TITLE: THE RECONSTRUCTION OF POST-SOVIET JEWISH IDENTITIES
AUTHOR: ZVI GITELMAN, University of Michigan

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR EURASIAN AND EAST EUROPEAN RESEARCH

TITLE VIII PROGRAM

1755 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
LEGAL NOTICE

The Government of the District of Columbia has certified an amendment of the Articles of Incorporation of the National Council for Soviet and East European Research changing the name of the Corporation to THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR EURASIAN AND EAST EUROPEAN RESEARCH, effective on June 9, 1997. Grants, contracts and all other legal engagements of and with the Corporation made under its former name are unaffected and remain in force unless/until modified in writing by the parties thereto.

PROJECT INFORMATION:

CONTRACTOR: University of Michigan

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Zvi Gitelman

COUNCIL CONTRACT NUMBER: 811-14

DATE: February 27, 1998

COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

Individual researchers retain the copyright on their work products derived from research funded by contract with the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research. However, the Council and the United States Government have the right to duplicate and disseminate, in written and electronic form, this Report submitted to the Council under this Contract, as follows: Such dissemination may be made by the Council solely (a) for its own internal use, and (b) to the United States Government (1) for its own internal use; (2) for further dissemination to domestic, international and foreign governments, entities and individuals to serve official United States Government purposes; and (3) for dissemination in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act or other law or policy of the United States Government granting the public rights of access to documents held by the United States Government. Neither the Council, nor the United States Government, nor any recipient of this Report by reason of such dissemination, may use this Report for commercial sale.

1 The work leading to this report was supported in part by contract funds provided by the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, made available by the U. S. Department of State under Title VIII (the Soviet-Eastern European Research and Training Act of 1983, as amended). The analysis and interpretations contained in the report are those of the author(s).
Summary

The Soviet state created, destroyed and imposed national identities, setting their boundaries and cultural contents. Most post-Soviet states are less involved in this activity and people are more free to choose their identities, establish boundaries that mark off one group from another, and determine both individually and communally the meaning or cultural content of their identities. This study shows that Jews in Russia and Ukraine perceive their identities differently, have different ways of expressing them and different affect toward them. This is likely to lead individuals and groups to different patterns of communal and individual behavior; introducing greater heterogeneity and uncertainty, but also possibility than there were among the Jews of the Soviet Union.

In 1992/93, I and two Russian colleagues conducted the most extensive survey ever done of Jews in the former Soviet Union (FSU). A National Council grant enabled us to supplement this with eight interviews in-depth in each of eight cities in which the survey was done, and these 64 interviews have now been incorporated into a data base which includes parallel surveys of over 800 immigrants from the FSU in Israel and 550 in Chicago, and over 200 in-depth recorded interviews on Jewish identity conducted among Soviet immigrants in Israel. This report on Jewish identities in post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine draws on all these data.

This study will be useful both to academics and policy makers. It contributes rich empirical information to the worldwide debate about the meaning of being Jewish and to broader discussions of ethnic identities and their implications. It can provide insights to policy makers who need to understand the beliefs and expectations of FSU Jews in order to make better informed decisions and more efficient use of resources invested in FSU Jewry and in the resettlement of FSU emigrants.

Thus far, we have analyzed seven issues included in our materials. They are: conceptions of Jewishness; the role of religion in Jewish identity; affinity with Jews, Russians and Ukrainians; Jewish languages and Jewish identity; participation in public Jewish life; the consequences of intermarriage; and emigration.

Though Russian and Ukrainian Jews differ on what being Jewish means, in general their conceptions of what it means to be Jewish differ radically from those held by most American and Israeli Jews. Jewishness in Russia/Ukraine is not a matter of religion, traditions or formal affiliations, but of descent, official "nationality" and subjective feelings of belonging. It is not publicly manifested but privately felt. It is not measured by worship, organizational affiliation and philanthropy, the dominant modes of Jewish expression in America, but by subjective perceptions. Our finding that religion (Judaism) plays little role in FSU Jews' conceptions of Jewish identity is a
logical concomitant of the dominant conception of Jewishness. Moreover, though a surprisingly high proportion of our respondents are inclined to believe in God, this does not translate into a strong preference for Judaism among the faiths, nor does it imply ritual observance. Respondents are divided on whether one can be Jewish and practice a faith other than Judaism, a proposition most non-FSU Jews would reject. They also find it very difficult to say whether or not Jews are a nation, and they disagree on whether one can be "both Russian (Ukrainian) and Jewish." Some have a "civic" conception which allows for Jewish ethnic identity in a Russian/Ukrainian state, while others see Jewish nationality as mutually exclusive with a Russian/Ukrainian identity, perceived in "ethnic," not civic terms. These differences have implications for behavior. For example, Jews who do not see a contradiction between Christian faith and Jewish nationality may adopt Christianity, crossing a "boundary" which most Jews in the rest of the world still respect. Those who see Jewish ethnicity as compatible with Russian/Ukrainian citizenship may be less likely to emigrate than those who feel that these states are for their titular nationalities and all others must be alien.

Respondents in the FSU, Israel and the United States all strongly prefer Jews when asked to name the ethnicity of their closest friends. Yet, Jews in Ukraine and, especially, Russia have a strong affinity for Russians, though not for Ukrainians, and for Russian culture. The in-depth interviews, however, reveal that a minority identify positively with Ukrainian culture and are negative toward Russians and their culture. In most cases, however, affinity for Russians is even stronger than for Jews who live outside Russia, even if in other parts of the FSU. Russia and its culture are highly attractive to Jews. This may bode well for the integration of Jews in Russian society, but it has the opposite consequence for Jews in Ukraine who are justly seen as part of the "Russkoizychnyi" (Russian-speaking) element. Jewish languages do not play an important role at all in the Jewish identity of the respondents.

No Jewish organization existed in the USSR until 1988. For this and other reasons, organizational affiliation among Jews is low. Only 9 per cent of Russian and 15 per cent of Ukrainian respondents claimed membership in a Jewish organization, and 40 per cent did not even know that such organizations exist in their city. The oldest and youngest people are most likely to affiliate and be active in the organizations. In a 1997 follow-up survey we seek to determine if consciousness of and affiliation with Jewish organizations have increased since the early 1990s.

There is little condemnation of intermarriage, but intermarried couples report less happiness in their married lives than those married to Jews. Some oppose intermarriage on demographic or psychological, but not religious, grounds. Many of those interviewed are children of mixed marriages and are themselves married to non-Jews. There do not appear to be consistent differences in attitudes toward Jewishness between them and those born of and married to Jews.

Unrestricted emigration is one of the great gains resulting from the collapse of the USSR, but it also vitiates attempts at communal revival, especially since the young are overrepresented in the
emigration. Nearly half our respondents have relatives in Israel and/or the United States and, quite apart from any other factor, this portends future emigration. Indeed, half the Ukrainian respondents and a third of the Russians expressed some interest in emigrating. We have uncovered some significant differences regarding intended country of immigration and among the age cohorts in our sample (see full text below).

Because conceptions of Jewishness among Russian/Ukrainian Jews are so different from those of Jews elsewhere, serious issues of mutual recognition arise and challenge those who set the contents and boundaries of Jewishness.

Introduction

Peoples and states in the former Soviet Union have had to re-define themselves in the wake of the simultaneous collapse of the supra-national ideology of Communism and of the Soviet state. Russians, for example, are debating who they "really" are; what the borders of Russia should be; what responsibility those in Russia have for Russians living beyond its borders; what their political, social, cultural and economic relations should be with the other successor states to the Soviet Union; and, once again, whether they are part of the West, East, or neither. Jews are deciding whether and how to re-define their national identities, what their relationship to the successor states of the USSR should be, how they should relate to world Jewry, and whether to stay or emigrate.

