Fear, Imagination, and Public Representations of 'Western Citizenship' Among Jewish-Israeli Activists in Toronto

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Abstract

In this paper, I examine personal imaginings and public representations of belonging and citizenship among a group of Jewish-Israeli immigrants who are active in pro-Israeli political demonstrations such as protests, rallies, and marches (which in recent years have become sites of clashes with local pro-Palestinian groups calling for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel). Using a set of one-on-one interviews and observations as starting points, I interrogate these activists' motivations for their political activity. In particular, I look at the meanings and values that these activists assign to their political memberships within Israeli and Canadian societies by analyzing the ways in which they explain their participation in pro-Israeli public events in the city. More broadly, I use these discussions to help illustrate ways in which contemporary discourses of fear and national security in Canada, Israel, and globally, allow Canadian-based immigrants from Israel to imagine and display coherence between their multiple political allegiances and racial positions by assuming the role of defenders of Western societal ideals.

Keywords

migration, emotions, citizenship, race, Israel, Jews

Introduction

In this paper, I examine personal imaginings and public representations of belonging and citizenship among a group of Jewish-Israeli immigrants who are active in pro-Israeli political demonstrations such as protests, rallies, and marches. In recent years, these pro-Israeli public events have become sites of clashes with local pro-Palestinian groups calling for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel[1]. Using a set of one-on-one interviews and observations as starting points, I interrogate these activists' motivations for their political activity. In particular, I look at the meanings and values that these activists assign to their political memberships within Israeli and Canadian societies by analyzing the ways in which they explain their participation in pro-Israeli public events in the city. More broadly, I use these discussions to help illustrate ways in which contemporary discourses of fear and national security in Canada, Israel, and globally, allow Canadian-based Jewish immigrants from Israel to imagine and display coherence between their multiple political allegiances and racial positions by assuming the role of defenders of Western societal ideals.

As I show, contemporary geo-politically-informed fears regarding immigration from non-Western countries and Islamic terrorism in the West play a central role in shaping the imaginative geographies of belonging and citizenship amongst Israeli activists in Toronto. The participants in this study, who come from racially diverse Jewish-Israeli backgrounds, are navigating their allegiances to different states and cultures (Israel and Canada, Judaism and Christianity) and their differences from the Canadian mainstream (in religion, appearance, etc.) through participation in public activism. Their pro-Israel political activism in Toronto is informed by their perceptions of Canadian and 'Western' citizenship, and these perceptions allow them to imagine themselves as defenders of, rather than threats to, Canadian and 'Western Citizenship'.

The interview excerpts presented in this paper have been chosen from a set of forty-eight in-depth interviews which I conducted between February 2011 and August 2014. Some prospective participants were recruited through flyers that I personally handed out during a number of communal public events, but most were contacted through a "snowball sampling". The interviews were conducted face to face and were carried out in Hebrew. The majority of the participants were second generation Israelis, born and raised in Israel to families of diverse (Middle Eastern- and European- Jewish) ancestries and have lived in the GTA between 5-15 years. Most of them were educated, middle class, and secular or *masorti* ('traditional', meaning religiously and culturally observant but non-orthodox). As a Jewish

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[1] BDS is a global campaign targeted against Israeli firms, organizations, and institutions, which is intended to remain in effect "until Israel complies with international law and Palestinian rights". The campaign was initiated by Palestinian civil society in 2005, and is coordinated by the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC), established in 2007.

immigrant who was born and raised in Israel (to a family of Libyan decent) and is now living in Toronto, I shared many these characteristics with the participants.

The article also presents empirical material from field observations at various pro-Israeli public events, including large solidarity celebrations on Israeli Independence Day and smaller ones staged in support of the Israeli state during confrontations between Israel and Palestine. They also include fundraising marches such as the United Jewish Appeal's annual 'Walk with Israel', and counter-demonstrations against groups calling for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israel.

I begin with a brief exploration of the contemporary geo-politically-informed fears cited and alluded to by many of the participants in this study. I then discuss the evolution of Jewish citizenship and racial identity in the West before moving into the interviews and discussion.

