Русская Улица» Израиля Как Часть «Русского Мира»,” 103.

72. Larissa Remennick, “Transnational Community in the Making: Russian-Jewish Immigrants of the 1990s in Israel,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 28, no. 3 (July 1, 2002): 526, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830220146581>; Majid Al-Haj, “Identity Patterns among Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union in Israel: Assimilation vs. Ethnic Formation,” *International Migration* 40, no. 2 (June 2002): 55, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2435.00190>.

73. Chaim I. Waxman, “Multiculturalism, Conversion, and the Future of Israel as a Modern State,” *Israel Studies Review* 28, no. 1 (2013): 44.

*yerida*, meaning ‘the descent’) presents it as a unique case due to the country’s unique immigration policy and socio-ethnic context.<sup>74</sup> From the latter perspective, Jews leaving Israel run opposite to the Zionist ideology at the core of Israeli nationhood and national self-conception, leading to limited data availability to support a migration studies approach.<sup>75</sup> Nonetheless, limited research on why some Israelis left is available, with Gould and Moav identifying the highly-educated Soviet Jews as the most likely to leave because they saw other countries giving them the most opportunities to leverage their education.<sup>76</sup> This motivation could, in theory, demonstrate failed economic integration where respondents felt that they could not achieve a desired economic outcome due to issues related to their out-of-country origin, such as credential-related issues. It could also, however, indicate simply that the respondents were highly mobile due to their education opening opportunities in other countries, and determining which is the case is only possible through additional research.

Regardless of whether the incentive to leave was extrinsic or intrinsic to the individual, those highly educated Soviet Jews left at highly disproportionate rates. While there is no available dataset to show trends over time, concerns about brain drain led the country’s Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) to publish figures showing that approximately 110,000 Soviet Jews left Israel between 1990-2014, representing 38% of emigrants in that time period.<sup>77</sup> CBS data

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74. Steven J. Gold, *The Israeli Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 2002), 8; Zvi Sobel, *Migrants from the Promised Land* (Piscataway, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1986), 223.

75. Danny Ben-Moshe and Zohar Segev, *Israel, the Diaspora, and Jewish Identity* (Sussex Academic Press, 2007), 324; Ian S. Lustick, “Recent Trends in Emigration from Israel: The Impact of Palestinian Violence” (Annual Meeting of the Association for Israel Studies, Jerusalem, 2004), 2, [http://img2.timg.co.il/forums/1\\_157881297.pdf](http://img2.timg.co.il/forums/1_157881297.pdf).

76. Gould and Moav, “Israel’s Brain Drain,” 1–2.

77. Liza Rozovsky, “One in Six Soviet Children Who Moved to Israel in the Early 1990s Have Since Left,” *Haaretz*, May 9, 2017, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1-in-6-children-who-moved-to-israel-from-russia-have-since-left-1.5470092>.

further broke down the disproportionate emigration rates of Soviet Jews born between 1970-1996 (17%) and native-born Israelis (5%).<sup>78</sup> The last available data point identifies key destinations of the cohort's outflow: only about 45% returned to the countries that were former Soviet Republics, with the remainder undergoing secondary migration to other European countries (15%), the United States (26%), and Canada (13%).<sup>79</sup> In other words, while half of Soviet immigrants leaving Israel engage in return migration, the other half are a significant cohort engaging in secondary/onward migration. The temporal scope of this cohort is unfortunately not clear from the reporting on these figures, as original data releases were not available, representative of the limited research on this topic. In much the same way, non-economic reasons for departure are largely not addressed by the literature, beyond Lustick's research showing a positive correlation between increasing Israeli-Palestinian violence and emigration.<sup>80</sup> In short, however, while only some reasons for their departure have been identified, the Soviet Jews in Israel are departing at highly disproportionate rates, necessitating further investigation.

#### ***1.4 Scope of Research***

This project included in its scope those Soviet Jews with residency in Canada, and previous residency in Israel that began between 1968-1991. Firstly, due to the presence of

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78. Rozovsky, "One in Six Soviet Children Who Moved to Israel in the Early 1990s Have Since Left." Interestingly, this definition of Soviet Jews includes those born up to 5 years after the collapse of the USSR, suggesting a stronger grouping of identity in that community that might otherwise be expected. It is likely that included in that group are both those born to FSU Jewish parents in Israel and those who arrived as children in later waves of emigration post-1991.

79. Uzi Rebhun, "The Russian-Speaking Israeli Diaspora in the FSU, Europe and North America: Jewish Identification and Attachment to Israel," in *The New Jewish Diaspora: Russian-Speaking Immigrants in the United States, Israel and Germany* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2016), 45.

80. Lustick, "Recent Trends in Emigration from Israel: The Impact of Palestinian Violence," 15.

existing literature on return migration, those in the Soviet Jewish diaspora who returned to the FSU were excluded from this project, as they would appropriately be discussed through that lens. The inclusion criterion of Israeli residency starts at 1968 as the first real year of emigration of Jews from the FSU, as emigration prior to that date was not permitted by the state, nor reported as having occurred.<sup>81</sup> The last year in which the respondents' Israeli residency could have started to be considered for inclusion is set at 1991, reflecting the final dissolution of the Soviet Union on December 26, 1991. This window was set to limit as much heterogeneity in the sample of respondents as possible, as the collapse of the USSR created a group of emigrants that was less educated, older, more secular, more intermarried, with weaker Jewish identification than the earlier wave, and which thus faced significantly different experiences in Israel.<sup>82</sup> While their migration patterns could also be of interest, given indications that they also left Israel in large numbers, limiting the internal differences between study participants proved helpful in isolating specific trends.

No further demographic limitations were put on the cohort as inclusion criteria beyond necessary linguistic capacity (English, French, Russian), technological capacity (ability to use a computer and have access to the Internet) and consent, meaning that those who immigrated from the FSU to Israel as minors were included. While their experiences in integration and adaptation to life in Israel and Canada would by necessity be significantly different due to the different stages of life in which they occurred, this represents an opportunity to further analyze how education and systemic supports influenced the adaptation of Soviet Jews in Israel, and why they left.

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81. Tolts, "Demography of the Contemporary Russian-Speaking Jewish Diaspora," 23.

82. Tolts, 24–33.

## ***1.5 Methodology***

The methodology for this research project takes into account its nature as an exploratory project, interviewing an identified case group that has not yet been specifically targeted or researched. The limited literature on Soviet Jews who left Israel means that preliminary identification of potential drivers for FSU Jewish emigration from Israel is based almost entirely on research about those who still reside in Israel, or else research on Jewish life in the FSU. This research, as well as the basis of the theoretical framework, consist of secondary sources, including research articles in the literature, and primary sources such as memoirs of Jews from the FSU. Common themes identified in existing resources were used to guide the design of the rest of the project, with an eye to integrating existing knowledge and new, primary research.

The first stage of primary research involved a recruitment survey, which was used to identify eligible respondents for the interview stage. It was written in and disseminated through the use of Google Forms and did not require participants to be signed into the Google suite or provide email addresses as a condition for participation. The survey was designed to gather basic demographic data, assess the respondent's eligibility based on the inclusion/exclusion criteria of the project, and gather contact information where applicable. Questions included in the survey were written in English and Russian and made available in both languages, reflecting the linguistic background of most members of the targeted population and minimizing potential barriers to participation. The questions included in the survey were:

- 1) Do you identify as Jewish?
- 2) Were you born in the Soviet Union? (within the territory of the current countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, or Uzbekistan?)
- 3) What is your current country of residence?
- 4) Did you live in Israel before arriving at your current country of residence?
- 5) In what year did you immigrate to Israel from the Soviet Union? (Drop-down list provided)

- 6) In what Soviet Republic were you born? (Drop-down list provided)
- 7) In what city do you currently reside?
- 8) In what year did you arrive in your current country of residence?
- 9) Are you willing to be interviewed about your life in the Soviet Union and Israel? The interview will include discussions of your education and work experience, religion, ethnicity, and your experiences adapting to Israeli life. It will also ask you about your decision to leave Israel.

If respondents indicated [no] to questions 1, 2, 4, or 9, or indicated out-of-scope answers to questions the survey ended at that question. Those who proceeded through the survey and demonstrated their eligibility through their answers were able to indicate their willingness to participate in the interview stage in question 9, and were thus prompted for contact information.

The initial design of the survey was such that those respondents who were not eligible would have any relevant information provided coded and anonymized in the same fashion as eligible respondents. However, only one individual participated in the survey who was not eligible, and ended the interview by indicating [no] to question 1, meaning that no information was provided and therefore that no data needed to be coded or anonymized. Eligible respondents who were not willing to be interviewed were listed, and their data coded for the additional analysis where relevant, including general demographic observations about the cohort. Personal contact information collected through the survey was limited to email addresses through which respondents were contacted in follow-up messages to arrange interview times. Some interview participants who were recruited through alternate methods did not complete the recruitment survey, and their basic demographic data for questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 were confirmed through interview questions.

The recruitment survey was shared through two major strategies: word of mouth, and online posting. Online posting is not geographically located, save by eligibility to the relevant online groups. For example, local Russian community groups (often called ‘Dvorik’ or ‘yard’)

limit eligibility to residents of that city. However, Jewish networks on social media provided a useful tool for advertising the recruitment survey. Posts linking to the survey were posted in the Ottawa Dvork, Русскоязычные израильтяне в Канаде (Russian-Speaking Israelis in Canada), and חברים Friends Друзья (Friends) Facebook pages. Word of mouth was also employed, with outreach to local, provincial, and other community networks such as individual rabbis, community organizations, and community members known to the researcher. Response rates were lower than anticipated, leading to an adjustment of the size of the anticipated interview cohort. Limiting inclusion in the study to Soviet Jews in Canada meant that additional outreach through international networks was not possible.

The dual methods of snowball sampling used in the distribution of the recruitment survey inherently introduced sampling bias into the research results. However, this could not be avoided due to the lack of alternative methods to identify members of the case group, as both Jewish identity and previous Israeli or Soviet residency cannot be randomly sampled across the Canadian population. The geographical bias introduced by the use of local Ottawa social media groups is also a result of the difficulty of identifying the population. As the resulting sample is not representative, it is acknowledged the common themes identified in the interview responses are not representative of the whole population of Soviet Jews who emigrated from Israel. However, there is still value in these themes and in the broader hypothesis. In the absence of literature on the topic, an exploratory, but not representative, discussion of reasons for the FSU Jews' emigration from Israel is still useful, providing a starting point to later research and situating itself in the greater literature on migration and identity.

The research project originally targeted 25 interviews with FSU Jews with Israeli residency identified through the survey. Due to limitations in outreach caused by the COVID-19

pandemic, a cohort of 21 interviewees was recruited and interviewed. While smaller than the original intended cohort, the 21 participants provided a wealth of information in their interview responses, sufficient to analyze for the purposes of the project. The interview questions were designed to explore the drivers that were implicated in the interviewees' decision to leave Israel. Depending on their responses, discussion could follow on a relatively free-form basis or be prompted further. If their answers were short, for example, such as 'the war' or 'the climate', interviewees were prompted about their experiences in Israel beyond those factors, or for more explanation on why those factors made them consider leaving. The list of key prompts/questions for the interview was as follows:

- Tell me about how you felt living in the Soviet Union. What were the most important or most common experiences or feelings that you had? How did you feel as a Jewish person in the FSU?
- Why did you choose to leave the FSU and go to Israel?
- Tell me about how you felt living in Israel. Did you feel that you made the right choice choosing to immigrate to Israel?
- What were the challenges that you felt as a Soviet immigrant to Israel? What were the parts you liked? What were the parts you did not?
- Did you think about: [war/conflict/climate/culture/religion/employment]? How did you feel about [topic]? How did it compare to your life in the FSU?
- Why did you choose to leave Israel and go to Canada?
- Tell me how you feel living in Canada.
- Do you feel that you made the right choice choosing to immigrate to Canada?
- What are the challenges that you have felt as an immigrant from Israel/the FSU?
- What parts of living in Canada do you like? What parts do you not like?
- [in comparison to answers about living in Israel] how do you feel about [any topic raised in earlier section] in Canada, versus in Israel?
- Do you feel more or less connected to the larger community in Canada versus in Israel?
- Do you feel more or less connected to the Jewish community in Canada versus in Israel?
- How do you feel about Canadian culture? About Israeli culture?

Table 1: Interview Timeline

<b>Interview</b>	<b>Date</b>
Interview #1	2021-09-29
Interview #2	2021-10-01
Interview #3	2021-10-05
Interview #4	2021-10-05
Interview #5	2021-10-06
Interview #6	2021-10-21
Interview #7	2021-10-21
Interview #8	2021-10-28
Interview #9	2021-10-28
Interview #10	2022-01-13
Interview #11	2022-01-13
Interview #12	2022-01-18
Interview #13	2022-01-18
Interview #14	2022-01-18
Interview #15	2022-01-19
Interview #16	2022-01-24
Interview #17	2022-02-06
Interview #18	2022-02-07
Interview #19	2022-02-07
Interview #20	2022-02-17
Interview #21	2022-02-17

All interviews were held through remote methods, either through Zoom or by telephone, due to limitations on in-person research caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Where consent was obtained from participants, interviews were recorded. The recordings were kept until the interviews were reviewed and notes taken, after which they were destroyed. Once the notes were transcribed, all data was anonymized, with any identifiers destroyed. The responses were analyzed for common themes and differences, similarly to the analysis applied to the secondary sources obtained during the literature review, and then integrated as part of the research for the project. All interviews were conducted with mutual agreement that data would be anonymized after transcription, and therefore personal identifiers remain confidential. All but one of the interviews were conducted in Russian.

## ***1.6 Theoretical Framework***

The project heavily incorporates the key concept of integration, which as both a process and outcome of migration is often analyzed as a critical part of migration research, and which is a dominant theme throughout the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework chosen for the project combines elements of several existing theoretical models for migration. The framework is grounded in a neo-economist understanding of migration, using a push/pull model focused on structural analysis of disparities between the sending and receiving countries.<sup>83</sup> However, the model also builds on newer elements of migration theory by incorporating a more qualitative methodology which is founded in individuals and their agency as they engage in migration.<sup>84</sup> The necessity of a model which more adequately assesses both structural drivers and this more individual lens arises from the fact that, despite the wide range of existing models of migration, secondary or onward migration does not fit into most dominant theoretical models particularly well. Much of the underlying rationale found in explanatory models of migration does not fit the experiences or outcomes of Soviet Jews in Israel, providing a poor explanation for why so many chose to leave relative to other populations..

This poor fit can in part be attributed to the fact that secondary/onward migration is a multi-layered and complex phenomenon, with equally complex decision-making. As previously outlined, onward migration, or the phenomenon of immigrants immigrating again to a third country, is extremely limited in large part due to the difficulties of obtaining data that separates

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83. de Haas, "Migration Transitions: A Theoretical and Empirical Inquiry into the Developmental Drivers of International Migration," 4.

84. Oliver Bakewell, "Some Reflections on Structure and Agency in Migration Theory," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36, no. 10 (2010): 1692-3. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2010.489382>.

secondary migrants from one-time migrants.<sup>85</sup> Analyses of onward migration have focused on sub-national movements between communities and between member-states of the European Union, where barriers to migration are lower and tracking migration patterns are easier. Some theoretical frameworks have been developed or applied to return migration, in which immigrants return to their country of origin after a significant period abroad, but even in that case, no single model can adequately capture the entirety of the decision-making process.<sup>86</sup> With the addition of a third, distant country in the decision-making process of onward migration, there is even more complexity, with additional factors to consider for individuals considering their options. It is that complexity which existing models largely fail to capture, and which necessitates a model that incorporates both *drivers* and *multipliers*.

### **1.6.1 Drivers**

Drivers, as defined in this project, are structural characteristics encountered by, or influencing, individuals who are engaging in migration decision-making. In the existing literature, these are highly varied. These fit most accurately in the push-pull model of migration, which built on early understandings of migration as a result of factors that push individuals away from their homes and pull them towards their destinations.<sup>87</sup> The model inherently relies on the assumption that there is a difference between the point of origin and the destination, whether that is in terms of income, security, or any other condition of life in those regions, and that

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85. Ayumi Takenaka, "Secondary Migration: Who Re-Migrates and Why These Migrants Matter" (Migration Policy Institute, April 26, 2007), <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/secondary-migration-who-re-migrates-and-why-these-migrants-matter>.

86. Filiz Kunuroglu, Fons van de Vijver, and Kutlay Yagmur, "Return Migration," *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture* 8, no. 2 (January 1, 2016): 30, <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1143>.