This study aims to describe and analyze how Jews in Russia and Ukraine--71 per cent of the Soviet Jewish population in 1989, the third or fourth largest Jewish population in the world--conceive of their ethnic and religious identities and the implications for community building and relations with Israel and world Jewry. How are Russian/Ukrainian Jews re-defining their identities, if at all? Do they see a place for themselves as Jews in their respective states and societies, or would they rather either assimilate or emigrate? Secondly, the study explores the implications of evolving identities for the states of Russia and Ukraine as well as for Israel and the Jewish community in the United States.

The study has both academic and practical value. It contributes to the worldwide re-evaluation of the meaning of being Jewish and is part of broader discussions about ethnic identity. It also provides policy makers insights into the beliefs, mentalities and expectations of Jews in Russia and Ukraine. These should help them, planners and activists, especially those outside the former Soviet Union (FSU), make more efficient use of the resources they invest in post-Soviet Jewry. Transplanted models of Jewish identity and communal organization will not take root unless the planters know the soil and the climatic conditions.

The first phase of the study was surveys of Jews in three Russian and five Ukrainian cities in 1992/93. The next phase, funded by the Littauer Foundation, examined over 200 in-depth recorded interviews with Soviet Jews who emigrated to Israel. National Council funding made it possible to
interview in depth in 1995/96 eight respondents in each of eight cities where the original survey was conducted. The study will also draw on my 1992 survey of over 800 Soviet immigrants in Israel and my earlier survey of 550 Soviet immigrants in Chicago. Fortunately, we have secured funding almost sufficient to replicate the 1992/93 Russian/Ukrainian survey in 1997 in order to determine what changes have taken place in these most volatile times and places. The 1992/93 survey is a "snapshot" of a moment in time. A follow-up survey will reveal the dynamics of the attitudes, beliefs and intentions of post-Soviet Jews, and alert us to trends and processes among them. We should be able to discover how malleable and volatile Jews' beliefs, attitudes and opinions are and whether or not the efforts made in the last few years to strengthen Jewish consciousness, identity, knowledge, commitment and affiliation in the FSU have succeeded.

Defining States and Nations

Leaders of the FSU states are choosing between "civic" and "ethnic" models of states, the former defining citizens on the basis of adherence to a common political system, the latter designed to serve the interests of a single ethnic group or nation. But as states re-shape themselves, the people inhabiting them also make some defining decisions. They must decide who and what they are, and how they manifest that identity—in language, religion, territory, and place in the political, economic and social hierarchies. What is their relationship to fellow inhabitants not of their group? In Belarus, Ukraine and Lithuania, Poles are asking: Are we Poles (or Belarusians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians)? Should we have Polish-language schools? Should we re-Catholicize churches converted to Orthodoxy? What should our relation be to Poland? Similar questions are asked, mutatis mutandis, by Germans, Jews, Hungarians and others in the FSU. Should a Volga German republic be restored? Should there be Polish autonomous regions in Lithuania? For non-territorial peoples, including Jews, the issue is not only state borders but cultural borders and their location. Should Jews and others have national-cultural autonomy where they live now, or should they emigrate to their ancestral homelands? Borders, identities, cultures and ideologies are all in flux in the FSU and Eastern Europe.

The Transformation of Jewish Identity

Identity is "a person's sense of self in relation to others, or...the sense of oneself as simultaneously an individual and a member of a social group." 2 "Who you are" often determines how you behave and even how you think. This is crucial both for individuals and for groups. The fate of Yugoslavia illustrates how much it matters whether people who inhabit a state think of themselves as members of that state. The Yugoslav case also shows that identity is not fixed but is shaped by culture and events, by situations, ideology, and geography. When Serbs, Croats and
Bosnians stopped identifying as Yugoslavs and reverted to earlier identities, which were ethnic rather than civic, the Yugoslav state collapsed and its peoples could no longer live together.

Ethnic identity may or may not be primordial, but it is not immutable. Nations and peoples are created and disappear.\textsuperscript{3} ...Recent scholarship has veered decisively away from the primordialist view that ethnicity and nationality are fixed categories. Most students of nationalism now understand national identities as boundary-maintaining, but malleable, imagined communities sustained by invented traditions. These national identities are typically seen as one of a family of nested identities, the salience of which is a function of circumstances.\textsuperscript{4} People change identities and announce--by language, dress and social-political behavior--that they no longer perceive themselves or wish others to perceive them as they have before. Moreover, even when identities remain nominally unchanged--people continue to call themselves by the same name--their content may shift. For example, Zionism or socialism may replace religion as the core of a seemingly stable Jewish identity. In other instances, new meanings accrue to a nominal identity without replacing the older elements. Religious Jews may add a conscious Zionism to their self-conception as Jews. Soviet Jews may posit education and intellectualism as hallmarks of Jewishness and downplay the importance of Judaism.

Jewish identity originated in the ancient Near East where religion, kinship and nationality/ethnicity were fused. The convert to Judaism is called "ben Avraham" (Son of Abraham) or "bat Sarah" (daughter of Sarah) not in order to establish literal biological kinship but to assert membership in a group, one of whose defining characteristics is putative common ancestry. Kinship could be fictive and symbolic. In contrast to John Locke's assertion that only explicit consent makes one a member of a political society and that "has been the practice of the World from its first beginning to this day,"\textsuperscript{5} the Hebraic conception is that membership is conferred by birth, i.e., kinship, or a fictional kinship conferred upon "naturalization" (note the reference to "natural"), that is, conversion. Members of the group are called, significantly, b'nai Yisrael [children of Israel].\textsuperscript{6} When modern societies differentiated religion and ethnicity, Jews had to decide whether there could be Judaism (religion) without Jewish nationality, or Jewish nationality/ethnicity without Judaism. For 200 years, since emancipation allowed Jews to enter European societies and assume identities as Germans, Frenchmen, et al, Jews have argued about whether they are a religious, national or cultural group. The debate is complicated by their dispersal in different cultures where nationality, ethnicity, and even religion, are understood differently. Geographic and ideological differences create serious disagreements among those who claim the same identity.\textsuperscript{7}

How could Jews be construed as an ethnic group independent of religious identity? An ethnic group is a "social group whose members share a sense of common origins, claim a common and distinctive history and destiny, possess one or more distinctive characteristics, and feel a sense of
collective uniqueness and solidarity." The "distinctive characteristic" or the "epitome of peoplehood" of an ethnic group is usually language, kinship patterns, or religion. Though religion has been the most distinctive characteristic of the Jewish ethnic group, in the modern period one may be a non-believer and a Jew, though it is unlikely that one can be an active practitioner of a religion other than Judaism and still be considered by other Jews as a Jew. As we shall see, Jews in Russia and Ukraine have a different view of the relation between Judaism and Jewishness.

New Challenges

Ethnic groups are defined by content and boundaries. "Content" may be shared interests, shared institutions or shared culture. Boundaries are the demarcation lines drawn to establish who is in the group and who is not. While most contemporary forms of Jewishness appropriate the symbols of Judaism, the content of Jewishness is shifting in many instances away from Judaism, but not toward anything substantive, such as language, kinship patterns, or territory. Few Jews outside of Israel speak a Jewish language; in all diaspora countries intermarriage rates are increasing, thereby weakening kinship; and there are no distinctively Jewish territories outside Israel.

But there is a second meaning to "culture," and it is in this second meaning that Jewish culture may be surviving as the content of Jewishness. I have in mind culture as a "common and distinct system of understandings and interpretations that constitute normative order and world view and provide strategic and stylistic guides to action." I label this "thin culture," as opposed to "thick culture" which has tangible manifestations (language, customs, foods, dress). Thus, the crucial question for the future of diaspora Jewishness is whether without substantive, manifest "thick" cultural content it becomes merely "symbolic ethnicity," much like the ethnicity of most Polish-Americans or Swedish-Americans; or whether "thin culture" is sufficiently substantive and sustainable to preserve a group's distinctiveness on more than a symbolic level.