Fear and the resurgence of Western citizenship

Following the attacks of 9/11 in New York and Washington and those inspired by ISIL (the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) in Europe and North America more recently, narratives of security in politics and the media have in recent years returned to a portrayal of Western nations as being vulnerable to abuse of their liberal openness to non-white, non-Western immigrants and refugees, particularly those from the 'Middle East' (Ahmed, 2004; Razack, 2007; Pain and Smith, 2008; Rana, 2011). According to Pain and Smith (2008, 4), the terrorist attacks of 9/11 "acted to crystalize the emotional landscape of the west […] which had been developed for some time" (ibid). Driven by a 'new' geo-politics of fear (Pain and Smith, 2008, 1), the transnational identities, allegiances, and practices of (legal and illegal) non-white and non-Western newcomers in Western countries have been linked to the threat of terrorism and the erosion of white and Western national culture, with Muslim communities (and others mistakenly perceived as 'Muslim', 'Arab', or 'Middle Eastern') in particular increasingly defined as a potential threat to state security due their perceived religious affiliation with Islamic radicals, hostile states, and terrorist groups (Hopkins, 2016). Negative emotions (of fear and hate) have, increasingly, been directed towards asylum-seekers, migrants and religious minorities across the West (Ahmed, 2004; Nayak, 2011). With this, a rise in nationalist sentiments has led to a resurgence in the everyday importance of the formal institution of citizenship, tying it more explicitly to racialized notions of belonging to the nation (Pain and smith, 2008; xv; Nagel and Staeheli, 2004; Arat Koc, 2005; Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2006; Razack 2007; Gilroy 2008), even within officially multicultural nation-states such as Canada. Indeed, alongside Canada's increasing diversity, newcomers have faced the state implicit and explicit demands to not only embrace, but to outwardly *demonstrate* their acceptance of and belonging to Western ideals of citizenship (Arat Koc, 2005).

Yet, according to Rachel Pain (2009), widely felt emotions, such as fear of 'others' and otherness, do not only act *on* migrants; particularly where fear is motivated by geo-political phenomena such as terrorism and international conflict, it can also manifest in and through the actions of newcomers as they navigate their different national, cultural, racial, and religious attachments and affiliations. These actions can vary greatly depending on the racial, religious, political, or socio-economic positions of the migrants as individuals, making it important to pay attention to their own narratives and perspectives on exclusion and belonging, as well as to their own fears, as informed by their previous life experiences.

As a result of rising popular discourse of a supposed "clash of civilizations" (Huntington, 1996) between the West (generally portrayed as modern, liberal, and secular) and the Islamic world (often portrayed as backwards, repressive, and fundamentally religious), especially over the past 15-20 years, the longstanding Orientalized geographical imaginations that separate the Judeo-Christian or secular West and the Arab/Muslim world have been further sharpened (e.g., Said, 1978; Gregory, 2004; Mamdani, 2005; Arat Koc, 2005; Frankenberg, 2005; Gilroy, 2008; Razack, 2007; Kalmar, 2013). This framing involves a number of novel and problematic constructions with respect to the framing of the role of Jews, and of Israeli Jews, which have barely been explored.

Historical re-alignment of Jewish citizenship

The idea of 'Judeo-Christian' solidarity is largely a recent one, anomalous in the history of Jewish-Christian relations over the last two millennia. Jews have, in the Western imagination, 'graduated' through a series of racialized periods: from pre-modern, religious-based racialization, in which Jews were lumped alongside other non-Christians such as Muslims, to the disastrous, biologically based racialization of the 19th – mid 20th century (in which Jews were classified as 'Semites', a pseudo-scientific category that also includes Arabs). After the Nazi Holocaust, the public repudiation of official racialization, and the migration of large numbers of Jews from Eastern Europe to North America, Western Jews were re-classified under the cultural label of 'white ethnicity', in which they are currently situated (Jacobson, 1998; Brodkin, 1998; Train, 2000; Goldstein, 2007; Bakan, 2014). This progression allows us to see the shifting identification of Jews in Western spaces, and the changing role of Jews vis-à-vis Muslims, Arabs, and the 'East' in general.

The first two stages of anti-Jewish discrimination (up to the Holocaust) placed Jews together with other 'Semites' or 'Orientals' as eternal outsiders to the imaginative geographic construction of 'the West' (Said, 1978). This was the historic departure point of Zionism. Zionism, from its inception, embodied a self-conscious desire to 'rebuild the Jew' as a way of moving European Jews from their historical position as the perennial 'outsiders' towards one of belonging in the so-called 'family of nations'. This process, which culminated in the geo-political alignment of the newly established State of Israel towards the West, has involved a

re-calibration of Jewish identity vis-à-vis other 'Oriental' peoples (particularly Arabs and Muslims) with whom Jews were historically identified (Shohat, 2003). As the Palestinian scholar Edward Said (1978, 306) has noted: "by Zionism 'Semitics' were split into two" – Jews invited into the 'Western' family and Arabs left out as inferior others. One particular manifestation of this was a post-War embrace of Jewish Israel as a useful ally of the Christian West in the Middle East, long a strategically important region.

With the strongly Western geo-political orientation of the modern State of Israel from its founding in 1948, the reciprocal embrace of Zionism in Western politics (see for example Gregory, 2004, 76-8), and the growing acceptance of Jews into the political and economic spheres of Western countries, Jews largely overcame the Oriental Semitic Other-ness with which they were for so long associated (Kalmar, 2013, 504), and became increasingly absorbed into the same construct of a single "Judeo-Christian" identity that 'permitted' many Jews living in the West into whiteness (Bakan, 2014). Jews in the West, particularly in North America, underwent a transformation from being seen as a stateless diaspora to a politicised, Western-oriented lobby group with power in the Middle East (Bakan, 2014). As we will see, this geo-political alliance has strongly influenced the identifications of migrants from Israel in Western countries such as Canada, even when their appearance, accents, and mannerisms might otherwise be seen as foreign and non-Western.

