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The New Anti-Semitism and Diasporic Liminality: Jewish Identity from France to Montreal

Through a case study approach, 40 French Jews were interviewed revealing their primary reason for leaving France and resettling in Montreal was the continuous threat associated with the new anti-Semitism. The focus for many who participated in this research was the anti-Jewish sentiment in France and the result of being in a liminal diasporic state of feeling as though they belong elsewhere, possibly in France, to where they want to return, or moving on to other destinations. Multiple centred Jewish and Francophone identities were themes that emerged throughout the interviews.

There have been few accounts of the post-1999 French Jewish diaspora and resettlement in Canada. There are some scholarly works in the literature, though apart from journalistic reports, there is little information about this diaspora.¹ Carol Off's (2005) CBC documentary entitled *One is too Many: Anti-Semitism on the Rise in Europe* highlights the new anti-Semitism in France and the outcome of Jews leaving for Canada. The documentary also considers why a very successful segment of Jews would want to leave France, a country in which they have felt relatively secure since the end of the Second World War. This documentary and media reports of French Jews leaving France for destinations such as Canada provided the inspiration for beginning an in-depth case study to investigate why Jews left France and decided to settle in Canada. The case study consisted of interviews with 40 French Jews between 2006 and 2009, which revealed that the primary reason for leaving France was their experience with the new anti-Semitism and related concerns regarding family safety, security, and the prospect of being able to practice Judaism openly without being threatened or harmed. The new anti-Semitism in France focuses on Israel and the "systematic delegitimization, defamation, and demonization of Israel as a Jewish state" (Wistrich, 2013: 4). This new anti-Semitism focused on blaming French Jews for anything connected to Israel. Those interviewed warn that the criticism of Israeli policy, the existence of Israel, and anything related to the Israel-Palestine conflict has given licence to anti-Semitic attacks ranging from racist taunts to outright physical harassment, assaults, and murder in France (e.g., the 2006 killing of Ilan Halimi). It has also influenced other French Jews to consider leaving France for safer destinations (Bénédicte & Dreyfus, 2004; Wasserstein, 1996).

There seemed to be more push factors than pull factors for those interviewed who have left France. While the 'old anti-Semitism' is always omnipresent, one of the main push factors was the 'new anti-Semitism' directly associated with this diasporic community leaving France. What seems most compelling is how French Jews interviewed saw themselves as being blamed for events in Israel. While some may argue there is no clear connection between anti-Israel sentiments and the 'new anti-Semitism,' many French Jews in the study felt they were blamed for Israel's actions during the 1990s and later. In addition, those interviewed said that resentment of Israel throughout parts of France resulted in threats and violence against them. Arguably, this connection between anti-Israel sentiment and the new anti-Semitism

is a tangible reality that continues to leave them in a state of flux in terms of staying in Montreal, going back to France, or considering other destinations.

In terms of pull factors, those interviewed commented on Montreal being a place to safely practice Judaism, converse in French, and ultimately maintain a distinct French Jewish identity. They often said that Montreal was a city where they could comfortably make the transition to living in North America, due to there being a well-established Jewish community as well as French, English, and other languages spoken. These linguistic and religious benefits were an important part of their adjustment in Montreal.

Another theme that emerged throughout the interviews was the connection between the new anti-Semitism and the transitional element of being liminal diasporic Jews without a clear sense of place. Diachronically, many of those interviewed saw themselves as de-centred Jews who have multi-centred origins, with parents and grandparents leaving North Africa or parts of Europe to resettle in France. There were those who viewed Montreal as a liminal destination, which left them in flux as being diasporians with what they hope will be a safe destination. This theme emerged in terms of the notion of 'belonging' and being de-centred. As part of a multiple centred diaspora (Shuval, 2000), their decision to resettle in Montreal was noted throughout many of the interviews as being connected to their parents leaving places like Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco in the late 1950s and 1960s. Therefore, with these multiple centred diverging Jewish identities, resettling in Montreal had the effect of strengthening Jewish identity in terms of being associated with the freedom to practice Judaism. What also emerged in the research is that, if necessary, due to anti-Semitism or other adverse circumstances, those interviewed would also be prepared to leave Montreal for destinations such as Toronto or cities in the United States.

