

Invisible Migrants: The Case of Russians in Montréal

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## Abstract

### Invisible Migrants: The Case of Russians in Montréal

Phillip Gingras

Fourth wave Russian migrants in Montréal pose an interesting case for ethnographers. Unlike many other immigrant groups residing in Montréal and in Canada, few community associations exist and in many cases Russian migrants may live for years never knowing other Russians living just blocks away. The body of literature concerning immigrant settlement and integration often contradicts these findings. This thesis will explore the attributes, attitudes and modes of existence of Russians residing in Montréal in the hopes of providing insights into the theoretical models that govern the research on migration

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As a child I had always been interested in Russia and the Russian language. By my early teens I knew I wanted to learn the language, but it is an impossible feat without the help and guidance of an expert. I would like to thank Dr. Gary Roy Ph.D., who was my tutor providing weekly sessions, not only on the language, but the culture and its arts. Without this background, I would not have been able to carry-out fieldwork or understand much of the data I acquired.

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Пусть всегда будет  
солнце!

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter I Methodology .....	5
Profile .....	5
Approach .....	10
Fieldwork .....	11
Chapter II Literature Review .....	16
Cosmopolitanism .....	18
Literature on Russian Migrants .....	21
Invisibility .....	23
Social Networks .....	27
Chapter III History of Russian Migration to Canada .....	33
1917-1939 .....	34
1939-1946 .....	36
1947-1970s .....	39
1980s- Today .....	41
Chapter IV Immigration Policy and Multiculturalism .....	47
NUMAS .....	49
US/Canada Immigration Policy .....	55
Multiculturalism/Interculturalism .....	57
Chapter V Class .....	60
Mobile Middle Class .....	69
Chapter VI Settlement & Integration .....	71
Residence .....	72
Settlement and Place Making .....	75
Chapter VII Network Analysis .....	79
Networks in Montréal .....	84
Comparative Analysis Montreal & Toronto .....	102
Chapter VIII Acculturation .....	112
Maksim's Story .....	115
Conclusion .....	129

References .....	131
Fig. 1 .....	145
Fig. 2 .....	146
Fig. 3 .....	147

## Introduction

During one late evening, I chatted with Sveta<sup>1</sup>, a tall Russian from Novosibirsk studying fashion design. With a cigarette in one hand, she showed me her class project, designing a ready-to-wear fashion line for a fictional women's clothing company. "I love fashion" she said, pointing to her prized design. "I want to work for Armani or Versace." I asked her whether she had been so fashionable back in Russia. "Hah" she responded, "our mother had to make our clothes, or hand-me-downs from our cousin. We didn't have new clothes." I asked whether her lack of fashionable attire as a child had impacted her desire to make and design clothes as an adult. Her response was a quick "no," as she took a drag from her cigarette. "Well, maybe. Maybe. I don't know." As a young immigrant from Russia, she had every opportunity she felt her parents didn't have to follow her dreams. Hers was to design clothes that would make people happy and look beautiful. She had come to Canada reluctantly but like many other Russians I would encounter, found that Canada furnished opportunities not available in Russia. Like so many others, Russia made them who they were, and they felt Canada would allow them to do the things and be the people they had hoped to become. In Canada, Sveta felt she could realize her dreams, following a path that she chose. Asking her if she thought that she'd one day work for Armani or Versace she replied "all it takes is hard work."

In the years following the Soviet Union's collapse, Russians have endured significant political, economic and cultural transformations, reshaping the state and social relations. The Russian economy has collapsed, on a number of occasions,

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<sup>1</sup> All names and some key details have been changed to provide anonymity to my participants.

notably in 1998 which in the process bankrupted millions of Russians (Johnson, 2000). Ironically, Russia is also home to one of the largest and most developed industry bases in the world, predicated on oil extraction from some of the largest stores of oil, boasting two of the world's largest oil companies, Gazprom and Rosneft. These companies have reserves of billions of dollars in bonds, as well as debts owed to them by various industries, national governments and people, including eight billion dollars by Sadaam Hussein (Baker & Glasser, 2005: 217). Some of the most lucrative oil projects, construction projects and financial projects in the last fifteen years have been in Russia. Yet, Russia is a nation of paradoxes, home to the rich and famous as well as to millions of Russians and ethnic minorities surviving on modest salaries and scant government benefits. Moscow is the world's most expensive city, a city which ironically has some of the lowest wages in the industrialized world. The rich engage in champagne wars in France while the poor are drafted and sent to die in sectarian violence in Ingushetia, Dagestan and Chechnya. Reluctant mothers hold vigils for their sons, some of whom won't return (Caiazza, 2006). For many caught between the stability of the upper echelons of Russian society and the instability of the squeezed lower and middle classes, there is an alternative: emigration.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, restrictive movement policies have been eased and Russians have been increasingly furnished with the right to seek residence abroad. Early estimates predicated that some four million Russians would depart, taking with them their technological know-how and devastating the Russian economy in the process (Shevtsova, 1992). Though those predictions never quite came true, over a million Russians did leave, many for the safety of Germany, the



United States, Israel, the United Kingdom and increasingly, Canada. Canada has been growing as a destination for Russian migrants over the last two decades.

In the vast majority of cases, Russians reside in two of Canada's major cities: Vancouver and Toronto. Toronto which is Canada's largest and wealthiest city, hosts the largest concentration of Russian immigrants in Canada. While they are scattered throughout Toronto, many older generation Russians reside in North York. The district's proximity to downtown and its relatively inexpensive housing offers them the opportunity to become home owners, a luxury that many Russians back home can only dream of.

In the late-1800s and continuing into the early part of the twentieth century, Montréal, then Canada's largest city, was the traditional home of Russian immigrants. Neighbourhoods that once existed where present-day St. Henri and the Plateau are now located, were then home to the largest concentration of Russians in Canada. The population began to decline as economic opportunities grew westward. Russians following economic growth headed to Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. They left an indelible mark on Canada's prairies, transforming them culturally, economically and politically, changes which can be felt to this day. The Russians who remained in Montréal were a strong community, opening legion halls, churches, stores, factories and community centres. They became involved in the social and political life of Montréal, Québec and of Canada.

Over the ensuing decades, many relocated to Toronto. The Cathedral that was once the head of the Russian Orthodox Church in Canada relocated to a facility in Ottawa to meet the demands of many of its members. The community that once

existed has slowly slipped into the history of Montréal. Yet as the older Russian community in Montréal becomes increasingly less prominent, a new generation of young, mobile, middle class migrants has begun to appear. As with the earlier generations of Russian migrants, these recent migrants are attracted to Canada's educational institutions, job markets and relative liberties. However, unlike the older generation, they have avoided creating community links.

Russian immigrants arriving in Montréal within the last fifteen to twenty years live inconspicuous lives in Montréal, engaged in a process of acculturation that renders them invisible<sup>2</sup>. In large part, studies of immigrant settlement and integration have at their core a focus upon community solidarity as a means of initially entering into the adoptive society (Ellis & Wright, 2005; Marrow, 2005). This frame of reference, however fails to account for migrant populations who seek alternative sites of residence and settlement. From the outset of this project, I had intended to account for invisibility as a product of clandestinity and deep social antagonisms that drove social cleavages between individuals and their respective groups. However, in engaging with Russians through interviews and participant observation, it became abundantly clear that this definition missed salient factors that surround the lived experience of Russians in Montréal. As such, this project will then approach the concept of invisibility produced through the concept of class, residence, networks and acculturation as producing a form of residence and existence beyond the strict confines of the community association.

As Sveta and I departed that evening, we walked casually to the metro. She lives in the Mile-End with two roommates and wanted to return home to watch

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<sup>2</sup> This will be developed in full in chapter two.

“America’s Next Top Model” with them, their weekly ritual. As we parted company, she said “life is what you make of it” and entered the metro station.

## Chapter I Methodology

My fieldwork was heavily reliant on participant observation and semi-structured interviews. The participant observation was carried out between May and September of 2009 in the city of Montréal among fourth-wave Russian immigrants. I was introduced to fourth-wave immigrants through referrals from friends and acquaintances. Participant observation often involved partaking in daily activities, such as daily shopping, drinking coffee at local cafés, or attending social events. Of those with whom I interacted, ten were further involved in the project as interlocutors in semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted between June and October of 2009 among participants who identified themselves as Russian immigrants, who fit the fourth-wave parameters which I describe in the profile section of this chapter. I also intend to include a brief discussion in this chapter, on the unanticipated or unintended, which I assert can produce important results and be an acceptable means of identifying participants and conducting ethnographic research. In order to provide a clearer picture of my interlocutors, I have provided here a survey which includes basic socio-graphic information, such as age, place of birth, gender, languages, educational attainment, etc.

### *Profile*

Fourth-wave Russian migrants, as I will describe in Chapter III in greater detail, began arriving in the west in the mid-to-late 1980s (1985-1987) as a result of

significant shifts in Soviet policy (see Chapter II and III), which allowed greater access to sought-after exit visas. In many cases, the early parts of the fourth-wave were Russian-Jews seeking to start new lives in Israel, the United States and Germany. Often they were well educated professionals and scientists, leading to a significant brain-drain from the (former) Soviet Union. The growth of the Canadian economy after the end of the recession that lasted from the late 1980s until the early 1990s, Canada became an increasingly important destination for Russian immigrants, particularly the cities of Toronto and Vancouver. Fourth-wave immigrants can be defined as having arrived in Canada between 1985 and now, but particularly in the last 15 years. Canadian immigration policy primarily selects candidates based on credentials and ability to contribute to the Canadian economy, and as a result, fourth wave Russian migrants possess a better-than-average education (as I detail further in this chapter), with the majority of arrivals residing in Canada's major urban centres.

Among those I interviewed, the average age of the migrants at the time of the research project was 27.6 years, with the oldest participant being 31 and the youngest 25 years. The average age at arrival in Canada, however, was 20.2 years. Of the ten participants whom I interviewed, all identified as being of Russian ethnic origin, while one, whose mother is Ukrainian, identified himself as a Russian-Ukrainian. He commented that having grown-up in the Russian-speaking eastern regions of Ukraine in a mixed-Russian family, he felt that he was much closer to the Russian culture than his mother culture.

All of my participants were asked to define their religious faith. The majority, five, identified themselves as having no religious orientation, while four identified as

Jewish, and the remaining one as Russian-Orthodox. Of those identified as Jewish, only one defined her self as observant, while four identified themselves as either “lapsed” or as “culturally” Jewish. By culturally Jewish I mean someone who has been raised among Jews, is familiar with Jewish customs and traditions but does not observe religious Jewish practices. Those who are ‘lapsed’ were at one time religiously observant, but have subsequently ceased.

Torresan (2007) notes that, on average, migrants tend to be better educated than the average population, which is corroborated by this research. All ten participants either possessed or were in the process of acquiring a higher-education degree. My participants could be split into two groups: those who received at least a portion of their education abroad and those who were wholly educated in Canada. Of the first category, two of my participants had acquired degrees abroad, one of them an engineering degree in England, and the other an undergraduate degree in economics and languages from Russia. To increase their credentials and marketability, these two participants had begun postgraduate studies in Canada. The latter group, which comprises the bulk of my informants, acquired the totality of their education in Canada at Canadian institutions of advanced learning. Four of my informants arrived as dependents of their families at a young age, and had thus gone to Canadian primary and secondary education institutions in Canada. Those who had arrived as independent class immigrants had all sought to increase their educational profile in Canada as a means of securing more lucrative employment, but had acquired at least a portion of their education abroad. Although this sample is too small to derive an accurate picture of Russians in Canada, the high-level of educational attainment

among migrants is particularly striking. Among G-7 nations, Canada has a particularly high rate of participation in post secondary education. According to the OECD, 46% of the Canadian-born population are involved with post-secondary (see fig. 2) while the attainment of a university degree stands at 19% (ibid). By comparison, the rate of post-secondary university attainment among immigrants to Canada is 51% (see fig. 3). The participants in my project reflected the high level of educational attainment among recent immigrants to Canada.

According to Statistics Canada (2006), there were 24 million non-immigrant English speaking Canadians and just under seven million French speaking Canadians. Among the immigrant population, 1.5 million reported English as their commonly used language while slightly fewer than two-hundred thousand reported French (Stat Can, 2006). Among the Russians interviewed for this project, all could speak English fluently at the time of the interview. Throughout the fieldwork, I encountered only a single migrant who had any knowledge of French prior to his arrival in Canada, having studied the language at an Israeli school before entering Canada. All had at least attempted to learn French. One participant, who had resided in Canada for slightly over a year at the time of our interview, could speak basic conversational French. Those who had resided in Canada for 19 years could speak French fluently (with a slight accent) while their command of English was flawless (without accent). At arrival, many of the participants (5) reported knowledge of technical English which is knowledge of English terminology in their vocational field. Additionally, my informants could speak Hebrew, Dutch, Portuguese, Italian, Spanish and German to varying degrees of fluency. Maksim, for instance, had learned Hebrew as a resident of

Israel, while an informant, Pavel, had learned Dutch in secondary school as part of his curriculum.