A number of recent factors have contributed to the strengthening of new geo-political alliances with respect to Israel (and by extension, Jews). For instance, the contemporaneous adoption of mass attack methods such as suicide bombings by Palestinian militant groups during the Second Palestinian *Intifada* (uprising) in the early 2000s in the same period as the terrorist attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001 and other attacks in Europe, was an opportunity for the Israeli government to argue to the Western public that Israel and the West share a common battle against Islamic terrorism. Successive Israeli government regimes have thus framed the Israel/Palestine conflict as a forefront battle in the "clash of civilizations" between the enlightened 'Judeo-Christian' West and the irrational and fundamental 'Muslim World', rather than as a national or territorial conflict (Gregory, 2004; Abu Laban and Bakan, 2008). Feelings of fear amongst Israelis (stemming from a seemingly perpetual state of war along with traumatic memories of Holocaust and dislocation from former homelands) have thus been discursively tied to generalised anxieties about terrorism and cultural 'invasion' in the West.

Despite a long history of similarity, post 9/11 anxieties about Islamic fundamentalist terrorism, combined with global racialized public discourses of Arab and Islamic cultural backwardness, have situated Muslims and Jews unequally in the Western national polity, and have greatly differentiated their everyday experiences and symbolic belongings in Western cities (Ahmed, 2004; Razack, 2007). As I discuss in this paper, a desire to affirm and reinforce this relatively new position of belonging in the West, coupled with persistent fear of

losing this safety, informs the values and meanings that Israeli activists assign to their national citizenship in Israel and in Canada; their motivations to join pro-Israeli public events in Toronto; and their negotiations between conflicting and intersecting national loyalties during these events.

Fear of precarious citizenship

In recent years feminist and anti-racist scholars have drawn our attention the embodied nature of emotions and the work they do in shaping both individual and collective bodies. Sara Ahmed's (2004) theorization of emotions and the work they do resonates with work on geographies of emotion. She rejects the popular understanding of emotions as either private psychological dispositions or collective feelings. Ahmed argues, rather, that emotions in fact mediate the relationships between these realms, and between individual bodily space and collective social space, by producing "the very surfaces and boundaries that allow the individual and the social to be delineated" (10). Drawing from feminist work on emotions, Anoop Nayak (2011, 555) asserts that social and cultural geographers must engage with emotions when studying the lived experience of citizenship, belonging and race, as many of our ideas around them are figured through emotions, in particular, fear (see also Ahmed, 2004).

In this section, I look at the ways in which perceived fears of anti-Western radical Islamic terrorism, anti-Semitism, and Jewish vulnerability shape the meanings that members of the Israeli community assign to their Israeli and Canadian citizenship as well as their motivations to join pro-Israeli public events in Toronto.

When I ask Ron, a forty-five year old engineer of *Ashkenazi* (East-European Jewish) descent, why he participates in these events, he states,

> I have left Israel. Now I am living here and I have my Canadian citizenship, and […] everything is really nice for me here. But I know from our history that without Israel, my Canadian citizenship means nothing - I can throw it into the garbage. Israel has our back here whether we want to admit it or not.

He goes to argue,

> My greatest fear is that we will lose Israel to the Arabs and will be back to square one, helpless, like in the period of the Holocaust. Who can promise that it won't happen to us again? Where would we go? Who will accept us? Did you now that even Canada also refused to accept Jews during the Holocaust? What will happen if tomorrow Canada will have a Muslim prime Minister?

Ron believes that Canadian citizenship is valuable (or valid) only when the existence of the Jewish state is fully secured, telling me that to feel safe as a Jew in Canada (and presumably elsewhere) requires Israel having our "back". He refers to

the Holocaust, and in particular, to the situation of European Jews at the height of their persecution by the Nazis as the ultimate proof that citizenship status outside the Jewish state has proven to be precarious for Jews. That the process of stripping European Jews of their citizenship rights culminated in the attempted extermination of the entire 'Jewish race' and the death of six million Jewish civilians, undoubtedly adds considerable emotional weight to these feelings. Ron is convinced that if a second Holocaust occurs, Jews will remain without shelter, "even in Canada", referring to Canada's poor record of protecting Jews during the Holocaust (see Abella and Troper, 1983).