Not only the content but also the boundaries defining Jewishness are being pushed out and becoming more blurred. Groups set boundaries in order to define who belongs to the group and who does not. In modern times, the two most salient components of the boundary of Jewishness were the prohibitions on marrying non-Jews and practising a faith other than Judaism. The first prohibition is increasingly violated in the FSU and elsewhere, and the second is rejected by a fair number of Russian and Ukrainian Jews. Jews are now challenged again to re-define their identities and the content of their "peoplehood." In the shrinking diaspora, nearly universal acculturation, increasing assimilation (loss of identity, as through intermarriage), demographic decline, and secularization challenge Jews to find ways to preserve their numbers and invigorate their identities. Reform Judaism has re-defined Jewish identity by legitimating patrilineally acquired Jewishness, rejected by Conservative and Orthodox Jews. World Jewry and the Israeli courts and
knesset fiercely debate "who [what] is a Jew." This has practical implications for Israeli immigration policy, marriage and divorce, and Israel-diaspora relations. Today there are Orthodox, Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist Jews; cultural, secular, humanistic Jews; or half, quarter and "Law of Return" Jews. Thus, there is a large menu of identities from which Russian/Ukrainian Jews can choose, a choice available to them only since 1992.

Jews can either re-define the boundaries, as the Reform movement has done; accept the loss of many members of the group who choose “exit” over “loyalty;” or find ways to retain members within the traditional boundaries, perhaps by “thickening” the increasingly “thin” cultural content of Jewishness.

The Evolution of Jewish Identities in Russia and Ukraine

Russian and Ukrainian Jews have changed the contents of their Jewish identities at least three times in this century. In the 1920s and 1930s they moved from the traditional religious, modern Zionist or Yiddishist bases of the pre-revolutionary period to a predominantly Russian, Soviet culture and even identity, only a minority adhering to the newly constructed secular, socialist Soviet Yiddish identity. Intermarriage rates rose steeply. Only the introduction of internal passports in the early 1930s and the official registration of nationality prevented many Jews from assimilating, that is, becoming Russians. Ironically, the very state that preached assimilation of all peoples as the solution to the "national [Jewish] question," kept people from assimilating by identifying them by nationality on their internal identification documents ("passports"). Thus, the Soviet state kept Jews nominally Jewish, against the will of many.

A second shift in the content of Jewish identity occurred in the 1940s and 1950s when the holocaust and Stalinist antisemitism destroyed illusions of acceptance and assimilation. Jewishness was now left without any positive cultural content. Jews identified themselves as "invalids of the fifth category." 16 many of our older respondents assert that they did not experience antisemitism in the USSR until either they were “in evacuation” during World War Two or immediately after the war. Perhaps this is because as they grew older they became more aware of antisemitism, or, more likely, because both Soviet policy and Soviet society changed in the 1940s. Increasingly, for most Ashkenazic Jews, Jewish identity came to rest on four bases: state-imposed identity (nationality=Jewish), social antisemitism, consciousness of the holocaust, and awareness of Israel. Only the latter had positive affect. After 1967, the Israeli component became more salient, and after 1988 the possibility of reconstructing Jewish life in the FSU itself challenged Jews to re-define themselves yet again. 17 Massive emigration--over a million Jews have left the FSU since 1970--along with the chance to reconstruct Jewish life in the FSU open the question of how Soviet Jews define themselves in the three major centers where they now live, the FSU, Israel, and the United States.
The Study

I have been interviewing ex-Soviet Jews in Israel and the United States and, with colleagues in Moscow, Jews in Russia and Ukraine. Two senior scientists at the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Sociology, Dr. Valery Chervyakov and Professor Vladimir Shapiro, are working with me to determine whether, how and why the four populations conceive of themselves as Jews and how those conceptions are affected by locale and other variables. We examine the place of religion, culture, Zionism, tradition, and descent in people's conception of their identities, and the implications of these conceptions for Jewish community, expression and survival. How is Jewish identity shaped by specific locations and cultures? How will ideas of who they are and what they ought be doing affect the character of Jewish entities in Russia and Ukraine. What are the implications for those states, their peoples and Jewish people elsewhere?

Method

To answer these questions, we have conducted four related surveys. I surveyed 809 Soviet Jews who moved to Israel in 1989-92, and two waves of 550 Soviet Jewish immigrants who came to Chicago. I developed a questionnaire with Shapiro and Chervyakov which was tested on 150 Jewish residents of Moscow in 1991, revised and used to interview 500 Jewish residents each of Moscow and St. Petersburg and 300 of Ekaterinburg in 1992/3. These studies were funded by the Wilstein Institute (Los Angeles). My Israeli study was funded by Wilstein and the Littauer Foundation (New York), and some of its findings have been published.18 With the aid of an IREX grant, the survey was later replicated among 2,000 Jews in five Ukrainian cities: Kiev, Kharkiv, Odessa, Lviv, and Chernivtsi. This enables us to gauge the impact of non-Russian cultures, societies and state structures, and different Jewish cultural traditions on the re-formation and expression of Jewish identity. We can now compare Jewish identities in Ukraine, which was in the pre-1917 Pale of Settlement, and Russia, a center of Jewish population for less than a century.

The Ukrainian cities, major centers of Jewish population, represent geographical, historical and cultural diversity. Lviv (Lvov; Lwow; Lemberg) and Chernivtsi (Chernovtsy; Cernauti; Czernowitz) were in Poland and Romania, respectively, until 1939-40. Their Jewish populations were deeply involved in Hebrew and Yiddish cultures, Orthodox Judaism, and a wide range of modern Jewish ideologies and political parties. While many of the post-war residents of those cities came from elsewhere, pre-war cultures left their stamp on Jewish life there. By contrast, Kharkiv (Kharkov) in East Ukraine was Soviet for more than twenty years longer than the cities of the "West." By the late 1930s, most vestiges of traditional Jewish culture in Kharkiv had been eliminated by Soviet "internationalism." Kiev, on the other hand, was a major center of pre-Soviet and Soviet Yiddish culture. Odessa, a heavily Jewish city, was a center of Hebrew culture and was

8
known for its "Jewish atmosphere." Though much of this diversity has been vitiated by acculturation and migration both into and away from these cities, traces remain.

We interviewed 500 people each in Kiev and Odessa, 400 in Kharkiv, and 300 each in Lviv and Chernivtsi. Using 1989 census data obtained for the population of each city, we structured samples by gender, age, education and sphere of employment to replicate the structure of the city's Jewish population. A panel we believe represents that population provided lists of people who have at least one Jewish parent. Potentially appropriate respondents were then selected by a "snowball" technique, starting with names provided by the panel. This made it possible to constantly control the parameters of the sample and adjust them to the sample "universe," defined as the Jewish population of the city, sixteen and older. "Jews" were defined as those who were either registered as such in their passports or, or who declare themselves as Jews to the interviewer, irrespective of their passport registration. Interviewers were mostly Jewish women, age 25-45. After several training sessions, the best were selected to do the actual study. The result was a quota sample, the best possible under present circumstances, interviewed face-to-face. Shapiro and Chervyakov supervised the field work. In both republics there was an excellent (80 per cent) response rate. We can now use the data of the 1994 "microcensus," which sampled three million people, to construct the 1997 sample in the same way as we constructed the earlier sample.

Some Findings

Here we can give only a brief indication of some of our findings in the following areas: 1) conceptions of what it means to be Jewish; 2) the role of religion in Jewish identity; 3) affinity with Jews and with Russians and Ukrainians; 4) Jewish languages and Jewish identity; 5) participation in Jewish public life; 6) the consequences for Jewish identity of intermarriage; 7) emigration.