Of the ten people interviewed, only one was engaged to be married, while the other nine identified themselves as single. The participant engaged to be married had met his future-wife in Montréal in his program of study. All indicated that they had sought out romantic relationships with locals in Montréal rather than among members of their ethnic or linguistic group.

Of those who had resided in Canada the longest (10-19 years) three had surrendered their citizenship of Russia or Ukraine, while one, who had a valid passport, saw no use in renewing it and intended to simply use her Canadian passport as her sole means of travel or identification of citizenship. Those who resided in Canada 1-4 years had not yet had enough time in Canada to apply for citizenship (1,095 days of consecutive residence) or possessed the proper visas to apply for citizenship, but all indicated that they intended to get a Canadian passport at the earliest possible date. When asked why, they indicated that it meant they could travel without visas and it ensured a level of safety when traveling that was not guaranteed by a Russian passport. One of the interviewees, though born in Belarus, did not possess a passport for Belarus and noted that because of his ethnic heritage, he had been furnished with a Russian passport by the government of the Russian Federation, despite his Minsk birthplace and the fact that he had never visited Russia (cf. Thiele, 1999 for an analysis of post-socialist citizenship criterion).

The fourth-wave Russian migrants on which this project focused constituted a young, well educated, set of informants who were born to families with similar high

levels of education. Upon arrival all could communicate in one of the official languages. This high level of education and willingness to learn another language no doubt facilitated their entry into Canada as economic migrants.

### *Approach*

Prior to engaging with the field methodology, I first attempted to create an operational definition of invisibility that would guide the theoretical background of this project, as well as guide possible questions during interviews. As I detail in Chapter II, invisibility is a concept in the related migration literature that usually holds connotations of clandestinity, illicit migration and subaltern populations (Bibler Coutin, 1999/2005; Odem, 2008). It is fair to say that Montréal's Russian population is rather invisible-- there are no new immigrant organizations, churches or community centres and the "Russian neighbourhood"<sup>3</sup> is increasingly diverse, with the population of Russians decreasing year after year. Taking into account the literature on Russian migration as well as that of invisible migration, a set of general questions were produced that would provide the basis for my initial interviews:

1. How did you come to Canada?
2. What is your age?
3. Educational attainment?
4. How did you arrive in Canada?
5. Are you, or do you know anyone who is, illegally in Canada?

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<sup>3</sup> An area that extends along Décarie Boulevard from Jean Talon in the north to Queen Mary Road in the south.



6. Would you say you are involved in a Russian ‘community?’ in Montréal?

Is there a community?

In formulating these questions, I had originally assumed that there would be some form of community association or solidarity among Russians. In this sense, the research was geared towards exposing these realities. This had a two-fold effect on my research project. Of primary concern were potential ethical problems which might be involved in conducting research among clandestine migrants residing in Montréal. Secondly I considered the possibility that clandestinity was not a factor, and as such other issues were responsible for the invisibility of Russians in Montreal.

### *Fieldwork*

Initially, the goal had been to locate Russians through a snow-ball sample. Having previously conducted research among Russians, I intended to call upon these contacts as a means of gaining access to the broader population. These contacts proved unfruitful, many of the participants had left, and others were didn't know of a suitable Russian interlocutor to whom they could pass along information. This roadblock immediately posed several concerns, notably that I had no feasible means of finding Russians. In the early phase of the fieldwork, I made contact with Russians at local stores in the vicinity of Concordia University and along Queen Mary Road. This, too, proved rather unhelpful. Many of the store proprietors were older, having arrived among the 3<sup>rd</sup> wave and were established immigrants. They noted that the

bulk of their consumers were not native-born Russians but Canadians who sought out delicacies from Russia or to experience a traditional Russian goods.

It was not until the late spring that I was introduced to Viktor at a dinner party, a Russian immigrant who would become one of my main interlocutors. He had a simple suggestion for finding participants: “ask your friends.” He noted that he knew few Russians but personally knew a greater number of Canadians, reasoning that it was likely that I would be able to make contact with Russians through people whom I knew at such places as the University or through other large organizations. As such, he suggested that I should start there. This proved to be the best advice I had been given as a researcher. I sent out messages to friends through social networking sites and through email regarding the nature of my paper, and within a few short days I was referred to a number of people who were Russian immigrants and who were also more than willing to tell their story.

Maksim, whom I met in the spring through this means, began to show me around. He helped me identify a greater number of participants by bringing me to events and parties where he knew some of his acquaintances would be. This is, unfortunately, a double edged sword. In most cases the venues were noisy, busy and the presence of alcohol complicated observations and made it difficult to converse.

Participant observation is defined as the engagement of the fieldworker in the daily activities of the group (Bailey, 2007: 80). Being a non-participant at social gatherings would be impractical as well as impolite and as such, I participated in the events despite the difficulties posed. Knowing that this approach would constitute a significant portion of my research, I was forced to devise a means of assessing a

participant's knowledge about ethical obligations in the event I could not get written consent. I settled upon verbal consent and an exchange of email and phone numbers. Since recording many of these events would simply be useless, a recorded confirmation of this consent would be improbable. Included in noise issues were the complications this posed for recording the events and discussions. As a result I created a simple substitution code that could be jotted down and quickly translated into longer ideas, inferences and comments. Invaluable resources, in this respect, were the late-night coffee shops where one could work nearly uninterrupted. The substitution code was simple, but conveyed the necessary information quite well. Draw backs to this form of note taking include a great deal of required debriefing immediately after events ceased, which often meant working well into the morning.

The generally warm and sunny summer weather in Montréal meant that many events took place at outdoor gatherings or at the homes of friends. Despite the methodological difficulties I outlined above, these sites were important places of data acquisition. Interviews may not have gleaned the same amount of detail regarding the lived realities of my informants. I could be a spectator as well as participant, collecting data at these events as they happened, and were lived, not exclusively through second hand recollections or impressions provided through interviews. I was able to see, first hand, how fourth-wave Russians interacted with their surroundings and with whom they consorted. Though interview data would become a prominent feature of the research, participant observation provided key foundational insights into the lived realities I was attempting to discuss.

As I noted earlier, it was imperative to write everything down as quickly as possible to produce the most accurate depiction of events. Late-night coffee shop visits would be the first step in jotting down the information. Second came typing up and organizing the material found in the field. This data allowed me to reformulate questions and produce a new approach to the interviews. Interviews were held with ten individuals, four of whom would be consulted on a number of occasions throughout the fieldwork period and beyond. The interviews were a means of decoding or explaining what had been recorded in the field. Interviews took place at a location of the interlocutor's choosing, in some cases in public places, such as at McGill University; however, in the bulk of cases, interviews took place at the interlocutor's residence. The interviews began with broad questions about the fourth-wave of Russian immigration and gradually became more specific, focusing on issues of class, networking and secondary migration.

Issues, which had arisen during my participation in various social events, such as the political beliefs, personal goals and aspirations of fourth wave Russian immigrants, their lives, their interests and their habits subsequently became the focus of interviews, when I asked my close informants to explain to me what these topics meant, particularly for recently arrived Russians. In many cases the interviews, which had an agreed upon length of no more than an hour and a half often went much longer. Some participants relished the chance to discuss their opinions and beliefs. What had begun as an ethnographic project studying the invisibility of a community of Russians turned into a project asserting very different notions. In fact, issues of clandestinity and subaltern migration were non-existent, and instead the salience lay

in issues of class and social mobility. The participant observation provided the missing information that allowed me to reformulate my project and produce a different thesis.

What had kicked off a previously stalled project was a serendipitous encounter between myself and a participant, Viktor. Serendipities and improvisation hallmarked my early experiences in the field. Simply attending a dinner party I found myself in a position to introduce myself to a potential interlocutor who became a close participant. The embarrassment of approaching an individual whom the ethnographer does not know is mitigated by the knowledge that to proceed with a project, one must begin somewhere. This may be an astute observation of the obvious; however, more importantly, it takes a keen understanding of a project and willingness to accept the unknown to take advantage of such opportunities. If the sign that hangs over Harvard University's Medical Faculty, in honour of Pasteur, is correct and "[c]hance favors only the prepared mind" (Van Andel, 1994: 635), then the anthropologist's duty is to accept the messy and ambiguous nature of ethnography. Despite planning and good intentions, my initial plan fell apart and had to be reworked. Accepting alternative solutions to my problem, by being prepared at improbable moments, I was able to locate participants. As Vered Amit notes: "[t]he strength and the irresolvable dilemma of anthropological inquiry is our Sisyphusian oscillation between the messy uncertainties of experience on the one hand and the necessarily tidied general abstractions we derive from them" (2010: 19-20).

## Chapter II

### Introduction to Literature Review

Current ethnographic accounts of Russians abroad (cf. Hardwick, 1993; Smith, 1999; Slobin, 2001; Lomsky-Feder & Rapoport, 2003; Kopnina, 2005/6) are scant. The collapse of the Soviet Union on December 25<sup>th</sup>, 1991 shifted the optic from Russians abroad, particularly in industrialized nations, to Russians *at home*. Much of the ongoing research is concerned with economic transition in Russia and its effects on culture and society (cf. Caldwell, 2004; Patino, 2005/8). As such, interest in Russians abroad has waned and in large part, the scope, scale and intensity of recent Russian migration abroad remains rather mysterious. To properly frame my ethnographic account of Russians in Montréal, it is therefore necessary to turn first towards the more general corpus of literature related to migration, mobility, invisibility and networks.

The history of transnationalism is rooted in the concept of internationalism, which is defined as “an idea, a movement, or an institution that seeks to reformulate the nature of relations among nations through cross-national cooperation and interchange” (Akira, 2004: 214). It set out to study civic and political participation that took place not merely within the state, but across national boundaries. Typically associated with such developments as the women’s movement, and democratization movements mobilized through NGOs (ibid: 215- 216); the emergence of transnationalism as a theoretical concept in the social sciences and related literatures developed from this earlier concept into a broader field of inquiry encompassing movement, travel, capitalism and not merely civic engagement and political

development. One of the most cited definitions of transnationalism as related to migrants is set forth by Basch, Glick-Schiller and Szanton Blanc in their text *Nations Unbound* (1994:7) as a process:

by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their society of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders.

Although this definition has been subsequently reformulated, reworked and generally re-written by various scholars, it is nonetheless a good base from which to begin. As a theory, transnationalism is situated within a particular mode of late-capitalism in which flows of capital and technical expertise move across national borders through sophisticated modes of digital communications (cf. Aneesh, 2006). These flows were concisely discussed by Arjun Appadurai in his 1990 work on the five scapes (1990: 296). The development of technologically sophisticated global cities and the national governments which aim to facilitate their power in the global market have changed the nature and scope of capitalism. Large global power structures have changed the nature of movement between places and the relationship between people and their nation. Where once there existed a delay between countries, a lag in exchanging goods, services and information, there now exists an instantaneous means of cross-communication. Remittances can be sent home in a matter of minutes and received in a very short period of time. The delimiting of spatial differences and the rapid

exchange between peoples and places creates what Vertovec calls “bifocality” (2008:150) or an orientation between the here and the there, the home and homeland. Migration in the era of rapid technological, financial and social change is presented as chaotic and rapid, calling into questions issues of identity and citizenship (Khagram & Levitt, 2008: 4).

As I described in chapter one,<sup>4</sup> my informants are of a mobile generation of young Russians establishing themselves in industrialized nations of the West. As I intend to assert in the coming chapters, my informants sought to establish themselves in Canada as middle class, educated migrants who through the process of acculturation adapted to life in Canada rendering themselves inconspicuous or ‘invisible’ as *Russians*.

A salient feature of transnationalism, or at least a bi-product, is cosmopolitanism, defined by Hannerz “as an openness toward divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity, but not simply as a matter of appreciation” (2004: 70). Often critiqued as a rather dissolute theory, cosmopolitanism can nonetheless be defined as an elite characteristic (Hannerz, 2004: 73; Vertovec & Cohen, 2002: 6-9), one in which members of the cosmopolitan echelon carry multiple passports, work on opposite sides of the Atlantic, speak multiple languages and are as proficient in their own culture as another. Among middle class migrants seeking to escape the limited economic opportunity and social problems of their homeland, it may seem rather odd to append such a title; however, research by Hiebert (2002) and Chicoine et al., (1997) have shown that immigrants in major Canadian cities are using their new found cultural bilingualism to engage not

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<sup>4</sup> See pages 5-9



only with their neighbours and indeed their nation, but also their homeland (Hiebert, 215-216).