87. Ravenstein, "On the Laws of Migration," 197.

individuals choose to move in accordance with that difference.<sup>88</sup> Put differently, push and pull factors are structural conditions which shape individuals' decision-making, whether by attracting them or repelling them, and models based on them assume that decision-making occurs as a rational process where individuals weigh potential options according to cost and benefit. While simplistic, the core concept of push and pull drivers of migration remains valuable to interpreting individual decisions and rationales in a way more abstract concepts do not.

Within the concept of drivers, the theoretical framework of the project leans heavily on the 'plus' model of push and pull factors as established by Van Hear et al. The authors break those drivers into four main categories: predisposing, proximate, precipitating, and mediating drivers of migration, all of which can either be push or pull factors in a given case. Predisposing drivers include structural factors that make migration more likely, like disparities between countries.<sup>89</sup> Proximate drivers are the short-term structural push and pull factors, like an economic downturn or an ongoing conflict occurring the country of origin.<sup>90</sup> Precipitating drivers trigger the decision, and tend to be linked to an event, like the *outbreak* of a new conflict.<sup>91</sup> Finally, mediating drivers are the conditions which make migration either easier or more difficult, such as the availability of transportation.<sup>92</sup> The refreshed push-pull framework provides a clear correlation between each type of driver and its duration, proximity, and relationship with the decision-making process of individuals considering migration. In particular,

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88. de Haas, "Migration Transitions: A Theoretical and Empirical Inquiry into the Developmental Drivers of International Migration," 4.

89. Van Hear, Bakewell, and Long, "Push-Pull Plus," 931.

90. Van Hear, Bakewell, and Long, 931.

91. Van Hear, Bakewell, and Long, 932.

92. Van Hear, Bakewell, and Long, 932.

the clear understanding of the relationship between the types of drivers and the decision itself makes it relatively easy to apply to specific case studies, with objective categories for the drivers based on how they impacted participants in the project.

However, although the push-pull plus model is useful, it is not sufficient on its own to analyze the case of Soviet Jews in Israel. Van Hear et al. argue that drivers are not deterministic, but rather make some decisions or actions more likely or less likely and more or less attainable for individuals' capacities and capabilities for action.<sup>93</sup> This represents a strong step forward from earlier push-pull models, with a more nuanced capacity to explain or understand complex migration flows that do not easily match the deterministic, simplified logic found in earlier models. Nonetheless, the model still lacks a critical element necessary to explaining the Soviet Jewish exodus from Israel: the individual. Even in cases where structural drivers are the same, individuals, and specific populations, may be affected to them to different degrees. While the additional nuance and probabilistic approach to drivers in the push-pull plus model makes it better able to explain complex migration flows, it is missing a functional variable that integrates the individual's capacity and desire for migration.

### ***1.6.2 Multipliers***

Multipliers are where the individual and their unique capacity to respond to structural drivers are integrated in this project's theoretical framework. In a similar way to the push-pull plus model's probabilistic definitions of drivers, where structural conditions make migration more or less likely, multipliers are also probabilistic factors, where an individual's characteristics make migration more or less likely. These multipliers can take the form of any number of individual characteristics, and are the missing link between drivers-based theories and the Soviet

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93. Van Hear, Bakewell, and Long, 928.

Jewish case group, acting as a filter through which drivers are processed and evaluated by individuals considering migration.

One major multiplier identified in this project can be linked to a key concept in both the social sciences and economics alike. *Human capital* has a variety of definitions across disciplines and authors, but can be loosely defined as the sum total value of an individual in a market, including their abilities, skills, and health.<sup>94</sup> As applied in this project, human capital is the *capacity* of a person to make, act on, and succeed in their decisions, using whatever resources they may have access to. In the case of migration, having more human capital may mean being young and healthy, or having higher education, a high-skill profession, language proficiency, or any number of factors which make an individual more likely to be *able* to migrate.<sup>95</sup> Having lower human capital might mean the absence of those things, or the addition of individual issues which make planning and acting more difficult.

In push-pull theory, this would map onto the concept of mediating drivers, which make migration more or less possible, and it is one considered for immigration to Canada in Section 3.2.7, because Canada's points-based immigration system adopted a human capital model-based approach in the 1990s through to the 2000s.<sup>96</sup> The points-based system, which seeks to mitigate population aging and increase long-term economic growth, aims to select skilled immigration by assigning point values to desirable traits like educational attainment and language proficiency,

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94. Thomas Lemke, *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction* (New York: NYU Press, 2011), 110.

95. Athena Kottis, "Mobility and Human Capital Theory: The Education, Age, Race, and Income Characteristics of Migrants," *The Annals of Regional Science* 6, no. 1 (June 1972): 59, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01285513>.

96. Garnett Picot, Feng Hou, and Theresa Qiu, "The Human Capital Model of Selection and the Long-Run Economic Outcomes of Immigrants," Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series (Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada, May 29, 2014), <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2014361-eng.htm>.

which became increasingly heavily weighted as revisions were made in that period.<sup>97</sup> By selecting for immigrants with these qualifications, themselves measurements of prospective immigrants' human capital, the system enabled those traits to act as mediating drivers for Soviet Jews in Israel considering Canada as a potential destination. The strength of the selection effect on immigrants to Canada is strong, with over half of recent immigrants to Canada in 2006 holding at least a bachelor's degree.<sup>98</sup> In this capacity, it can be seen as a strong mediating driver, since prospective emigrants from Israel would be able to leverage their human capital into a potential emigration that might otherwise not have been possible.

However, in the theoretical framework proposed for this project, high human capital can also act as a multiplier because it shapes migrants' perspectives of what they are reasonably capable of achieving in economic terms. That internal, normative perspective of achievement can make migration more or less likely depending on the structural conditions of the surrounding economy, because it is against that subjective expectation that opportunities are weighed and compared to the costs of migration. An individual could live in a country experiencing an economic downturn but still feel that they are reasonably able to achieve economic success, and would therefore be less likely to perceive that economic downturn as a driver pushing them away. Conversely, an individual could live in a country with a flourishing economy, but still perceive it as preventing them from achieving seemingly reasonable goals, making them more likely to consider leaving. In short, Soviet Jews' high human capital within this framework is mapped onto high expectations for economic achievement, and therefore is predicted to act as a multiplier on economic reasons to leave their source countries.

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97. Neeral Kaushaj and Yao Lu, "Recent Immigration to Canada and the United States: A Mixed Tale of Relative Selection," *International Migration Review* 49, no. 2 (Summer, 2015): 482-483

98. Kaushaj and Lu, "Recent Immigration to Canada and the United States," 495.

The second multiplier of importance in this project is the connections or ties an individual has to both their home and destination countries. It is important to note that these ties can take the form of drivers: for example, being part of a strong transnational network based on a community or faith present in the destination country would facilitate migration, and thus constitute a mediating driver as it is a structural condition. While they are sometimes expressed as drivers, ties and connections can be internal and not structural when they take the form of personal values, aspirations, and desires, which have been presented as the basis of alternate models of migration in opposition to those focused on structural drivers.<sup>99</sup> However, rather than separating them entirely, aspirations and desires can be integrated into a broader model alongside structural factors through the understanding of decision-making as a multistep process, as will be described in this section.

Individuals' ties can be extremely varied: they can include feelings like pride in one's nationality or even local community, association with a national identity, or the belief that a given country is where they *should* be, in a normative sense. They can also be instigated or manipulated by structural drivers; a precipitating driver taking the form of the outbreak of conflict could lead to an increase in an individual's attachment to their country or national pride, for instance, if defending their country aligns with their values. Regardless of their malleability, however, ties to one's country represent an incredibly important aspect of analysis for the case of Soviet Jews in Israel, because their ties at the moment of decision-making played a large role in determining the outcome of that process. This is particularly the case for the second stage of migration from Israel because normative values, including belonging and community, are

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99. Jørgen Carling and Francis Collins, "Aspiration, Desire and Drivers of Migration," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 6 (April 26, 2018): 915, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1384134>.

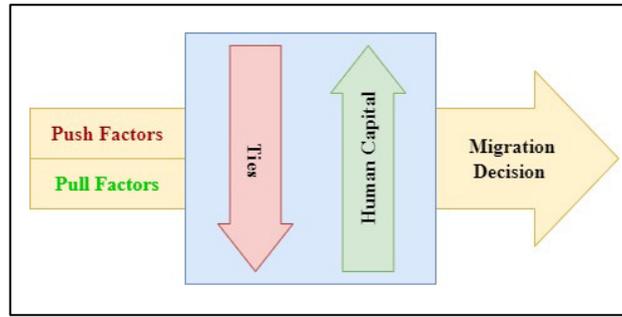
heavily involved in the process of migration to and from the Jewish state. To make *aliyah* to Israel is, ideologically, to come home, and to leave the opposite – and yet, the Soviet Jews did. Analyzing whether those ties were superseded, or if they never materialized at all, provides an avenue for investigation for the Soviet Jewish departure pattern.

These two multipliers operate in opposition to one another when the ties in question are to the home country, and operate in a complementary fashion when the ties are to the destination country. For the purposes of this analysis, ties discussed will be ties to Israel specifically, rather than to the destination country of Soviet Jews in Israel considering emigration. While some participants in the study reported ties to Canada, these were predominantly drivers; for example, having friends and family in Canada served as a mediating driver, facilitating the flow of information that made migration easier to plan and do. Conversely, ties of the internal sort, which fall into the category of multipliers, were always discussed in reference to Israel, and sometimes in reference to the USSR, meaning ties to the home country are of more relevance for this project.

### ***1.6.3 Multiplied Push-Pull Model of Migration***

Putting together the two functional variables of *drivers* and *multipliers* produces a bi-directional push-pull model of migration, where drivers that push and pull individuals towards certain migration decisions are in turn amplified or suppressed by multipliers (see Figure 2). For the purposes of this project, this model will be referred to as the *Multiplied Push-Pull Model*, reflecting the inclusion of individual multipliers.

Figure 2: Hypothesized Multiplied Push-Pull Model of Migration



Accordingly, ties to the source country are negatively associated with emigration, making the decision to migrate less likely when they are stronger compared to the decision to stay. High human capital makes it more likely that individuals will make the choice to leave than low human capital, representing a positive association with emigration. Push and pull factors in the model have polarity respective to the source and destination country, meaning that high push factors for the source country plus high pull factors for the destination country make migration more likely, and vice versa. Identifying the drivers and multipliers for the case of the Soviet Jews choosing to emigrate from Israel will enable a deeper understanding of how the unusual migration pattern came to be. Mapping the project's hypothesis onto the theoretical model produces the working theoretical framework for the project, as seen in Figure 3.



Figure 3: Hypothesized Multiplied Push-Pull Model of Migration for Soviet Jews in Israel

## **Chapter 2 - Survey Data**

In sum, a total of 28 individuals were captured in the recruitment survey, including seven individuals who were contacted directly and whose information was appended through an oral delivery of the questionnaire. Of the 28, one respondent indicated that they were not Jewish, ending the survey at the first question and demonstrating ineligibility to continue. A total of 25 participants indicated their interest in participating in the interview stage, although only 21 responded to interview requests. Nonetheless, the sample of 27 survey respondents provides some key demographic data points that suggest that the sample selected is, at least in some respects, similar to that of the population, particularly along the lines of geographic origin within the USSR, the year of their departure from the USSR, and the duration of their residency/stay in Israel. In these demographic categories, the respondents align closely to available data on the population of FSU Jews, which strengthens their responses as source material for a model of FSU Jewish migration in the project.

### ***2.1 Timelines: Movements by Year and Duration of Stay***

Among the sample of individuals who completed the recruitment survey or whose information was made available through interviews (27 participants), it was observed that the average duration of their residency in Israel was approximately 12.64 years. This represents a slightly higher number than in the existing literature (11.5 years).<sup>100</sup> However, this variation may be due to the inclusion, in this study, of individuals who arrived in Israel as minors under the age of 18. Notable outlying data points in this category – including individuals who stayed for 22, 25, or even 29 years in Israel – were all in that group, having arrived as young children or

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100. Rebhun, “The Russian-Speaking Israeli Diaspora in the FSU, Europe and North America: Jewish Identification and Attachment to Israel,” 46.

adolescents. Several participants in that category would not have been included in earlier research about FSU Jewish migration patterns, as much of it was conducted approximately 12 years ago when they were still residing in Israel.

In general, the survey data is largely consistent, with strong grouping. The majority (86%) of participants emigrated from the USSR between 1990-1991, which represents the highest period of Jewish emigration captured in the research project. The remaining participants either emigrated at the start of the rising peak (1989, 3 respondents) or much earlier, with one participant (0.037%) departing in 1973. The main cluster for emigration spans a slightly longer period, with 39.2% of participants emigrating from Israel to Canada between 2000-2002. There is a slight negative correlation between the year of emigration (USSR) and year of emigration (Israel), but the relationship is not statistically significant at a confidence interval of 95% (Pearson's  $r = -0.0058$ ,  $p = 1$ ). This suggests that although those who left the USSR later tended to leave Israel earlier, no conclusions can be made about this pattern being representative of all Soviet Jews, due to its weakness in the sample. The survey cohort, and similarly, the interview cohort, are almost exclusively from the start of the major Russian *aliyah* (wave of immigration) to Israel, which occurred in the last two years of the USSR's existence. The literature would suggest that these individuals were likely less Zionist and religious than those who came before them, and this proved to be clear in their interview responses.

The proximity of the average duration of residency in Israel observed in the survey participants to that observed in earlier research suggests that many of the trends observed in the earlier research may also be applicable to the current sample. In particular, the trend where these individuals completed some form of additional education or qualification while in Israel, acquired high-skill employment, in some cases established families and then proceeded to

emigrate is of note. The majority of participants surveyed and interviewed mentioned these waypoints – education, economic adaptation/job acquisition, and establishing families – in their discussion of their lives in Israel. Most attended some form of educational program in Israel, whether primary and secondary education for those arrived at a younger age or additional post-secondary education for those who arrived as adults and previously held post-secondary qualifications from the Soviet Union. Moreover, all participants who were interviewed mentioned families at the time of their emigration from Israel, many with multiple children at that point in time.

*Table 2: Migration Years and Duration of Stay by Participant*

<b>Year of Emigration, USSR</b>	<b>Year of Emigration, Israel</b>	<b>Length of Stay, Israel</b>
1973	2002	29
1989	1999	10
1989	1999	10
1989	2006	17
1990	1994	4
1990	1999	9
1990	1999	9
1990	1999	9
1990	2001	11
1990	2010	20
1990	2011	21
1990	2012	22
1990	2015	25
1991	1997	6
1991	1998	7
1991	1999	8
1991	2000	9
1991	2000	9
1991	2000	9
1991	2000	9
1991	2001	10
1991	2001	10
1991	2001	10
1991	2002	11
1991	2002	11
1991	2005	14
1991	2008	17
1991	2009	18
<b>Average Length of Stay:</b>		<b>12.64</b>

This trend is of note because the accomplishment of these life stages – completing a local education, acquiring gainful employment, and establishing a family – tend to reduce the likelihood of migration.<sup>101</sup> This is due in part to the additional costs of migration, both in absolute terms (for instance, the additional resources needed to move a larger family unit, or having both partners agree to move) and in terms of opportunity cost (the lost income, time, and resources that would otherwise have been accrued in the high-earning career). In this respect, the Soviet Jewish migration trend is unusual. Understanding how these factors interacted with the personal experiences of Soviet Jews in Israel is achieved through the analysis of interview responses in the next chapter.

## ***2.2 Soviet Republic of Origin***

On the whole, the origins (birthplaces and childhood residencies) of participants in the research survey match the general demographics of the Jewish population of the former Soviet Union. The majority were born and raised in the current countries of Russia (40.7%) and Ukraine (37%), with comparatively few from other former Soviet republics, including Belarus, Moldova, Azerbaijan, and Kyrgyzstan. This corresponds relatively closely with the distribution of the Jewish population in the former Soviet Union according to the 1989 census data. Variation between the survey and census data occurred most strongly for Moldova (11.1% versus 0.4%), but this is likely attributable to the small sample size of the survey. The other former Soviet republics included in the participants' origins appear to align closely with census data in 1989. Overall, the sample appears to be highly geographically representative of the population as compared to the nearest available population-level data in the 1989 census ( $\chi^2 = 78.668$  with 6

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101. Stefanie Kley, "Explaining the Stages of Migration within a Life-Course Framework," *European Sociological Review* 27, no. 4 (2011): 469.

degrees of freedom, two-tailed  $p < 0.0001$ ). This makes it useful for discussions of geographic origin and its potential impacts on culture, integration, and identity.