Of particular interest to me is how Ron implicitly identifies Arabs/Muslims as the future carriers of the anti-Semitic threat, voiced in his fear that Canada will have a Muslim prime Minister in the future. With this statement, he connects what he has learned growing up in Israel to be the ultimate threat for Jewish survival – Muslim hatred of Jews - to his life in Canada. The connection that Ron draws between "Muslims" and the anti-Semitic threat is informed by the longstanding public discourse in Israel, which has connected the Arab-Israeli conflict both to religion and to the past trauma of the Holocaust. Indeed, the Holocaust functions as a filter through which Israelis interpret global and domestic political and social crises. The memory of the Holocaust, still strong on a personal level amongst the politically dominant *Ashkenazi* minority in Israel, as well as amongst many North African-Israeli Jews who also experienced the Holocaust under European colonialism of Morocco, Algeria, Libya, and Tunisia, is also often utilized by official voices as a political tool to bond Jews and to explain the state's security problems (Zandberg, 2006). The trauma of the Holocaust also enables many groups in Israeli society "to ground their identities in oppressed memories of victimhood while ignoring […] their role as victimizers" (Hagin and Yosef, 2013, 2). Introduced to children at an early age, the lesson of the Holocaust (as communicated in the education system and the army) is that a strong Jewish state is the only solution to the perpetual, even eternal danger of global anti-Semitism, and that such a state must be preserved as an "insurance policy" to protect against such danger not only within Israel, but around the world (Balsam, 2011, 86). This is the ideal that Ron refers to when explaining his participation in pro-Israel activities. Dina, a fifty-eight year old travel agent and Israeli-born Jew of Yemeni descent, describes a similar type of motivation for joining pro-Israeli demonstrations:

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

She goes on to argue that,

> You know, many Canadian Jews remain silent, and silence is admitting that you are guilty, and there is also the image of the

"weak Jew". So we want to come from a place of power, to break this image of the Jew that is going to the concentration camp, to change the way that the average Canadian thinks of Jews […] We are demonstrating [primarily] as Jews, before we are Israelis. You know, Hitler went four generations back (in Nazi Germany, citizens who had up to four generations of Jewish grandparents were considered Jews, despite any conversions to Christianity). He didn't care if you are an Ashkenazi Jew or a Mizrahi Jew.

Dina explicitly refers to the image of the Jews during the Holocaust as people who were passively led by the Nazis' to the gas chambers - "like a flock of sheep to the slaughter". This is an image that took hold among Zionist Jews in Palestine during and after the Holocaust, and that still circulates among Jewish Israelis, motivating the drive to build the 'new Jew' as strong and powerful. Seeing passivity as a sign of historical Jewish weakness and vulnerability (and unwittingly confirming classical European anti-Semitic stereotypes that portrayed Jews as such), she participates in Pro-Israeli public events in order to demonstrate Jewish strength and pride.

Dina's views can be related to her Israeli upbringing. According to Georgis (2007), within the Israeli nation's logic, survival is imagined by way of aggressive resistance and refusal of vulnerability (250). Dina's sense of solidarity links acts of defiance (such as dancing with Israeli flags in front of a BDS demonstration) with a desire to express strength in the face of a perceived existential threat, and to take ownership of the fight against anti-Semitism on behalf of all Jews.

Particularly interesting is Dina's explicit reminder that the Nazis didn't distinguish between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi (Middle Eastern) Jews in applying their "Final Solution" of the 'Jewish Question". Earlier in her interview, Dina had shared her everyday experience of racialization as a woman of Jewish-Yemenite descent within the predominantly Ashkenazi Jewish community of Toronto (Train, 2006). However, for the sake of resisting against what she sees as a common vulnerability and demonstrating unity, she suspends intra-Jewish racialized differences and divides. As Balsam (2009, 86) explains, fear of a second Holocaust creates a sense amongst Jewish communities that they must remain vigilant to the threat of anti-Semitic narratives and 'blood libels' (false accusations against Jews as a group or as individual members of that group). As both historical and present anti-Semitisms have often started with the spread of libellous rumours about Jews (e.g., that they are guilty of killing Jesus, that they drink non-Jewish blood, that they control the world), many Jews are suspicious of criticism targeted at the Jewish community from non-Jewish sources – even when they hold similarly critical views themselves.

For Michael, a thirty-five-year-old insurance agent, this means that as a Jew living outside of Israel, he is obligated to support Israel's policies on any occasion and at any cost, despite having his own reservations. As he states,

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

For Michael, this greater responsibility is tied to vigilance. Michael, who self-identifies as a "leftist", liberal Zionist, believes that public expressions of political dissent against the current Israeli government policies are a luxury that he, as a Jew, can only afford while living within the Jewish state. The fear, perhaps, is of not being able to tell, outside of Israel, who is interested in taking part in a civil political discussion, and who is actually an anti-Semite looking for any excuse to despise Jews.

When I asked Michael about the reason for his involvement in pro-Israeli public events he expressed a strong sense of fear, and a sense of empowerment gained by public displays of allegiance to the State of Israel:

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

Michael's participation in the Pride parade is motivated by a sense of anxiety over the growing public presence of pro-Palestinian solidarity groups in Toronto, which he believes represent a new and dangerous form of anti-Semitism. His participation is also motivated by a sense of moral duty to combat such groups. For Michael, the pro-Palestinian BDS groups are not legitimate peace groups, but

anti-Semitic 'Muslim' propagandists[2]. In his view, their demand for the deconstruction of Israel as a Jewish State is in fact an attempt to destroy the Jewish collective, not only in the Middle East, but altogether.