What Being Jewish Means

Russian/Ukrainian Jews overwhelmingly conceive of their Jewishness as a matter of descent, "nationality," and feelings of belonging to a group. It has little or nothing to do with Judaism (religion) or the observance of customs and traditions. The most fundamental basis of Jewish identity, in their view, is being born of Jewish parents. Second, Jewish identity is understood in the way the Soviet state defined it, that is, as membership in an ethnic group ("nationality"). In contrast to American Jews, 47 per cent of whom said in the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey that Jews are a religious group, FSU Jews do not connect the Jewish religion with being Jewish. Respondents were offered nine criteria for defining Jewishness. Only three per cent in Ukraine and Russia, and five per cent in Israel, say that practicing Judaism defines "being a Jew." It is striking that only three per cent among the more recent arrivals in Chicago connect Judaism with Jewishness, but 26 per cent of those who have been in the U.S. several years longer do so. It
seems that immigrants who have been in Chicago longer are adopting American notions of Jewishness as a religion. In America, Jewish ethnicity is expressed in religious forms; over time, immigrants from the FSU begin to do likewise, conforming to American patterns of "symbolic ethnicity." But while in America affiliation and philanthropy are the measures of Jewishness—a "good Jew" is one who belongs to Jewish organizations, including synagogues or temples, and contributes to Jewish causes—these are unknown behaviors among Jews in the FSU. Instead, our interviews reveal, the basis of Jewish identity in the FSU is a deeply internalized and not necessarily publicly expressed sense of kinship with other Jews and of connection with earlier generations. This difference in conceptions of Jewishness and its expression have led to frequent misunderstandings between American and "Russian" Jews, the former regarding the latter as "weak" or "poor" Jews because they do not seem to affiliate with or contribute to Jewish causes in the same measure as do American Jews.

Soviet/post-Soviet Jews have a common "national identity" imposed by the Soviet state, though some were able to shuck it off, and many others treat it as a meaningless, content-less rubric. Indeed, it is an identity defined more by boundaries than by cultural content. Those boundaries were constructed more by the state and the societies in which Jews lived than by the Jews themselves, though some Jews continue to construct their boundaries, not in traditional terms—only slightly more than half the Ukrainian and Russian respondents think "it is necessary to choose a spouse of the same nationality"—but either in terms of feelings of consanguinity and mutual recognition or in terms of inclinations toward intellectualism, higher intelligence and the like. Opposition to intermarriage declines steadily with the age of the respondent so that in both countries less than 40 per cent of the 16-19 year olds agree that one should marry a person of the same nationality. The traditional boundaries of Jewishness were eroded in the Soviet period, and what was left was almost completely "imagined" communities since there were no institutions, organizations or forms of ethnic representation and activity. In the post-Soviet period official boundaries have blurred—as of October 1, 1997 new Russian "passports" will not include "nationality"—but there are opportunities for resuming or "inventing" traditions and creating or importing cultural content. Of course, ethnicity is one of several "nested identities," but there are links among the identities. The identity of "intelligent" and "Jew," and perhaps "urbanite" are nested within each other. The identity of "Russian" and "Jew" are close to each other in the perception of Jews, though perhaps not in the perception of Russians. "Ukrainian" and "Jew" are distant, both in Jewish and (probably) Ukrainian perceptions. The salience of these identities is now undergoing revision, across generations, across space (former Soviet republics) and within individuals. As circumstances continue to change, the salience of Jewish identity will continue to vary, except among those passionately committed either to its rejection or to its expression, in whatever form.
We find several types of attitudes toward Jewish identity. One can be called “primordial”--something they feel, they know, without being able to specify objective characteristics. As one respondent put it, it is a feeling of belonging, “family--people with something in common.” It is a fact that needs no explanation. “My Jewishness is a given that fits me and I don’t want to change it.” D., born in the Urals in 1946, says “I did not think about it. I just thought that since I am Jewish, I am Jewish.” A teenager from Ekaterinburg says, “I don’t know what makes one a Jew exactly, but whenever Jews encounter each other, they recognize one another, they feel that they’re Jewish--by their manner, their way of rubbing shoulders, their eyes, I don’t know, something...you can’t explain it scientifically.” As one woman grew older, she says, “I began to realize that Jews are closer in their souls...It is more comfortable and interesting with them.”

A second type of identity is the traditional conception of Jewishness as a religion and/or a nation. An unemployed teacher from Odessa, whose mother was Jewish and father Ukrainian, says that Jews constitute one nation, but “Jews are more a religion than a nationality” (sic). A third conception of being a Jew is being a victim, a subject of persecution and suffering. Perhaps the other side of this coin is the conception of Jewishness as involving superior intelligence, intellectual inclinations, working harder than others. Zhanna P., born in 1956, a Muscovite, defines a Jew as “a little different and everything he does, he does a little better.” A Kiev mechanic relates how his parents taught him that “We are Jews, and a Jew, in order to get a grade of ‘5’ [the highest grade in the Soviet system] has to know enough to get a ‘6.’” People take pride in the achievements of Jews. “Jews have given much to the world,” boasts a young man in St. Petersburg. Look at our Rockefeller! [sic!]. Jews are happier than other people. They see joy in life.” In contrast to those who say that Jews have something ineffable in common, others see Jewishness as an accident of designation which has neither meaning nor importance. Gleb M., born in 1968 in Leningrad: Jews “have nothing much in common, except blood, coming from the same ancestors, the same genetic roots” [his mother is half-Jewish and his father is Russian]. And this descent has no meaning for values or behavior. Finally, quite a few respondents say that a Jew is one who chooses to be so.” Maxim B., born in 1968 says, “Being Jewish is a question of self-identification. If you define yourself as a Jew, you are a Jew.” Many respondents combine several of these definitions. Their tendency is to give one definition and then to expand when pressed by the interviewer. This may indicate both that Jewish identity is multifaceted and also that, as this is no longer determined by the state, many are wrestling with the concept of being Jewish. As a young man in Chernivtsi observed, “That’s a question we discuss all the time. [What does it mean to be a Jew?] I’ve been to many seminars and meetings and we always take up this question, but have never arrived at an answer.” He is not alone.

Conceptions of Jewishness vary by generation, though not always consistently. Typical is the difference among the three generations of women who came from Dnepropetrovsk (Ukraine) to
Israel. Frida, born in 1918, has strong feelings of consanguinity and sees Jewish identity as primordial. "I treat it [my Jewishness] as something that exists, something that is given by God." Jews are both "religion and nation." She adds that Jews are "different by their brains, their belief in God." "My feeling towards my Jewishness is like feeling towards family, people [who have something in] common." She does acknowledge that Jews who "live in different conditions and have different languages" have suffering in common--"Everyone suffered equally during the war"--but she does not harp on victimhood nor see it as the defining characteristic of the Jew.

Her daughter Larisa (born in 1946), on the other hand, says that Jews "are different by being persecuted." Their defining characteristic is victimhood and they are not part of a single nation because "their lifestyle, the environment they live in, makes even Jews different." Though she asserts that "I was always a Jew and never hid it," she married a Russian--from whom she is divorced. "I promised myself never to marry a Jew...so my children would not suffer the way I did." She got used to being called a "zhidovka." Negative circumstances formed her Jewish identification, unlike her mother's. "When I was growing up, everyone in the neighborhood criticized Jews, was angry at Jews, but that was considered normal." She has a pragmatic, unsentimental attitude toward ethnic identification, whereas her mother's is emotional and even spiritual. "If I could choose to be a Russian in my passport, I would have been Russian." This is a pragmatic choice, not an assertion of Russian patriotism. "My main belief is humanism." Katia, Larisa's daughter and Frida's granddaughter, born in the early 1970s, says that Jews are defined "by their fate, the exile, the humiliation...And nothing else." Jews are united by "their common persecution originally caused by their having a different religion." But she never mentions religion, consanguinity and higher intelligence--the defining characteristics for her grandmother. They are implicitly denied. She has adopted her mother's view of Jewishness as victimhood and says her Jewish consciousness was formed by one antisemitic incident when she was a child. "When I was a child I did not say I was Jewish (I looked Russian) because 'Jew' sounded like a curse word. The topic of our Jewishness was not discussed in the family." When pressed, she adds non-conformity to victimhood as the marker of Jewishness. "Non-acceptance of any religion [sic], non-acceptance of general structures of life of that country where they live" unites the Jews. Katia rejects ethnicity as an important, meaningful category. "I don't want to be a nationalist, it carries the most evil."