Table 3: Comparison of Survey Participant Origins and Soviet Census Data, 1989<sup>102</sup>

<b>FSU Republic of Origin</b>	<b>Count of Survey Participants</b>	<b>Percent of Survey Participants</b>	<b>Percent of FSU Jewish Population, 1989 Census</b>
Russia	11	40.7%	38%
Ukraine	10	37.0%	34%
Belarus	2	7.4%	7.70%
Azerbaijan	1	3.7%	2%
Moldova	3	11.1%	0.40%
Kyrgyzstan	1	3.7%	4.50%

While not all respondents provided their municipalities or oblasts of origin in the Soviet Union, the majority who did so in the survey or interview stages were from large urban centres, the largest proportion hailing from Kyiv (Ukraine), St. Petersburg (Russia), and Moscow (Russia). Other participants reported that they were from smaller urban centres, like Baku (Azerbaijan), Lvov (Ukraine), Chişinău (Moldova), Simferopol (Ukraine), and Vitebsk (Belarus). No respondents identified a rural home or origin, which is expected given the sample size and the fact that the Soviet Jewish population was almost exclusively urban.<sup>103</sup> Only approximately 1.5% of the entire Soviet Jewish population was reported to be living in rural areas as early as 1979.<sup>104</sup> In this respect, the survey participants were similar to the population.

Most respondents indicated their families had not moved in their lifetimes, with some indicating multiple generations of their family resided in the same city, and in one case, the same

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102. Lee Schwartz, “A Note on the Jewish Population of the Ussr from the 1989 Census Data,” *Soviet Geography* 32, no. 6 (June 1, 1991): 433–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00385417.1991.10640867>.

103. Altshuler, *Soviet Jewry Since the Second World War - Population and Social Structure*, 62.

104. Altshuler, 62.

apartment unit. This is not surprising given the restrictions on movement and residency in the USSR, including total restrictions on major urban centres like St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Kyiv.<sup>105</sup> Four respondents indicated some form of shifting residence in the Soviet Union, but only one involved a family displacement from Ukraine to Moldova. The remaining three respondents indicated the move had been for the purposes of study, in all three cases because of antisemitic pressures influencing their choice of post-secondary institution. These moves, from Kyiv-Moscow, Vitebsk-St. Petersburg, and Simferopol-Sevastopol respectively, were not designed to be permanent, and therefore are minimally representative of mobility in the Soviet Union.

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105. I. N. Gang and R. C. Stuart, "Mobility Where Mobility Is Illegal: Internal Migration and City Growth in the Soviet Union," *Journal of Population Economics* 12, no. 1 (1999): 120, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s001480050093>.

## **Chapter 3 – Migration Patterns of Participants**

### ***3.1 Demographics***

The demographic characteristics of interview participants largely corresponded to the trends identified in the literature. One characteristic exhibiting the highest degree of conformity to trends established in prior research about their cohort was that of religion, where those interview participants who mentioned their level of observance largely described themselves as non-religious. Of the 14 participants who discussed their or their family's level of observance, only two identified themselves as regularly observant in the USSR. In comparison, six identified themselves as completely non-observant of any Jewish traditions and six identified themselves as only observing some major holidays, such as Pesach. Moreover, those in the latter category tended to be minimally observant even of those major holidays, with only one mentioning observing holidays outside of Pesach.<sup>106</sup> Those who did celebrate Pesach generally described it as a highly limited observance. For example, one participant described their family's observance as just eating matzo bread (unleavened bread), but not any other elements of the holiday, and moreover she noted that she was instructed by her parents to do so in secret.<sup>107</sup> To several participants, observance of Jewish traditions was described not as a religious matter, but rather a cultural one, acting as a connection to a community from which they had been severed by the eradication of the Yiddish language and Jewish education.<sup>108</sup> In sum, the interview cohort was broadly non-religious like most in the 1989-1991 wave described in the literature.

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106 Interview with Study Participant, February 7, 2022.

107. Interview with Study Participant, September 29, 2021.

108. Interview with Study Participant, October 5, 2021; Interview with Study Participant, February 7, 2022; Interview with Study Participant, February 17, 2022.

Interview participants were similarly aligned with the literature on the level of education of Soviet Jews. While not all participants indicated their level of education at the time of their departure, most had either completed a post-secondary degree of some kind or were in the process of doing so when they left the Soviet Union. Of the 21 participants who were interviewed, five were minors, being under the age of 18 at the time of their arrival in Israel. Therefore, they would not have been at an age to pursue post-secondary education in the USSR. Of the remaining sixteen, twelve indicated their education at the time of their emigration. None of those twelve indicated that they had not attended post-secondary education at all at the time of their emigration, and all indicated they had either completed a post-secondary degree or had attended post-secondary institutions for at least some time. This amounted to 75% of all interview participants. The high level of educational attainment observed in the interview cohort is highly proportional to the literature, which showed that the average years of education of Soviet Jews exceeded the secondary level.

### ***3.2 Drivers***

The drivers of departure observed through interviews with the participants map well onto the expected drivers found in push-pull theory, for both steps of the migration pattern. Clusters for the USSR-Israel migration center on economic issues, both individual and systematic, and antisemitism, both direct and systemic, and almost exclusively push factors. Meanwhile, drivers of migration identified for the Israel-Canada migration are more diverse, with significantly more variation. Nonetheless, answers tended to cluster on a similar variety of drivers, including security and war, weather and climate, economic reasons, and cultural discussions. Identity and cultural upbringing played a large role in almost all of the latter, suggesting the presence of a possible multiplier as hypothesised.

### 3.2.1 USSR-Israel: Economic Drivers

The reasons for emigration identified by interview participants map closely onto the four categories of drivers of migration identified in Van Hear et al.'s model of push-pull migration. Notably, most interview participants identified both individual and structural factors which affected their decision-making, as well as how those factors changed in their influence or magnitude over time. All of these answers indicate support of the categorization of drivers established in the updated push-pull model. Analysis of the participants' answers on why they left Israel suggest a most common pattern clustered around economic and social reasons. With few exceptions, the migration decision to leave the USSR and immigrate to Israel was push-dominant, with all participants identifying conditions or events that repelled them and their families away from the Soviet Union and relatively few identifying conditions, events or sentiments pulling them towards Israel.

59% of respondents identified purely economic reasons as contributors to their, or their families' decisions to emigrate from the USSR. Many identified exclusively structural economic reasons, such as the downturn of the Soviet economy following the *perestroika* movement of political reforms in the 1980s or limited opportunities for advancement in a planned economy.<sup>109</sup> Many participants identified personal or individual economic reasons. Generally, however, discussions of economic drivers of migration pushing them away from the FSU tended to include both types of drivers, with consideration for how they were affected. Interestingly, most participants identified economic reasons for their departure both in the immediate and longer-term, demonstrating awareness of how structural conditions affected them differently.

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109. Vladimir Mau, "Perestroika: Theoretical and Political Problems of Economic Reforms in the USSR," *Europe-Asia Studies* 47, no. 3 (1995): 388–89.

For example, several respondents noted the difficulty of purchasing consumer goods, including groceries and necessities, as a major contributor to their departure. “Stand in line for a few hours,” one respondent from Ukraine noted, “And you might get a block of butter.”<sup>110</sup> But where this was not particularly new to the Soviet planned economy, where queues for stores were a given for consumers, she also noted that it had gotten remarkably worse in Kyiv in the years leading up to her departure. Two other participants, a married couple from Baku, both identified the constant lack of consumer goods and food alike as a long-standing frustration with the system.<sup>111</sup> However, one also noted the emergence of speculators selling imported goods during *perestroika* as a new frustration with the Soviet economy, finding it demeaning that she had to allow herself to be extorted to get access to those goods.<sup>112</sup> Many participants identified the predisposing factor of long-standing frustrations with the Soviet economy and limited access to food, consumer products, and investments as something that contributed to their decision to leave, but not as a sufficient condition. Instead, many noted proximate drivers acting in the economic sphere as extensions of the long-term issues. One participant, for example, noted a long-running frustration in her family with their inability to rent a ‘good’ or high-quality apartment, but added that it was short-term economic downturns that prompted them to leave, identifying overnight inflation spikes and monetary instability as key reasons.<sup>113</sup>

Moreover, some of the interview participants described precipitating drivers within the economic sphere. Whereas the predisposing factor – a structural inequality between the Soviet

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110. Interview with Study Participant, January 21, 2022.

111. Interview with Study Participant, September 29, 2021.

112. Interview with Study Participant, September 29, 2021.

113. Interview with Study Participant, January 21, 2022.

Union's planned economy and capitalist economies with free access to goods and services that respondents wanted access to – had always been present, most had not had access to knowledge of that disparity. Instead, interactions with Americans or friends and family who had that information abruptly broke through that ignorance, suddenly changing their worldview. "The American students were like aliens," said one participant about hosting American exchange students at the age of 14.<sup>114</sup> She described her privileged lifestyle, living in a large apartment in a wealthy neighbourhood three bus stops away from the Red Square and vacationing for months in the Baltics annually, but nonetheless found the American students and their lives incomprehensibly free and rich. "I couldn't believe it. I told my mother I wanted to go there, or live anywhere that wasn't the USSR."<sup>115</sup> That same participant later went on an exchange to the United States, and noted that although she "thought [she] was privileged in the USSR, it was nothing compared to what [she] saw and heard in the United States."<sup>116</sup>

At the age of 14, and then again at 16, she came face-to-face with a wealth of information that completely shattered her worldview. Although she had previously believed she lived in the best country in the world, the experience of meeting American students, and then visiting the United States, acted as a precipitating driver that immediately prompted a desire to leave the country. Another participant who also went on an exchange to the United States as a student similarly found herself re-evaluating the circumstances in the USSR upon her return, noting a new perspective on Soviet life after seeing what kind of life was possible elsewhere.<sup>117</sup> The fact

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114. Interview with Study Participant, September 30, 2021.

115. Interview with Study Participant, September 30, 2021.

116. Interview with Study Participant, September 30, 2021.

117. Interview with Study Participant, January 13, 2022.

that her father, a prominent academic in his field, lived a lower middle-class lifestyle became unpleasant once that she knew their quality of life would have been much higher elsewhere and had a point of comparison.<sup>118</sup>

Exposure to new information about the economic disparities between the Soviet Union and other countries proved a common precipitating event for many participants in the study. Another participant noted that her mathematics tutor suggested they leave, a decision she made shortly after that discussion. That conversation, she said, came as archival documentation began to be opened to the public, releasing a flood of information about the injustice endemic in the Soviet system.<sup>119</sup> The sudden dissemination of that information, alongside her mentor's suggestion, led her to the belief that there were no opportunities for her in the USSR, and thereafter to the decision that she should leave the country altogether. The abrupt influence of that precipitating driver was strong enough that she emigrated on her own at the age of 19, having made the decision to emigrate separately from her parents, who remained in the Soviet Union.<sup>120</sup> Therefore, the provision of information acted as a precipitating driver for those individuals by enabling them to take into account the predisposing factor that was the disparities between the USSR and countries on the other side of the Iron Curtain.

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118. Interview with Study Participant, January 13, 2022.

119. Interview with Study Participant, January 18, 2022.

120. Interview with Study Participant, January 18, 2022.

Table 4: Summary of Economic Drivers of Migration, USSR to Israel

Driver Type	Examples from Interviews
<b>Predisposing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limited access to food products</li> <li>- Limited access to consumer goods</li> <li>- Limited access to property market</li> <li>- Limited upward growth potential (employment)</li> </ul>
<b>Proximate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased shortages of food products</li> <li>- Increased shortage of consumer goods</li> <li>- Emergence of imported goods and related extortion</li> <li>- Monetary instability during and after <i>perestroika</i></li> </ul>
<b>Precipitating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Access to new information about economic conditions in the USSR</li> <li>- Access to new information about economic conditions in other countries</li> </ul>

### 3.2.2 USSR-Israel: Social Drivers

Operating on a similar push basis were the social drivers motivating Soviet Jews to leave the country. In the case of the Soviet Jews, social dissatisfaction was primarily focused on antisemitism, an ever-present experience universally described both by study participants and those in other interviews and primary research available in the literature. Antisemitism, much like the economic factors that influenced Soviet Jews' migration decisions, operated in both the long- and short-term, and on both the individual and structural level, mapping closely to the driver categories established by Van Hear et al.

Over the longer term, antisemitism acted as a predisposing driver, contributing to dissatisfaction with life in the Soviet Union alongside an undercurrent of feelings of insecurity that remained pervasive even for interview participants who had not experienced severe antisemitism. Some interview participants, for example, did not disclose the fact that they were Jewish to classmates or acquaintances, wanting to avoid mistreatment or judgement. Some families carried this practice of hiding their Jewish background and status to such an extreme that one participant said she had not known she was Jewish until she was ten years old and read a

book about it.<sup>121</sup> Others, meanwhile, indicated that they although they had not personally experienced antisemitism, they remained constantly aware of it, hearing stories from parents, relatives and friends about missing out on post-secondary education and promotions at work, and experiencing casual antisemitism in the form of slurs or general mockery.<sup>122</sup>

A constant feeling of being set apart from the broader population, and knowing that there were limitations put on you because of your nationality, was a common theme explored in interviews.<sup>123</sup> Even when participants noted they had experienced antisemitism directly and regularly, it was often dismissed as a minor event that was a fact of life, not a major irritant. One participant recalled his experiences being visibly ethnically Jewish in school, and the constant harassment because of his features that he received from students and teachers alike, but dismissed it as “not the end of the day”.<sup>124</sup> Another described antisemitism as a “given,” something every member of the community was ready for because it was so commonplace.<sup>125</sup> Although a clear push factor that participants mentioned as a reason to motivate their departure from the USSR, much of the discussion of antisemitism was in a high-level, structural sense due to the way it was embedded in Soviet society, making it more so a predisposing factor that repelled Soviet Jews from their home country towards those deemed less antisemitic.

That perception arose from a long history of antisemitism from both the state and the greater population. Under Stalin, Jews were targeted under campaigns meant to remove

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121. Interview with Study Participant, January 25, 2022; Interview with Study Participant, September 30, 2021.

122. Interview with Study Participant, January 18, 2022.

123. Interview with Study Participant, January 13, 2022.

124. Interview with Study Participant, October 20, 2021.

125. Interview with Study Participant, January 18, 2022.

‘cosmopolitans’ and ‘enemies of the people’, and later shifts to less overt campaigns targeting ‘economic crimes’ and religious activity nonetheless disproportionately led to the arrest and execution of Jews.<sup>126</sup> A long history of Jews being ousted from positions of power or executed as traitors cemented the idea of Jews as untrustworthy Soviet citizens in the minds of Soviet citizens and policymakers alike, informing state policies restricting their access to higher education and positions of responsibility.<sup>127</sup> This antisemitic environment was further reinforced at the individual level, where strong narratives about Jewish domination of elite positions, disloyalty, and as the root of society’s evils abounded.<sup>128</sup> With both state and individual-level antisemitism rampant, the feelings described by participants match the broader Soviet Jewish trend, where being despised and discriminated against led to alienation from the Soviet state and ideology, and to thoughts of emigration where possible.<sup>129</sup> This long-term embedding of antisemitism in their daily lives enabled antisemitism to operate as a predisposing driver for participants.

Notably, however, antisemitism also worked as a precipitating driver, where a specific instance was sufficiently severe to overcome the ability of Soviet Jews to tolerate. Rejection from coveted post-secondary programs, for example, was an event that inflamed longer-term frustrations for many participants, who tended to speak of it with an interesting combination of blasé acceptance (largely related to the longer-term understanding that antisemitism was everywhere) and anger. The participant whose decision to leave was influenced by her mathematics tutor spoke of how that same tutor pointed out the hopeless nature of attempting to

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126. Gitelman, *Jewish Identities in Postcommunist Russia and Ukraine*, 201-202.

127. Gitelman, 202-203.

128. Zvi Gitelman, “Glasnost, Perestroika and Antisemitism,” *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 147.

129. Gitelman, 146, 158.

apply to her desired economics program, which denied her three times, because “everyone knows they don’t accept Jews for economics.”<sup>130</sup> Another was told outright when going to apply to his chosen post-secondary institution that Jews were given a mathematics problem designed to make them fail both the entrance exam and potential appeals.<sup>131</sup> One participant only ever experienced indirect antisemitism herself, but had an uncle who failed his entrance exam to a physics program on the basis of being Jewish, underscoring that Jewishness was a barrier and meant to be hidden.<sup>132</sup> Most participants did not report violent antisemitic incidents, but one participant did note that her brother was assaulted on multiple occasions at school on the basis of being Jewish, necessitating his transfer to another school and contributing to her sentiment that Israel was the place she belonged.<sup>133</sup> Alongside the predisposing driver of long-term antisemitism, which made Israel a more attractive destination to the absence thereof, specific antisemitic incidents prompted acute frustrations and drove Soviet Jews to leave.