Ron, Michael, Dina, and other Israeli activists perceive their participation in Pro-Israeli public events in Toronto as part of their moral duty to guarantee that another Holocaust will never happen. Their narratives echo the ethos of "Never Again", which has long been a discursive pillar among Jewish communities in Israel, Canada and around the world (Georgis, 2007, 255), as well as a source of transnational solidarity between the Canadian mainstream Jewish community and the state of Israel.[3]

The narratives of Israeli activists in Toronto illustrate how collective emotional histories of fear and trauma are both powerful motivators of political action and effective means of uniting people (Ahmed, 2004; Georgis, 2007). Fear, as Ahmed suggests (2004, 64, 71-2, 77), is an active component in 'sticking' subjects with otherwise differing positionalities together into political collectives of shared emotional experience and of shared practices, while designating their boundaries. Jewish solidarity in the face of fear 'moves' many Israeli activists to temporarily align their individual bodies and experiences with the body of the local pro-Zionist Jewish community against the pro-Palestinian groups. Indeed, pro-Israeli public events in Toronto are moments in which intra-Jewish cultural divisions and tensions are transcended. As Ron stresses:

> These [pro-Israel solidarity events] are the only occasions that Canadians [Canadian Jews] and Israelis really come together. It is sad, but I really do feel that way. We don't really have much in common with them when it comes to our culture and interests besides Israel […] When it comes to supporting Israel I think that

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[2] Within the wider political and scholarly debate, the mixing between racial Anti-Semitism and Anti- Zionism is a highly contested. A number of North American Jewish scholars argue that such mixing is instrumental in avoiding any criticism of Israeli policies and of Zionism in general (e.g, Butler, 2004; Bakan, 2014), and in the context of Toronto, supports institutional delegitimization efforts to silence the public visibility of BDS movements in Toronto (Nadeau and Sears, 2010). Other Canadian Jewish scholars support the idea of anti-Zionism as a form of "New anti-Semitism". For example, in his essay entitled "The Changing Dimensions of Contemporary Canadian Anti-Semitism", Montreal-based historian Morton Weinfeld (2005, 44) argues that anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism are forever linked, and that Support for anti-Zionist positions, as advanced by BDS groups "- aids and abets the potential genocide of the Jewish Israeli population" (45).

[3] Many Canadian-born Jews, a large proportion of whom have direct familial links to the Holocaust, are exposed to the Zionist public Holocaust discourse from an early age (Troper, 2010; Habib, 2004; Weinfeld, 2001, 102-3). They read the Israeli pro-Zionist narrative through a similar filter as their co-religionists in Israel. For example, during the crisis of the June war/"the Six Day War" in 1967, both Jews in Israel (Segev, 2001, 85) and Canadian Jews (Troper, 2010:164) expressed their fear of a second Holocaust pending, and a subsequent sense of moral duty to support the Jewish state.

> they are really great. I can feel their true love for Israel and it warms
> my heart. I feel more connected to them [because of this].

Ron, among other Israeli activists interviewed for this study, struggles to identify with Canadian-born Jews. However, for Ron, public events of joint Jewish support of the Israeli state are moments of unity, where intra-Jewish cultural differences become irrelevant. The shared fear of losing Israel among Israeli immigrants and many Canadian-born Jews, reflective of traumatic memories of Jewish loss (Georgis, 2007, 250), functions as glue that temporarily binds him to otherwise culturally different Jewish communities. Going back to Dina's testimony, it becomes evident that the shared fear of losing Israel also has the power of transcending intra-Jewish racialized divisions.

Pro-Israeli public events as spatial displays of Western citizenship

Recent scholarship on citizenship and immigration have focused on new geographies and 'topographies' of political belonging within and beyond the nation-state (Isin and Wood, 1999; Sassen, 2002; Smith, 2003; Purcell, 2003; Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2006; Staeheli and Nagel, 2006; Dickinson et al., 2008; Cohen, 2011; Ashutosh, 2013; among others). This vast scholarship demonstrates that contemporary transmigrants are imagining and practising their citizenship transnationally. They engage in complex negotiations between their multiple, and sometimes conflicting, political identities, loyalties and commitments (Nagel and Staeheli, 2004; Leitner and Ehrkamp, 2006). More than simply a static legal or political status or a bundle of rights and responsibilities conferred by a singular and territorially-bounded nation-state, citizenship is also socially negotiated, experiential, emotionally-saturated, and boundary-breaking *process* (Leitner and Ehrkamp, 2006, 1594; see also Ho, 2009; Jackson, 2016). Moreover, subjects constitute themselves as 'public' citizens (Mitchel, 2003, 129), or "become political" (Isin, 2002) through social, cultural, and *spatial acts*. Public events such as patriotic demonstrations represent grounded and concrete acts for citizenship, through which transmigrant groups can "re-imagine belonging beyond the territories of the nation state" (Ashutosh, 2013, 198). Such spaces are active arena in which scripted social racialized identities are negotiated, confirmed or challenged (Ruddick, 1996, 141). Encounters in public spaces, in particular, are where people begin to understand themselves their place in a racialized hierarchy through the gaze of others (136).