The transitional changes in French Jewish identity that seem to have occurred as a result of the immigration and integration process in Montreal will be discussed in relation to their state of diasporic liminality. The focus, in terms of multiple centred diasporas and diasporic liminality, will be on how there does not seem to be a point of resettlement, but instead a state of liminality. In the context of this work, a liminal diaspora is a condition of being culturally, linguistically, religiously, and socially 'between' homeland and host-land. There is a sense of homeland which often accompanies diasporians as a way of binding them to their past and historically connecting them to a future in a host country. It is the transitional quality of the diaspora that may leave members of the community 'in process' between the homeland and host nation in order to sort out their connection with their past and present circumstances. Liminal diasporas are essentially the circumstance which places an individual or community within a locale of perpetual limbo (Turner, 1977; van Gennep, 1960). The

transitory aspect of diasporas renders those affected by such movement as liminars who shift between geographic locations, cultures, and languages. They also undergo a transformation that directly impacts their own identity as well as that of their community and surrounding place of residence (Kenedy, 2012).

Contemporary and Historical Push and Pull Factors Related to the New and Old Anti-Semitism

The new anti-Semitism has led many French Jews interviewed for this project to connect their diasporic Jewish identity to their parents' and grandparents' own multiple centred diasporas of leaving Algeria, Tunisia, and other North African countries due to similar anti-Semitic attacks against Jews in the 1950s and 1960s. Those interviewed pointed out that the new anti-Semitism was similar to Arab-Israeli-Jewish issues that prompted their parents and grandparents to leave North African countries. These experiences with anti-Israeli sentiment in France and their parents' encounters with Arab Nationalism and leaving North African countries, has become associated with them leaving France and deciding to live in Montreal.

It is important to point out that all 40 Jews interviewed between 2006 and 2009 noted that the new anti-Semitism was a primary reason for leaving France. While this number does not seem representative, I would argue that this case study is a proverbial canary in the coal mine that may be part of a larger trend of anti-Semitism applicable to Jewish populations throughout Europe and in other countries. This case study of French Jews is an example of an ongoing issue of general anti-Israel sentiments, specific anti-Israel policies, and anti-Semitism that seems to be spreading throughout parts of Europe and globally. In the case of French Jews, it seems as though both the anti-Israel sentiments, as well as the blaming of Jews for Israeli policies toward the Palestinians, are directly connected to the new anti-Semitism. This connection between Israel and Jews is reported by those interviewed as resulting in anti-Semitic harassment and cases of violence against French Jews.

New Anti-Semitism in France

Many of those interviewed said they began to notice the new anti-Semitism mainly during the late 1990s. It was the intensity and frequency of this anti-Semitism that prompted them to reconsider living in France. Taguieff (2004) notes that the "la nouvelle judéophobie" is based on anti-Zionism and attacking the Jewish State. The new anti-Semitism is associated with a steady rise of verbal and physical attacks on Jews in France. Media reports link violence against Jews in France to Israeli-Palestinian issues (Selig, 2010). These public daytime attacks often included French Jews being assaulted, especially when wearing visible religious garments or symbols (e.g., a kippah or a Star of David). Since 2000, there has been a "...growing number of

verbal and physical attacks on Jews not only in France, but also in Britain, Belgium and elsewhere in Europe” (Bénédicte & Dreyfus, 2004, 1). Media reports about anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism in France confirm the frequency and intensity of the violence, as the 2006 murder of Ilan Halimi was presented as “nothing new,” even seen as “normal” (Selig, 2010). Yet, for many of the French Jews interviewed, one of the most significant deaths “...[o]n February 13, 2006 [involved] Ilan Halimi, a 23 year old French Jew...who was tormented and ultimately killed...because he was a Jew” (Human Rights First, 2006, 1). French police “...confirmed the anti-Semitic nature of the crime” (Human Rights First, 2006, 1). Halimi’s death is often connected to the new anti-Semitism linked to Israel and “...the growing tension between the large Jewish and Muslim communities in France and the growing frustration of the economically disenfranchised *Maghrebin* [their emphasis] (North African) youth” (Dreyfus & Laurence, 2002, 1).