Issues at the place of employment caused by antisemitism similarly spanned both predisposing and precipitating factors. Several participants spoke about barriers they, or their immediate families, faced in their careers on the basis of their nationality in the FSU. Participants from Baku noted that despite a relatively blended population, compared to the more segregated and openly discriminatory structures found in the more European Soviet republics, Jews were nonetheless barred from leadership positions in stores and factories, and were

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130. Interview with Study Participant, January 19, 2022.

131. Interview with Study Participant, October 5, 2021.

132. Interview with Study Participant, February 6, 2022.

133. Interview with Study Participant, February 7, 2022.

restricted to the next step down no matter their aptitude or qualifications.<sup>134</sup> Similar experiences were reported by participants from Ukraine.<sup>135</sup> One participant found the limited career opportunities so frustrating that he quit his post-secondary program after five years, saying it was “useless because he was Jewish.”<sup>136</sup> Meanwhile, other participants reported difficulties in the workplace on the basis of being Jewish. One individual from Ukraine recalled how, despite his higher-ranking position, he was instructed to do menial labour to meet quotas, and then paid significantly less than his colleague on the basis of his nationality, leading to him quitting the job entirely.<sup>137</sup> This aligns with memoirs and firsthand accounts established in the available literature, where non-Jewish managers treated Jewish employees poorly to the point of driving them out.<sup>138</sup>

Antisemitism does not appear to have acted as a proximate driver on its own for emigration from the Soviet Union in the same way that economic downturns did. Participants did not report changes in the frequency or severity of antisemitic incidents in the shorter term leading up to their decision to emigrate. However, it does appear that antisemitism operated as a secondary dimension of economic proximate drivers. As the economy began to collapse, many participants noted increasing worry about antisemitic reprisals, enabling fears of antisemitism to act as a proximate driver. “It was precarious,” said one participant, “To live in a country that is

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134. Interview with Study Participant, October 28, 2021.

135. Interview with Study Participant, October 5, 2021.

136. Interview with Study Participant, January 18, 2022.

137. Interview with Study Participant, February 17, 2022.

138. Lev Bilich, *What I Will Always Remember : Pre-War/Wartime/Post-War in Russia (Soviet Union)*, *Memoirs of Holocaust Survivors in Canada v. 031* (Montreal: Concordia University Chair in Canadian Jewish Studies, 2004), 19.

falling apart, where you are a minority.”<sup>139</sup> Another participant noted that it felt like “at any moment something might explode, and you have to leave to be safe,” while yet another commented that his mother saw what was coming and made the decision for the safety of her two children.<sup>140</sup>

In the words of one participant’s father, they had to get out of the failing country because when the central authority collapses, people start to kill Jews. “As the saying goes,” he would say, referencing a common saying using a slur for Jews, “Kill the zhid, save Russia.”<sup>141</sup> As the economic situation in the USSR worsened, then, so too did fears of reprisals. Even though participants did not say they thought a pogrom was on the horizon, what was clear from their accounts was a heightened sense of insecurity and concern. That concern acted as a proximate driver that pushed them away from the Soviet Union, one which also entered a feedback loop: the start of mass emigration of Soviet Jews produced a backlash among some Soviet citizens who were not able to leave, fuelling grassroots antisemitism in the population and strengthening Jews’ desire to leave even further.<sup>142</sup>

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139. Interview with Study Participant, January 18, 2022.

140. Interview with Study Participant, January 13, 2022; Interview with Study Participant, October 21, 2021.

141. Interview with Study Participant, October 5, 2021.

142. Sidney Heitman, “Soviet Emigration in 1990: A New ‘Fourth Wave’?,” in *Soviet-Jewish Emigration and Resettlement in the 1990s*, ed. Tanya Basok and Robert J. Brynn (Toronto: York Lanes Press Inc., 1991), 8.

Table 5: Summary of Social Drivers of Migration, USSR-Israel

Driver Type	Examples from Interviews
<b>Predisposing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- History of antisemitism in the Soviet Union and Russian Empire</li> <li>- Feelings of non-belonging and exclusion</li> </ul>
<b>Proximate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fears of worsening antisemitism caused by economic downturn</li> <li>- Rise in grassroots antisemitism caused by other Soviet Jews' departure from the USSR</li> </ul>
<b>Precipitating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rejection from post-secondary institutes</li> <li>- Antisemitic incidents in the workplace</li> </ul>

### 3.2.3 USSR-Israel: Mediating Drivers

In the case of the first leg of the movement pattern from the Soviet Union to Israel, there were several mediating drivers operating on the Soviet Jews. Much of these drivers were focused on state-level policies, which dominated the ability of Soviet Jews to emigrate and, similarly, to immigrate. The broader mediating driver of their ability to leave, for example, meant that migration flows trended up and down according to Soviet policies on approving their departure. However, the most interesting role mediating drivers played was in determining *where* Soviet Jews migrated to, rather than whether they migrated at all. Almost half (45.5%) of interview participants, for example, explicitly identified that Israel was their destination country primarily because it was the only country accepting Soviet Jewish immigrants at their time of departure, with pull factors acting as secondary considerations. Many noted an original preference for the United States, and that they were unable to reach that destination after the policy changes in the late 1980s.

Other mediating drivers, however, also played a role in determining their destinations, including medical considerations and lack of broadly available information on possible migration paths. Two participants, a married couple, had an opportunity to try for the United States. However, due to an eight-month pregnancy at the time of their departure that complicated their

decisions and altered their risk profile, they elected not to. “People in Rome were waiting up to a year to get to the United States,” one of them said, “And we were scared we’d get stuck in transit with nothing, stuck settling in a temporary country with a baby. We didn’t know that we could go to Vienna and get citizenship, and then go on to the United States. We had no way to know that. The Internet didn’t exist yet. Israel was simpler, safer. So, we picked Israel.”<sup>143</sup> In their case, the pregnancy and imminent start to their family acted as a mediating driver that made the more desirable, and otherwise possible, destination country much harder to achieve, particularly given the lack of available information on what they were entitled to and able to claim in transit countries. Those mediating drivers led to their arrival in Israel, rather than the United States that they would have otherwise preferred to choose.

Where mediating drivers affected the possibility of migration, outside of the Soviet government’s decision to allow Jews to emigrate at all, they tended to be clustered around Jews’ professions and socio-economic contexts. Those who worked – or had once worked – in secure industries, for example, which were those deemed to be of national interest, were often not permitted to leave. One participant’s father, for example, served in the Soviet army to ‘pay his dues’ and be permitted to return to his home country of Romania, but discovered that because he had worked as a translator on German documents involving rocket weapon technology, a state secret, he was forbidden to leave for 25 years.<sup>144</sup> Soviet fears of valuable knowledge escaping – as well as concerns about the potential brain drain Jewish emigration might cause – led to

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143. Interview with Study Participant, January 25, 2022.

144. Interview with Participant, January 18, 2022.

attempts to slow or restrict the emigration of those valuable workers, at least until it was no longer possible or other concerns became priorities.<sup>145</sup>

Common mediating drivers that would normally have a positive effect on migration – for example, the availability of family networks and support systems in the destination country – do not appear to have played a great role in the decision-making of Soviet Jews immigrating to Israel. Although many participants mentioned having family and friends in their destination country at the time of their arrival, most did not identify the existence of those networks as helping their migration process as a mediating driver. Only one participant noted that having a family member who had emigrated reduced the barriers to his family’s emigration, as the family member was able to leverage higher earnings in France to fund the expenses of applying for an exit visa, including required fees and bribes.<sup>146</sup> However, for the other participants, although the support systems made it easier once they had arrived, they did not seem to have facilitated the migration itself, as the decision was made independent of whether participants would have a welcoming committee. Several, in fact, arrived as young adults alone and without any family support at all, suggesting that the ease of emigration and integration in a new country was not a driving force that influenced their decisions.

*Table 6: Summary of Mediating Drivers of Migration, USSR-Israel*

Driver Type	Examples from Interviews
<b>Mediating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Soviet policies on emigration for Soviet Jews</li> <li>- Soviet policies on emigration for specific professions</li> <li>- Destination country policies on immigration</li> <li>- Health considerations</li> </ul>

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145. Heitman, “Soviet Emigration in 1990: A New ‘Fourth Wave’?,” 8.

146. Interview with Study Participant, January 18, 2022.

### *3.2.4 Israel-Canada: Economic Drivers*

The drivers that prompted migration decisions where Soviet Jews left Israel and came to Canada also encompassed both economic and social spheres, but differed significantly from the first movement between countries. Unlike the USSR-Israel leg of the migration pattern, economic drivers for the Israel-Canada migration were mostly clustered around longer-term predisposing drivers and precipitating drivers, with little in participants' responses about short-term changes in economic circumstances that could have acted as proximate drivers of their migration decisions. Few participants noted economic reasons as significant contributors to their decision to leave Israel, compared to the importance accorded to economic reasons to leave the Soviet Union. Finally, economic drivers of migration from Israel to Canada were somewhat more diverse in their polarity, with some pull factors to Canada emerging despite a predominant push orientation.

Of the participants who named economic reasons for their departure, four indicated longer-term frustrations with the Israeli economy, identifying a desire to be in a country that had more opportunities for them to grow as a predisposing disparity between Israel and Canada. Four participants identified shorter-term economic drivers for their migration from Israel to Canada, all of which were precipitating drivers rather than proximate ones, consisting of specific events. Acceptances to Canadian post-secondary institutions acted as the precipitating driver in the cases of two participants, which pulled them to Canada specifically and represented the only economic pull factors identified by any participants in the study.<sup>147</sup> Another precipitating economic driver was job loss, as reported by one participant, which removed a major attachment to Israel and

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<sup>147</sup> Interview with Study Participant, September 29, 2021; Interview with Study Participant, February 7, 2022.

motivated him to seek opportunities elsewhere.<sup>148</sup> Similarly, the push factor of a failed job search also acted as a precipitating driver for migration, producing feelings of annoyance that precipitated the search for better options in other markets.<sup>149</sup> Overall, in both the long- and short-term, economic drivers of emigration from Israel tended to be push factors, with almost no participants describing Canada as their specific target for economic reasons.

*Table 7: Summary of Economic Drivers of Migration, Israel-Canada*

<b>Driver Type</b>	<b>Examples from Interviews</b>
<b>Predisposing</b>	- Limited growth potential in Israel
<b>Precipitating</b>	- Acceptance to Canadian post-secondary institutions - Job loss in Israel - Failed job search in Israel

### ***3.2.5 Israel-Canada: Social Drivers***

The social drivers that acted on the decision of Soviet Jews to leave Israel were primarily clustered around topics of religion and culture, and were largely predisposing factors as they were long-term, ongoing push factors embedded in the structure of Israeli society. The first dimension of push-oriented drivers identified by participants proved to be the religious structure of the country, which led to feelings of alienation rather than inclusion for most participants. “In the Soviet Union, my features and my documents labelled me as Jewish,” one participant said, “But in the Jewish state, they called me Russian instead.”<sup>150</sup> This was part of a broader phenomenon where the Jewishness of Soviet Jews was brought into question in Israel, where their background meant they were often seen as economic migrants rather than those arriving for

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148. Interview with Study Participant, October 5, 2022.

149. Interview with Study Participant, February 6, 2022.

150. Interview with Study Participant, February 7, 2022.

Jewish reasons.<sup>151</sup> This led to often-mandatory classes on Jewish history and religion for new arrivals from the FSU, which participants reported as required courses in their Hebrew language programs, university degrees, and integration programs. Although most of the participants who indicated they took those courses said they appreciated the opportunity to learn and some increased their level of observance, none reported significant changes in their religiosity.

The consequences of the Israeli approach to integrating FSU Jews went beyond mandatory Jewish education, extending to investigations of whether Soviet Jews were even Jewish at all. The doubtful approach Israeli society and authorities took to Soviet Jews' Jewishness proved especially insulting after they had faced so much antisemitism in the USSR. "In the USSR, they beat the Jewishness out of us," complained one participant, who had faced several instances of direct antisemitism in his source country, "And then we came to Israel, which was supposed to be better for Jews, we weren't Jewish enough, and they wouldn't even let us get married without proving it!"<sup>152</sup> 'Proving it' was a reference to the challenge of acquiring Jewish status faced by many Soviet arrivals to Israel, a result of the contradictory definitions of Jewishness involved. One, used by the Law of Return, allows those with Jewish ancestry and non-Jewish family Israeli citizenship, whereas the religious authorities controlling marriage, divorce, and burial adhere to a traditional halakhic (religious) definition limiting Jewish status to those with a Jewish mother or who had undergone an Orthodox conversion.<sup>153</sup>

This represented a significant conflict between the two definitions of Jewishness in use in Israel upon the Soviet Jews' arrival. It was also in conflict with Soviet definitions and

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151. Interview with Study Participant, January 18, 2022.

152. Interview with Study Participant, October 5, 2021.

153. Karin Amit, "Identity, Belonging and Intentions to Leave of First and 1.5 Generation FSU Immigrants in Israel," *Social Indicators Research* 139, no. 3 (2018): 1222–23, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-017-1758-2>.

experiences of Jewishness, where Soviet nationality laws meant that Jewishness could be passed by patrilineal descent. Only the children of both a Jewish father and Jewish mother were Jewish by default, since children of different-nationality marriages could choose between their parents' nationalities.<sup>154</sup> Furthermore, the inheritance of Jewish-sounding patronymics and surnames through the father meant that experiencing antisemitism was often patrilineal as well.<sup>155</sup>

Even for those who were not excluded by the criterion of matrilineal descent, the barrier of proving one's Jewishness made acquiring a marriage license difficult. One participant, who was entirely halakhically Jewish, recalls the amount of paperwork involved in proving his Jewish status for a marriage license, including delays caused by a misspelled death certificate of a relative who had died decades prior.<sup>156</sup> "It was a ridiculous process for us, since we'd been treated as Jewish all our lives before coming to Israel, and then suddenly these people are demanding we prove our own existence," he said, and joked that he and his wife had intentionally started their family before getting approval, leveraging a rumoured loophole where the religious courts' desire to prevent the birth of an illegitimate child accelerated the marriage license process.<sup>157</sup>

Unsurprisingly given the barriers they faced to proving their Jewish status, many participants noted a feeling of simultaneous belonging on the basis of their Jewish identity and non-belonging on the basis of their less religious lifestyles and ensuing mistreatment by Israeli authorities and individuals alike. In this context, the religious structure of everyday life in Israel

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154. Gitelman, *Jewish Identities in Post-Communist Russia and Ukraine*, 80.

155. Leon Boim, "The Passport System in the USSR," *Review of Socialist Law* 2, no. 1 (1976): 38.

156. Interview with Study Participant, February 17, 2022.

157. It should be noted it was not clear if the participant was joking about his intent, but was clear about his perception of how the loophole influenced marriage licenses. Interview with Study Participant, February 17, 2022.

acted as a predisposing factor, a long-term frustration with what participants saw as a society that was religious in its entirety despite the existence of secular Israelis. Crucially, the religious nature of Israeli society both pulled Soviet Jews to remain, and pushed them to leave. On the one hand, one participant noted, she loved living in a Jewish state, where she was comfortable and which was *her* state because she was Jewish; yet, at the same time, she reported feeling sharply ostracized, deemed by native Israelis to be Russian rather than Jewish.<sup>158</sup> Even as the Jewishness of Israeli life welcomed Jews from the FSU with the promise of being the majority and being able to go through life without antisemitism, they found themselves deemed newcomers, not properly Jewish, and in sum a disliked minority all over again. This was at odds with the Zionist national narrative of Israel, which held that Jewish arrivals were not foreigners but rather those returning home and expected those newcomers to adopt an Israeli identity alongside the ideological basis of the Israeli state.<sup>159</sup> This disparity, where the Soviet arrivals were morally demanded to adopt an Israeli identity even as their foundational Jewish identity was questioned, acted as a strong frustration-based push factor.

Those who arrived as minors (the 1.5 generation) were not exempt from this push-oriented predisposing driver, arriving to find that their peers ostracized them for being ‘Russian’ rather than being Jewish. Participants who attended primary and secondary schools in Israel reported strong divisions between students from the FSU and other Israelis, including regular physical fights, regular name-calling, and in one case the pervasive idea among the school’s students that all ‘Russian’ girls were prostitutes and all ‘Russian’ boys were criminals.<sup>160</sup> Nor did

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158. Interview with Study Participant, January 18, 2022.