With this in mind, I would assert that many of my informants could in fact be seen as cosmopolitan. Research by Chicoine et al., (1997) and Rose (1999), has found that in Montréal among immigrants with weak ties (i.e. acquaintances, neighbours, etc, Hiebert, 2002: 217), groups tend to branch beyond ethnic or linguistic boundaries. Often, immigrants themselves sought connections with those who were not part of their ethno-cultural and as a result were often more fully integrated into their surroundings (Chicoine, et al., 1997: 40). Likewise, as I will discuss in detail in the chapter on networks<sup>5</sup> I will discuss how the relationships formed in Canada by my informants are hallmarked by weak ties, and as well integrated into life in Canada. In addition to the aforementioned factors, my informants fit many of the hallmark definitions of cosmopolitanism --- mobile, well educated and quite comfortable in multiple cultural settings.

The effect of this ease with multiple cultures and the willingness to create broad networks of friendship and support no doubt has an impact on the concept of invisibility. The process of acculturation is significantly impacted by a willingness to adapt to new cultural environments as well as the composition of networks, languages spoken and level of educational attainment. These factors combined situate migrants within the city, often dictating how and when migrants engage with their surroundings and under what circumstances.

Transnationalism studies are often influenced by popular (public) American political discourse regarding illegal, or clandestine, migration. Numerous studies have

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<sup>5</sup> See chapter VII

analysed the case of Latin American labourers entering the U.S. employment market, and the effect this has on the culture, social and economic connections between compatriots in the United States and their homes in Latin America. These studies have become quite popular in the anthropological literature and are a good base from which to provide examples for a later analysis of Russian migrants.

Jeffery Cohen and Roger Rouse, both working with Mexican labour migration to the United States have noted a tendency among their participants to be intricately bound both to their homes in Mexico and their employment outside Mexico, changing the concept of spatial differences (Rouse, 1992; Cohen, 2001: 955). In both ethnographies, the Mexican migrants are temporary sojourners in a system of circular migration to the United States working to raise money to remit back to Mexico to support family members and community projects. Cohen's approach to the migrants focuses on the economic aspects of migration, elucidating that the rational choice of the migrants to seek semi-legal or illicit work in the United States was a direct consequence of the decreasing availability of lucrative employment in Mexico City and the rising profitability of work in the United States. Of this migration, he states that: "migrants often followed a circular (transnational) pattern, leaving for one or two years, remitting regularly while in the United States, and returning home to participate in local community and family life before migrating once again" (Cohen, 2001:957).

As an example, Cohen's study displays the hallmark characteristics of transnational migration such as the non-linear migration patterns, the bonds between the place of settlement and home, the movement of remittances from global cities in

the North to Latin American countries that supports the development of home and community projects, placing two formerly disparate locations into a bounded relationship of dependence. As I previously noted, the dearth of ethnographic research on Russian migration is a complicating factor. The most up-to-date ethnography currently available was written by Helen Kopnina (2005/6) on Russian migrants who migrate to and from the Western European cities of London and Amsterdam.

Helen Kopnina's ethnography of Russians in London and Amsterdam is one of the few concise ethnographies of fourth-wave migrants who had recently resettled in Western Europe directly from Russia. The rationales for their departure ranged from personal reasons such as marriage and relationships to the desire to experience Western culture as well as economic reasons for professionals seeking opportunities not readily available in Russia. Kopnina's research was carried out through snowball sampling, beginning with contacts she had established in both cities; though, in some cases cold calling potential interlocutors was needed. This "practical migration" (2005: 30) is a result of a confluence of variables, such as opening borders, liberalized exit policy from Russia as well as continued economic opportunity in Western Europe.

The driving theme of this ethnography is the feature of "invisibility", which Kopnina relates to the lack of formal recognition in Dutch or British census data of the Russian presence; the lack of knowledge of the Russian presence by locals and the indifference of Russians in contacting or connecting with their countrymen abroad (2005: 30-32; 83- 85; 89). Many of the informants had consciously avoided making

contact with other Russians, citing a culture of complaints (2005: 92-93). Many of her younger informants had wished to experience the culture of Britain and the Netherlands, so attending Russian clubs or restaurants for instance would be of little interest, especially since they could at any time listen to Russian music or return to Russia if they felt the need (2006: 107). These migrants had few, if any binding characteristics. Their shared Russian citizenship was not enough of a force to unite them on common grounds. Social antagonisms between culture, regionality and class had created a chasm between the residents, often an insurmountable one. Divisions of class and ethnicity, for example, were often fiery issues in Russia that shaped differences abroad as well. The author notes that “among recent arrivals, I heard the statement ‘I want to have nothing to do with these Russians’ from people of different occupation groups and social strata as well as different ethnic denominations (Russian, Jewish, Georgian, etc)” (2005: 92).

This indifference and avoidance is translated into an unwillingness to organize a community, which thus renders them invisible as an identifiable collectivity. Kopnina’s analysis of invisibility, particularly regarding community is striking. Though I would agree that Russians are ‘invisible,’ it is left up to the reader to decide whether this invisibility extends to non-institutionalized, informal social relationships, which she only covers in passing stating that, according to Snel: “some informants, however, point out to the importance of informal relations, which are viewed as originating from old Soviet practices during the community regime” (Snel, as cited in Kopnina, 2005: 87).

The bulk of other studies related to Russians abroad, have at their core a belief in the presence of a Russian community as an axiomatic fact of Russian residence abroad. Hardwick (1993) working in the Pacific Northwest of the United States and British Columbia defines the Russian presence in this region as being defined by a close-knit and organized community structure. Kopnina herself points to the community structures found among Russian in Berlin, Israel and Canada (2005: 94). What should be recognized is that at the heart of these studies are the earlier waves of migration. Kopnina conflates many of the waves of migrants, mixing young urban migrants circulating through Western Europe with previous, more established immigrant generations. I assert that between the second and third waves and fourth waves the nature of migration is fundamentally different. The earlier generations were responding to fundamentally different circumstances. Whereas earlier generations could be said to constitute escapees, refugees and political asylum seekers, the fourth-wave are practical economic migrants (something noted by Kopnina, 2005: 30), sharing little with the previous generations.

To assume inter-generational contact among migrants by virtue of a shared cultural and ethnic lineage disregards significant differences in class, educational attainment and political orientation. Fourth-wave Russian migrants are seldom 'political agitators' or religious refugees, but educated members of Russian society seeking to establish themselves abroad. Taking this to heart, we are left to wrestle with the unresolved nature of Russian invisibility. In this sense, the invisibility aspect remains undefined. The literature on Russian migrants simply assumes that a

community exists. For that reason I turn here to the literature on invisibility in migration studies.

The bulk of studies of invisibility approach the concept from a different path, rendering quite different conclusions. The *Oxford Dictionary* defines invisibility as something unseen or unacknowledged; Kopnina's ethnography follows this definition. Her interlocutors went unseen and unacknowledged as Russians by the broader populations in England and the Netherlands. As I will show, the concept of invisibility is often bound up in analyses of clandestinity which include social and political repression through the denial of formal recognition of citizenship and rights within the nation-state.

Invisibility, despite its common usage in defining political and social repression is a commonly utilized term in certain forms of demographic categories mandated by Canadian government policy. Statistics Canada, for instance, classifies immigrants as both visible or invisible minorities. In the census it is used as a means of quantifying the proportion of non-Caucasian citizens and residents of the nation. Canada's *Employment Equity Act* defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour" (as cited in Hou & Picot, 2004: 8). Russians then, by virtue of being 'white in colour' are categorized as within census data as being "invisible minorities," something acknowledged by Kopnina (2005:85) that is, a minority that resides within the majority Caucasian population.

Despite the use of visible and invisible in quantitative analyses of minorities, the qualitative literature employs the term in a much more diffuse manner, often

ignoring issues of race altogether, focusing rather on the political and social. The literature of invisible migration, as I shall develop further, is not usually<sup>6</sup> concerned with upwardly-mobile middle class migrants; rather, it is focused on poor, disenfranchised clandestine migrants living in a hostile environment, avoiding the spectre of detection, always one step ahead of authorities. In contrast, my informants welcomed the authorities as a means of legitimizing their stays in Canada, furnishing them with visas and hopefully citizenship. Despite this divergence, the term invisibility is in fact an appropriate means of defining the fourth-wave Russian presence in Montréal. Like the clandestine migrants in the studies of Susan Bibler Coutin (1999/2005) and Roer-Strier and Olshtain-Mann (1999), there exist few community institutions, and little in the way of overt expressions of national or ethnic identity.

The literature discussing invisible migrants focuses primarily on clandestine Latin American immigrants in the developed world, notably the United States, with some studies emanating out of Israel (cf. Bibler Coutin, 1999/2005; Olshtain-Mann & Roer-Strier, 1999). The lived reality for many clandestine migrants is that they must conceal their identity in the host society to avoid capture and eventual deportation. Additionally, given that these migrants are illegal, they are often victimized, subject to extortion by groups at home and abroad, exploited by employers who are cognizant that they lack recourse, and are often unable to access state social services, which can even include education (Bibler Coutin, 2005). I then acknowledge that Susan Bibler Coutin's assertion that these migrants have never fully arrived in the host society is in fact quite a reasonable representation of this kind of circumstance(2005: 200). Fearful

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<sup>6</sup> For research that does deal with upwardly mobile migrants, cf. Amit-Talai, 1989

of capture and unable to participate within the state, these migrants are unseen—they in fact take great pains to be unseen while on the other hand the state may not be able to appropriately monitor their presence.

Susan Bibler Coutin's work in the United States among clandestine Latin American migrants focuses most specifically on the fact of hiding one's presence, remaining as invisible as possible. The physical act of keeping a low profile was a form of invisibility through hiding that provided security from the watchful eye of immigration services. Her informants were: "afraid to go out in public, I was afraid to talk." Dolores Magaña feared capture and arrest, stating that "[w]hen I went somewhere... when I saw the police and everything, I thought that they were Immigration . . . I would say, 'Immigration is going to take me away and is going to deport me'" (Bibler Coutin, 2005: 200). The imperative of hiding highlights that invisibility is a conscious effort, one that is produced through acts of concealment, whether through avoiding overt expressions of identity or whether through the concealment of spoken language. The fact of physical hiding, creating invisibility through one's own effort is a salient issue for this project in general. While Bibler Coutin's interlocutors sought to limit their chances of capture and deportation through acts, Russians seek to be categorically invisible through acts aligning them to the Canadian population, often through the avoidance of overt expressions of nationalism and the selective use of language, comportment, etc.

To continue with examples drawn from the work of Bibler Coutin, we can see that invisibility is a result of a confluence of variables centered around the lack of political expression, exercise of individuality, employment and social rights (1999:



53). In large part, the denial of political freedom and expression, whether imposed by political and economic realities of the host society, or adopted by the migrants themselves, becomes constitutive of a people who do not possess the capacity to pursue their interests and rights and thus, as she sees it, fail to 'exist' (1999: 54). Though I will not advocate that this situation is constitutive of being 'in-between' the nation state, I will, however, argue that these factors rob migrants of rights and freedoms normally guaranteed in the democracies of the West.

Invisible migrants are quite frequently among the most marginal members of a society, unable to seek support or security; they live without official recognition, avoiding the specter of detection and deportation. Studies have been primarily focused on migrants who do not possess a formal education and are employed in blue-collar work, usually citizens who arrive from the global south and reside in the global north. As such, studies with invisible middle-class migrants as their focus are particularly rare. If, as Karen Fog-Olwig notes, the impetus for migration tends to manifest itself as a desire for upward social and economic mobility (Fog-Ølwig, 2007:99) then middle-class educated migrants are better suited within the adoptive nation state for such ascent.

Many of Kopnina's informants in the United Kingdom and Netherlands were educated professionals, ranging from accountants to software engineers (2005: 92). Despite the fact that many were present in the nation beyond the stated length of their visas, circulating between European countries, taking advantage of lax deportation regimes; they were accruing capital and seeking a legitimate means of remaining in

Western Europe. As members of an educated class, they possessed the means with which to actualize upward mobility.

The reality of Russian invisibility is then rather different in both scope and scale to the examples of clandestine migration that I have discussed earlier. As practical migrants, issues of exploitation and rights are not played out to the same degree. Knowledge of official languages is often not an issue, and many are aware that they can return to Russia. For many Latin American migrants, the prospect of being returned is worse than a clandestine existence in the United States or Israel.