A very different, atypical but not unique, view is expressed by 37 year old Victoria from Lvov. Jews are defined by being the "chosen people." Jews are soul-relatives on the basis of religion. To be Jewish means "to have something in your soul that makes you feel different from everybody else." Here we have a mixture of Jewishness as religious belief and as a primordial sense of consanguinity. While she denies she is chauvinistic, Victoria--who has changed her name to Esther--expresses anti-Russian sentiments. "I never had a single Russian friend in my life, I could never connect with them, there was some kind of barrier. Maybe because there [in
Russians were persecuted by Ukrainians and so they took out their resentments on the Jews...And yet I was friendly with Ukrainians. There was not a single antisemite among them, but with the Russians it came out sooner or later. And this feeling remained with me until now, even in Israel. Russians are the one people I can't accept; I even like Ethiopians more than Russians.” Victoria mentioned in a different context that she could not get along with her Russian mother-in-law--her husband is half-Jewish--and this played a role in her decision to emigrate. She claims that she has been interested in Jewish history and traditions since she was ten or twelve. She is from Love, and that may be significant.

A somewhat similar case is Y.Z. of Kharkov, just about 18 years old when interviewed, whose grandfather says that nearly everyone in his own family was an atheist, except for one grandmother, but whose father says he was interested in the Jewish holidays. Y.Z. claims that he was always proud of his Jewishness and that “In childhood I would come up to people in my class and ask them if they were Jewish. If they said yes, I congratulated them on the Jewish new year. Everyone thought it was normal.” This is in sharp contrast to many of the middle generations who were not told they were Jewish or, even if they knew, would keep that knowledge to themselves or even deny their Jewishness.

**Judaism and Jewishness**

What might alarm Jews outside the FSU is that while 18 per cent of our Russian respondents and 24 per cent of the Ukrainian respondents say they believe in God--and another 24 per cent of those in Russia and 30 per cent in Ukraine are "inclined to such belief"--only about a third see Judaism as the most attractive religion and over ten per cent see Christianity as most attractive. Only slightly more than half condemn Jews who "turn to Christianity." Thus, on one hand, we are surprised by the relatively high inclination to religious belief, in spite of decades of atheistic propaganda and the near-total absence of religious education in the USSR. On the other hand, we find that religious belief is not necessarily correlated with a preference for Judaism. Moreover, bearing in mind that Orthodox Judaism was historically dominant in the lands of the FSU, it is striking that even among those who are both believers and prefer Judaism, ritual observance is not dramatically greater than among non-believers or those who do not name Judaism as their preferred faith. A majority of those who define themselves as religious do not think they are obligated to keep the Sabbath and kashrut. Perhaps this is because more respondents prefer Reform Judaism than any other variety, though only a third of the sample do so. Still, it is remarkable that in the year preceding the interview, only half the religious people fasted on Yom Kippur or participated in a Passover seder, rituals generally observed by Reform Jews. In all, only half of those affirming Judaism observe the religious laws about which we inquired and a quarter do not observe them at all. Clearly, the term "religious Jews" does not necessarily describe people who adhere to traditional behavioral norms.
There is a strong consensus that Judaism has preserved the Jews as a nation, even among those who are not religious. Over three-quarters of respondents in both Russia and Ukraine agree (half of them “strongly agree”) with this proposition. Yet, many reject the notion that to be Jewish one must practice Judaism. One goes so far as to define ethnicity so independently of religion, that practicing Judaism does not make one a Jew (contrary to Jewish tradition which admits any practitioner of Judaism to the Jewish people). “I can be a French person and practice Judaism, but that does not make me a Jew,” she maintains. More typical is the resident of Ekaterinburg who says, “Judaism is the religion to which most Jews are connected, but it seems to me not to be necessary [to be Jewish.] I think if a person believes in something, let him believe in it--it doesn’t have to be Judaism.” Even more explicit is a St. Petersburger who is a member of Betar, nominally a Zionist nationalist organization although he seems to regard it as more of a social one. “A Jew who practices a religion other than Judaism is not a bad Jew--it’s his choice...If you want to believe in Jesus Christ, believe, please, who forbids you to do so?” All accept Jewish atheists as Jews but many reject Jews as Jews if they take on another religion. A Kievan accepts the idea that one does not have to be religious to be Jewish--“You can be a good Jew without being religious”--but maintains that if a Jew adopts another religion, “he ceases to be a Jew because, even if one is not religious Jewishly, one must “respect the traditions.” Zhanna P., born 1956, from Moscow: “A Jew who is an atheist--this is normal. But to convert to another religion--this is betrayal of your people.” These people seem to be guided by the reasoning behind the Brother Daniel decision, that Jews can be non-religious, but not active practitioners of another religion since Jewishness fuses ethnicity and religion. The religious component can be dropped but not substituted for.

This view is common among diaspora and Israeli Jews, the great majority of whom regard a group such as “Jews for Jesus” as having crossed the boundaries of Jewishness. These would no longer be Jews by religion, of course, and if Russia and Ukraine will no longer officially identify people by nationality, the sense of belonging to a designated ethnic group may also be eroded. Moreover, feelings of kinship may be weakened by intermarriage, emigration and acculturation. This may push those who want to maintain Jewish identity to emigration while others move to assimilation. However, communal reconstruction offers a third option--remaining in Russia or Ukraine but activating a hitherto private Jewish identity by participating in expanding Jewish communal and cultural life.

Friendship and Ethnic Solidarity: Jews, Russians and Ukrainians

Which of the three options is exercised will be determined partially by how comfortable Jews feel in Russia and Ukraine and with which state and people they identify. We have considerable data on perceptions of antisemitism and will analyze them in relation to attitudes toward states and peoples and toward emigration. We have found that very high proportions of the respondents
prefer to have Jewish friends. Asked to recall the nationality of their three closest friends in the FSU, 55 per cent of emigres in Israel, 89 per cent in Chicago, 58 per cent in Russia and 71 per cent in Ukraine mentioned a Jew first. There is a strong sense of affinity with other Jews, though it is somewhat weaker in the youngest cohort queried (ages 18-29 outside the FSU, 16-19 in FSU).

Yet, we also find strong identification with Russian people and Russian culture, as much in Ukraine as in Russia. The majority of respondents describe their "national consciousness" as "both Russian and Jewish." Their "native language" is Russian—only two per cent of Jews in Ukraine listed Ukrainian as their native language in the 1989 census, whereas 91 per cent listed Russian (only seven per cent listed Yiddish).21 There are interesting differences on whether one can be both Russian and Jewish. Of course, most children of mixed marriages think one can. On the other hand, most people of the oldest generation opine that one must be either Russian or Jewish.

In general, there are those who insist that one must be of a single nationality; those who see themselves as "hybrids; and the "internationalists" who are uncomfortable with the very concept of nationality. Ludmila B., a physician born in 1927 in Ukraine, asserts that a person cannot be both Russian and Jewish because "the soul remains Jewish. I grew up in an assimilated family, but all my life my soul would hurt for the Jews." One child of a Russian father and Jewish mother, an electrical engineer, says, "I am a person without a nationality. In Israel, I am of course Jewish...because it is a Jewish country." She is, of course, halachically Jewish but that is not what counts for her: since she has a claim on Jewish identity and Israel is a Jewish country, she emphasizes the Jewish side of her for pragmatic reasons. Subjectively, however, she says "I am proud of both nations [Jewish and Russian] that are present in me. Both of these nations are dear to me." Interestingly, she says that among her Jewish friends she would say that she is Russian and among Russians she would say she is Jewish—"I was proud of my other side." Another older woman, born in Belarus but a long time resident of St. Petersburg, feels that ethnicity is fixed and cannot be re-defined by religion. "I can be a French person and practice Judaism, but that does not make me a Jew!" The "hybrids" explain their position as deriving from the facts of their lives. One respondent in Ukraine observed, "I was raised in Russian culture, but at the same time read Jewish books, sang Ukrainian songs and observed both the Jewish Passover and the Christian Easter. " "We are Jews," says another, "but also to some extent Slavs. This becomes clear especially when people go to Israel." Another opined that "The traditions of the Russian and Jewish people intertwined in such a way that they are neither Russian nor Jewish but some kind of a special hybrid people." One person explained that "My Jewishness lies in my descent, and my non-Jewishness derives from the environment in which I live." Asked to define his national consciousness, another stated: "I feel myself a Russian of Jewish origin living in a Ukrainian environment." Similarly, a nearly 30 year old resident of St. Petersburg argues that if a Jew knows
nothing of Jewish tradition and history, and has no pride in his Jewishness, he is a “Russian, simply of Jewish nationality.”