159. Edna Lomsky-Feder and Tamar Rapoport, “Homecoming, Immigration, and the National Ethos: Russian-Jewish Homecomers Reading Zionism,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 74, no. 1 (January 2001): 2-3.

160. Interview with Study Participant, October 1, 2021; Interview with Study Participant, January 24, 2022.

the feeling of exclusion ever completely fade, one participant noted; although as people grew up they became less likely to blurt out rude thoughts, she believed they still held those same opinions.<sup>161</sup>

The religious mismatch between the relatively non-religious Soviet Jews and the much more religious nature of Israeli society was a long-term predisposing driver that operated on a constant basis, and leaned more strongly towards being a push factor. Much like the constant reminders of antisemitism in the USSR, where it was impossible to escape daily reminders of your exclusion and minority status, participants noted that it was impossible to escape the religious trappings of life in Israel. This underscored their alienation because of their unfamiliarity and the inconveniences they posed. “The whole religion thing was annoying,” said one participant, “Especially because my family was raised atheist, which made not being able to catch a bus on shabbat or grocery shop because it was a Jewish holiday even more annoying because it wasn’t *my way*.”<sup>162</sup>

Another participant, who did not have access to a personal vehicle until the sixth year she lived in Israel, similarly found the inconvenience of shabbat closures infuriating, and said she strongly disliked the religion, leading to an active effort to not connect with religious Judaism and Jewish life in Israel.<sup>163</sup> The difficulties of living a non-religious life in a country where religion had a highly important and influential role, including problems of exclusion from social groups and important life events and inconveniences in daily life, created a long-term frustration that predisposed Soviet Jews to emigrate. No participants identified specific incidents of friction

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161. Interview with Study Participant, January 24, 2022.

162. Interview with Study Participant, January 21, 2022.

163. Interview with Study Participant, October 5, 2021.

with religion or religious practices in Israel as precipitating drivers, and similarly did not identify them as shorter-term proximate drivers. Instead, the language participants used presented the religious division as a constant, and unchanging, factor that pushed them away. Having been raised in secular families and with Jewish identities that were separate from religious belief or practice, participants described being uncomfortable in the much more religious environment they arrived in. The stark difference between the Jewish identity that developed in the Soviet Union and the Israeli conception of Jewishness along more religious lines underscored this discomfort, producing feelings of alienation and rejection on a long-term scale.

*Table 8: Summary Table of Social Drivers, Israel-Canada*

<b>Driver Type</b>	<b>Examples from Interviews</b>
<b>Predisposing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mismatched level of religiosity between host country and migrant group</li> <li>- Social exclusion caused by Israeli state and native Israelis</li> </ul>

### ***3.2.6 Israel-Canada: Other Drivers***

One of the major drivers that contributed to Soviet Jews' decisions to leave Israel was the lack of security in the region, which pushed them away from their new country. Of the participants who indicated that security concerns of some type were involved in their decisions, six cited longer-term, ongoing concerns about constant warfare. "There was no end in sight to the conflict," one couple said of their decision, describing recurring terror attacks, wars with neighbouring states, and other security concerns as part of a single structural condition of insecurity and danger.<sup>164</sup> However, significantly more respondents identified the outbreak of specific conflicts, or close experiences with conflict, as precipitating drivers that prompted them to emigrate. One couple, for instance, found that their decision to leave was solidified after the

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<sup>164</sup> Interview with Study Participant, October 28, 2021.

third time one of them nearly got on a bus that later exploded in a terrorist attack in Jerusalem.<sup>165</sup> The Second Intifada was the most commonly identified precipitating driver in the conflict category, with five participants noting the outbreak of that conflict as a significant driver that either prompted or accelerated their decision-making.

However, the chief vector that led to the conflict-related push factors taking effect was the birth of children, acting as a proximate driver as those children were born and approached adulthood, when they would be engaged in mandatory military service. Eleven participants noted that their concerns about conflict – both on the longer term and the shorter term – became acute and took effect on their migration decisions because they had children. This effect was caused by both the security issues, where participants wanted to protect their children, and concerns about their children serving under Israel’s mandatory military service regime. “I wanted my three children to grow up in a country where their only concerns were education and succeeding financially, not war and terrorism,” one participant said in an interview, adding that he would not have left if he were still single without children.<sup>166</sup> The effect of children on conflict as a driver of migration was more acute for those with sons than those with daughters, due to the added risks in mandatory military service, where men serve for 8 months longer than women and are more likely to be found in combat roles.<sup>167</sup> “We had two sons,” said two participants, “And if we had had daughters, we would not have left.”<sup>168</sup> Six participants in total identified that having sons made the security situation in Israel act as a push factor driving them away from the country,

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165. Interview with Study Participant, October 5, 2021.

166. Interview with Study Participant, October 1, 2021.

167. “Our Soldiers,” Israel Defence Forces, February 2022, <https://www.idf.il/en/minisites/our-soldiers/>.

168. Interview with Study Participant, October 28, 2021.

compared to only two for those with daughters (three participants did not indicate the gender of their children).

This combination of conflict-related drivers likely contributes heavily to the average length of stay as found in both this study and in the literature. With many arriving in the 1989-1991 period, they would likely have progressed through stages of their lives as students, young employees, and started families just as, just over a decade later, the Second Intifada began in 2000.<sup>169</sup> However, although a conveniently simple explanation, the security/conflict explanation is not sufficient to explain the migration pattern on its own. Some participants noted that they would have stayed if not for other reasons unrelated to the security concerns others described. Moreover, there is no explanation for why Soviet Jews in particular would be affected by the outbreak of conflict, exposure to war, and other security concerns relative to other groups in Israel. Only the respondents from Azerbaijan mentioned conflict as an experience they had from life in the Soviet Union, suggesting it was not a common prior negative experience for Soviet Jews that might have amplified the impact of conflict in Israel.

Several other drivers of migration appear as push factors participants identify as dislikes in Israel. Climate, for example, was identified by six participants as something they did not like about their immigration to Israel, with all five noting that the Israeli climate was too hot. For some, the heat was merely uncomfortable, whereas others reported that the heat resulted in health problems that they attributed to being used to colder climates.<sup>170</sup>

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169. Jeremy Pressman, "The Second Intifada: Background and Causes of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Studies* 23, no. 2 (2003): 114, <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/JCS/article/view/220>.

170. Interview with Study Participant, January 13, 2022; Interview with Study Participant, February 17, 2022.

Table 9: Summary Table of Other Drivers of Migration, Israel-Canada

Driver Type	Examples from Interviews
<b>Predisposing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ongoing conflict/series of conflicts with no foreseeable resolution</li> <li>- Dislike of, or health concerns caused by, Israeli climate</li> </ul>
<b>Proximate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Outbreak of Second Intifada</li> <li>- Birth of children, especially sons</li> </ul>
<b>Precipitating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Personal exposure to, or narrow avoidance of, terrorist acts</li> </ul>

### 3.2.7 Israel-Canada: Mediating Drivers

Participants in the study identified a key series of mediating drivers that prompted them to immigrate to Canada specifically. Firstly, many had already considered North America (usually the United States) as a target destination in the first leg of the migration pattern, but were unable to emigrate there due to immigration policies restricting their choices. As a result, they already had information about life in those countries. In a phenomenon very similar to the first leg, the United States’ immigration policy proved to be a significant filter on their migration pattern. For several respondents, the United States was their first choice, with five participants identifying it as the destination they had wanted while in Israel. “I saw the most prospects in the United States, after seeing the success of friends of the family who went there already,” one participant noted, “But it was impossible to get through the immigration lottery system.”<sup>171</sup> The system in the United States acted as a negative mediating driver, reducing the possibility of emigration to that destination. Another participant had preferred to go to Australia, but was similarly unable to, due to restrictive immigration policies that left him turning to Canada as an alternative.<sup>172</sup>

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171. Interview with Study Participant, February 7, 2022.

172. Interview with Study Participant, October 21, 2021.

Many participants similarly chose Canada as an alternative option to their most-desired destination. Unlike the United States' negative mediating driver, Canada benefited from a positive mediating driver because of its immigration system. Canada's immigration system ranks applicants to the skilled worker stream according to points assigned for characteristics that make them more desirable to the Canadian economy, including age, level of education, official languages proficiency, and work experience.<sup>173</sup> The majority of participants also immigrated prior to the launch of an updated system in 2015, meaning that they were also granted points for designated professions deemed to be in high demand in the Canadian economy, many of which were the science, technology and other skilled professions disproportionately common among participants and Soviet Jews at large.<sup>174</sup>

In other words, rather than being subject to political will or random chance, the Canadian immigration system was a feasible target for Soviet Jews, whose demographic characteristics facilitated their entry. In 1992, up to 20 points of 70 (28%) required for entry under the Canadian skilled worker stream could be earned through education and professional working experience that Soviet Jews had in droves, with additional points if their skilled occupation was in demand; by 2006, their education and experience alone could accrue 46/67 points required for entry (69%).<sup>175</sup> Combined with proficiency in one of Canada's official languages (up to 15 points in

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173. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, "Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS) Criteria," Canada.ca, December 1, 2014, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/express-entry/eligibility/criteria-comprehensive-ranking-system/grid.html>.

174. Alan G. Green and David A. Green, "Canadian Immigration Policy: The Effectiveness of the Point System and Other Instruments," *The Canadian Journal of Economics / Revue Canadienne d'Economie* 28, no. 4b (1995): 1008, <https://doi.org/10.2307/136133>; Refugees and Citizenship Canada Immigration, "Express Entry Year-End Report 2015," not available, March 11, 2016, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/express-entry-year-end-report-2015.html>.

175. Kaushaj and Lu, "Recent Immigration to Canada and the United States," 483.

1992 and up to 24 points in 2006), Soviet Jews’ demographic characteristics meant that they were able to meet the Canadian entry requirements relatively easily compared to other desirable countries like the United States, where family reunification channels are the largest proportion of immigrants and skilled worker visas have much higher competition.<sup>176</sup> The relative ease of procuring entry under the Canadian skilled worker stream compared to other countries led to a sentiment among participants where Canada was the only available option, with participants noting that it was “impossible to go anywhere else.”<sup>177</sup>

In short, the main mediating drivers that affected the ability of Soviet Jews to emigrate from Israel were not on the Israeli side. Many reported living middle- to upper-middle class lifestyles, with well-paying careers and high-profile positions. There were no barriers to emigration reported on the basis of funds or transportation, and even where language barriers existed, several participants reported learning English in advance in order to emigrate, demonstrating that they had resources to remove those mediating factors that limited their options. Instead, the mediating drivers operated on the receiving end of the migration, with the United States having a negative driver due to its restrictive and unpredictable immigration lottery and Canada benefiting from a positive mediating driver that heavily prioritized characteristics abundant in the Soviet Jewish population in Israel.

*Table 10: Summary Table of Mediating Drivers of Migration, Israel-Canada*

<b>Driver Type</b>	<b>Examples from Interviews</b>
<b>Mediating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Immigration policy of the United States</li> <li>- Immigration policy of Australia</li> <li>- Immigration policy of Canada</li> </ul>

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176. Kaushaj and Lu, “Recent Immigration to Canada and the United States,” 483-484.

177. Interview with Study Participant, February 6, 2022.

### ***3.2.8 Drivers Are Necessary, but Not Sufficient***

The experiences of Soviet Jews across each step of their migration pattern along the USSR-Israel-Canada pathway correspond well to the push-pull model described by Van Hear et al. Each step, as described by participants, demonstrated some combination of predisposing, proximate, precipitating, and mediating drivers in social, economic, and other spheres that influenced the migration decisions. However, whereas drivers provide a relatively strong explanation for the first step of the pattern from the Soviet Union to Israel, the base model is not as convincing an explanation for the second step from Israel to Canada.

The drivers described by participants as influencing their migration from the FSU to Israel clearly explain why Soviet Jews wanted to leave, with strong push factors related to economic downturns and antisemitism in particular that were not experienced by other groups in the population. Similarly, the mediating driver of Soviet emigration policy explains why Soviet Jews emigrated and other Soviet citizens did not, as the policy was highly restrictive and did not allow emigration under normal circumstances. As established in the literature, it was only after years of lobbying by external powers that Soviet authorities began to permit Soviet Jewish emigration. That permission was not extended to most of the Soviet population, with limited examples of other groups being able to emigrate, such as ethnic Germans from 1986 onwards.<sup>178</sup> The drivers in the Soviet Union, in this case, adequately explain the disproportionate rate at which Soviet Jews left the Soviet Union in comparison to other Soviet citizens.

That kind of adequate explanation, however, is not present for the onward migration from Israel to Canada, where drivers alone fail to explain why Soviet Jews were leaving at rates disproportionate to other groups in the Israeli population. Cultural differences between the

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178. Helmut Klüter, "People of German Descent in CIS States – Areas of Settlement, Territorial Autonomy and Emigration," *GeoJournal* 31, no. 4 (December 1993): 427, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41146115>.

European-raised Soviet Jews and the Middle Eastern norms observed in Israel represent one possible answer, acting as predisposing drivers and frustrations that pushed those individuals to emigrate. However, no participants described those frustrations as sufficient to make them go through the arduous process of migration to a new country, a process they had been through once before and whose costs they knew from firsthand experience.

Similarly, although the mediating driver of Canada's points-based immigration system made it attractive to high-skill, high-education applicants, and therefore explained much of their migration decision, it does not on its own explain why Soviet Jews were immigrating at such high rates compared to other Israelis. A model based solely on drivers cannot produce a convincing explanation for the disproportionate rates of the second migration of Soviet Jews, both in comparison to other Israelis and to other migrants studied in the literature, where secondary migration is extraordinarily rare. Therefore, a secondary mechanism is necessary to explain the migration pattern.

### ***3.3 Multipliers***

Multipliers are the name given to the secondary mechanism used to explain Soviet Jewish emigration from Israel in this study's theoretical model. For the purposes of the Soviet Jewish case, it was hypothesized that the multipliers relevant to their situation were human capital and internal ties to the source country, where internal ties are ideas, emotions, and beliefs rather than the structural, external drivers like cost of migration, citizenship, and so forth. Examining the experiences of Soviet Jews participating in the study showed that these multipliers amplified the drivers identified in the earlier section for many participants, increasing their effects such that migration became more likely. Comparatively, although the same multipliers did affect the

decision-making process for Soviet Jews emigrating from the FSU, they were not as significant of a consideration in comparison to the drivers at play in that period of the migration pattern.

### ***3.3.1 USSR-Israel: Limited Multiplier Interactions***

Human capital played a relatively limited multiplier role in how Soviet Jews were incentivized to leave. While the limited opportunities available to Soviet Jews regardless of level of effort or education, for example, acted as a driver to push them away as described in Section 3.2, the limitations they faced also coloured their perceptions of other issues within the Soviet Union and made the decision to leave more likely. For example, while the limited economic achievement possible in the USSR was, from the perspective of one participant, felt by absolutely everyone, the perception that it was much worse for Jews no matter what they did contributed to the fact that he did not feel ‘at home’ in the Soviet Union, despite having grown up there.<sup>179</sup>

The concept of individual ties as a mechanism in the case of the Soviet Union was identifiable in some of the answers of the interview participants. For this first step of the migration pattern, ties to the source country were low, making emigration seem more palatable, and some ideological and identity-based ties to Israel as the destination country made it more likely that Soviet Jews emigrated. These multipliers facilitated the emotional and psychological aspects of the decision to leave the only country these individuals had ever known, although as noted by participants, they were not the drivers of the decision but considerations that made the decision less difficult on a personal level.

For example, participants broadly reported low or no attachment to the Soviet Union as a country, despite having been born and, in many cases, raised there. Nationalist ties to the country

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<sup>179</sup>. Interview with Study Participant, January 18, 2022.

as a concept were limited, as were connections felt to the communist cause. Participants who did suggest an early affinity with those internal ties to the core Soviet identity generally noted that it did not last, with exposure to outside countries or antisemitic incidents shattering their beliefs at relatively young ages.<sup>180</sup> Without the connection to the Soviet state or ideology, their attachment to residency in the USSR was accordingly diminished.