Conceptualizing the differences between what I refer to as the traditional anti-Semitism and what others refer to as the new anti-Semitism is not intended as a comprehensive examination of anti-Semitism in France. The task of a complete account of anti-Semitism in France goes beyond the scope of this work and is better left to more complete accounts provided by others (Benbassa, 1999; Birnbaum, 1998; Hyman, 1998; Taguieff, 2004; Wistrich, 2010). Instead, this work considers the impact of the new anti-Semitism and provides an explanation as to why it was one of the main reasons that the Jews interviewed for this research left France. More specifically, the new anti-Semitism provides a focal point for this case study of the French Jewish Diaspora in Canada. While the new anti-Semitism is a focal point, traditional anti-Semitism needs to be considered as a persistent prejudice that is a foundation for anti-Zionism related to Israel.

Before addressing the issue of the new anti-Semitism, it is important to note that there is a layering effect of traditional anti-Semitism being combined with the new anti-Semitism. Yehuda Bauer (in Tommer & Fleischer, 2007) notes that Western anti-Semitism is not new and that there are various sources that “trigger” anti-Semitism; Israel is only one of those prompts. Taguieff (2004: 62) states that “[a] number of traditional anti-Jewish themes have clustered around the demonic figures of Israel and a fantasy-world “Zionism”: Jews plot together; Jews seek to conquer the world by all means; Jews are cruel and blood-thirsty by nature (hence the reactivation of the old legends of “ritual murder” or the poisoning of food or water supplies); Jews of “imperialistic,” and so on.” He also notes the connection to Holocaust denial literature. In many ways, there is a recycling of themes attached to traditional anti-Semitism, which is then connected to Israel and being Jewish.

Traditional anti-Semitism has also been associated with anti-Semitic violence against and expulsions of French Jews during periods of heightened anti-Semitism

before and during the Second World War. The issue with how “new” is the ‘new anti-Semitism’ pertains to the focus of blaming Jews for issues associated with Israel. In many ways, though, the new anti-Semitism is a mix of traditional anti-Semitism that has morphed into a more potent version in the 1990s, which has been linked to Israel (Wistrich, in Rosenbaum, 2004). “The focus of the new anti-Semites is disproportionately centered on one time spot on the world’s surface – the State of Israel” (Wistrich, 2010: 62). It is the specific anti-Israel sentiment, as well as resentment of the Israeli government and Israel as a nation, that is associated with the new anti-Semitism (Phillips, in Rosenbaum, 2004). The essential point is that the new anti-Semitism incorporates aspects of traditional anti-Semitism in combination with references to Israel and anti-Zionism. As Phillips (in Rosenbaum, 2004) points out, “...Anti-Zionism is now being used to cloak a terrifying nexus between genocidal Arab and Islamist hatred of the Jews and deep-seated European prejudices” (252). Differentiating between traditional anti-Semitism in places such as Europe, and how it acts in combination with the new anti-Semitism may clarify this case study of a French Jewish diaspora. This may explain the layering effect and continuation of anti-Semitism whether traditional or new, as Wistrich notes, the new anti-Semite does seem to focus more on Israel and still include various historical incarnations of past anti-Semitism. In other words, addressing why French Jews have been leaving France due to the alarming extent that the new anti-Semitism has been “normalized” (Selig, 2010) is an important part of understanding the new anti-Semitism.