These subtleties are of no interest to the “internationalists.” “A person should think of himself as an individual and not as a member of a nation [natsiia].” Another, who defined his national consciousness as “internationalist,” and refused to be categorized as a Jew or Russian, explained that “I was raised in an international environment.”

Those who emigrated to Israel are less inclined to speak of a dual national consciousness and mixed identity than those in Russia and Ukraine, probably for the obvious reason that they now live in a Jewish state and within a Jewish culture.

Thus far, we have been considering the issue of dual ethnicity (“nationality” in Soviet terms). However, the issue of multiple national identity arises in a new form in the post-Soviet period. The Russian Federation and Ukraine have defined themselves as civic, not ethnic, states—that is, multinational states united by territory and political allegiance rather than by descent, language and culture. Therefore, a Jew and other non-Russians can be a Rossiyanan, a “Russian” in the civic sense, as compared to a “Russkii,” a Russian by ethnicity. The Jew can hold a Russian civic identity, as he once had a Soviet civic identity, along with a Jewish ethnic identity. A young woman in Moscow, half-Jewish and half-Russian, says that even if both parents were Jewish she would consider herself a Russian Jew. “Of course,” says a young citizen of Ukraine, “you can be a Rossiyanan, or a Ukrainian, or a Frenchman, or an Uzbek, but Jewish by nationality.” For another citizen of Ukraine, the issue is not so simple. Ethnically, he asserts, “your origins don’t allow you to be more than one thing.” He loves both Russian [he does not mention Ukrainian] and Jewish cultures, “but how to be [Russian and Jewish] simultaneously? I don’t know.” As a citizen of Ukraine, with family roots there going back hundreds of years, he insists that he is as Ukrainian as ethnic Ukrainians. Moreover, “I consider the Israeli army to be ‘ours,’ but I also consider ‘ours’ the army of the country in which I live and in which I served. I would hate, really hate, to fight in a war between these two armies, because I would not know on which side of the barricades to stand. And one cannot stand on both sides!” An older man, born in pre-war Romania and married to a Ukrainian, makes his loyalty to Ukraine conditional. If the state treats a Jew equally with others, the Jew must be a patriot of that country. One can be Jewish ethnically and a loyal “Ukrainian” in the civic sense as long as Ukraine will treat Jews “as equal members of the family.”

Though they may resent unequal treatment by others, Jews, like other persecuted peoples, are not immune to ethnic prejudice. Most express a liking for Russians and Ukrainians and their culture. When asked to describe the differences between Jews and Russians or Ukrainians, many will do so in value-neutral ways. The Jewish table has much to eat and little to drink, and on the Russian table the proportions are reversed, asserts a young resident of Russia. Jewish families are
close, intense, emotional, and the Jewish mother treats her offspring like children well into adulthood, whereas Russians pay less attention to their children but the latter are more independent. But a half-Jewish woman in Odessa considers Russians “boors, not all of them, but the majority.” They are aggressive, with a strong inclination to drink. On the other hand, she says, “I can’t imagine a Jewish alcoholic, a Jewish drug addict,” though she admits that “There are no-good people among Jews, too, but they’re a minority.” An older Jewish woman points with approval to what she describes as Russians’ pride in themselves and their culture, whereas Jews suppress their pride and keep a low profile—just the opposite image of that of another respondent who praised Jews for their pride and criticized Russians for being indifferent to their nationality. The same contradictory opinions are expressed about Ukrainians. One Ukrainian Jew characterizes the “typical Ukrainian [as] a person with an inferiority complex...because of his meager history and the weakness of his culture. That’s why he must always try so hard to talk about his culture more than it deserves and about his history more than it is worth.” Ukrainians whose national pride was hurt by the Soviets “start to search for those who are to blame. An of course, the Jews are the ones.” But other Ukrainians are “fine people and there’s no problem dealing with them.” Another Ukrainian Jew prefers Ukrainians to Russians because “they are softer” and easy to get along with.

As we have seen, Jews prefer other Jews as friends. But they do not extrapolate this preference to a sense of kinship with Jews the world over. Indeed, we find rather weak identification with Jews not only in the rest of the world but even in non-European parts of the FSU. Only 41 per cent in Russia and 51 per cent in Ukraine agree with the statement that “Jews all over the world constitute a single people.” Some say Jews are one people, some say they are a people united by religion, many say that the different groups in Israel—reference is most frequently made to Moroccan and Ethiopian Jews—“prove” that Jews are not a single people. A woman who visited Israel from Russia observes, “I saw this in Israel—it’s Pinsk, Minsk, and others, and Moscow and Leningrad, these are totally different people! Absolutely!” Hanna G., born in 1912 in Belarus, says that Jews are not a nation. “I think that a Georgian Jew is a Georgian.” Her daughter, born in 1944 to a Russian father and her Jewish mother, agrees: “I do not think that a Jew from Yemen and a Jew from St. Petersburg are people of the same nationality....I do not know what unites them.” Anna from Kiev, born in 1922, does not think even FSU Jews constitute a single people. “Georgian Jews are more Georgians, Jews from Bukhara are more Uzbeks, it’s difficult to tell them apart.” One person found it very difficult to say whether Jews are a single people. “A religious Jew of African descent, a Black, is probably a better Jew than I am. The fact that he’s black, so what? It changes nothing. It’s very hard for me to consider him a close relative. It’s an ethnic difference....I don’t know.” However, the most
frequent response was a variant on the theme that Jews constitute a single entity (nation, nationality, people) with many sub-groups.

In Russia, two-thirds of those interviewed said they feel "spiritually and culturally" closer to the Russians of their city than to Georgian, Bukharan, or Mountain Jews, and 46 per cent said they feel closer to local Russians than to Jews in Belarus or Ukraine (from whence most Russian Jews originate). Twenty per cent feel equally close to both, and 16 per cent feel closer to the non-Russian Jews. In Ukraine, half the respondents claimed to feel "equally close" to local Ukrainians, local Russians and Russian Jews. In contrast to Russian Jews, more Ukrainian Jews feel affinity for Russian Jews than they do for local Russians, and they feel greater affinity for local Russians than for Ukrainians. Like Russian Jews, they are distant from the non-Ashkenazic Jews, though less so than Russian Jews. Other measures also indicate that Jews in Ukraine have a more powerful sense of Jewish kinship and affinity than Jews in Russia.

For historical, cultural and possibly economic reasons, Ukrainian Jews are less attached to their country and its dominant people than Russian Jews are to theirs. While 54 per cent of our respondents in Russia and 47 per cent of those in Ukraine said that "there is much that is Russian in me," only eight per cent of those in Ukraine said "there is much that is Ukrainian in me." Ukrainian Jews have emigrated in greater proportions than Jews from Russia. From 1973-1993, over 212,000 Jews emigrated from Russia, but over 291,000 did so from Ukraine, despite the fact that the Russian Jewish population was somewhat larger. Our survey data help clarify that this is not necessarily out of greater fears of antisemitism—surprisingly, our Russian respondents are more apprehensive on this score than those in Ukraine—but for complex familial, cultural and historical reasons that I am exploring. Curiously, Ukrainian Jews have emigrated to the United States in greater proportions than Russian Jews, who are more inclined toward Israel. Between 1974 and 1994, more than twice as many Jews came from Ukraine to the U.S. as came from Russia, though the base populations were roughly the same, despite the seemingly greater Jewish consciousness of Ukrainian Jews. I have explored this paradox elsewhere.