For fourth-wave Russian migrants, issues of networking, secondary migration, and class are paramount in understanding the conditions that give rise to invisibility. The following chapters engage with the aforementioned topics through a hybrid analysis mixing the theoretical and ethnographic. The aim is to provide as comprehensive an analysis as possible. I will, however, turn now to an introduction of networks. The topic of networks is rather diverse with many connotations. It is necessary then to introduce the concept to properly frame it for the following ethnographic discussion.

During the early to mid portion of the twentieth century, network analysis was prominent among many anthropologists, particularly among the Rhodes-Livingstone and Manchester School researchers in the Copperbelt cities of southern Africa and among urban residents in the United States. A resurgence in network analyses began in the later twentieth century as it found a renewed use in the social studies of science literatures and among ethnographers working in large urban environments (Brettell, 2000; Latour, 2005).

The definition of networks that I follow in this project is an ego-based, person-to-person approach that defines networks as webs of affiliation in which people are bound to one another through mutual interest, need or support; it is in the broad sense a mesh of sociality (Mitchell, 1969: 3). Network analysis, however, is not confined to the types of social networks that I use in this project. In fact, network theory is by its nature quite diverse. Scholars such as Latour (2005) conceived of networks of human and non-human interaction; Castells (2000) conceives of networks in a broad digital sense, uniting the global through the mass digital communication technologies which have brought about shifts in human interaction. While Castells and Latour conceive of networks in the broad sense, linking the global and the local, the human and the non-human; Saskia Sassen (2002) takes a slightly altered approach. Her research conceives of global networks which rely on technological and corporate advancements which in turn increases the power of global cities (2002: 3).

In taking a much more limited definition of network, I am avoiding discussions of the global, the digital and non-human. Such omissions are of my own choosing, in an attempt to narrow down the concept of networks that I mobilize. Scholars such as Snel, Kopnina, Caldwell, and Ledeneva, for instance, have all pointed to the importance of informal networks among Russians. During the course of fieldwork, this would demonstrate itself. Selecting an appropriate frame in which to analyze networks is rather important. According to Crossley, et al., (2009: 1):

Social network analysis is based around the idea of seeing social relations in formal terms as patterns of points and lines in a mathematical space with formal properties that can be analysed with precision.

This definition, which has been synthesized from the Copperbelt studies (cf. Mitchell, 1969) identifies networks as a series of individuals. Between these individuals are the linkages, or the relationships between the members. Mitchell describes the linkages between persons as being the content of a network, which “may be, among other possibilities, economic assistance, kinship obligations, religious cooperation or it may be simply friendship” (1969: 20). Mitchell’s analysis sets the groundwork for a network analysis that is inclusive of a broad range of people, both Russian and non-Russian, as well as places, activities and relationships.

Many of the studies of ethnic migrants have, at their heart, an a priori belief in the existence of the ethnic community as the common parameter of social interaction abroad. Yet, I attempt to correct this through a posteriori justification of networks as a valid means of exchange between Russians. Community defined in a diffuse manner as common sociality, as Kopnina has done, ignores the fact that it is quite possible that two Russians may in fact have little in common. The “common sociality” meaning common language and nationality may have little to do with the selection of friends or partners and any undue emphasis on this point .

Invisibility conceived as a lack of political autonomy or the failure to construct community institutions cannot account for the purposive nature of the Russian presence abroad. As I will show in chapters six through eight, Russians use

the development of personal networks as a means of keeping tabs on one another, exchanging goods, services and information. Being involved more acutely in their vocational milieu or social interests allows them to engage more wholly with members of chosen groups, facilitating the process of cultural adaption, or acculturation.

Implicit in my analysis is the assumption that the world is in an era of transnational migration, impacted by the immigration and public policy of particular nations, the form social exchange takes in the host society, and in regards to migrants themselves, such the reasons for undertaking a move, and ontology such as religious or political beliefs. The ceaseless back-and-forth (Portes & DeWind, 2007: 9) brought my informants from Russia to intermediary countries then to Canada, following an ad hoc , non-linear path.

Given the importance of invisibility to this study, it is appropriate that I bring this chapter to a close with a brief clarification of the subject . From what I have shown in the previous section, invisibility may be broken down into aggregates:

1. **Legal Invisibility:** In the studies by Olshtain-Mann and Roer-Strier (1999) and Bibler Coutin (1999/2005), the migrants were rendered invisible by their lack of formal legal recognition. They were guaranteed no rights, could not seek social support, medical help and were denied educational opportunities. Given that clandestinity is against the law, they were forced to avoid detection by the authorities who could arrest, detain and finally deport the migrants. This has led into physical invisibility.

2. **Physical Invisibility:** Physical invisibility can be broken down further into two categories, that of phenotype and concealment. The latter, which was mostly aptly displayed in the work of Bibler Coutin (1999/2005) regarded the physical nature of avoiding detection, such as prolonged periods indoors, very routinized behavior to avoid any undue suspicion or to arouse attention. These migrants were concealed from the broader population. The former, based on the physical appearance of the migrants is best described by Kopnina, in which her informants simply appeared to be British. They possessed the same physical attributes and thus from their outward appearance could not be distinguished.
3. **Social Invisibility:** Social invisibility, unlike the other forms, is not particularly associated with clandestinity. Many socially invisible migrants possess the qualities and attributes of the host society, thus they generally fit in. As a result, they often appear much like their hosts- in dress and deportment, language and outlook. This is namely the form of invisibility from which this project draws.

### Chapter III

#### History of Russian Migration to Canada

The movement of peoples from Russia and the near abroad to Canada can be categorized into four distinct waves. The first began with the end of the First World War and continued to the outset of the second (1917- 1939); the second began with the end of the second world war continuing until roughly 1970 (1946- 1970) and from 1970 until the outset of Gorbachev's policy of perestroika and glasnost (1970s- 1985). Gorbachev's efforts were intended to significantly redesign the statist Soviet economy, while simultaneously allowing greater freedom in religious affairs, movement as well as the media (cf. Gorbachev, 1987, Kotkin, 1991). Soviet authorities began to open up the USSR to the idea of emigration, allowing hundreds of thousands to seek residence in Europe, North America and Israel. It is now commonly believed that between 1948 and 1999 around 1,130,000 Russians left the country with 40% leaving between 1987 and 1989 alone (Shevtsova, 1992: 241).

Prior to the first major wave of Russian migration, dating back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, Russians began arriving in Canada as labourers in the agricultural sector. In 1867 the census showed 607 persons of Russian origin and by 1881 that number had grown to 1,227 (Laine, 1983: xvii). The majority of these arrivals were members of religious sects objecting to forced combat service in the Russian Empires armed forces, "attracted to Canada where they were not required to do military service" (Mogiljansky, 1983:5). In addition to these religious and political dissenters (who mainly settled in cities) were Russian farmers looking to take advantage of free land in Western Canada and who developed homesteads in Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. The

government of the Dominion of Canada had set forth a work-to-own policy providing land to immigrants that they would farm and eventually own. This work-to-own policy drew thousands of people to the West, which to this day has deep cultural roots associated with Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian migration (1983: 6).

By 1917, immigration to Canada began to pick up in pace and size. Many of those escaping Russia were anti-Bolsheviks, Russian intellectuals and the religious community who feared persecution. Often expelled from the Russian state, these émigrés moved to the major European centers, to the United States and to Canada. By 1921, it is estimated that there were roughly 100,000 Russians living in Canada (Ponomareff, 1983: 52) though, it is believed that these statistics under represented the actual number of Russians who were residing in Canada. The Russian Empire and later Soviet Union's borders were revised and re-worked; often Russians were born outside of their actual homeland but maintained strong political, social and economic connections with it, despite the lack of any formal recognition of citizenship. The inverse situation is true of groups, such as Germans and Finns who were born in Russia but had no connections to their supposed country. This situation furnished a complicated set of demographic statistics in the early part of the twentieth century that could not quite categorize émigrés. Laine states: "for example, the immigrants who had already left or were streaming out of those territories which had been ceded by Russia to her neighbours, or had declared themselves independent states often did not know whether to report themselves to Canadian authorities as Russian" (1983: xviii). Ponomareff adds that : "Russian immigration to Canada between 1917 and 1939 and before lies in the fact that it is very difficult to come up with accurate immigration and census statistics for Russians... [which] suggests their



presence as numerically vague or implicit percentage of general categories such as alien of East European” (1983:49). The shifting borders of the Russian Empire and the peace accords ending the First World War had created classes of stateless Russian peasants, intellectuals and religious groups seeking amnesty abroad. The volume of these migrants was quite large though Canada did not receive nearly the same number of migrants as Europe or the United States. This can be attributed both to Canada’s exclusionary immigration policy favouring Western European and American migrants over central and eastern European migrants as well as a general lack of access to Canadian cities from European ports of departure.

Many of the Russian immigrants in this first wave of migration to Canada believed that once the political and economic situation in Russia had reverted to pre-1917 standards they would be able to return to their homeland and return to their previous lives. This belief led these migrants to vehemently protect their culture, language and their religion: “The émigrés strove to compensate for their loss with a conscious dedication to the continuity of national culture, which was “an essential aspect of their national identity, of their identity as educated, at whatever level, Russian people”” (Slobin, 2001: 515). Taking advantage of many first-generation Russian immigrants’ desires to return, and knowing that they had maintained strong cultural connections, pro-communist unions and political organizations in Montréal and Toronto attempted to convince Russians to promptly return to take advantage of the developing economy and new opportunities offered though Leninist plans. It is doubtful, however, that this emigration *from* Canada was ever significant and it is believed that the organizations were propagating myths more than truths.

To summarize, the population of Russians who arrived between 1917 and 1939 numbered around a hundred thousand, mostly exiles, who had taken advantage of economic opportunities in Canada such as physical labour or agriculture. The protection and continuation of their national culture was an important feature among the first wave of Russian migrants, who felt that this would be necessary for their eventual return to their native homes. However, by 1939 the Second World War had broken out which would see the devastation of much of western Russia and would see a new form of political terror.

Between 1939 and 1946 there were few migrants from Russia to Canada. The Canadian government's focus on their war efforts and the inaccessibility of Canada from much of Western Europe meant that population movement to Canada decreased to just a trickle. Movement of Russians within Europe, however, was happening at a rapid pace. The Nazi deportation of tens of thousands of Russians to slave-labour camps in parts of the expanding German empire had moved many out of the reach of Stalin and into the heart of the Third Reich under brutal conditions. At the end of the war, from 1945 – 1946, the allies began to uncover the camps left behind, often filled with young Soviet-Russian labourers who had little desire to return home, cognizant of the horrors that awaited them. Seeing an opportunity to fill labour shortages in a booming economy with young Russian labourers, the Canadian government sent physicians and immigration officials to camps in Europe (Jeletzky, 1983: 67). This policy broke part of the convention signed at Yalta in which Stalin demanded the return of all Soviet citizens, regardless of their desire (Ibid: 70-71), thus the Canadian government provided a formal means for many Soviets to gain access to Canada.

Nonetheless requirements to enter Canada were rather liberal, effectively accepting anyone young and healthy enough to be employed in Canada. Those who had a petitioner, such as a relative or prospective employer, would receive preferential access. This meant that the vast majority of those coming to Canada during this period were young men who would be employed in the agricultural or labour industries that were growing during the post-war boom (1983: 75). Most of the men were on single year contracts, obligating them to remain in the same job for at least a year. Upon termination of the contract, the Russians were given the chance to stay in that profession or find a new path for themselves in Canada. This prompted many young men to take jobs in industries that did not match their skill level; however, the investment of a single year meant that they were free to live in the “blessed land” and seek better opportunities (ibid: 75). During their first year, the Government of Canada provided free health care, courses on history, geography, government and English/French courses. Sixty per cent of the Russian migrants knew neither official language and saw these courses as an opportunity to connect with their countrymen (ibid: 76-77). The time limit on these courses, like the labour contracts, meant that after a year, the Russians would need a new venue in which to interact. For the second wave of Russian migrants, this was the Russian Orthodox Church. As with the first generation, they preserved their culture and language largely with the Church’s aid, providing courses, meeting space and social organizations that Russians could partake.

Although the first and second waves of Russian migrants were both concerned with the preservation of their culture, language and history there were intense social antagonisms between the two generations. Among the Russian migrants of the first wave

were cultural nationalists and Bolshevik sympathizers. Having lived in Canada or the US since the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, they had not been witness to the suffering that had taken place under Stalin's reigns of terror or the destruction caused by the Second World War. Having little interaction, two distinct Russian groups developed, the first wave who "living abroad inevitably reacted to the political situation in the homeland" (Slobin, 2001: 517) with the intention of one day returning and the second wave who recognized that they could never return to their homeland. T.F Jeletzky stated that: "within a political context, if Russian anti-communists came to a location where "old-timers" were predominantly, then mutual lack of understanding led to conflicts. As a result, they did not develop close ties and, in some cases, there were even strong animosities" (1983: 79).