Methodology

A case study approach was used to examine the diasporic experience of Jews from France resettling in Montreal between 1999 and 2009 (Simons, 2009; Yin, 2009). This approach was selected in order to focus on a specific group of the diasporic French Jewish community and their contemporary experience connected to anti-Semitism, as well as the linguistic and religious challenges they faced. It also helped focus on this group’s specific and unique Diasporic liminality and their identity transition. Using the interview data collected over a three-year period offered a specific, personalized perspective of what many of these diasporic Jews experienced in terms of leaving France and how they managed throughout their resettlement experiences. A case study inquiry “...copes with the technically distinctive situation of many more variables of interest than data points” (Yin, 2009:2), making this in-depth approach a helpful exploratory method in terms of studying a real-life context of diaspora and resettlement. In more specific terms, a case study approach highlights reasons (i.e., anti-Semitism and the new anti-Semitism) why those interviewed left France and if there were shifts in their Jewish identity due to both their reasons for leaving and their experiences of resettling as multiple centred diasporic Jews. This case study also concentrates on their identity transition from France to the Montreal Jewish population. As a contemporary Jewish diaspora in Montreal, this work helps

to clarify the transition from France to Montreal and beyond. The focus is also on how shifting identities are linked to diasporic decisions, and while points of resettlement change, religious identities remain relatively consistent even though these transitions have various influences on their 'diasporic liminality,' as is revealed below. Overall, this case study inquiry makes this in-depth approach a helpful exploratory method to garner details about this specific group's transition as one example of diasporic liminality.

Interviews. In-depth qualitative data was gathered and analysed based on operationalizing variables such as diasporic liminality, multiple centred diasporas, Jewish identity, religiosity, resettlement, and other demographic variables (i.e., education, occupation, income, marital status, family size, and sex). The semi-structured interview schedule included open and closed-ended items that were conducted mainly in French, with interviewees responding in both French and English. The 40 interviews took place in Montreal between March 2006 and April 2009. Each interview lasted approximately 40 to 80 minutes, and took place in a variety of settings such as a Jewish Community Centre, restaurants, respondents' homes or workplaces, and other locations selected by the respondents. Of the 40 French Jews interviewed (i.e., 17 women and 23 men), 30 were permanent residents of Montreal and 10 were students who did not reside in Montreal year-round. Interviews were recorded then transcribed for the purpose of facilitating analysis.

Sampling. A combination of four non-random sampling techniques were utilized, including judgmental-purposive sampling, availability sampling, quota sampling, and snowball sampling (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2002). Participants were identified through social networks, Montreal-based organizations involved in Jewish immigration, and resettlement services such as JIAS (Jewish Immigrant Aid Services of Montreal), Centre Hillel (The Francophone Jewish Student Association in Montreal), and lastly, Hillel House (the Anglophone Jewish Student Organization in Montreal). Participants were also recruited using judgmental-purposive sampling once a pool of potential participants was identified with the help of the above agencies. We contacted most of those on the lists and interviewed those living in Montreal who had left France between 1999 and 2009, and were above the age of 18 years. Some were not contacted based on not meeting the criteria of the research (i.e., leaving France and living in Montreal). Availability sampling was used in cases where subjects were readily available and willing to participate in the study on short notice, or responding to a letter that JIAS Montreal was asked to mail in order to recruit participants for the study. Quota sampling was used to ensure that a variety of participants were recruited, such as an equal number of males and females, as well as those who were married, common law, and single. After interviews were completed, the snowball sampling technique was used: participants were asked if they knew of others who may have wanted to be interviewed.

Interviewing technique. The semi-structured interview schedule included 56 questions/items about pre-migration issues in France that related to the interviewee's family life, where they and their parents were born, languages they spoke, religious activity and determinants of religiosity, why they left France, and safety issues in France. Post-migration issues were examined such as resettlement, religious activity in Montreal, languages spoken, friendship and other social networks, matters of being or feeling Sephardi or Ashkenazi, challenges of resettling, feelings of safety in Montreal, and the comparison of perceived levels of anti-Semitism in France and Montreal. In the final part of the survey we focused on the possibility of returning to France, their remaining connections to France, connections to Israel (and if they would consider resettling there), if they are thinking of resettling elsewhere, and demographic questions.