This was further amplified by the fact that most participants reported feeling ‘other’ and ‘set apart’ from the rest of the Soviet population, made acutely aware of their exclusion from the Soviet multinational identity by what would eventually become social drivers for their emigration. Life in the Soviet Union was underpinned by constant minor incidents reinforcing the Soviet Jews’ exclusion, one participant said, describing how “at every opportunity, people made [me] feel that I was not welcome, that this was not [my] place, just leave already!”<sup>181</sup> Other participants reported a constant feeling of being different, set apart from the broader population, due to their ‘Jewish’ appearance and identity.<sup>182</sup> Although some participants noted that they did feel ‘at home’ in the Soviet Union, it was by default, and the tie weaker than might be expected. “The USSR felt like my home because there was no other home,” reported one participant, but when another option emerged, she swiftly made the decision to leave, demonstrating the weakness of the attachment to the Soviet Union.<sup>183</sup> In short, throughout their lives, the antisemitic pressures that acted as drivers for their eventual decision to leave the USSR

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180. Interview with Study Participant, September 29, 2021; Interview with Study Participant, February 17, 2022.

181. Interview with Study Participant, January 19, 2021.

182. Interview with Study Participant, October 5, 2021; Interview with Study Participant, February 7, 2022; Interview with Study Participant, January 24, 2022; Interview with Study Participant, January 13, 2022; Interview with Study Participant, February 6, 2022; Interview with Study Participant, October 21, 2021.

183. Interview with Study Participant, February 6, 2022.

also reduced Soviet Jews' ties to the Soviet nation and identity, resulting in a positive multiplier for migration where low ties made migration more likely.

### ***3.3.2 Israel-Canada: Strong Multiplier Interactions***

Multipliers appear to have played a much larger role in the decision to leave Israel and come to Canada than the first leg of the migration journey, with participants explicitly identifying them as inputs to their decision-making. Both low ties as a result of failed or weak integration outcomes and high human capital were present as influencing factors in the decision-making processes described by participants. Moreover, they were often described explicitly as colouring participants' perceptions of various drivers, influencing how they perceived the costs and benefits of migration.

#### ***3.3.2.1 Low Integration and Low Ties to Israel***

The lack of strong ties to Israel among FSU Jews – or in some cases, of ties strong enough to make emigration less likely – appears to be largely a product of failed integration due to cultural and religious mismatch and resulting enclave-building. While the actual experiences of Soviet Jews in Israel also operated as social drivers for migration, primarily as push factors for most participants, they also produced the multiplier of low ties. This reciprocally led to further segregation from the greater Israeli society, and then amplified negative experiences and reduced positive ones. As a consequence, the low ties caused by social drivers for migration operated as a magnifier for other frustrations, similar to how antisemitism amplified frustrations and negative associations with the Soviet state in the first migration.

The frustration of participants' internal Jewish identity being dismissed by those around them acted as a multiplier for eventual emigration, reducing the strength of their ties to Israel by invalidating their feeling of belonging. Notably, this occurred despite surface-level analysis

showing that they had successfully integrated, where integration is assessed on the basis of language acquisition, economic attainment, and progressing through life stages. Participants overwhelmingly had done all of the above, learning Hebrew, entering into highly remunerated careers, and starting families in their new host country, but still reported that they did not feel part of the whole, and did not feel at home in Israel despite taking many steps to build a home there. Past research shows a similar trend of integration nominally succeeding but failing to strengthen ties to Israel. In one study, for example, 1.5 generation FSU Jews scored higher on all markers of integration than their first-generation counterparts, with easier access to language and economic accomplishment due to spending their formative years in Israel, but were still highly likely to leave because of the constant reminder that no matter how much they assimilated into Israeli society and identity, they were never going to be fully accepted.<sup>184</sup>

Whereas integration usually involves the breaking down of divisions between newcomers and native residents of a given community, integration for the study participants failed to do so. Rather, in many cases they found themselves feeling more excluded and more foreign the more they interacted with native Israelis. It is therefore unsurprising that, in an environment where native Israelis rejected their presence and invalidated their identity, many participants reported closed social networks as found in the literature on Soviet Jewish integration in Israel, sequestering themselves in Russian communities that did not invalidate their experiences and identity. “All of my friends in Israel were Russian Jews,” said one participant, “Because it was totally impossible to get outside of that community, when it was all around you and no one else

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184. Amit, “Identity, Belonging and Intentions to Leave of First and 1.5 Generation FSU Immigrants in Israel,” 1231–32.

welcomed you.”<sup>185</sup> Another participant, who was immersed in a mostly-native Israeli faculty in university with less than five FSU Jews out of 120 students, nonetheless had an exclusively Russian Jewish friend group.<sup>186</sup> Even participants who said they felt mostly at home at Israel also reported being part of predominantly FSU Jewish circles there, implying relatively Russian-dominant life.<sup>187</sup> Only one participant reported a predominantly Israeli friend group, and only two identified as part of an Israeli identity.<sup>188</sup> The closed social networks of participants were themselves a result of failed integration, but also prevented integration from occurring, and multiplied frustrations with Israeli society in doing so by limiting participants’ capacity to understand other groups.

For example, where a cultural mismatch between Soviet Jews and Israelis acted as a push factor on a longer-term, predisposing basis, it was amplified by the way that many participants did not interact with Israelis at all. “I couldn’t get used to the Eastern way of life,” said one participant, adding that she “could not understand the rules of the game, because [I] grew up with a different mentality.”<sup>189</sup> In theory, that feeling of being unable to understand and acculturate to the interpersonal culture in Israel should have diminished as time went on. Instead, however, that participant noted that it did not, and it was the cultural disparity that ended up being the primary push factor that led to her departure.<sup>190</sup> On its own, the cultural mismatch was a driver, but the

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185. Interview with Study Participant, January 18, 2022.

186. Interview with Study Participant, January 19, 2022.

187. Interview with Study Participant, January 24, 2022; Interview with Study Participant, February 7, 2022.

188. Interview with Study Participant, January 18, 2022; Interview with Study Participant, October 28, 2021.

189. Interview with Study Participant, January 18, 2022.

190. Interview with Study Participant, January 18, 2022.

extent and magnitude of that mismatch were amplified by the failed integration and closed environment of Soviet Jews, including that participant. One participant, describing the neighbourhood where his brother lives to this day, called it an “Ashkenazi Russian community, where everyone on the street speaks Russian, every store greets you in Russian.”<sup>191</sup> The Russian enclaves, he added, made Israel feel a lot more like home, but it also made the discomfort and dysphoria in Israel worse, because of the abrupt difference you encountered every time you left the Russian neighbourhood.<sup>192</sup>

In sum, where the drivers that pushed Soviet Jews away from Israel acted on a religious or cultural sphere, they led to the breakdown of integration processes, making Jews from the FSU feel uncomfortable and excluded from the greater Israeli population and from Israeli life. It was that same failed integration that then led to the feelings participants described of not being at home, of not having particularly strong or numerous ties to Israel, if they had any at all, which participants described in ways that matched the multiplier model in their decision-making. “If I had felt at all at home in Israel,” said one woman, “I would have stayed despite all of the problems, despite my career frustrations, the climate I hated, the culture I didn’t like – even the security concerns. But I didn’t feel at home, so I left.”<sup>193</sup> For those individuals who did not feel at home or tied down in Israel, that sensation made the push factors they encountered intolerable enough to prompt emigration where they may not have been sufficient otherwise.

Interestingly, a small minority of participants’ responses suggested that the multiplier also functioned in a negative way, making emigration a more daunting and less likely decision

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191. Interview with Study Participant, October 5, 2021.

192. Interview with Study Participant, October 5, 2021.

193. Interview with Study Participant, September 29, 2021.

where feelings of being at home and ties to the Israeli state, political story, or population made them more reluctant to leave. “I felt truly Jewish only after I lived in Israel, and I felt totally at home there,” said one participant, and said that the only reason she left was the immediate outbreak of the Second Intifada combined with having two young sons, a critical and abrupt driver that overwhelmed her desire to remain.<sup>194</sup> Another woman described all Israelis as “her people,” and described feelings of comfort and belonging in Israel; it took similarly severe and acute drivers (conflict and having sons) to break through the ties to Israel that kept her there.<sup>195</sup> Where integration was achieved, and participants reported strong ties and identities shared with Israel, many drivers that others described as contributors to their departure were simply ignored. Participants in this category described economic issues and social issues like the religious nature of Israeli society as things that they disliked in Israel in the same way as other participants. However, they also explicitly stated that they were *not* contributors to their departure, suggesting that the ties they felt to Israel were sufficient to suppress or nullify the influence of those drivers, demonstrating the negative multiplier effect.

### ***3.3.2.2 Human Capital***

The primary role of human capital as a multiplier for Soviet Jews in Israel is visible in how participants in the study described their perceptions of the Israeli economy. With a high average level of human capital, Soviet Jews in Israel had every tool they needed to achieve high economic attainment, including education, certification, technical skills, and experience, and in many cases participants reported that they had achieved those things in Israel, describing high-paying careers, apartments with yards, multiple cars per family, and other luxuries. What seemed

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194. Interview with Study Participant, January 24, 2022.

195. Interview with Study Participant, October 28, 2021.

to have occurred, however, is that that instead of those achievements leading to satisfaction with living in Israel, the high human capital many participants reported instead led to a desire for more than Israel was capable of providing.

“We hit the ceiling,” said one participant, who described an upper-middle class lifestyle with several privileges and assets most Israelis have no access to, “Even though [my wife and I] both had good jobs, we hit a ceiling and couldn’t grow anymore.”<sup>196</sup> Another participant used similar words, saying she and her husband felt that they had “grown past” Israel, a country that had been good to them at the beginning but which did not have the space for them to grow further.<sup>197</sup> Another individual articulated the same feeling, noting that Israel’s economy had no opportunities for him to move further than where he was, despite that being a successful position.<sup>198</sup> This perception of limited opportunities was occurring in a highly-industrialized, booming economy: the majority of participants made the decision to leave Israel during periods of relatively high economic growth, such as the late 1990s and early 2010s, when GDP growth rates were high.<sup>199</sup> One potential reason for this disparity between individual perceptions and national data lies in the difficulty of attaining home ownership in Israel, which is a known push factor that is particularly strong for families with young children in the literature.<sup>200</sup> The participants felt that they were unable to achieve what they considered a reasonable quality of life in Israel, despite their high incomes and general prosperity. In this way, the high human

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196. Interview with Study Participant, February 7, 2022.

197. Interview with Study Participant, February 6, 2022.

198. Interview with Study Participant, January 18, 2022.

199. World Bank, “GDP Growth (Annual %) - Israel,” DataBank, accessed February 13, 2022, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=IL>.

200. Kley, “Explaining the Stages of Migration within a Life-Course Framework,” 481.

capital of Soviet Jews enabled them to achieve high levels of economic attainment in Israel, but also shaped what they considered achievable, such that what had once been enough began to be insufficient and incentivized migration again, representing the reciprocal and iterative nature of multipliers in migration.

The secondary dimension of the high human capital of Soviet Jews operated in a similar sense. High human capital made migration somewhat easier for participants, since it was associated with higher income, skills and education in higher demand that facilitated acceptance to destination countries, in the case of Canada, and integration within a destination country as described in the experiences of participants in both Israel and Canada. What it also appears to have done for Soviet Jews, however, is enable a reciprocal effect between migration and the likelihood to migrate. As migrants go through the process of migration, they accumulate a new type of human capital in the form of knowledge, skills, and experience with the process of migration, the cost-benefit analysis thereof, and the tools available to them to swing the results in their favour. Having effectively undergone training on migration, the calculation on a second migration shifts because of increased knowledge and preparedness, which enable migrants to minimize costs and maximize benefits. Moreover, the perception of migration as an ongoing process – where multiple migrations and a family history of repeated migration – contribute to an understanding of migration as an innate aspect of life rather than a process with a firm completion. This perspective on migration is found across communities, with research on the Chinese diaspora in the Americas finding a similar perception of migration as “less a

monumental event,” where repeated migrations in the community and family line normalize migration as something commonplace, rather than unique and life-altering.<sup>201</sup>

This is evidenced in the answers participants gave about the second migration they underwent from Israel to Canada. In addition to all of the drivers that pushed them away from Israel, and the failure to establish strong ties to Israel as described in Section 3.3.2.1, several participants commented on the fact that making the decision to engage in a second migration was easier, even though it appeared much more complicated on the surface. “Leaving Israel was a tougher choice than leaving the USSR in that there were only benefits to be gained from leaving the USSR, and there were costs to leaving Israel,” said one participant, “But I knew what price I would pay, what benefits I would gain, and I was right about all of them, so I could make that decision.”<sup>202</sup> Another noted the same increased confidence in decision-making because of her knowledge gained from the first migration, saying that “you know what’s going on, you know what it’ll cost you, so it’s not as scary as the first time, and that makes it really easy to leave.”<sup>203</sup> Knowing in advance what they would need to succeed in a new country enabled Soviet Jews to prepare, which itself reduced a significant perceived barrier to migration. “We knew it would be hard,” said one married couple, “Especially with two small children – but we did it before, so we knew how to do right this time.”<sup>204</sup>

The knowledge and skills they gained from the first migration extended past the decision-making stage to the integration stage, according to one participant, who said that “integrating in

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201. Lok Siu, “Serial Migration: Stories of Home and Belonging in Diaspora,” in *New Routes for Diaspora Studies*, ed. Sukanya Banerjee, Aims McGuinness, and Steven C. McKay (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 145.

202. Interview with Study Participant, October 1, 2021.

203. Interview with Study Participant, January 13, 2022.

204. Interview with Study Participant, February 17, 2022.

Canada was easier because it was their second time, and they already knew what was going on – accepting a third country is easier than accepting a second.”<sup>205</sup> Another called the second migration “elementary” and “very easy” compared to the first.<sup>206</sup> One couple noted that both leaving and settling down is always easier after the first time you do it. “The first time, you cut your roots off,” they said, describing the experience of leaving the USSR, and added, “It’s much easier to cut them off again, and then you know how to plant them again in the next place. We could go to a fourth country, or even a fifth.”<sup>207</sup> In their case, they learned from their first migration that they could put down new roots through immersion, and eventually joined an English country dance club, resulting in improved English language skills, expanded friendships, and a greater sense of belonging.<sup>208</sup> They made the decision to immigrate to Canada confidently, with knowledge of the costs and challenges ahead gained from the first time they found themselves in a new country, and then used their experience to guide their decisions in Canada. In sum, a certain amount of human capital is gained from the process of migration, which then iteratively facilitates future migrations by expanding migration-related knowledge and skills. Altogether, this acts as its own multiplier that helps explain the secondary migration of Soviet Jews from Israel to Canada.

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205. Interview with Study Participant, October 21, 2021.

206. Interview with Study Participant, January 18, 2022.

207. Interview with Study Participant, October 5, 2021.

208. Interview with Study Participant, October 5, 2021.

## **Chapter 4 – Discussion**

### ***4.1 Zionism as a Driver***

One curious observation derived from the interviews is the remarkable absence of Zionism – in the broad sense of a political or national desire for a Jewish state – in the decision-making processes involved in both stages of the movement pattern. Given its dominance in discussion of migration flows to and from Israel, it was expected that Zionism would similarly represent at least a moderately-strong driver of migration for the first stage of the migration pattern from the Soviet Union to Israel. However, most participants did not identify any Zionist sentiment at all, and several explicitly stated that it had not played a role in their decision to go to Israel or to leave it. The weakness of Zionist sentiment in later waves of Soviet migration is well-evidenced in large-scale surveys and analysis of those groups available in earlier literature, but its absence as a significant driver is nonetheless telling.

The role of Zionism in the decisions and identity-formation of Soviet Jews along the migration pathway appears to have been limited to a minor consideration for those participants who identified it as a driver at all. Whereas the desire to be in a country where they were not part of an oppressed minority was identified by most as a strong factor, it did not translate to the Zionist perspective where Jews are *meant* to live in Israel, which had attracted previous waves to emigrate to that end. Instead, it was a minor pull factor, based on the conception of Israel as “our country,” a possessive perspective based on a Jewish identity.<sup>209</sup> However, although it contributed to some extent to the decision to leave the USSR and go to Israel, the idea of Israel as a Jewish country did not have persistence as a pull factor to Israel after they had arrived, and

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209. Interview with Study Participant, January 19, 2022.

did not affect their decision to leave Israel. Even the few participants who identified themselves as Zionist by name were careful to make that distinction: “I am a Zionist,” said one, “And Israel is my country, but that isn’t going to make me stay.”<sup>210</sup>

While other drivers, like economic and social drivers, were described in all stages of the migration pattern, Zionism and Jewish nationalism were primarily described as afterthoughts, most prominently in discussions of life in Canada. Where society was Jewish by default, in Israel, participants described a *laissez-faire* approach to their Jewish identity, something that simply happened rather than something they actively chose or engaged in. This is in some part shown by those same participants’ descriptions of their Jewish identities and thoughts on Israel after they had left. When describing their lives and identities in Canada, several participants indicated they were more religiously or culturally observant of Jewish traditions than they were in Israel, something they ascribed to an opposition against assimilation. That increase in active engagement with Jewish traditions and thinking also seemed to have strengthened their Zionist ideas. The participants brought up the concept of Israel as a Jewish state to explain why they felt a continued connection to it and continue to actively consume Israeli media and maintain their awareness of Israeli events, even though that level of attachment was not described while they were living there or as a factor in their decisions to leave. In short, participants’ answers demonstrated that although the Israeli national narrative includes the Zionist belief that Jews should live in Jewish State, their own Zionist ideology was strengthened by not doing so.