The second wave of migrants to Canada had a relatively easy transition into the local economy and social sphere. In cities such as Montréal, they tended to cluster residentially, mostly along St. Laurent Boulevard and in the Hochelaga district north of Rue Ontario and east of Iberville (Kukushkin, 2007: 108-110)<sup>7</sup>. Montréal was Canada's first and largest destination for Russian migrants (Kukushkin, 2007: 42), providing a basis for a large community. They opened up a Russian Branch of the Canadian legion in 1954 at the Church of the Holy Apostle Peter and Paul (the oldest Russian Orthodox Church dating from 1907 (Kukushkin, 2007:42)), as well as Russian language schools, sports teams, and children's and community outreach programs (Yaroshevsky, 1983: 170-172). The second wave of Russian immigration is marked by a strong focus on community, both local and Russian. Montréal's Russian community built strong ties with communities in Rawdon, Québec; Ottawa, Ontario; Toronto, Ontario; New York, USA and Western Canada. They created transnational organizations that provided aid to those

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<sup>7</sup> For a description of Russian residential habits, see: Hardwick, 1993

looking to escape, provided support to non-governmental organizations attempting to bring change in the Soviet Union, and provided tangible aid to those who had made it to Canada. The second wave provided some of the necessary means of support to those who would form the third wave of Russian migration.

The third wave of Russian migration, which ostensibly began in limited numbers in the late-1960s, is marked by escape, exile and occasionally permitted departure. The third wave sought to leave the Soviet Union for “national, religious and socio-political” reasons “characteristic of Soviet life” (Yaroshevsky, 1983: 90). Given that many had to fight in earnest to leave the Soviet Union, they have been defined as “the most active and gifted, succeeded in reaching Canada and established a prosperous life-style” (ibid: 92). Aided by the second wave of migrants in securing visas and integration into life in Canada, there was greater camaraderie between members of these two waves of immigration who had both known the horrors of the Soviet Union’s political machine.

Determined to make a successful life in Canada, the third wave attempted economic integration as quickly as possible. Ironically, for highly skilled professionals, the integration was actually a longer process. Lawyers and doctors, for instance, needed to learn the language of their profession and bring their professional standards up to the Canadian standard, which often meant learning new material and re-taking exams (ibid: 92-93). The most successful in the short term were tradesmen and administrators who were quickly adopted into the Canadian economy. Economic success translated to integration into the overall Canadian society.

Russian migrants in Montréal, though, began a process of outmigration and by the mid-1970s Toronto had overtaken Montréal as the economic capital of Canada. The

Russian community in Toronto, once smaller than Montréal's was now four and a half times the size of the community in Montréal. The Church of the Holy Apostle Peter and Paul which had been head of the Russian Orthodox Church in Canada lost this title to a Cathedral in Ottawa. The Church itself had moved a number of times, from its primary location on Rue Soulanges in Point St. Charles in 1907 to its current location on Rue Champlain in the East-end of Montréal, a much smaller location living in the shadow of the brewery. It remained the heart of the dwindling Russian community in Montréal.

A salient feature of the late-1970s in Montréal and in Québec was the rise of Québécois nationalism and language consciousness. Usually landmarked by the 1976 election of René Levesque and his Parti Québécois, the prominence of this new political party caused social and economic waves. Many businesses and anglophones departed during this time for other provinces in Canada and the United States. 'Success' for Russian migrants is often predicated on educational attainment and economic performance in Canada. The rise of Québécois nationalism had noted deleterious effects on the economy, making financial success more tenuous. In addition, Russian immigrants were more likely to know at least some English than French. The history of the educational system in Québec had favored integration into the Anglo-protestant school system over the French school system (Rosenberg & Jedwab, 1992: 270). By the mid-1970s Russians had firmly established themselves in anglophone schools, seeing it as the language of commerce and education. The rise of nationalism had destabilized the province, and hoping to avoid a precarious situation similar to those they had left behind in the USSR, many Russians followed the Anglophones out of Quebec. Hou & Bourne (2006) working on migration statistics for Canada's three largest gateway cities note that

Montréal was losing well educated migrants, unable to retain them once they landed in the city (1517). The diminishing community of second and third wave Russians becomes an important feature for the decision of fourth wave migrants to move to Montréal.

By the 1980s, many of the first wave of migrants had passed away or were too old to take part in community activities. Pockets of strongly defined cultural Russian or Ukrainian communities descended from first generation migrants remained in the Western portion of the country with small communities that existed by solely speaking Ukrainian or Russian, but most were second-generation and not nearly as politically active as their parents and grandparents had been. They had little connection to the immigrants from Russia who resided in the urban centers. The mid-to-late 1980s also saw a new breed of migrant coming to Canada.

The fourth wave of migration began in the 1980s when it became clear the Soviet government no longer wielded the iron-fist control over their borders that they once did. Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of perestroika and glasnost (cf. Gorbachev, 1987) had involved sending professionals abroad to take part in intellectual and skill exchanges on subjects ranging from medicine to engineering and business. A much more mobile class of migrants was emerging, with the intellectual capital to quickly leave the country and a visa regime that was no longer as complicated or as daunting as it had previously been – bribes and fake documents were commonly available. During the middle-to-late 1980s, the Soviet government began providing exit visas to Jewish Soviets who sought the security of Israel or the United States. The policy of perestroika was an attempt to curry favour among UN nations in trade rights and large scale loans to prevent bankruptcy.

This policy furnished many Russians with the legal right to seek settlement abroad without the schism that punctuated the migration experience of earlier generations.

It is important to note that the fourth wave of Russian-Soviet migration was not motivated by political or religious harassment, but rather economic and political instability. Tired of shortages and perpetual political instability, many sought refuge in countries such as Israel, the United States, Germany and the United Kingdom (Rybakovsky & Ryazantsev, 2005: 9-11). Immigration policy to the United States and other post-industrial societies favors educated professionals over non-educated migrants, which has meant that fourth wave migrants tend to be educated, possessing in most instances a greater than post-secondary education. According to Ontario's Immigration Department, roughly 63% of all Russian immigrants held a university degree, 12.8% a non-university diploma, 4.3% a trade certificate and 13.6% had a secondary education. Only 0.7% of the immigrants had no formal education (Ontario Immigration, 2007: 3). Russian demographers working on emigration note that this trend forms a brain drain as well-qualified scientists and professionals are leaving for more lucrative employment abroad (Rybakovsky & Ryazantsev, 2005: 12).

The above-average educational attainment of Russian immigrants of the fourth wave has put them at odds with their second and third-wave counterparts who see them as materialistic and money driven (Kopnina, 2005). This "materialism" has also apparently translated into a loss of religious values among the fourth-wave migrants. Raised under the atheistic system of state socialism, they most often hold no or weak religious affiliations. Fourth wave migrants, thus, are not involved in the same cultural or social milieus as their counterparts in the earlier second and third wave of migration. The



division between the second/third and fourth waves mirrors that between the first and second waves. The social, cultural, religious and economic make-up of the population currently emigrating from Russia is very different from the earlier population of Russian migrants in Canada.

The division between third and fourth waves can be understood by shifts in the extent of necessity experienced by migrants. The third wave, having escaped from dire economic shortages used strategic plans to move, often setting up strong local roots to compensate for the lost roots of their homeland, protecting their language and their culture while simultaneously investing in their local surroundings, in this case, the city of Montréal. Fourth-wave migrants are using intermediary cities and nations as stepping-stones from Russia, often leaving then returning to Russia temporarily. In most instances they enter the Canada from Europe or Israel, many responding to employment or social opportunities. They may also see Canada as simply another step in a long sojourn or it may represent a final destination. Fourth wave migrants do not have to surrender familial or social bonds in Russia, can form much more dispersed social networks across the world and maintain them through travel and communication technologies. This emerging form of migration, transnationalism, can be said to define the fourth wave migrants.

An interesting consequence of the fourth wave's educational attainment and social identity is their relative invisibility in the literature, in the statistics and in the city. The second and third wave migrants, proud of their heritage as Russians, were eager to exhibit to the Canadian society their connection to both homes. The building of monuments in Rawdon, Québec; plaques to memorialize Russian-Canadians who fought in the Second World War; the opening of a Russian Branch of the Canadian legion; parade floats;

religious contact with other Christian sects in the city; cultural events and day schools helped provide a level of visibility to the Russian community in Canada that has been lost with the fourth wave of migrants. The Russian Orthodox Cathedrals in Montréal have a steadily declining population with an ever rising average age. In addition to the decline of religious observance is the disappearance of Russian-oriented day schools and the slow and steady decline of the branch of the Canadian legion organized by the surviving Russians who fought on behalf of Canada in her foreign wars.

The Russian migrants of the second and third wave being concerned with the social, religious, political and the economic situation in the Soviet Union presented a united front that opposed Soviet politics, connecting Russian migrants in most of the Western democracies and forging not only political but also social and personal ties. These politicized networks are the hallmarks of the Russian diaspora (cf. Clifford, 1997: 247). The strong local connections, international associations, memory and longing towards the historic 'home' are all common features of the diaspora. The fourth wave, however, is fundamentally different. No longer escaping persecution and repression, they are now largely leaving to pursue opportunities that relate to financial success or for personal reasons. Such personal reasons include the desire to travel, to engage with their religion in a more safe environment, as well as to live openly as a homosexual. Kopnina terms the fourth-wave migrants "practical migrants" (2005: 30). Shuttling between Western Europe and Russia they can enter and exit, taking advantage of relatively weak access points in many Central European nations and simply taking up residence in one of the more affluent nations in the West. In many cases the "Russians" do not require visas

to enter or exit the west as they may possess more than one nationality, or not possess Russian citizenship at all.

Many of the Russians of the fourth wave migrants are not necessarily Russian citizens, nor have they ever lived *in* Russia, for that matter. Often self-defined as “Russian” they may, in fact possess the citizenship of Kazakhstan, Ukraine or Baltic citizenship. The Russification policies of the Soviet Union (cf. Sebag Montefiore, 2005) ended up moving tens of millions of ethnic-Russians from their homeland to the corners of the Soviet Union. Graham Smith notes that this figure is as high as twenty-five million ‘diasporic’ Russians (1999: 500). The liberalization of movement furnished many ethnic Russians the opportunity to return to their homeland, or seek a new home abroad. In an attempt to avoid political interference by the Russian state many nations forced Russian nationals to drop their Russian citizenship, in some cases rendering them stateless (Verdery, 1998; Smith, 1999). Convolved demographic statistics pertaining to Russians can be explained, in part, by the very complexity of self-identification as “Russian.” Many of the participants in the project in Montréal were “Russians”, who spoke Russian as their native tongue, were involved in Russian practices (to be detailed later) and followed current events; but who were not citizens of Russia, holding passports of other nations, particularly Israel.

As a result, there is no clear picture of Russian migration to Canada. Russians are coming to Canada via secondary countries in Europe and in particular Israel, traveling on passports that are not Russian and are often identified by other Russians as Jews or ethnic minorities and not as “Russians.” These Russians are less inclined to organize ethnically, quickly adapt to Canada’s middle class and may form strong familial connections that

span vast distances while remaining unknown to Russians around the corner. This phenomenon has rendered these migrants socially invisible, being largely outside of the ethnographic literature and invisible in the cityscape, blending in amongst the host population.

Of course, division along class or ethnic lines is not particular to the Russian community, and in fact “class position, acquired skills, knowledge bases, familial and work experiences provide transnational migrants with accumulated stocks of human and social capital, which they use to adapt to their changing circumstances and to achieve satisfactory levels of livelihood for themselves and their dependants” (Conway, 2007: 420). As with many groups, the Russians in Kopnina’s ethnography are fractured along class, ethnic, and socio-cultural lines, identifying themselves as “Russian” by virtue of the citizenship bestowed upon them and the culture in which they were raised. Though divided and often times antagonistic, they nonetheless were connected through informal networks. She notes that though the Russians would spend the vast majority of their time outside of these networks, they would use them or call upon them when need-be(2005: 82). Such networks are rather common among Russians, having a distinct place in survival strategies during the Soviet era, and which were utilized in the post-socialist era as a means of maintaining connections and social capital among people.

## Chapter IV Immigration Policy and Multiculturalism

This project drew from a population of Russian migrants who entered Canada through the independent class visa system. Most of my informants immigrated to Canada to continue their education in Canada and as a result were able to take advantage of the new immigration visa category of Canadian experience which expedited their quest for permanent residence and citizenship. In large part, their command of national languages, educational attainment and adaptability to the social and cultural life in Canada informs their ethnic invisibility, through a rapid process of integration, assimilation and employment. The policies and practices of Canada's immigration regime, have, in large part, attempted to select migrants readily able to adapt to the social and economic climate of the country and as such it is imperative to discuss immigration policy as a social force in producing invisibility.