Findings

All participants discussed the importance of their Jewish identity in relation to immigration and resettlement in Montreal. What motivated all interviewees to leave France was not being able to practice their religious beliefs openly without the risk of attacks against them, especially when wearing clothes or jewellery (e.g., kippah or a Star of David) that identified them as Jewish.

What prompted many of the interviewees to leave France is the new anti-Semitism that is connected to Israel. For those Sephardic French Jews from North African countries such as Algeria and Tunisia, the old type of anti-Semitism was experienced by their parents and grandparents without an apparent connection to Israel. This shift to the new anti-Semitism explicitly includes a connection to Israel and the Palestinians as well as related issues.

Multiple Centred Diasporas, Anti-Semitism, and Liminal Diasporas

The majority of those interviewed discussed various aspects of being part of a multiple centred diaspora (Shuval, 2000). Many of those interviewed commented specifically on their decision to resettle in Montreal as connected to their parents leaving Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco in the late 1950s and 1960s and moving to France. Shuval's (2000) notion of "Multiple Centred Diasporas" is often evident in the interviews, in terms of living in one place while maintaining connections to the country (or countries) of origin. The multiple connections and identities that Jews from France perceive were often associated with Zionism and Israel, North African Jewry (if this is their or their parents' ancestral home), or other types of Jewry (being Ashkenazi, and their parents' birthplace being in Poland or other countries in Europe).

Interviewees discussed how, like their parents who were born in places such as Algeria and Tunisia, they had to leave their birth countries and resettle elsewhere due to the old and new anti-Semitism. The theme of "Multiple Centred Diasporas" was evident in the interviews as it related to interviewees' resettlement process and how migrants living in one place maintain connections to their country or countries of origin despite the presence of anti-Semitism. Participants expressed these multiple connections and identities connected to North African Jewry:

We are Sephardic Jews...I remember when my father told me in France that this was not my country, now we have made the same journey as my parents, for the same reasons, and it is the same cycle...(Interview with PF3)

There was the clear sense that they had gone through an unexpected life experience that forced them to leave France. Many respondents made it clear that they felt as though they did not have many options, but had to do as their parents and grandparents did in the 1960s when they left North Africa:

The Arabs killed my family in Algeria, my parents were the only ones to survive...now we left France because of our children for their security and it is sad that this exists in our generation, that we were expelled from our own country. (Interview with PM21)

Several participants noted that they were repeating their parents' or grandparents' experiences of having to leave due to anti-Semitism and related death threats. Many discussed leaving France and not feeling safe in a country they thought of as 'home,' and many also lamented that they wanted to practice Judaism freely without the threat of anti-Semitism.

The fact that we are Jews in France made for that we did not have the right to practice our own religion, or have a quiet life...in the same way that our families left Algeria and Morocco, we have left France and we are now part of the modern Jewish diaspora. Anti-Semitism is still living today and we have seen its face... (Interview with PF14)

There is clear disappointment expressed by the respondent with having to cope with the continuing anti-Semitism her parents confronted in Morocco and Algeria, related to practicing Judaism. Interviewees often expressed frustration at having to leave France as a place they thought would always be safe. France was, they thought, a home that offered the safety their parents did not have previously. They often recounted how they are re-living what their parents experienced in North Africa countries:

Yes we left, there was no choice left to make once the attacks started...our parents did the same thing, they left Morocco because of the Arabs and now we left France because of the Arabs...our country does not exist anymore because it is the France of the Arabs. (Interview with PF11)

Many of those interviewed compared France to Canada. While France was seen as a place where anti-Semitism was still a problem, Canada was perceived as a destination that was more welcoming:

Yes, like my father left Tunisia, I left Paris for Montreal. From generation to generation it is bizarre that nothing changed but not really because anti-Semitism has never left France. (Interview with PM15)

Another interviewee noted the multiple centred diasporic potential for moving due to anti-Semitism. There is also a liminal diaspora of being between destinations and not necessarily arriving in a safe place that allows them to practice Judaism without fear of retribution. The sense of homeland seems distant for them, in that they travel constantly so their families can feel secure and settled. This constant state of being between seems to be part of their identity as liminars with a cosmopolitan view of living nowhere and potentially everywhere.