For many the respondents in this study, pro-Israeli public events are significant material and symbolic sites for imagining, expressing, and claiming transnational form of political membership and belonging to Israel, Canada, and 'the West', while simultaneously avoiding their own potential racialization based on their differences from the white, Western mainstream. By conveniently aligning the perceived fear from anti-Western Muslim terrorism with the perceived threat by the same group against Jews inside and outside of Israel, and assuming the role of

defenders of 'Western civilization', they are able to stake a claim in Canadian, and Western, society without abandoning their perceived obligations to fight anti-Semitism (as they may have had to do in the past when Jews were perceived as an Oriental 'threat' against the 'enlightened' West), their cultural affiliation to Judaism, and their political commitment to defend the Jewish state.

For example, Elad, a forty-three year old accountant, explicitly links the local conflict in Israel-Palestine and the mythical global clash between the West and the Muslim world:

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

Elad's fear of Muslim conquest of the West is informed by the dominant political and media discourses in Israel, Canada, and elsewhere in the post 9/11 era. As was mentioned earlier, in media outlets and political speech, Muslims are often represented as supporters of Islamic terrorism who comprise both a cultural and demographic threat to white/Western national culture and society (for an analysis on Canadian media see Perigoe and Eid, 2014; Jiwani, 2012).

Pervasive myths of secretive Oriental/Semitic plots to penetrate and conquer Euro-Christian civilization have long engendered hostility and suspicion towards Europe's' two significant non-Christian 'others' — the Muslims and the Jews (Kalmar, 2013; Rana, 2011; Said, 1978), and Jews have historically paid an extremely heavy price for their labelling as Oriental outsiders in Europe. Yet pro-Zionist Israelis like Elad strategically reset this historical pattern. By imagining Israelis as the frontline soldiers of a supposedly cohesive 'Judeo-Christian' Western civilization and perpetuating the myth that Muslims are the true threat to this society, Eran effectively de-associates Jews from Oriental identity, validating his newfound position as Western hero, and staking his claim alongside Christians in Western identity:

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

By choosing to highlight common elements of Jewish and Christian theology, and by contrasting them with seemingly violent imagery from Muslim texts, Elad reflects the 20th Century trend towards erasure of Judeo-Islamic culture that is particularly evident in Euro-Zionist discourse (Shohat, 2003); the significant overlap between Jewish and Muslim texts, not to mention the violent imagery in Christian and Jewish texts, is ignored. Elad affirms the sense of civilizational superiority and innocence of the Judeo-Christian "West" by referring to the different essence of their cultural values, reflecting what Mahmood Mamdani (2005, 17) refers to as "Culture Talk". By dividing the political terrain along cultural lines, pro-Israeli activists like Elad are able to deny accountability and place themselves in a position of victimhood and innocence as Western subjects vulnerable to the Islamic terrorist threat (see Razack, 2007; Frankenberg, 2005, 568). The same logic is apparent in the slogans that have circulated during various Pro-Israeli public events that I have observed in Toronto (e.g., "Israel's values are Canadian values"; "Israel: Where freedom and tolerance live"; "Support for Israel is support for Canada").

Mainstream media and geo-political discourses in North America have often stressed Israel's defensiveness and victimhood in the face of imminent threat from the irrational hate of Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims in general (e.g., Perioge and Eid, 2014; Joseph et al., 2008). At the same time, Israel positions itself as a hero at the forefront of the 'global battle' of the West against Islam (Goldberg, 2009). In a similar way, the Israeli activists also profess an almost heroic mission to protect Western values in the face of supposed Canadian naïveté.

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

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

Two interesting things stand out for me in Rona's statement. First, Rona believes that part of the Jewish mission in the world is what is known to Jews as "*Tikkun Olam*", a classical rabbinic idea suggesting communal responsibility to

heal, repair and transform the world for the better. However, Rona's specific employment of the term in the context of the 'war on terror' is meant to demonstrate compatibility between Jewish culture and the 'civilizing mission' of Western powers in delivering the gifts of democracy, modernity and freedom to the Muslim world (Razack 2007). Rona implicitly reframes the Canadian government's support of Israel, from being a possible burden on Canada's reputation to being a natural, and even necessary consequence of Canada's commitment to Western democracy. Like Elad, Rona also participates in pro-Israeli public events in Toronto in order to inform the "Canadian public" about the Islamic threat to these values.

Respondents such as Elad and Rona imagine and represent their civic action during pro-Israeli public events as *defensive* acts of Western civilization (Israel and Canada, in their estimation, being equal parts of this civilization). By assuming the role of defenders of Western civilization, they negotiate their multiple, and sometimes contradictory, loyalties and beliefs to two different countries. Both Elad and Rona perceive pro-Palestinian BDS groups to be representative of the threat of global Islam in Toronto, a point of view that bears obvious comparison to what Gregory (2004) describes as post-9/11 *imaginative geographies* of fear, violence and security.