Hebrew, Yiddish and Ethnic Identity

What role does language play in FSU Jews' conception of Jewishness? After all, language is not merely a neutral instrument of communication. For many of its users, a particular language evokes associations, memories, and emotions, thereby affirming, strengthening and, in some cases, even creating, allegiances. In some instances, language is contentious and crucial because it is an instrument of state-building, as in Tanzania and the former USSR; for others, it is the primary symbol of the nation rather than of the state. In Israel, Hebrew has been an instrument of both state and nation building. For some peoples language is their defining characteristic or a critical issue. For example, in Quebec, Belgium, Estonia and Catalonia language is a central issue. For
other peoples, language is not at issue. The war in Bosnia involves one group of people who speak Serbian and Croatian against two others speaking the same languages.

For Jews, language has not been a powerful nexus for ethnic identity because they have adopted and dropped languages—Aramaic, Judaeo-Espanol, Judaeo-Persian, Tat, Yiddish and others—over the centuries. They have elevated Hebrew to the status of *lashon hakodesh* (the holy tongue) but have taken a pragmatic, instrumental attitude to vernaculars. By contrast, beginning with Stalin's 1913 dictum that language is a crucial component of nationhood, it played a major role in the Soviet conception of nationality and in Soviet nationality policy. Hebrew was outlawed as the language of the "clericals, Zionists and bourgeoisie," and Yiddish, the "language of the toiling masses," was made the official Jewish language. Most Jews rejected Soviet Yiddish and its culture for reasons I discuss elsewhere. The percentage of Jews naming Yiddish as their mother tongue declined from 73 per cent in 1926 to eleven per cent in 1989. Today, in both Russia and Ukraine, Hebrew is seen as more desirable to learn than Yiddish as can be seen in the table below, reporting our survey results.

### Necessity or Desirability of Learning Yiddish and Hebrew

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To Learn Yiddish</th>
<th>To Learn Hebrew</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absolutley necessary</td>
<td>Russia 6.3%</td>
<td>Ukraine 16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Russia 17.3%</td>
<td>Ukraine 20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desirable</td>
<td>Russia 26.5%</td>
<td>Ukraine 39.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Russia 39.8%</td>
<td>Ukraine 42.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Necessary</td>
<td>Russia 59.8%</td>
<td>Ukraine 37.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Russia 37.8%</td>
<td>Ukraine 35.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know, no answer</td>
<td>Russia 7.4%</td>
<td>Ukraine 5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Russia 1.6%</td>
<td>Ukraine 1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whereas a third in Russia are positive about learning Yiddish, 57% feel that way about Hebrew; in Ukraine, part of the former Pale of Settlement, familiarity with Yiddish is greater and attitudes toward it are more positive. But even in Ukraine, where 53% think it desirable or necessary to learn Yiddish, 63 percent feel that way about Hebrew. No doubt, Hebrew's advantage lies in its being the language of Israel, where many of the respondents see their future or that of their children. Thirty-five per cent in Russia and nearly half in Ukraine think they will emigrate, and in both republics over 40 per cent think that their emigration will be to Israel. Perhaps that is why 64 percent of all respondents say they would like their children to learn Hebrew. Their preference for Hebrew is doubtless based on pragmatic, not ideological, considerations.

Analyzing the data by age produces interesting findings. The oldest cohort feels very much the same about both Yiddish and Hebrew, perhaps because their personal attachment to Yiddish is as strong as any pragmatic calculation about Hebrew, or because they recognize the languages as of equal cultural significance. But all the rest of the cohorts value Hebrew more than Yiddish, the two youngest groups most of all. Perhaps it is because the youngest are the most likely to emigrate to Israel. Yet, the very youngest group is second only to the very oldest in its valuation of Yiddish, one-third asserting that it is necessary or desirable to know that language. This may
reflect a greater interest in Jewish culture on the part of the young, who had least experience with Soviet rule and whose possibilities for becoming familiar with Jewish culture are greater than those of any other cohort.

**Participation in Jewish Public Life**

The Soviet state first controlled and then abolished all Jewish public activity. Beginning in 1988, however, grassroots efforts created several hundred mainly local Jewish organizations in all parts of the FSU. Our survey shows that the extent of involvement in organized Jewish life is still quite limited. Only nine per cent of Russian respondents and 15 per cent in Ukraine claim membership in any Jewish organization, though there are significant differences by cities (from a high of 22 and 24 per cent in Chernivtsi and Lviv, to a low of 5-6 per cent in Odessa and St. Petersburg). Over 40 per cent are unaware even of the existence of local Jewish organizations, and about half of those who know of them say they have no interest in participating in their activities. Lack of involvement in Jewish life is likely due to several factors: disinterest in Jewish matters, the novelty of such involvement and of the organizations, and the likelihood that many in the FSU still understand organizational involvement as an imposed obligation rather than a voluntary choice. There are two significant findings from the data: 1) the most active groups are the oldest--those with the most time for such activity--and the youngest--those with the least exposure to Soviet "activism;" 2) there is a positive correlation between strength of Jewish background and consciousness and Jewish activism. This means that activism is not random and, perhaps, that organizational involvement itself strengthens Jewish consciousness and commitment. An important aim of the follow-up survey is to determine whether and where affiliation with Jewish organizations has grown and how perceptions of these organizations have changed.

**Interrmarriage and Jewish Identity**

Interrmarriage, high mortality and low fertility are undermining the biological base of Jewishness. In 1988, 48 per cent of Soviet Jewish women and 58 per cent of Jewish men who married, married non-Jews. In 1989, Jewish deaths in the USSR exceeded births by about 3:1--4:1 in the RSFSR--and the ratio has widened to 7:1 since. A quarter of our respondents have spouses who have no Jewish ancestry at all and another two per cent are in marriages where both spouses are of partially non-Jewish descent. Among our respondents, only 54 per cent asserted that Jews should not marry non-Jews. As expected, older Jews were more opposed to intermarriage than younger Jews. Moreover, a third of those advocating marriage only to Jews claim they would not be upset were their children to marry non-Jews. As noted earlier, mixed marriages are now very widespread among FSU Jews. It is therefore important to determine what consequences this has for the Jewish collectively. For now we will limit our attention to the personal level.

We asked people to characterize their relationships with their spouses and the degree of happiness in their marriages. Marriages between Jews and non-Jews are characterized as less
happy than those with two Jewish partners. Women in mixed marriages are more unhappy than men. When we inquired whether spouses agreed on politics, cultural issues, child raising, "marital life" and Jewish issues, we find considerable disagreement on Jewish issues in mixed marriages (far less so in Jewish-Jewish marriages), and that this is a more contentious issue than politics, culture, child raising and marital life. Respondents in mixed marriages are significantly less apt to characterize the atmosphere in their households as Jewish than those in endogenous marriages. Issues of intermarriage and its consequences are hotly debated in the United States and, pending further analysis of our data, we shall not draw conclusions from our observations so far.

**Emigration**

One of the most positive developments in the post-Soviet period, unrestricted emigration, is also one of the greatest impediments to the reconstruction of Jewish life in the FSU. Half the respondents in Ukraine express some intention to emigrate and about a third in Russia do so. This is another piece of evidence of the greater integration of Russian Jews into their country than that of Ukrainian Jews. Another part of the explanation is that Jews in Ukraine perceive their economic situation more negatively than do Jews in Russia and so have less reason to stay.

As in most migrations, the young, most energetic and entrepreneurial elements of the population are overrepresented in the emigration from the FSU, depriving the remaining Jews of their talents, energies, and resources. The emigration was previously driven by Zionism, desire for political and cultural freedom, as well as for economic opportunity, and later (1989-92) by the rise of grassroots antisemitism and the collapse of the Soviet order. More recently, it seems to be largely a "chain migration," where the presence of family members and friends in Israel and the United States draws those in the FSU to migrate.