Our tradition says that we will be dispersed around the world, like my parents left Algeria; I left Paris to come to Montreal. We will always be the people of the diaspora and now I have seen that for myself. (Interview with PF18)

Overall, there was an acute awareness amongst those interviewed that they had to repeat their parents' and grandparents' experiences of resettling in another country. Participants noted that they selected Montreal as a safe place to be Jewish and French, and that a Francophone would feel safe there. There was also an awareness that they may have to leave Montreal for another destination. This multiple centred liminal view of being diasporic Jews is ongoing and prevalent to them as living in one place and potentially having to move to another.

The New Anti-Semitism in France: An Attack on Jews of the Republic

Arguably, the French Jews interviewed left France reluctantly due to their anti-Semitic experiences related to practicing Judaism and to maintaining their Jewish identity. It was a culmination of the old and new anti-Semitism, combined with constant threats and the lack of safety connected to practicing Judaism that prompted these Jews to leave France.

This new anti-Semitism was the primary reason provided by all participants for leaving France. One participant stated:

Anti-Semitism never disappeared in France. It more is elaborated and more discreet to this day than of the time of the period before the Second World War. It goes back to a well-identified ideology, at the start the one of the extreme right and left, hiding itself between layers of extreme right and left wing politics. For it existed since 1948, as a new major element modifying the expression of the anti-Semitism, as an imbedded hatred for the state of Israel. We were obliged to leave, for our children, for our security. We were hunted out of our own country, which is France, the France of the Arabs. France colonized them, now they are colonizing France. (Interview with PF4)

Another participant remarked on these tensions by stating:

In France the new anti-Semitism is supplied by the Magrèbine and North African immigration. But no one dares to say it or look at the figures. This anti-Semitism attacks every liberty of expression or freedom that exists, as we saw in the death of Ilan Halimi. Poverty touches everyone in France, but does not have the same impact as it does on those in the North African culture. Let us continue to put on blinders and to hide our head in the sand as ostriches and see where that takes us. (Interview with PM2)

All participants pointed to the inability of the French government between the 1990s and 2007 to protect Jews from harm. Some participants also pointed to the media as being responsible for the “vilification” of Israeli and Jewish politics, resulting in increased attacks during the Intifada period. One participant stated, “The French media are the worst. The Jews are all the unpleasant ones; we are all of the Nazis, the Zionists” (Interview with PF4). As stated here, it is how the media reports the Intifada that seems to be the problem; French media contributed largely to the deterioration of the image of Israel in the eye of French public opinion (Birnbaum, 2000). According to one participant, it’s only with the recent election of Nicolas Sarkozy that the police have received any help at all. “They (the Leftists and Arabs) say that Sarkozy is against the Arabs, I tell you, no, Sarkozy is for the law and for France; he is the only one who helped the police.” (Interview with PM2)

All participants interviewed arrived in Montreal between 2003 and 2009 – the same years as when the majority of Intifada bombings and attacks occurred.