The participants did not seem to have internalized the normative positions of Zionism at any point, such as the imperative tenet which holds that Jews must, or should, immigrate to the

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210. Interview with Study Participant, January 13, 2022.

Jewish state or else assimilate and no longer be Jewish.<sup>211</sup> This is of particular interest because it is a foundational concept behind the national narrative in Israel, and heavily communicated through the educational programs participants undertook upon arrival and through informal day-to-day encounters.<sup>212</sup> The Zionist national story of Israel – where those arriving are ‘ascenders’ and those departing are ‘descenders’ – is built on this imperative, linking the Jewish identity of the country to a normative belief that to be part of the Jewish nation one must reside and stay in Israel.<sup>213</sup> However, participants did not seem to have adopted this perspective, suggesting that the strengthening effect living in Israel had on their knowledge of Judaism and their Jewish identity did not extend to Zionism. This resistance to the Zionist national narrative that was dominant when participants arrived is similarly found in previous research on Soviet newcomers in Israel. Soviet Jews in Israel, despite their degree of assimilation or conformity to the state’s national narrative, tended to reject the cultural imperative to shed their Russian identity, and challenged the ideal of a monolithic Israeli society.<sup>214</sup> In sum, although by arriving in Israel the Soviet Jews accepted the fundamental Zionist premise that it is the Jewish State, they did not universally accept the premise that Jews *must* live there.

When contrasted against the latter dimension of Zionist belief, where Israel is the Jewish state *and* Jews should live there, the limited Zionist perspective of Israel as a Jewish State appears much weaker as a driver. This is likely because it is mostly dormant and weaker when identity issues – such as assimilatory pressures in a non-Jewish society – are not felt. While

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211. Eliezer Don-Yehiya, “Zionism in Retrospective,” *Modern Judaism* 18, no. 3 (October 1998): 268. [muse.jhu.edu/article/22053](http://muse.jhu.edu/article/22053).

212. Lomsky-Feder and Rapoport, “Russian-Jewish Homecomers,” 1.

213. Lomsky-Feder and Rapoport, 3.

214. Lomsky-Feder and Rapoport, 10.

participants understood Israel as a Jewish state while they lived there, that perception was stronger whenever they lived in non-Jewish environments and constructed their identities in opposition to those around them. Whereas a perspective based on political Zionism and the national narrative of Israel would have made migration less likely through the imperative to remain in the Jewish State, the weaker, identity-based perspective reported by Soviet Jewish participants did not have the same effect.

#### ***4.2 Effect of Choice***

A second notable observation from interview responses is the significant effect of migration choice on how both drivers and multipliers of migration operate. In the case of Soviet Jews, choice of destination was not an element for their first movement, since as established by both the literature and interview participants, their choice of destination was limited, and many felt that leaving the USSR was necessary. Many Soviet Jews leaving the Soviet Union were even considered refugees under international law, and thus were able to move to countries like the United States and Canada in particular because of refugee status.<sup>215</sup> This refugee status came from a conventional reading of the Geneva Convention, whereby Soviet Jews did fulfilled the requirements being outside their country of origin and unable to return for fear of persecution on the basis of their religion and ethnicity.<sup>216</sup> As one participant stated, “anyone who could leave, left: it was clear you had to leave, and so we did.”<sup>217</sup> From that perspective, then, emigration from the USSR was not a choice at all, but a necessity for one’s continued survival and well-

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215. Tanya Basok, “The Canadian Refugee Policy and Practice Towards Refugees from the Commonwealth of Independent States,” *Refuge* 12, no. 4 (October 1992): 12.

216. Carmen Moldovan, “The Notion of Refugee. Definition and Distinctions,” *CES Working Papers* 8, no. 4 (2016): 682.

217. Interview with Study Participant, October 1, 2021.

being, constituting displacement. For those who were able to choose their destination, it may have felt less coerced, but what is known is that those who arrived in Israel overwhelmingly not did so only because no other destinations were available, and thus had no choice in either leaving or arriving.

This absence of choice was keenly felt by participants in the study. Alongside the 45.5% of participants who explicitly identified that they had not had any other choice of destination, several also noted the effect of that lack of choice on their later migration decision-making. Plainly put, the feeling of having been forced into a country they did not choose amplified feelings of non-belonging, inhibited desires to integrate, and promoted desires to leave, mapping roughly onto the concepts of low integration/ties as a multiplier and push factors driving them away. One participant, for example, noted that she did not feel much of a tie to Israel as her ‘home’, and that she and her husband “wanted to try again in a place we *chose*.”<sup>218</sup> She and her husband noted that their experience in Israel, which they dubbed a “poor cultural fit” and were not satisfied with, amplified their desire to live in a country that was diverse rather than monocultural, and which better fit their ideas of norms and culture than Israel did.<sup>219</sup> The lack of choice exhibited by their displacement from the USSR to Israel was evident both in that they ended up in a country they felt uncomfortable in, and that the perception of having been forced motivated them to regain control by choosing their new home.

If they had had a choice, they might have instead taken a route to a destination that more closely matched their own backgrounds and preferences. On that basis, the lack of choice likely led to the development of additional push-oriented drivers. This amplified the negative reception

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218. Interview with Study Participant, January 13, 2022.

219. Interview with Study Participant, January 13, 2022.

many participants reported from native Israelis in Chapter 3. One participant, for example, who had described her family's emigration from the USSR as something they had to do because they were Jewish, found it exceptionally unpleasant that Israeli society perceived Soviet newcomers as economic migrants of convenience rather than as Jews coming home, something she found deeply hurtful.<sup>220</sup> Having been forced – or at least, feeling that they had been forced – to come to Israel and being perceived as opportunistic felt particularly galling to those participants, something which represented another amplified contributor to the feeling of non-belonging described in Chapter 3.

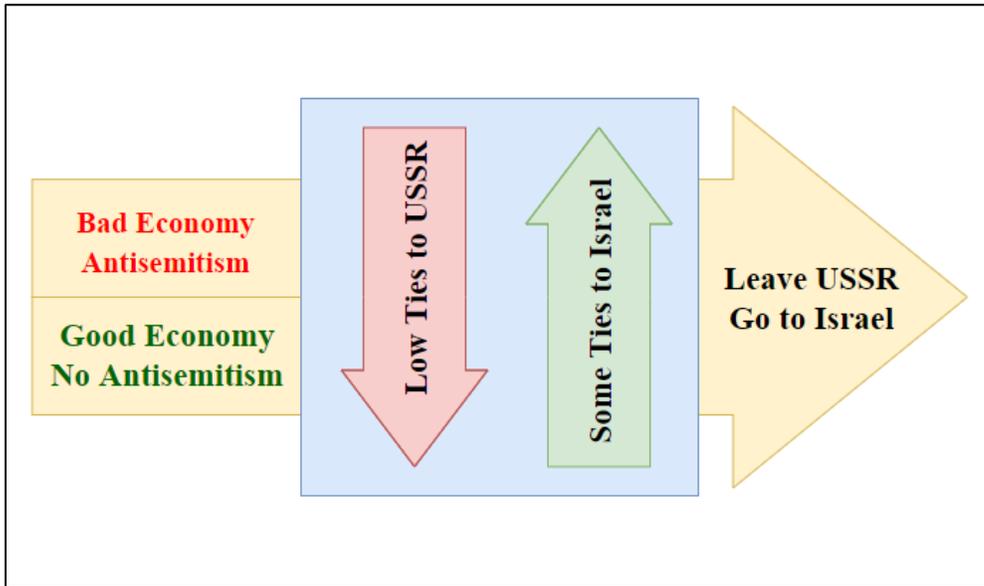
#### ***4.3 Assessing Hypothesis: Why Did They Leave, After All?***

The hypothesis stated that the movement pattern of Soviet Jews from the USSR to Israel and then from Israel to Canada was a result that combined push-oriented drivers of migration and a secondary process of multiplying factors caused by their relatively high human capital and limited choice in destination when leaving the FSU. Mapping the responses and drivers identified by the participants themselves onto the theoretical framework for the first movement produced a version of the model as shown in Figure 4. It was hypothesized that the push-oriented drivers of the Soviet Jews' departure were the poor economy and antisemitic environment of the USSR, the pull-oriented drivers were the (relatively) strong economic performance of Israel and the absence of antisemitism there, which were multiplied by Soviet Jews' low ties to the USSR and some ties to Israel.

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220. Interview with Study Participant, January 18, 2022.

Figure 4: Multiplied Migration Model, USSR-Israel, Participant-Identified Factors



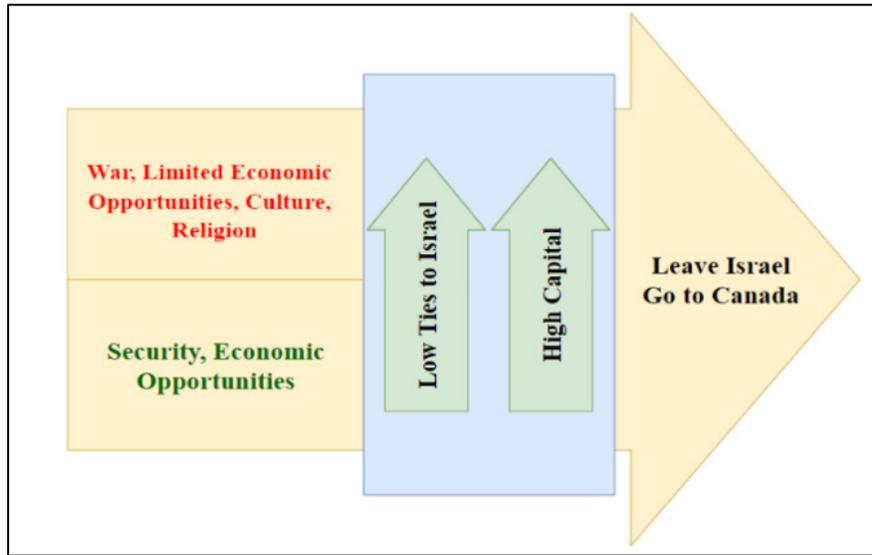
This hypothesized model is moderately accurate in describing the decision-making process shared by study participants. It is strong in identifying push factors, such as the poor economy of the Soviet Union and the strong influence of antisemitism as a driver pushing Soviet Jews to seek to emigrate. Similarly, it correctly identifies that many Soviet Jews did not feel strong ties to their home country, with many participants reporting either neutral or antagonistic emotions with respect to the Soviet state. Where this hypothesized model is less accurate is in identifying the important factors that pulled Soviet Jews to Israel. Although it was hypothesized that the better economy and less hostile environment would attract them, as would Zionist ideals, this was not largely evidenced in the perceptions of study participants. Although participants acknowledged that Israel was in a better economic situation, and that it represented an escape from Soviet antisemitism, those pull factors appeared largely secondary to the push factors. Similarly, Zionist ideology was not a major contributor to participants' decision-making, with most reporting little to no Zionist affiliation or consideration in their emigration from the USSR. Most participants would have preferred an alternative destination, and Israel was merely the

available option, rather than one chosen because of pull factors. Instead, the mediating drivers of immigration policies determined the flow of Soviet Jewish movement.

For the first leg of the movement pattern, then, the hypothesized model provides little additional value over the existing models of push-pull theory, which would adequately explain the mass wave of Soviet Jewish emigration observed in the study period. This is largely due to the fact that there were no abnormal or unique circumstances experienced by Soviet Jews in this stage, with a conventional flow of individuals responding to stimuli in the source country. Although it adequately described the main push-pull factors, the multipliers identified were not accurate, suggesting either alternate multipliers at hand or the absence of strong multiplier effects.

The second stage of migration from Israel to Canada is represented in the hypothesized model in Figure 5, which maps responses onto the multiplier model. In this stage, the model appears significantly more accurate. In comparing the hypothesized model in Figure 3 to the model completed with data gathered through the primary research in this study, the model clearly demonstrates a high level of accuracy in describing the factors that influenced participants' decision-making. The multipliers identified in the hypothesized model were also those evidenced in participants' responses, which demonstrated the effects of their low ties to Israel and their high human capital on their likeliness to emigrate. In particular, the failed integration and feelings of exclusion recounted by participants as expressions of their low ties to Israel were identified as making push factors appear more intolerable. Similarly, the high human capital of participants made Israel's economic landscape appear less tolerable and those of North America more attractive, even though econometric measures showed a thriving economy in Israel.

Figure 5: Multiplied Migration Model, Israel-Canada, Hypothesized Model



The most significant difference between the hypothesized drivers of emigration from Israel and those identified by participants was in the economic sphere. Participants identified economic drivers of migration as strong contributors to the decision to leave Israel, whereas no economic influence had been hypothesized. Cultural mismatch was identified by participants as a driver for their emigration, as had been hypothesized, although data from participants refined the hypothesized social drivers into both cultural and religious drivers. Finally, war and security-related concerns were correctly identified, as was that of climate, although their relative importance was more concretely defined by participants than in the hypothesized model.

Overall, the model and the hypothesis adequately explain why Soviet Jews emigrate from Israel at disproportionate rates. Multipliers directly attributable to their background in the USSR were shown to be the differentiating factor. The multiplier of low ties to Israel was described by participants as a product of their non-religious, non-observant upbringing in the USSR. The high human capital that acted as a multiplier on their decision-making processes was a result of their background in the Soviet Union, where Soviet Jews attained high levels of education as a response to societal stimuli. Because of their low ties to Israel, Soviet Jews were less affected by

drivers that pulled them back to Israel, and their high human capital similarly reduced the positive perception of the Israeli economy and increased their receptiveness to the idea of departure. Accordingly, the hypothesis's conclusion of those background-based multipliers' effects on the emigration rates of Soviet Jews was also supported by the evidence obtained through primary research.

#### ***4.4 Limitations***

The primary research in this project is limited in both temporal and geographical scope, encompassing only those Soviet Jews who departed their country of origin prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union and only those who eventually arrived in Canada. It was further limited by access to participants, which involved significant geographic bias centred on those residing in Ottawa due to the recruitment methodology. In this way, it excludes the majority of the Soviet Jewish diaspora outside of Israel, both by excluding the majority of Soviet Jewish departures from the FSU, which occurred after its collapse, and by excluding the majority of Soviet Jews leaving Israel, for whom Canada was not among the primary destinations. This limits the extent to which their characteristics and decision-making processes may be extrapolatable both to other Soviet Jewish populations and to other immigrant groups generally.

Moreover, due to the limited demographic data collected, it cannot be assumed that the sample of participants is representative beyond high-level characteristics such as the distribution of their Soviet republics of origin and the years in which they moved between countries. Extrapolating their perspectives to the broader population of Soviet Jews both in Israel and elsewhere is not possible without additional information collection to validate the extent to which they are a representative sample in this respect. Similarly, applying the model against other groups would be necessary to further test and validate the extent to which it is accurate,

such as Jews who departed from post-Soviet states after the USSR's collapse, or those who arrived directly in the United States or Canada. Absent an analysis of these groups' perspectives and experiences, the explanatory value of key concepts like choice, ties to one's country, and human capital multipliers cannot be fully explored.

Finally, this model retains many of the limitations of its push-pull predecessors, including an arbitrary classification of push and pull factors and its multipliers. This can be seen in the discussion of push-oriented drivers in the departure of Soviet Jews from the USSR, where social and economic drivers described by participants are highly entwined. Although the model, by definition, seeks to classify drivers such as a failing economy and an antisemitic society separately, individual experiences with these drivers often involved a complex situation that resulted from both, making classification inherently arbitrary. Similarly, the model relies on the rationalist underpinnings of all push-pull models, which assume that the individual making the decision approaches it from a rational assessment of costs and benefits. This simplification of decision-making is often inadequate to explain migration or movement flows that do not appear rational to the external observer. To some extent, this is rectified by the inclusion of multipliers like ties as an expression of individuals' perspectives that do not match an extrinsic logic, but further refinement would be necessary to broaden the model's applicability in this sense.