Among our respondents, nearly half have close relatives in Israel or the United States. Astonishingly, four of five have some kind of relatives in these countries, 46 per cent of them with relatives in both. One-third have first-degree relatives in Israel, and only six per cent have no relatives at all there. Twenty per cent have first degree relatives in the U.S. Under current American law, this by itself predicts to a lower rate of immigration to the United States than to Israel. We have developed an "index of attractiveness" to each country and find that Israel's "attractivity" is 2.5 times greater than that of the United States only on the basis of the presence of relatives and not taking account of economic, political and cultural factors.

When those who say they intend to emigrate are asked to what country they intend to emigrate, 43 per cent say Israel, 33 per cent say the U.S., and five per cent name Germany. Indeed, in recent years, about 65,000 FSU Jews have immigrated annually to Israel and about 30,000 to the U.S. The objective possibility of immigrating to Israel is greater than its subjective attraction.
Family ties are less important for younger groups in choosing to which country to immigrate. They are focused more on economic and educational opportunities. Older people are more concerned with where they will be better off as dependents. This is probably the reason that while nearly half of those over the age of 50 mention Israel as their likely destination, only about a third of those under 40 do so. To test this, we asked, not about respondents’ own motivations for emigrating--fearing that the answers would be cliches and slogans--but why they thought others leave. Over 55 per cent of those younger than 40 think that others leave for a "better life," while only 39 per cent think emigration is motivated primarily by the desire to escape antisemitism. Among the older cohorts, antisemitism is cited much more frequently. Finally, we find--counter-intuitively--that those who feel worst off economically are less inclined to emigrate than those who see themselves as better off. This requires further analysis, but a tentative hypothesis is that people with the lowest incomes are the least entrepreneurial and the least likely to undertake the risky venture of emigration.

What Is Left to Be Done?

Space limitations preclude further discussion of our preliminary findings or even of the many areas explored in our survey. We are working on further analyses of the survey data. This includes: analysis of data on questions such as antisemitism; analyses of open-ended questions, now coded; systematic and comprehensive comparisons by republics, cities and the standard demographic variables (age, gender, education, occupation; and analysis of 150 in-depth interviews with Soviet immigrants, collected by the Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, focused on Jewish identity. Interviews were conducted with three members of different generations in a single family, so that changes over historical periods could be observed. In 1996, another 39 interviews of the same type were conducted with recent immigrants to Israel from the cities in Ukraine and Russia in which we did our surveys, and 64 in-depth interviews were conducted in those cities themselves, eight in each of our survey sites.

We have published some articles and have begun to write a book based largely on our survey and the in-depth interviews. But we realize that our findings are only a "snapshot" of a moving and rapidly changing scene. Therefore, we would like to replicate our survey in 1997-8 to see what changes have taken place in the beliefs, attitudes and reported behavior of Russian and Ukrainian Jews in the past three to four years. We have much of the funding for this and have begun our field work in Moscow.

Conclusion

The Soviet state created, destroyed and imposed national identities, setting their boundaries and cultural contents. Most post-Soviet states are less involved in this activity and people are more
free to choose their identities, establish boundaries that mark off one group from another, and determine both individually and communally the meaning or cultural content of their identities. This study shows that Jews in Russia and Ukraine perceive their identities differently, have a variety of ways of expressing them, and different affect toward them. This dissensus is likely to be not a feature peculiar to the transition from state-imposed identity and state-managed expression of that identity. It is a long-term fact of Jewish life, and not only in Russia and Ukraine. Our research shows that the content of Jewishness for post-Soviet Jews is not religious. Nor is it the rich secular culture based on Yiddish which was eradicated with its bearers in the Holocaust. Post-Soviet Jewish culture is not “thick” culture. Can “thin” culture and “symbolic ethnicity” sustain Jewish identity, and for how long? The American experience shows that they are weak reeds on which to lean. Perhaps boundaries, maintained both by Jews and non-Jews, will suffice to keep the group distinct. Both the practice and attitudes of post-Soviet Jews regarding intermarriage suggest otherwise. Though Jews have managed to preserve a sense of common identity while they differed over the content of that identity, a lack of agreement on the boundaries of Jewishness is more troublesome.

The problem of content and boundaries is not only an internal affair of post-Soviet Jews. We have seen that for them the once inextricable link between religion and ethnicity is gone. But it remains fundamental to much of world Jewry. Moreover, the criteria for admission to the Jewish club that are set in the Jewish world, though by no means uniform, are not shared by a significant portion of post-Soviet Jewry. This means that the gatekeepers of that club have three choices: they can abandon the rules altogether and adopt the suggestion of some of our respondents that “whoever thinks he or she is a Jew, is a Jew.” They can modify the rules for admission, but if they do so extensively the rules can become so loose as to be inoperative or meaningless. Or, they can stick to the rules they have evolved and turn away many who seek admission. Those rejected may form their own, competing “Jewish club,” or they may turn away from the gates and seek their identities elsewhere. Ironically, the Leninist solution to the “Jewish problem”—the abandonment of Jewish religion and culture and the acceptance of Jews into the folds of other nations—may be more likely in the post-Communist states than in the state Lenin envisioned and partly constructed. But it may be possible to infuse cultural and religious content into the largely hollow shell of Soviet Jewish identity. Whatever will be the choices made, for once, the choice of being Jewish and defining its meaning is up to the Jews themselves.
Notes


6. Stevens argues that "reliance on marriage and birth for membership [in a political community] are not features specific to monarchies, but [are] exercised with special force in republics and democracies...." ibid., 24.


10. I have in mind, of course, the case of Brother Daniel (Oswald Rufesien), a Jewish-born Carmelite monk who wanted to acquire Israeli citizenship under the "Law of Return," which grants it automatically to Jews, on the ground that his ethnicity (nationality) was Jewish while his religion was Catholic. The Israeli Supreme Court rejected the claim, arguing that historically the conventional understanding of being Jewish excluded practice of a non-Jewish faith, though it did not preclude non-belief. The court ruled that "Judaism is a status [sic; I have not seen the original but surmise that "yahadut" is being translated as Judaism, a faith, whereas it seems to mean "Jewishness" in this context]; and status is indivisible....The basic attitude, that 'Jew' and 'Christian' are two mutually exclusive titles, is shared by all, whether it be the mass of the people or the scholars; none of these can consider an apostate as a member of the Jewish nation." Supreme Court Decision 72/62, in Itamar Rabinovich and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., Israel in the Middle East (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984) 153. The same logic would seem to apply in the more troubling case of "Jews for Jesus."


13. For an elaboration of this argument, see Zvi Gitelman, "Boundaries, Content and Jewish Identity in an Age of Contradictions," Jewish Social Studies, forthcoming.

14. The seminal work on boundaries is Frederik Barth, Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: the Social Organization of Cultural Difference (Boston: Little, Brown, 1964). A recent article points out that boundaries may be set by ethnic group awareness, "the recognition that common ascriptive characteristics are shared among a set of individuals, without any salience necessarily being placed on these commonalities;" by ethnic solidarity, which "indicates that social resources of some type (affectual, cultural, organisational) are shared among a set of individuals with common ascriptive characteristics;" or by "the ascriptive criteria that determine membership in particular groups organised for collective action." Sun-ki Chai, "A Theory of Ethnic Group Boundaries," Nations and Nationalism, 2, 2 (July 1996) 282.


16. A play on the fifth line of the internal passport, designating nationality.


22. For a detailed argument, see Zvi Gitelman, "Choosing Countries, Communities and Cultures: Jews in Post-Soviet Ukraine," paper presented to the Fifth World Congress of the International Council for Central and East European Studies, Warsaw, August 1995.


29. Five per cent name another country and the rest either don’t know (10 per cent) or say they will go “to any country” (4 per cent).