These Jewish immigrants are very different from other current Jewish

immigrants to Montreal, given not only their high socio-economic status in France, but also the fact that they are Jews fleeing a Westernized country, which presents an interesting addition to the established Anglophone Montreal Jewish community. (Interview with PF2)

Many participants arrived in Montreal, "...not expecting handouts from the Jewish community, but more information as to how to obtain employment, obtain education equivalencies, find a home" (Interview with PM3). Over the past decade, various events "...have been sounding the alarm which the world has continued to ignore, that of history repeating itself, and of the expulsion of Jews from France" (Interview with PM3). All participants stated that the main reason for their immigration was the high rates of anti-Semitic attacks against Jews in France. A participant stated, "We left because of our children. The attacks are so dangerous, stone throwing, cries of *sale Juif* or *sale Juive* [dirty Jew]. Why should we live in fear for being Jewish? We came not for us, but for our children..." (Interview with PF3). Another participant explained, "Why should we be afraid to be Jews in our own country? We came because we cannot be Jewish in France anymore. France has abandoned us..." (Interview with PF4).

All participants expressed that they left France because of these anti-Semitic attacks and the general lack of security in the country. They felt a general sense of "abandonment" because of the lack of support by French authorities who did not denounce anti-Semitic attacks against Jews. As explained by one participant, "...The only countries that are left for Jews are Canada, the US, and Israel" (Interview with PM4). All participants cited the appeal of the established Jewish community in Montreal as a main reason for immigrating. One participant stated, "To feel safe, that was what we wanted. We could not go to Israel with the children, and the economic and success of the Jewish community of Montreal, as well as all the Jewish schools and large community was what also helped us to come here" (Interview with PF3). To a large extent, Montreal was selected due to it being a safe destination. Many of those interviewed would have preferred going to Israel, but chose Canada. As noted in the above quote, they view Canada, and more specifically Montreal, as a safe country and one that has a prominent Jewish community. While many of those interviewed saw Israel as a common homeland, Canada was their main destination in that they were concerned about issues of safety and security.

Israel: A Common Homeland

The increasing identification of French Jews with Israel, especially since the outbreak of the Second Intifada, has made near-enemies of allies (Wistrich, 2010; Pinto,

2003). Some French Jews feel they are still not integrated into French society. “We, the Jews, the second generation of the Sephardim, we have left the [Jewish] ghetto. We have learned, we’ve integrated; and the [second generation North Africans], well, they’re still in the same hole” (Interview with PF5).

The importance of Israel as part of Jewish identity has been essential for the last fifty years (Charme, 1996). Being a Jew implies a commitment to the fate and fortune of Israel (Horowitz, 1998). For many Jews, Israel is considered their historic homeland, and its existence both sustains Jewish identity and contributes to the communities’ social cohesion (Arnold, 1981; Medjuck, 1993: 71-372; Taras & Weinfeld, 1993; Vigod, 1984). All participants felt special ties to Israel. One participant noted specifically the importance of Israel:

I do not think if you talk to anyone who identifies themselves as a French Jew, and has some sort of traditions and practices in their own mind, whatever they want to do, and you ask them about Israel, I would be very shocked to find out if people do not feel the same way. It’s our homeland. (Interview with PF2)

This notion of homeland was echoed by other interviewees in terms of the attachment to Israel. “Eretz Israel” (our homeland Israel) “...must be defended at all costs” (Interview with PM1). According to Birnbaum (2000: 125), French Jews’ focus on Israel as part of their identity has led to many problems in France.

Conclusions and Implications

The initial objectives guiding this research were to explore the identity of Jews from France who have immigrated to Montreal since 1999; to explore the relationship between this diverse Jewish identity and the reasons for immigration; and to examine all forms of changes that this Jewish identity may have endured as a result of immigration and integration processes in Montreal.

All participants cited anti-Semitic attacks or danger to their Jewish identity as primary reasons for immigration. This study has provided evidence that the current trends of anti-Semitism in France and violent attacks toward the French Jewish community have indeed played a crucial role in decisions to migrate. The research findings are based on 40 semi-structured, qualitative interviews with 23 men and 17 women who emigrated from France to Montreal, all within the previous five years. Given the exploratory nature of this study, many interesting results were presented in the analysis process and will be considered for future research.