Beginning in the 1960s, immigration policy began to reflect the changing economy of Canada then heavily dependent on agricultural exports as well as, to lesser degrees, the pulp and paper and heavy industry. Beginning in 1962, with renewed efforts in 1967, Canada introduced a merit points-based immigration process by which would-be migrants were assessed for acceptability under six general categories: education, language ability, work experience, age, arranged employment in Canada and adaptability (CIC, 2008; Green, 2003: 38). This points-based immigration policy, executed through *Citizenship and Immigration Canada*, remains in place today. Migrants who arrive in Canada and receive permanent residence can then sponsor family members such as spouses and dependent children provided they possess the means, and after a specified

period of residence in Canada, apply for citizenship. The system as it is in operation today aims to facilitate the residence and citizenship process for migrants through increased visa opportunities, new professional class visas and reduced waiting times.

Although the emphasis in immigration policy is on employment based migration, it is nonetheless cognizant of other needs and requirements and accordingly has three broad visa categories: family class immigrants (spouses and dependent children who are sponsored for immigration by immediate family members,); independent class migrants (who are given visas through a merit points system related to skills, and post-secondary education credentials, such as university education and technical training; experience and likely adaptability); and finally, there is the convention refugee class (who are given visas as outlined by the United Nations Human Rights Commission) (Beach et al., 2003: 4). The three category system was introduced to Canada in 1976 by the government of then-Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. In addition to the three categories, Canada opened its immigration policy, and removed previous provisions barring the admittance of homosexuals and the disabled. The new policy also provided greater latitude to judicial officials who could then decide whether or not to deport someone and whether or not to readmit them (Daniel, 2005).

With governmental efforts to modernize the Canadian economy, shifts in recruitment efforts occurred, moving away from selecting unskilled labourers and towards an emphasis on recruitment of skilled and professional immigrants to fill an increasingly urbanized industry and financial service sector economy. This required diminishing the number of those admitted under the family reunification or refugee class. In doing so, the government became more proactive in seeking suitable migrants through

recruitment campaigns abroad, particularly in western and northern Europe. Prior to the adoption of the point system and the three class category, the government was cognizant of the need to create better opportunities for migrants. Their 1966 white paper states: “A bigger population means increased domestic markets ... [which] permits manufacturing firms to undertake longer, lower cost production runs, and broadens the range of industry we can undertake economically ... improv[ing] our competitive position in world markets” (DMI, 1966 as cited in Walsh, 2008: 794).

To determine the capacity of a potential migrant’s success, the government instituted a policy of language assessments, credential recognition and a merit based points system called the Numerical Multifactor Assessment System (NUMAS) (ibid: 797). NUMAS operates by attributing values to six general categories. Under the current scheme, areas such as education, language ability and work experience, for instance are attributed a scaled number of importance, 25, 24 and 21, respectively (cf. CIC, 2008 and Walsh, 2008 for a break-down all of variables). The applicant requires a score of 67 to be awarded a visa. The higher one’s level of education and length of employment abroad, the higher the score one receives for that category. Those who achieve high scores are deemed to have the appropriate market, language and social skills for success in Canada and are thus seen as good candidates for residence. This system, which was instituted in the 1960s, saw multiple revisions as the economy shifted or political attitudes towards immigration changed. Between 1967 and 1993, for instance, the rise of the Reform Party, changes in Liberal Party doctrine or the election of Brian Mulroney’s Progressive Conservative Party all, in some way, resulted in a revision of the point system (Daniel, 2005: 692-697).

Although Canada's policies in the 1960s sought qualified immigrants from any nation, unlike Australia and its White Australia Policy (cf. Jordan, 2006), Canada maintained recruitment campaigns in Europe and sought a certain type of immigrant who was seen as a better fit for the social and physical environment of Canada. Yet, the late 1970s through the 1980s (Wilson, 1993: 653) saw a shift from a majority European migrant population, to immigrants arriving from the Global South. This shift in the sources of immigration caused racial backlashes in Canada. Though seen as a positive step for Canada by many observers (Wilson, 1993: 653-655), others attributed an increase of social and racial problems to the presence of these non-European residents. The sentiment was that too large a proportion of immigrants were arriving on the family reunification visas, while far too few were coming as independent (economic) migrants (ECM). Reform Party policies sought to limit the scope of Canadian immigration, selecting only highly qualified immigrants, a policy later adopted by the newly elected Liberal Party in 1993 (Daniel, 2005: 698).

Beginning in 1993, concerted efforts on behalf of the Canadian government sought to attract migrants who possess assets that could be directly infused into the Canadian economy (ibid). One such strategy undertaken by the Canadian government (as well as the United States government in a similar fashion) was to promote the entrepreneurial and investor visas, a subcategory in the independent class of immigrants. This category offered visas to individuals who seek admission to Canada and who possessed a certain net worth and capability of investing a minimum of money directly into Canada. The current scheme dictates that a would-be immigrant under the entrepreneur class possesses a net worth of at least C\$ 300,000. For investors, the current



scheme is a little more complicated. The minimum threshold for wealth is set at C\$ 800,000. The government is then given \$400,000 of that value to be used for five years and two months and then returned to the investor without any interest (CIC, 2008).

Despite being rather complex, this policy has been extremely successful, much more so than similar attempts by other western nations in attracting foreign direct investment.

Jaclyn Fierman, in her article "*Is Immigration Hurting the U.S.?*" indicates that Canada, which has a lower investor threshold than the US, was able to attract over three billion U.S. dollars of investment between 1986 and 1994 alone, far outpacing the rates seen in the United States (1994: 74).

Foreign direct investment is just a single example of the means that the government has in place towards attracting economic migrants. The participants in my own project were not entering under the entrepreneur or investor class, but were instead independent migrants or entered on student visas. Under previous Liberal administrations, government stipulations for skilled labourers and professionals seeking visas, has shifted from an emphasis on an employment offer acceptable to CIC officials to skilled qualifications, such as post-secondary education or professional and technical skills. Given the shift from employment offer to skills, many immigrants find that their ability to access gainful employment in their field of education is often limited. Immigrants from the major source countries of immigration to Canada – India, Pakistan and China, accounting for 40-50% of immigration to Canada (MacLeod, 2003: 22)—often have difficulty in getting their professional and educational credentials recognized. A government immigration target, set at 1% of the population annually (roughly 300,000) (ibid) emphasizes educational credentials in recruiting immigrants but has little ability to

influence the process of accreditation by various professional bodies. In the case of foreign-born, foreign educated immigrants, their earning capacity is often significantly below that of the Canadian born population as well as the foreign-born, but Canadian educated. Of importance for this project is the fact that for immigrants who received their education in Canada or have earned their skills here: “a pattern appears to exist such that... [they] have earnings comparable to the Canadian-born, while foreign-educated immigrants have much lower earnings across most disciplines<sup>8</sup>” (McBride & Sweetman, 2003: 433). As I have indicated, the Russians in this project arrived in Canada and then pursued further education or sought new skills to compensate for market differences.

For migrants from Europe, including Russia, there appears to be a positive correlation between their skill sets and a greater ability to integrate into the economy. Gertrud Neuwirth states that we “must consider that these immigrants [from the global south] face obstacles or hurdles that have not been experienced by Europeans and which are further compounded by the restructuring of the economy due to globalization” (1999: 51). In the globalizing economy, Europeans continue to outperform immigrants from Asia, Africa and the Caribbean (1999: 57, 61). Russian immigrants with expertise and credentials in the sciences, particularly in research intensive institutes are often employed in their field of education, which has created a significant brain drain from Russia to the west (Rybakovsky & Ryazantsev, 2005: 12); however, those in medicine or other professions with an accreditation body often find themselves underemployed.

To increase the number of independent migrants with a greater potential to succeed in the knowledge economy of Canada, the Canadian government implemented

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<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that statistics relating to foreign credential recognition and salary omits those educated in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and the United States. Statistics reflect parity between these groups and the Canadian-born population.

changes to immigration regulations in order to facilitate the admission of temporary workers and foreign-born students into Canada. In the year before these policy changes were implemented (2007) Canada had provided visas for 131,248 economic class migrants (out of a total of 236,758) while the United States provided visas for 162,176 economic class migrants (out of a total of 1,052,415) (Somerville & Walsworth, 2009: 147). In September of 2008, the ruling Conservative Party augmented immigration with the re-alignment of a process by which skilled temporary workers and students already in Canada can apply for permanent residence through the Canadian Experience Class visa (CIC, 2008). Previously the regulations governing foreign student visas allowed foreign-born but Canadian educated migrants to remain in Canada for one year after completing their post secondary degree; however, changes in immigration policies now allow such residents to apply for a permanent status. This policy seeks to resolve the integration issues which have been plaguing economic class migrants by extending visas to those who already possess Canadian qualifications and Canadian labour experience.

Despite the problems plaguing immigrants and immigration policy in Canada, the Russian migrants I interviewed noted that they had not considered moving to the United States, explaining that it was too difficult to acquire the necessary visas and as a result, not worth the effort. Rybakovsky and Ryazantsev, have noted the recent tendencies of Russians to prefer countries such as Canada and Australia as immigration destinations over the United States and Germany, formerly the most popular destinations, because of visa concerns and immigration difficulties (2005: 9-10). Although similar merit based system are in place in many of the aforementioned countries, they provide far fewer economic based visas to foreign-workers, per capita, than does Canada and the system in

place to account for economic migration is incredibly complex. Countries like the United States and Germany have quota systems in place to strictly control the flow of immigrants. If a potential migrant to the United States, for instance, meets the quota, they are then given self-assessment brochures that provide an outline of the various visa categories and a self test. Whereas Canada's self-assessment test provides would-be migrants with information regarding the viability of their visa requests, the United States instead establishes which visa would be appropriate to apply for and under which sub-category (Bray, 2007: 11-15). The system is much larger and the duration of visa requests can in fact be years long. Would-be migrants who possess an offer of employment in the United States are issued temporary visas that range in duration from 12 months to three years and that must be renewed. It requires employer certification, and documents attesting to the very specific obligations and duties of the job in question. Although migrants can, in theory, change employers, this is often very difficult and impractical. Many migrants in the U.S. find themselves in a situation in which their status is quite ambiguous. Changing a year-to-year temporary visa for long term visas is quite complicated and bureaucratic.

The handbook produced for immigrants looking to enter the U.S. entitled *U.S. Immigration Made Easy* outlines, within the first few pages, over seventeen different visa categories. Many of these visa categories, such as EB (Employment First Preference), for instance, contain sub-visas. Under the EB banner are: EB-1 (Employment First), EB-1 Ability (Outstanding Professor and Researcher Category), EB-2 (Exceptional Ability), EB-3 (skilled/unskilled no advanced degree), EB-4 (Religious Workers) and EB-5 (Those with 1,000,000 U.S. dollars to invest or 500,000 to invest in depressed area) (Bray, 2007:

192-200). In addition to the volumes of visa categories, there are specific dates and locations attached to visa submission. Cognizant that most immigrants do not have the skills to navigate the US immigration system, the book advocates hiring a U.S.-based immigration attorney to file the documents at the appropriate centers on their correct dates. The cost and difficulty in navigating this system has meant that Russian applications for immigration to the United States have fallen off and Canada has increased as a destination of choice (Rybakovsky and Ryazantsev, 2005).

Bureaucratic mechanisms were made more even more complex in the wake of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 (9/11) in which strict border controls were instituted by both the United States and Canada. These policies, ratified by Canada, covered joint border issues, migration policy and joint statements on detention. Canada passed the Anti-Terrorism Act Bill C-36, Bill C-55, the Public Safety Act, US-Canada Joint Statement on Cooperation on Border Security and Regional Migration Issues, and the Canada-US Smart Declaration (MacLeod, 2003: 30). Policy changes aimed at increasing security at US and Canadian ports of entry unfortunately caused a bureaucratic back-up for U.S. bound-immigrants. Somerville and Walsworth sum up the frustration of U.S. employers by stating: (Somerville & Wallsworth, 2009: 148- 149):

Major administrative bottlenecks in the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) at the Department of Homeland Security has left employers frustrated with the delays in securing foreign workers; as a result, they have started using temporary work visas as a bridging mechanism to bring skilled workers quickly into the United States while waiting for permanent status via the Economic Class.

Unwilling to enter the United States on visas that may result in nothing more than a temporary stay in the United States, Russians have increasingly opted to seek employment in alternative wealthy western democracies, notably Canada and Australia (Rybakovsky and Ryazantsev, 2005: 10).