Indeed, most respondents imagined the pro-Palestinian protestors as Arab and Muslim immigrants with hidden anti-Western sympathies, and the BDS campaign itself as an anti-Semitic and anti-Western campaign run behind the scenes by terrorist organizations and Muslim governments. Only a few respondents acknowledged the participation of either 'white' Canadians or Jews in local pro-Palestinian solidarity groups. Those who discussed the participation of white non-Jewish Canadians tended to describe them as either naïve and brainwashed, or as secretly anti-Semitic. For example, Natasha, a thirty-five year old secretary asserted that:

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

By imagining the BDS protestors as sympathizers of radical Islamic terrorism who exploit and endanger Canadian democratic values (and sympathetic Jews as self-haters), BDS activists are perceived as being less loyal to Canada than Israeli groups, as Eran implies when he remarks that the pro-Palestinian activists "carry Palestinian flags. We carry Israeli and Canadian flags, and that is the whole difference between us and them in a nutshell".

Promotion of 'Shared Western-liberal Values'

One notable public event, which a number of participants who I interviewed had either attended or referenced, was the annual Toronto Pride Parade, billed as a celebration of LGBTQ rights. The 2010 Annual Pride Parade was marked by wide public debate surrounding the participation of a group called "Queers Against Israeli Apartheid" (QuAIA). In May of that year, "Pride Toronto" announced that it would censor the term 'Israeli apartheid' from the parade in response to pressure from the municipality (which funds the parade via an annual cultural grant) and from pro-Israeli lobby groups. A wave of resistance from the LGBTQ community and allies succeeded in reversing the ban during that year, and QuAIA were in the end permitted to march without censorship. In response, local pro-Israeli Jewish organizations (including the Jewish LGBTQ group *Kulanu*) mobilized around 250 members to march in support of Israel. Michael, whose interview I quoted in the last section, was one of the marchers in the pro-Israeli group that year.

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

The desire to publicly demonstrate perceived parallels between Israeli and Canadian values is a strong theme in my discussions with the respondents, and provides another example of how the respondents in this study reconcile their multiple national attachments. Messages that treat LGBTQ rights as signifiers of Israel as a modern, liberal, democratic, Western country in an otherwise primitive, homophobic, sexist, and non-democratic region are in line with public relations campaigns sponsored by the Israeli foreign ministry that position Tel- Aviv as a tolerant and sexy gay Mediterranean travel destination, and Israel as a safe haven for Palestinian queers. As Alon, a forty- four year old interior designer and self-identified gay man told me: "People need to know that we are the *good guys* here, and that Tel Aviv is the only place in the Middle East in which one can be openly gay". This perception, and its promotion by the Israeli government, has in turn been criticized by BDS activists as an example of "Pinkwashing", of sanitizing of Israel's image by use of progressive-seeming narratives (Puar, 2013; Schulman, 2011)[4]. Such claims serve as emblems of Western values of freedom and

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[4] As many have pointed out, behind attempts at branding Israel as an LGBT-friendly oasis stands an imperfect (and deteriorating) record of defending and legislating LGBTQ rights and treatment of Palestinian asylum seekers, and a narrow, reductive framework of human rights that disconnects

democracy (Puar, 2013, see also Abu-Laban and Bakan, 2008), providing migrants from Israel in Toronto, including those of Middle Eastern heritage and appearance who might otherwise be labelled as foreigners, with a sense of common purpose and a feeling of belonging to Western citizenship.

The belief in a connection between Zionism, Jewish identity, and liberal Western values, a belief whose construction was discussed earlier, is both strong and implicit. This implicitness allows the Israeli activists to achieve a coherent 'Western citizenship'.

'Ambassadors in Canada' - Maintaining a claim on Israeli citizenship

Through their framing of pro-Israeli public events in Toronto as defensive acts of Western civilization, those interviewed in this study are able to claim a place in Canadian nation and in the city, while at the same time proving their allegiance to both the local pro-Zionist Jewish community and the Israeli state. Indeed, many of the respondents expressed their desire to be a recognized as loyal Israeli nationals while still living and building a life outside Israel. By pointing to the benefits for the Israeli state of their extra territorial position, some Israeli activists were able to fulfill this desire.

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

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

Sigal views herself as representative of Israel in the war of world opinion, and as a more loyal Israeli citizen than some Israeli Jews who actually live in Israel, because of what she sees as their anti-State activities.

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

> My world-view is that once you [an Israeli citizen] leave Ben-Gurion Airport, you are becoming an ambassador of the State of Israel […] For me, this is patriotism or Zionism, not what we have

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forms of violence, oppression and struggles from each other (Puar, 2013, 338). Moreover, although on the surface queer rights in Israel are relatively progressive, the reality of these rights is fragile and unstable (see Amnesty International., n.d.).

learned as children in school. That is old-fashioned Zionism. It is no longer needed today.