This research points to policy suggestions on federal, provincial, municipal, and local community levels of government. Most important, French Jews feel they need more support at a community level from the Jewish population of Montreal. The French Jews who immigrated had to fill the void in terms of integration and resettlement by forming their own support group called *Fréquence France*. This liminal space, most importantly, allowed them to support one another and help them to connect with new French Jewish immigrant families arriving and settling in Montreal. They created *Fréquence France* through a self-help ethos of providing a liminal social network to allow them to identify the needs of French Jewish immigrants and to articulate strategies for easing these Jews into the dominant Anglophone Montreal Jewish population. While there exist organizations such as Jewish Immigrant Aid Services of Montreal (JIAS) and *La Communauté Sépharade Unifiée du Québec* which are available to help Jewish immigrants, these organizations weren't able to provide the French immigrants with specialized services and educational opportunities. Though existing Jewish organizations became their partners, the majority of French Jews posed unique concerns and needs which the organizations often did not have the resources needed to help them.

French Jews are a unique immigrant group relative to Montreal's Anglophone Jewish community, in that they are mainly Sephardic and speak both French and English. Beyond this, they are university-educated professionals who feel they have not had enough help with retraining or in having their qualifications recognized. Many of those interviewed commented on how much they struggled economically, and that they felt that provincial and federal organizations could offer them more support. Québec and the Canadian government were interested in having the French Jews resettle in Montreal, but indeed they have not done much to help them. In terms of employment and finances, those interviewed commented that *Fréquence France* had to provide professional and occupational networking opportunities and social support that was lacking from various levels of government.

It is clear it was primarily the local organizations Jewish Immigrant Aid Services of Montreal (JIAS) and *La Communauté Sépharade Unifiée du Québec* that provided more help and funding than direct contributions from the Québec and the Canadian governments. Grassroots initiatives such as *Fréquence France* need to be clearly encouraged as an essential social network that has helped French Jews to cope with provincial and federal agencies. Many groups of newcomers have faced the same myriad of challenges as have French Jews, in terms of being 'liminal outsiders,' sometimes having a strong religious 'liminal conduit,' and generally having to struggle occupationally, professionally, educationally, economically, and in many other ways. In Canada, new Canadians who arrive educated and with a profession end up struggling in work not commensurate with their education, becoming taxi or limousine drivers, and working in the service, retail, and fast food industries. Although the French Jews

interviewed often did not encounter these issues, they have indeed struggled and have relied on self-support from *Fréquence France*.

Clearly, the French Jewish diasporic experience of leaving France and resettling in Canada resulted in a liminal situational identity. Using the concept of situational identity and the strengthening of the immigrants' Jewish identity as a positive 'liminal conduit,' the challenges faced by 40 French Jews as 'liminal outsiders' are examined in terms of having to leave France and resettle into the Montreal Jewish population. Many respondents said Montreal was a city where they could practice Judaism freely, converse in French, and maintain their distinct French-Jewish identity. Those interviewed discussed their liminal experiences of resettling in Canada between 1999 and 2006, emphasizing how their Jewish identities are intertwined with a liminal situational identity.

The French Jewish experience of leaving France and resettling in Montreal has resulted in a situational identity that strengthened these French Jews' identity as a positive 'liminal conduit,' and has allowed them to face the challenges of being 'liminal outsiders.' They have experienced both preliminal and liminal transitions as well as an ongoing situational identity. Integration into Montreal Jewry has been gradual but is eased by the creation of *Fréquence France* as a liminal space. Without the reinforcement of a strong and invigorated Jewish identity in Montreal, or without the ability cope well enough to form their own organization, these French Jewish immigrants would have many more liminal challenges. Still, this is not enough for full integration. Canadian, provincial, and local government agencies have to do more to provide resources for the success of organizations such as *Fréquence France*.

The problems faced by French Jews will be ongoing, as the participants suggested that attacks against Jews in France will not end. Therefore, more research needs to be conducted in order to help new Canadians, like French Jews, resettle using self-help models of creating liminal spaces.

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