Although the United States was acknowledged by my informants as being the country to which they had initially dreamed of immigrating, it was also accepted as posing formidable bureaucratic challenges and in which they would likely not fare any better than in Canada. Despite this, they noted that there were policy issues that also plagued Canada, particularly the policy of multiculturalism with which many of them openly disagreed.

Designated as official government policy in 1971<sup>9</sup>, multiculturalism “calls, first, for the action of societal decision-makers to recognize a social reality (polyethnicity) within their midst, and secondly, to articulate both a vision and a policy devised to achieve some basis for tolerance and mutual respect” (Wilson, 1993: 651, 653).

Multiculturalism in immigration policy has taken a number of forms, including providing culturally-based programs such as language learning, accommodation, and community based health programs, as well as funding for multicultural organizations that provide social services to immigrants, such as language and integration (Wilson, 1993: 656).

Such ethnic community organizations provide English/French language lessons in the native tongue, or provide day care services to recent immigrants. This policy reflects the government’s image of a pluralistic Canadian society and a more pragmatic assumption that community specific organizations offer the most valuable means of integrating new arrivals(1993: 653-655). Ethnic community organizations and the funding and support

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<sup>9</sup> For multicultural policy in other countries in a similar era, see Liddicoat, 2008.

they receive from various levels of government are assumed to be aids in filling “gaps in the services made available” (Rosenberg & Jedwab, 1992: 285).

The importance of the discussion of multicultural policy here is two-fold: Fourth-wave Russian migrants that participated in this research were very vocal regarding their opposition to multiculturalism. I will discuss their opposition to multicultural policy in later chapters. This research primarily focuses on Québec, a province that has greater latitude with immigration policy, as stipulated by the Canada-Québec Accord of 1971 (cf. Kotsov, 2008), than other provincial governments. This latitude, seen as satisfying the demands of nationalists in the province, poses several important issues for immigration to Québec, particularly for fourth-wave Russian migrants who reside in the city of Montréal.

Québec’s official policy on cultural affairs and immigration is that of an “intercultural policy.” Intercultural policy had not been properly defined in any pragmatic capacity until the Bouchard-Taylor Commission Report, published in 2008; however, its connotations have been taken to mean the acceptance of ethnic and linguistic diversity with an emphasis on integration into the dominant Franco-Québécois population. The Bouchard-Taylor Commission outlines 11 aspects of intercultural policy as a guideline for provincial legislators (Bouchard-Taylor Commission Report, 2008: 42):

To summarize, we could say that Québec interculturalism institutes French as the common language of intercultural relations; cultivates a pluralistic orientation that is highly sensitive to the protection of rights; preserves the creative tension between diversity and the continuity of the French-speaking core and the social link; places special emphasis on integration; and advocates interaction.

To protect the majority within a minority situation, intercultural policy is designed to foster the acceptance of the primacy of French as the language of interaction and everyday use in public, while allowing ethnic diversity to persist. In an attempt to avoid conflict with the Parti Québécois, the federal government has sought a middle ground solution, in which they delegate authority over immigration to provincial agencies, namely *Immigration et Communauté Culturelles Québec*<sup>10</sup> (currently under the direction of Yolande James, Liberal MNA) to select persons better suited to living in Québec. Such individuals include those with a functional knowledge of French and adaptability skills. To counterbalance the loss of immigrants and aging population, Québec is also provided with the right to select a proportionately larger portion of the immigrant pool population than other provinces (Simmons, 2003: 49). Québec's policies differ significantly in regards to cultural policy but reflect Canadian ideology in its quest to select well-qualified economic migrants.

Despite these efforts to promote a liberal-democratic civil society, Québec's immigration policy is suffering from provincial bureaucratization bogging down the mechanisms. As well, many immigrants find themselves living in a province with tense community relations. Despite efforts by political parties to accommodate incoming migrants, overtly nationalist discourses have been alienating migrants and prompting them to seek residence in other provinces (Frideres, 1999; Bouchard & Taylor, 2008). Alienation has led to a disproportionate number of Québec-landed immigrants relocating to other regions within the country, most often Toronto (Hou & Bourne, 2006; Simmons, 1999). Cities such as Toronto end up receiving more immigrants than were initially admitted to Ontario, which can result in integration and employment issues. The

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<sup>10</sup> See [immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/fr/index.html](http://immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/fr/index.html)



proportion of immigrants arriving in Toronto has reached 50% while Québec's over-all retention is falling towards 20% (Beach et al., 2003:3).

Immigration policy in Canada is designed to foster the entrance of economically capable migrants into the national labour force. The policies and politics of immigration in Canada affect where migrants reside, how they earn a living and even the forms of association that are created. Fourth-wave Russian migrants to Montréal must navigate the bureaucratic institutions of provincial and federal immigration while attempting to learn the cultural and linguistic politics of their new home. Such challenges are often difficult and have led Russians to improvise strategies to cope with their situation in Montréal.

## Chapter V

### Analysis of Class

As I have detailed in the earlier background profile section, the migrants with whom I worked were young, well-educated, identified themselves as Russian and as belonging to the *middle-class*. They saw themselves as being members of a privileged social and economic class who possessed a formal education, were involved in intellectual activities, and lived their life in a 'respectable' manner (cf. Dowling, 2009); through avoiding the nationalistic and excessive tones of Russian culture, as Katarina would say, living one's culture. The salience of class here underscores the aspirations and mobility of my participants. They saw themselves as being upwardly mobile and like the Canadians with whom they would live, capable of attaining their dream.

Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the radical restructuring plans of the 1990s, the Soviet Union had laid out its image of a classless pan-Soviet society. The system had been based on Marxist-Leninist (and later Stalinist) philosophy. The history of Russia and the Soviet Union is replete with a history of struggle, oppression, repression which as Marx notes, results in revolution (Marx, 1998: 50). Marxist doctrine, with which the Soviet Union would be obsessed for over seventy years stated that the capitalist class, the bourgeoisie controlled the means of production and thus possessed economic dominion over the population, producing a particular division of labour. This shackled the lower classes into economic and philosophical domination (1998: 53). Marxist doctrine saw the eventual creation of a unified society through the organization of a single class (creating effectively a classless society since there are no divisions or

distinctions), the proletarian class, who would “overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy” resulting in the “conquest of political power by the proletariat” (1998: 66).

Leaders of the USSR, in following Marx, sought to create a society founded upon communal rights and a pan-Soviet society where divisions based on race, ethnicity and gender ceased to exist. It was the intention of the Soviet political and economic system to provide equal social privilege to surgeons as police officers and farmers. This was, of course, never fully realized. Not only did divisions continue to exist, but these were sanctioned by the state. For example, the Soviet authorities valorized motherhood as biologically reproducing the state (Caiazza, 2006), while the teachers and educators, on the other hand, instilled Soviet values among the youth, socially reproducing the state (Patico, 2008). While propaganda espoused a classless, egalitarian society, there existed from its inception divisions and disparities related to the role one held in the reproduction of the state and the value attributed to one’s role within the Soviet state machine.

Within the actual realms of employment, disparities between the worker and the manager developed. As the strict regulation of commodities created mass shortages and ran on durable goods for production and consumption, factory managers became burdened with increasingly complicated work environments, broken and outdated equipment and angry staff. As a result, authorities dramatically increased their salaries to reflect the difficulty of their job in relation to their employees, up to 2,000 Rubles a month versus the 310R – 350R a month of floor workers (Kotkin, 1991: 5). This sanctioned salary differences through wages based on the vocation’s level of difficulty formulated a subjective, value-laden system that created a hierarchy of citizenry who lived in distinct ‘levels’ and ‘circles’ of an individual (Kopnina, 2005: 102-103). It

allowed certain groups more flexibility in vacation and rest, provided greater sums of money (though, for all intents and purposes this did not matter) and access to goods at factory stores. A derivative of this was the creation of a ranking system that set in motion a social hierarchy: factory managers consorted with factory managers, resided in better and more private residences and could afford better amenities and goods (for an in-depth analysis of the sanctioned state approach to class, see Lampert, 1979). Amongst the workers a distinctive social hierarchy developed that Patino (2008) deems to be a “folk” (12) category imbued with cultural and economic components (ibid). It existed beneath the sanctioned class constructs as an informal means of differentiating forms of state citizenry (proletariat) despite formally all being at the same level, in effect “comrades.”

Purges of the aristocratic gentry early in the Soviet Union’s history created leagues of diasporic Russian aristocrats living in European and North American cities, longing to one day return to their native lands (Cohen, 2003; Slobin, 2001). The departed Russian aristocracy was replaced instead with a political elite dominated by committee members, commonly referred to as the Soviet Intelligentsia or in Russian, the *nomenklatura* (номенклатура). They comprised a rather minimal rung of Soviet society, living mostly in and around the major cities of Moscow and Leningrad. They possessed the greatest levels of education, capital and differential access to medical care, social services and to transportation.

High ranking government officials in cities of lesser status than Leningrad and Moscow were furnished with less prestige or access to the wealth made available to the select few. They nonetheless possessed homes, were educated and could freely travel between the states of the Soviet Russian Federation and indeed other Soviet Republics.

Yet, for the labourers and average citizens, Soviet doctrine continued to espouse that there was 'no division', 'no hierarchical structures'. Despite this rhetoric, divisions among members of the Soviet society existed, based on gender, class, personal traits, ethnicity and language. Efforts to eradicate such differences had instead nuanced them, placing a greater importance on them—ethnically non-Russian Soviets held on to their national identities, cultural identities even more strongly than before. Women sought to push for equal pay and equal rights, while intelligent and capable labourers sought to differentiate themselves from the lesser-minded members of their organizations. As the government continued to officially espouse a stateless, egalitarian society, the government itself aided in habituating such divisions, which never ceased to exist.

The informal internal divisions constructed among citizens became, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the socially acceptable parameter of social division in CIS countries. The emerging post-socialist economy was in fact not vastly different and as such, the hierarchy that existed prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union remained in its wake. It consists of five distinct classes of Russian citizen: intelligentsia, technar (technical class, intellectually limited), hanzha (materially driven, fake aristocrats), peasant, and bydlo (commonly seen as ignorant or simpletons) (Kopnina, 2005: 103). As a comparison, the class system in America (which, apparently to Gorbachev included Canada, Gorbachev 1987: 209) consisted of three strata, the upper, middle and lower. The strata of importance for my research, the middle strata, are composed of employees, small businessmen, intellectuals, students and farmers (Griffiths, 1989: 37). It was hallmarked by educational attainment and a certain, reliable source of income. Unlike the upper strata, they did not control the means of production, or possess similarly large mutual

funds or pensions. The lowest class, the poorest of (North) American society possessed little in the way of education or culture. Since they, too, did not control the means of production, the dividing line between middle and lower class was cultural and social—knowledge of appropriate behaviours, possession of an education, etc. In other words, the middle class in North American society was neither intelligentsia nor bydlo; they did not make financial decisions for the nation, but were similarly educated, possessed a reliable income and could freely think for themselves.

Unlike the North American system, well-educated members of post-socialist Russian society, such as surgeons or educators, those who would be solidly middle-class in the West, have often experienced downward mobility into the working class, having to hold part-time employment working as taxi drivers or teaching English to the wealthy children of the New Russians to augment falling state salaries (cf. Caldwell, 2005; Patico, 2005). Jennifer Patico's (2008) work among post-socialist middle class educators in Russia notes that as a trend, the middle class has fallen off, and education is no longer a symbol of potential or growth; it is simply another personal marker (67). As a result, the once important educational attainment is now no longer a valid parameter to gauge access to higher incomes or stability and may in fact be as fraught with instability as any other career path. Those who invested years of their lives in the demanding university systems of the CIS in many instances have nothing to show for it beyond part-time employment to supplement their scant income, which is in some cases welfare. Two of Patico's informants noted their disgust at a system in which chemists with a Ph.D. level of education could not afford to buy bananas, whereas their Western counterparts could afford as many as they pleased (2008: 12).

Born to families of scientists, engineers, university economists and administrators, the bulk of the informants of this project were raised around Western literature, academic texts and a prestige in society recognized through their formal education and knowledge of life outside the Soviet Union. Many of my informants had been abroad as young children on Soviet-sponsored family vacations, a rare occurrence in the strictly controlled Soviet visa system. Despite their education and status within the Union, many resided in poorly constructed communal apartment blocks, did not have access to a car, and were victims of the shortages. In the Soviet Union, the possession of excess capital was strictly controlled and savings minimal. Nearing the end of the Soviet Union's existence, even high-ranking members of the Soviet intelligentsia resided in drab communal residences and were on long waiting lists for vehicles, fighting the same queues and shortages as the rest of the population. Immigrating from the CIS to Canada (often via intermediary countries) furnished them with new opportunities in which to assert themselves as respectable members of the middle class. Movement opened up avenues for asserting class identity and assuming a position in society alongside their Canadian-born neighbours. Seeing themselves as being victims of a political and economic system which did not reward their efforts or intelligence, Canada came to be seen as the place in which their goals and statuses could be achieved.