#### ***4.5 Implications for Future Research***

This project serves as an exploratory look at a unique case of onward migration while contributing to further discussions of migration decision-making. From a case study perspective, primary sources gathered through this project contribute to the existing literature on the experiences of Soviet Jews in the USSR and in Israel, with individual accounts of discrimination, exclusion, integration, and identity-building in both countries. It describes a group that has not

been isolated from the broader population of Soviet Jews both in the global diaspora and in Israel. In doing so, it may provide a base upon which further research into the identity-building and integration experiences of Soviet Jews in Israel may be conducted.

In a similar vein, the project also provides a lens into the phenomenon of onward migration across significant international borders with high barriers to immigration. The information about Soviet Jews' characteristics and decision-making process with regards to onward migration to a distant country with a selective immigration policy complements existing literature, which largely focuses on sub-national movements and those within the European Union's border control-free Schengen Area. Further research may compare the decision-making drivers and processes involved to better understand whether onward migration is largely affected by barriers to migration or not, or whether other aspects explored in this project such as culture, religion, and identity play similar roles across examples of onward migration.

Finally, the research performed in this project serves as an example of a possible way to conceptualize a more structurally sensitive rationalist model of migration decision-making. The model used in this project, while retaining the rationalist understanding of migration as a decision made through benefit maximization, introduces a vector through which individual factors can affect the cost-benefit calculation in ways that may not be externally rational. For example, where ties to one's country may or may not have developed, they are theorized to amplify or diminish the impact of push or pull drivers of migration, thus distorting the weight of those drivers in the cost-benefit assessment process. The integration of multipliers resembles some more recent literature on migration which seeks to explain it as a result of aspirations and capabilities, where the drivers of earlier theories represent aspirations or causes thereof and

multipliers like human capital a measure of capabilities.<sup>221</sup> As a simplified model, it represents only one potential framing of migration, but may serve as a useful approximation of more complex theories in future research.

#### ***4.6 Implications for Migration Policy***

The major implications of this research for migration policy lie in the need for government preparedness in the design of supportive policies for new immigrants and refugees. Israel's policies with regards to the massive wave of new arrivals were predominantly reactive and inadequate across all spheres of immigration policy, with policymakers unprepared and left scrambling for possible solutions causing significant delays in policy responses.<sup>222</sup> In part, the lack of preparedness was due to the rapid and unforeseen collapse of the USSR, which came as a surprise to the majority of the world, including the United States.<sup>223</sup> However, the shock of the collapse occurred after several years of increasing Soviet Jewish *aliyah*, which was broadly ignored by Israeli policymakers. Israel had developed and implemented a population dispersion and newcomer settlement policy suite focused on dispersion and development in the 1950s and 1960s, and it had remained largely unchanged for decades.

The state had not updated its housing and resettlement strategy to accommodate social and economic changes over time, which that had rendered the system largely inoperable in the

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221. Hein de Haas, "A Theory of Migration: The Aspirations-Capabilities Framework," *Comparative Migration Studies* 9, no. 1 (February 24, 2021): 29–30, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-020-00210-4>.

222. Rachele Alterman, "Can Planning Help in Time of Crisis?: Planners' Responses to Israel's Recent Wave of Mass Immigration," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 61, no. 2 (June 30, 1995): 159, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944369508975630>.

223. Leon Aron, "Everything You Think You Know About the Collapse of the Soviet Union Is Wrong," *Foreign Policy* (Washington, United States: Foreign Policy, August 2011).

1990s.<sup>224</sup> Similarly, the financial supports given to Soviet Jews were a holdover of the system developed for immigrants from South Africa, paying a small amount directly to FSU Jews in their first year and providing no further direct supports like the Absorption Centres used for later waves of migration.<sup>225</sup> Ongoing political instability, meanwhile, including the collapse of the government in 1990 and a political shift to the right and privatization, meant that the funding budgeted to support Soviet Jews were insufficient as early as May 1990, an issue that continued to cause major friction throughout the early 1990s.<sup>226</sup> On the whole, Israel's existing policies for both newcomer housing and supports were out-of-date, leaving it unprepared for the unprecedented size of the wave of movement out of the Soviet Union during the period of collapse. As a consequence, the policy responses to the surge in Soviet arrivals was delayed and inadequate. This contributed to the eventual migration of Soviet Jews by limiting or slowing their integration, and thus limiting the extent to which they put down new roots. Housing shortages, for example, were shown to contribute to a divisive identity crisis between Soviet Jews and native Israelis that later acted as a multiplier in Section 3.3.2.1.

Despite the generally inadequate policy response, there were some limited policies in place in Israel that supported the integration of newly landed Soviet Jews. For example, the *ulpan* system, which provided Hebrew language training, did so free of cost, and often included housing, as participants recounted months spent in labour-sharing Hebrew language programs at communal farms or *kibbutzim*. This policy has evolved since Israel's inception, with the current

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224. Matt Evans, "Population Dispersal Policy and the 1990s Immigration Wave," *Israel Studies* 16, no. 1 (2011): 114, <https://doi.org/10.2979/isr.2011.16.1.104>.

225. Arnon Mantver, "It Takes a Generation - Absorption from the Israeli Perspective," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* 85, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 98.

226. Clive Jones, *Soviet Jewish Aliyah 1989-1992: Impact and Implications for Israel and the Middle East* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1996): 83-86.

iteration replacing the *kibbutz* labour-sharing arrangement with an Absorption Basket that covers living expenses during *ulpan*.<sup>227</sup> Targeted industry supportive policies did emerge as well for some professions, such as free medical Hebrew courses and license exam preparation sessions provided to newly-arrived Soviet doctors seeking to return to their profession in Israel.<sup>228</sup> The Israeli government also provided retraining programs for a select number of professions, such as one which provided Soviet doctors unable to enter the Israeli medical field training as physiotherapists.<sup>229</sup>

However, the majority of participants stressed immense difficulties with the cost of living in the short-term following their arrival in Israel, evidence of the inadequate financial supports granted under policies designed for earlier waves of arrivals. This was further compounded by significant barriers to labour market entry that led to the acute need for retraining programs like the physician-physiotherapist one discussed previously, further limiting Soviet Jews' ability to integrate economically. In addition to the supply shock to the labour market caused by the Soviet arrivals and the ensuing difficulty finding work, what many participants reported was the lack of recognition of Soviet credentials. The lack of recognition meant that many had to return to post-secondary education, often restarting programs from the beginning despite overlaps with previous but unrecognized classwork, in order to enter skilled professions that they had already qualified for or held in the USSR.

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227. Ministry of Aliyah and Integration, "Ulpan – Learning the Hebrew Language," GOV.IL, July 26, 2021, [https://www.gov.il/en/departments/general/ulpan\\_main](https://www.gov.il/en/departments/general/ulpan_main).

228. Nurit Nirel, "Employment of Russian immigrants in 1998: summary of research and followup findings," *Harefuah* 138, no. 3 (February 1, 2000).

229. Larissa Remennick and Gila Shakhar, "You Never Stop Being a Doctor: The Stories of Russian Immigrant Physicians Who Converted to Physiotherapy," *Health* 7, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 94, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363459303007001620>.

Similarly, as new arrivals lacked local work experience, many found it difficult to break into the local labour market, as work experience in the USSR was not recognized. This speaks to a broader issue in immigration policy, where employers do not have effective means to assess prospective workers' skills and qualifications when they are outside the local system of companies and certifying institutions.<sup>230</sup> Much like others interviewed about their initial years in Israel, participants overwhelmingly reported making their living in low-skill jobs as cleaners, manual labourers, nannies, and repair workers.<sup>231</sup> No participants reported any supports from the state in this area, such as credential recognition or accelerated requalification programs, and many expressed frustration with being forced into what many deemed menial, undesirable roles. In general terms, participants were unhappy with the way they were received by the state, with issues ranging from inadequate housing, paltry direct support payments, and economic integration problems leading to significant frustrations with their early life in Israel.

With respect to future immigrant policies both in Canada and elsewhere, the experience of highly qualified Soviet Jews in Israel represents significant evidence supporting the need for expansive and cohesive supportive policies for high-skill immigrants. Although Canada's immigration system selects educated, high-skill immigrants, the issue of occupational downgrading is still pervasive just as it was for Soviet Jews in Israel. One study, for example, found that after four years in Canada, most highly-educated immigrants did not achieve the occupational prestige levels they had in their home countries, due in part to difficulties with the

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230. Jeffrey G. Reitz, "Tapping Immigrants' Skills: New Directions for Canadian Immigration Policy in the Knowledge Economy Symposium: North American Migration, Trade and Security," *Law and Business Review of the Americas* 11, no. 3 & 4 (2005): 414.

231. Remennick and Shakhar, "You Never Stop Being a Doctor," 95.

recognition of foreign credentials and work experience.<sup>232</sup> Also similar to Soviet Jewish experiences in Israel is the trend where highly-educated Canadian immigrants enroll in post-secondary education, with the same study finding 46% of new immigrants enrolled within four years of their arrival and demonstrating the need for recognized credentials.<sup>233</sup> Several participants in this project reported being part of this pathway, attending Canadian post-secondary institutions after their arrival because their existing credentials and experience was not recognized in Canada, further outlining similarities between their integration experiences in both countries.

Occupational downgrading of immigrants, therefore, is an issue for policymakers, even in countries with immigrant selection systems that ostensibly select for immigrants with the best economic potential, like Canada. On its own, occupational downgrading can lead to frustrations with the labour market and potential opportunities, which can act as push factors driving emigration. This was demonstrated by some participants' responses. However, it can also lead to the development of antagonistic, 'us' versus 'them' identities, with feelings of being underappreciated or disregarded leading to a separate identity for immigrants versus non-immigrants.<sup>234</sup> Mapped onto the experiences and decision-making processes of Soviet Jews who left Israel, this can impact immigrants' decisions about staying in their new country both as a driver and as a multiplier. Where occupational downgrading leads to development of a separate,

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232. Maria Adamuti-Trache, Paul Anisef, and Robert Sweet, "Impact of Canadian Postsecondary Education on Occupational Prestige of Highly Educated Immigrants," *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue Canadienne de Sociologie* 50, no. 2 (2013): 195–96, <https://doi.org/10.1111/cars.12011>.

233. Adamuti-Trache, Anisef, and Sweet, "Impact of Canadian Postsecondary Education," 187.

234. Dulini Fernando and Gerardo Patriotta, "'Us versus Them': Sensemaking and Identity Processes in Skilled Migrants' Experiences of Occupational Downgrading," *Journal of World Business* 55, no. 4 (June 1, 2020): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2020.101109>.

non-integrated identity formed around exclusion in the labour market, it can reduce the ties immigrants form to their new home, even when integration through employment occurs. In this way, it can lessen the stabilizing effect of integration, and thus make another migration itself more likely.

This demonstrates the acute need for immigrant-supportive policies that reduce occupational downgrading and facilitate the economic integration of new arrivals. This need is already recognized in Canada by existing programs, such as the Active Engagement and Integration Project (AEIP), which uses federal funding to provide resources to newcomers such as education on local labour markets and connections to local organizations and employers.<sup>235</sup> However, despite these supportive programs, there remain many barriers that lead to occupational downgrading. For example, getting foreign credentials recognized requires awareness of regulatory bodies and requirements in Canada, and immigrants may find that they need to switch jobs, fields, or attend additional education and training.<sup>236</sup> This leads to potential situations where immigrants selected on the basis of their qualifications find that those qualifications are insufficient upon arrival, a frustrating potential cause of disenchantment with their destination country. Policymakers, therefore, should continue to examine ways to reduce the potential barriers to economic integration in a more impactful way.

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235. AEIP Active Engagement & Integration Project, “Our Program,” About AEIP, accessed March 6, 2022, <http://aeipsuccess.ca/our-program>.

236. Refugees and Citizenship Canada Immigration, “Credential Assessment Process,” service initiation, October 22, 2013, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/new-immigrants/prepare-life-canada/prepare-work/credential-assessment/process.html>.

## **Chapter 5 – Conclusion**

This study answered two research questions about the migration and movement of Soviet Jews from the USSR to Israel, and then from Israel to Canada. Firstly, it was determined that the decisions made by Soviet Jews in leaving the USSR and Israel were similar in terms of their complex, socio-economic variety and the factor of exclusion and discrimination. However, the decision-making processes differed in terms of the types of exclusion and discrimination, with discrimination in the USSR caused by Jewishness and that in Israel caused by a perceived lack thereof. In addition, although in both steps of the movement pattern security concerns played a role, the type of security issues differed. Fears about security in the USSR were primarily personal due to antisemitism and the fear of antisemitic attacks, whereas those in Israel were related to ongoing conflict and the impact of mandatory military service on Soviet Jews' children.

As part of the discussion, this study also sought to investigate the impact of the background of Soviet Jews in terms of their experiences in Israel as newcomers, including how those experiences were shaped by their background and how they influenced their eventual departure. From participant responses and personal accounts, it can be concluded that although it did not play a sole or principal role, their background in the Soviet Union significantly impacted both their experiences and perceptions thereof. Cultural mismatches between their country of origin and destination country, as well as a lack of familiarity with overt religiosity, were compounded by the exclusion caused by those same factors in Israel. These areas of friction led to a lack of full integration and home-building in Israel, which facilitated their eventual departure even as the high levels of human capital resulting from the strong educational backing of their population did the same. These results indicate the importance of considering both structural and

individual factors as drivers of migration and suggest that individual perceptions can have strong impacts on classic extrinsic drivers of migration like economic, social, and environmental factors.

The multiplied push-pull model developed and applied in this study approximated this background effect through the use of *multipliers*, which amplify or suppress the impact of the individual push and pull drivers of migration. As part of these multipliers, the human capital of Soviet Jews – both in traditional measures such as education and vocation, and in terms of migration experience earned through migration – was explored as a significant influence on their movement and migration decision-making. This structure and understanding of the decision-making process engaged in by Soviet Jews proved more predictive in the second leg of their journey, during their migration from Israel to Canada. It proved significantly less descriptive, meanwhile, of participants' experiences in their first movement from the USSR to Israel, largely due to that journey's similarities to displacement rather than migration by choice.

The model's accuracy in describing the migration of Soviet Jews from Israel to Canada demonstrates the importance of bridging the gap between neo-economist models that center structural drivers of migration and more recent theories that focus on individual agency. The model's multipliers represent a given individual's aspirations and value system, affecting the relative weight accorded to any particular driver, and represent the element of agency in the decision-making process. By adding the multipliers to traditional rationalist models of migration, seemingly abnormal or outlying trends in migration can be explained through individuals' backgrounds and perspectives, an element lacking in most earlier models of migration. The development and application of this model, then, provides a potential middle ground between

purely rational approaches to migration theory and those that lean towards individuals, emotions, and identities as determinants of migration.

The model's multipliers also have value for further consideration from a theoretical perspective. In addition to their potential contribution to migration theory literature as a way of contextualizing individual outliers in rationalist models, the multiplier of human capital refines the broader understanding of migration as a process. As Soviet Jews acquired experience of the process of immigrating to a new country and integrating to a vastly different society, they acquired a new form of human capital that allowed them to better evaluate and prepare for their future migration choices, and thus made migration more palatable and likely. With a better understanding of costs and benefits alongside mitigation strategies facilitating migration in the future, the human capital lens on repeated migration frames migration not as a process with a finite destination but rather as an ongoing process that may continue throughout a lifetime. In this view, achieving integration – traditionally viewed as the terminus of a migration process – is not in itself a conclusion, but rather a process that generates human capital of its own, which can then be leveraged again. This iterative perspective on migration implies that migration is not a rare event, and instead views it as a constant option available to individuals. In this way, examining the case of Soviet Jews leaving Israel and the proposed model provides a new lens on migration that better explains otherwise outlying onward migration patterns.

In a similar way, the examination of Soviet Jews and the model's contribution to a better understanding of multipliers' mechanisms and their impact on migration decision-making makes them a potential target for migration policy. This is particularly true in terms of policies meant to support newcomers and reduce the likelihood of onward migration in the future, as understanding how multipliers like low ties emerge and mitigating them through policy action

may be conducive to achieving this goal. Understanding how those multipliers interact with known push-pull factors is an important element of policy-making context. Similarly, contextualizing human capital, and understanding migration not as a unique case but rather as an option that persists for new immigrants even beyond achieving integration, is necessary to designing policy that makes retaining newcomers more likely. This is particularly important given that onward migration is increasingly an emerging trend on a global scale. Policies meant to reduce its prevalence or to retain valuable immigrants, then, must take into account both structural and individual factors, or else countries may find that their sought-after newcomers continue onwards in search of the next promised land.

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