The desire of Sigal and Ilan to be recognized as loyal Israeli citizens while living outside its territorial boundaries, can be understood in the relation to the longstanding Zionist ideological and emotional baggage attached to emigration from Israel, which negatively portrays it as a 'betrayal' of Zionism, and which categorised Israeli émigrés as *Yordim* (literally, those who have descended). In the last two decades the Israeli state, as many with other countries, has 'trans-nationalized its citizenship and nationhood' (Guarnizo and Smith, 1998, 8) through the initiation of a large number of new outreach programs and the provision of services in several points of settlement outside its national territory (including Toronto) in an attempt to 'recapture' the investments, remittances, and loyalties of emigrant citizens (Cohen, 2007). Geographer Nir Cohen (2011, 1138) describes a new 'extra-territorial citizenship' contract between Israeli emigrants and the Israeli state, according to which Israeli emigrants can enjoy rights and entitlements (e.g., educational and cultural services for them and their children) in exchange to their uncompromising commitment, loyalty, and solidarity to the Israeli state through material displays of identification and active participation in events supporting and valorising the homeland. In exchange to their participation in pro-Israeli public events in Toronto, Sigal, Ilan, and other respondents in pro-Israeli public events in Toronto are able to claim "extra-territorial Israeli citizenship" (see Cohen, 2011, 1138).

Conclusion

In this paper, I considered Jewish-Israeli activists' imaginations around citizenship, belonging and race in Toronto, in Israel, and globally. Paying attention to "the work that emotions do" (Ahmed, 2004), this study shows how collective histories of fear and trauma (particularly the inter-generational, communal traumas of the Nazi Holocaust; Georgis, 2007), and desire to be rebranded as the heroes rather than victims in the context of contemporary racialized geopolitical fear of terror and "Muslim invasion" to the West, motivate Israeli activists to join pro-Israeli events in the city alongside non-Israeli pro-Zionist Jews.

The narratives of pro-Israeli Jewish immigrants in Toronto reveals that everyday embodied and emotional encounters across racialized and religious differences in the Western city have become explicitly connected to broader geo-political debates. For many of the respondents, the 'new' geo-political fear and the hate and racism that it triggered (Pain and Smith, 2008) function as main motivator for joining pro-Israeli public events in Toronto. Fear also structure the ways in which Israeli activists imagine, articulate, and display their belonging during their everyday lives in the city, demonstrating that the geopolitical and the everyday as entangled and mutually constituted spheres (Pain and Smith, 2008, 3).

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

Emotions (fear in particular), work to fortify communal borders and to confirm the Jewish collective's categorisation as a homogenous racialized group. This strategic essentialization of Jewish identity is instrumental in forging communal solidarity, unity and cohesion, as well as a material forum through which Israeli immigrants make claims to citizenship and belonging in both Israel and Canada. Indeed, pro-Israeli public events in Toronto are material and symbolic sites for imagining, expressing, and negotiating between conflicting and intersecting national and 'civilizational' political identities, loyalties, commitments, memberships, and feelings of belongings. Being publicly exposed alongside pro-Zionist members of the local Jewish community during these events, many of the respondents experience having a sole Jewish history that is racially and politically monolithic.

While the imaginations and representations of citizenship by Israeli activists in Toronto subvert the conventional conceptions of citizenship (as an identification with a single and territorially defined nation state), they nevertheless confirm the emotional and racialized rhetoric of citizenship and nationhood in both the sending (Israel) and receiving (Canada) states. The participants interviewed in this paper understand and represent their citizenship in civilizational terms (i.e, as 'Western citizenship' – a product of the "global war on terror", "culture talk", and the discourse of "clash of civilizations"), further pointing to the limits of transnational and cosmopolitan, and forms of citizenship. The "culture talk" prevalent in the public sphere in North America is instrumental in allowing Israeli activists to imagine and represent themselves as heroic innocent defenders of democratic values, and the BDS pro-Palestinian protestors as radical, hateful apologists for terrorism, who wish to operate outside of Canadian cultural norms and to abuse the democratic right to protest their dissent of Canada`s foreign policy. The pro-Israeli protesters use public space in Canada to build their multi-national citizenships, while viewing appropriations of space for political expressions by pro-Palestinian groups as transgressions that challenge the identity of the native majority.

As discussed, today's global racialized public discourse situates Muslims and Jews unequally and differentially in Western national spaces, underlining the long-term project of 'whitening' and Westernizing the Jewish people and culture, which were in the past seen as Eastern, Oriental, and fundamentally non-European.

By employing global discourses of "culture talk" and by assuming a self-image of defenders of Westren civilization, Israeli activists are able to stake a claim on what is seen as 'authentic', patriotic Canadian citizenship, and in some cases even to avoid or escape their own marginalisation as people of colour, while delegitimizing and othering the pro-Palestinian BDS activists and other immigrants of colour in Canada. The pro-Israeli activists thus use such discourses as an "entry point" into both Canadian and Israeli (extra-territorial) nationhoods, and into an imagined Western citizenship, suggesting that local forms of racial and cultural hierarchy are produced not only at the local and national scale, but indeed transnationally.

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