The failure of the systems in Russia, for my informants and many in the former-USSR, was compounded by the arrival of Western goods, which had been strictly controlled, but which now contrasted the differences between groups within the former-USSR and between the USSR and the West. For my informants, their first contact with the Western world came during the later 1980s, when the strict control over content set

by the Soviet government had begun to slip, and a greater number of western magazines imported from places such as Norway, along with condoms, clothes and foodstuffs began to arrive in the USSR. In an effort to regain control, the Soviet authorities began allowing the mass-import of selected Western products. Maksim recalls the incredible popularity of French folksinger Joe Dassin, whose early hits saw a renewed fame, in the Soviet Union.

Such imported goods began to grow in popularity, and Western goods began to take on a new symbolic meaning. The Eurostandard goods (Patico, 2008: 64-67) represented the plentiful stocks of the West and the economic success not found at home. After the collapse of the Soviet Union when the mass importing of Western goods was at its zenith, supermarkets, malls and high-end boutiques sprang up all over Russia sporting the latest goods from Europe and North America. The benchmark of personal success became the ability to acquire and appropriately use such items. Now, Western goods became the means in which the transitioning USSR and then Russia, would gauge success, and those who could spend the most and own the most were its winners, and those the least, were its losers.

Despite the ease with which one could find Western goods in the CIS countries their cost was often many times higher than their actual value in the West and their consumption was left to the fleets of expatriate business executives and new Russian tycoons who could pay the high import fees. For the Russian middle class, now termed 'the new poor' (Ochkina, 2006: 4), their capacity to purchase daily necessities, indeed to exist as middle class citizens became increasingly complicated. Inexpensive (Russian) products became increasingly difficult to find as stores sought to stock their shelves with



Western goods. The prices in supermarkets became increasingly unaffordable for the vast majority. This occurred as salaries and pensions fell dramatically, often to just a few hundred dollars a month (cf. Caldwell, 2004). Viktor, who was living in Moscow during the boom-bust of the late-1990s, recalls the boom of Western imported goods, particularly music and clothes: “you could buy anything, especially knock-offs of American brands.” Their extreme cost alienated many, particularly those who had invested decades into the Soviet Union only to end up among the poorest segment of society.

The middle class, the educated backbone of the Soviet proletariat, had fallen apart. Plunged into poverty, many grew restless from decades of strict governmental regulation, pervasive shortages and a reliance on informal and thus unreliable sources of income. Many sought to find better opportunities abroad, particularly in Israel, the European Union and North America. The newly defined borders between once unified states allowed citizens in many cases to simply leave the country without permission from local authorities. Given that the vast majority of middle class Soviet citizens had been given a free education (Andreev, 2008; Gorbachev, 1987) they were in fact quite mobile. The capacity to migrate from nation to nation, despite claims to the contrary is still dominated by the nation state and immigration and emigration policies. Guarnizo and Smith (1999:9) assert that “states still monopolize the legitimate means of coercive power within their borders.” Now furnished with the capacity to leave their CIS nation, many Russians were privileged precisely because they were middle-class, educated and as a result “adaptable” to the social environment of Canada.

As a matter of policy, Canada's immigration code seeks would-be immigrants who possess an education and capacity with one of Canada's two official languages. As was discussed in the section on Canadian immigration policy, CIC assesses migrants based on six criteria: education, language ability, work experience, age, arranged employment in Canada and adaptability (CIC, 2008). Fourth-wave Russian migrants tend to possess higher levels of education than earlier generations of Russian migrants and quite often possess knowledge not only of spoken but also of technical English. Their capacity to use their educational and employment skills in foreign countries facilitates their ability to acquire resident visas.

The cultural component of class and migrant identity is a salient issue given Canada's policy orientation. In selecting migrants on the basis of employment, education and adaptability, migrants whose orientation is that of a middle-class citizen, it is assumed that they will possess the necessary cultural tools and educational formation to succeed in Canada's high-paced global economy. Discussions of class in the West remains one of the most discussed forms of socioeconomic groupings in the social sciences literature. It is most often conceived of as divisions among labourers based on educational attainment, social standing, quantified by income and economic capital (Marx, 1988: 21-27; Polanyi, 2001: 138-139; Weber, 1978: 45). Within migration literature, it is often cited a key component of the settlement and integration of migrants in the host society. It determines in what area of a city a migrant will reside and with whom migrants will most likely interact. As a result of the strong attachment to culture and ethnic clustering, migration research has in large part studied 'labouring populations' (Appadurai, 1990: 302), those groups brought into the midst of well-developed global

cities to perform tasks that are not considered desirable work by the local population (Sassen, 2005) and who will “seek cultural security provided by ghetto environments as a means of reconstituting local communities abroad” (Fog Olwig, 1998: 12).

Calls for shifts in the optic of migration studies by Brettell (2000) and Glick Schiller et al. (2006) have highlighted problems with this lens, that is, the focus on groups whose class standing corresponds with the lower echelons of the host society, and whose attachment to culture is thus reinforced. For fourth-wave Russian migrants, whose attachment to the home is tenuous, whose educational attainment and knowledge of high culture is quite broad, this kind of perspective on migration renders them invisible to anthropological scrutiny, instead selecting migrants whose attachment to Russia is quite strong, usually from previous generations who were forcibly sent from the USSR.

There is, however, a growing focus in the scholarly literature on more mobile populations, middle class and elite migrants that bring with them economic and social capital (Fog Olwig, 2007a/b; Sklair, 1998; Torresan, 2007). Karen Fog Olwig’s research among Caribbean family networks of middle-class migrants has found that such migrants seek out an ‘appropriate’ middle class lifestyle in their adopted nations, such as homeownership in proper neighbourhoods, involvement in important sectors such as religious institutions or military service, etc. Her informants, like Henry Muir, embody the middle class cultural traits of his adopted nation, living in and amongst the members of the host society, quite invisibly, attaining a social standing among his Caucasian peers in the UK (2007a: 77, 89). Following Karen Fog Olwig I have modeled the concept of middle class used herein as, “a cultural category that concerns social as well as economic

aspects of the livelihoods deemed proper within the middle layers of a society” (Fog Olwig, 2007b: 87).

In the Canadian context, it is quite problematic to define a ‘proper’ middle class lifestyle for the entirety of the heterogeneous nation. What is proper will no doubt live in the diversity of opinion, fact and individuality. A partitioning of classes into income categories ignores the salient aspects of education and cultural knowledge—important factors for my participants. And as such, the aspect of propriety in this context rests solely with the Russian migrants themselves, that is, it is their perception of what the ‘proper’ middle class is in Canada that thus creates it. To my informants, the middle class in Canada are educated and intellectually stimulated. This class is dedicated and invested in their own success, often sacrificing an amount of leisure time for their vocation or education. Involvement in the political sphere, such as voting and maintaining a rudimentary knowledge of the goings-on of local, provincial and national politics was seen as a middle class predilection, something that my informants desired to emulate. The middle-class looked after their health and exercised, they avoided fisticuffs, settling matters in a much less overt fashion. When consuming, they purchased “the best, even if it cost more” and so, too, would my informants. In following Angela Torresan (2007), who noted that her Brazilian interlocutors had imported their concept of middle class from Brazil to Portugal (2007: 108). My Russian informants were perceived as middle class in the CIS and by extension would assert their standing as middle-class in Canada. Manners, status and image became salient aspects of the identity politics of fourth-wave Russian settlers in Canada.

## Chapter VI

### Settlement & Integration

Issues of settlement in migration studies are quite diverse, ranging from the economic (cf. Girard, et al., 2008) to the social and cultural (cf. Koopmans, 2008; Putnam, 2009). The literature on fourth-wave Russian migration is scant, and as such, no clear picture is present regarding issues of settlement and integration, either modes or means, and to that end, a clear picture of residential habits, sites of employment, and identity formation through fashion or behaviours is critically lacking. Much of the literature that does exist on the settlement and integration of Russian migrants focuses on residential habits and was written prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, often in cities with small Russian communities and no direct access to the homeland. Despite Hardwick's assertion that her research area stretches from Alaska to California (1993: 6) it was, however, conducted primarily in and around Sacramento, California. The paucity of examples amenable to analysis make it quite difficult to gauge the actual experiences of Russians abroad. Given this, I have elected to write a brief summary of the settlement and integration issues of a portion of my participants to provide an insight into their objectives and behaviours.

In large part, the emphasis on living a respectable middle class life (cf. Watt, 2008) led my informants to seek out the sorts of residential patterns and social engagements they associated with their image of the typical Canadian. In this sense, class has played an integral role in their settlement and integration. As middle-class migrants, they sought to live in acceptable sections of the city that displayed their economic as well as intellectual capacity. Living in areas typically associated with the established second-

and third-wave Russian presence was an undesirable situation. Similarly, living in regions of the city typically associated with Montréal's university population and its subcultures was seen as undesirable as these groups often consciously seek to avoid associating with the established middle class. From the conditions that they had set forth, a pattern emerged. They lived in areas of the city close to the downtown core, often in large apartment blocks near their places of employment or study, amongst older more established residents.

***Residence:***

Upon arriving in Montréal, the most immediate of needs is shelter. Finding suitable residence while abroad is quite difficult. My informants, many of whom arrived from a great distance away, had used the internet to locate rooms for rent. The apartments were available on a month-to-month lease, often without a formal lease being signed, which allowed them the freedom to move once they found suitable accommodations in a better-suited portion of the city. Historically, Russians have been associated with various parts of the city, including Point St. Charles, the East end and with Cote St. Luc and Outremont (Kukushkin, 2007: 109), particularly around the area of Queen Mary Road. This is the area of the city with the highest concentration of Russian stores, restaurants and salons. My participants, however, all resided in an area of Montréal in close proximity to the Green Line metro, extending from Papineau metro station in the east to Charlevoix metro in the west. This portion of the metro represents the bulk of the downtown core, access to l'Université du Québec à Montréal (where one participant took a French course), McGill University, Concordia University and the various governmental service outlets and amenities of downtown Montréal.

Sergei, for instance, lived for the first few months in a rented room in LaSalle. Not being familiar with the city, he had assumed that LaSalle was actually rather close to the city centre and that a commute would be rather minimal. In fact, he found the commute to be horrendous: “I lived near the 106 and 122. If one bus didn’t come, I could take the other. The problem was that the buses were late, or were packed, or filled with people going to school or the Douglas [Hospital]. I hated coming home at night because Newman was always a bit dangerous. And, if you came back, the only thing open late is the McDonalds. It was not ideal living arrangements, not at all.”

During the early spring, Sergei found alternative living arrangements closer to downtown in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce near the metro station at Vendôme. He had heard of a room for rent until July at a comparable rate. He packed up his three suitcases and moved to his new apartment for four months: “I lived near an Iranian restaurant, the metro station, burger joints, buses and I could walk to the [Westmount] Park or downtown. It was a nice part of the year so I walked around a lot and saw a lot of that part of the city. I had to move in July and so I began looking for a new apartment in that area.”

Stories of settlement recounted during interviews followed a similar pattern. Not a single migrant had arrived in Montréal, established their residence and remained in the same location longer than a few months. Despite Sergei’s desire to remain in the area of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, he in fact moved further downtown near Boulevard St. Laurent in a large apartment block that housed mostly older Francophone residents, graduate students and their families. By the time he had signed a lease at this apartment, he had moved multiple times, from the southwest portion of the city to the east-west dividing

line of downtown Montréal. At the time of our interview, Sergei was again moving, this time however, to an apartment in lower Westmount adjacent to the park, and local shopping streets. He moved each time to “upgrade” his residence, residing first in a furnished apartment, then acquiring furniture either through friends or through classified ads. His most prized acquisition, an IKEA bed, gave him a sense of permanence. He had arrived, like the others, with few possessions. Sergei, Pavel and Viktor noted that they had iPods, clothes, passports and photos. The sheer cost of bringing goods from abroad to Canada meant that they had to strategically move. My informants had a wardrobe that consisted of two or three combinations of work clothes, exercise clothes and street clothes and some cologne. Extraneous items like computers, books, or winter clothes were simply too bulky to import. Acquiring furniture gave Sergei, like the others, the sense that they now resided in Montréal, they had tangible anchors to the city and were no longer in transition.

Research on Russians has shown a tendency for there to be ethnic clustering. Hardwick (1993) whose work forms the basis of some of Kopnina’s later (2005) work, notes that there are distinct residential patterns to Russian communities. Hardwick’s research, undertaken prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, in the Pacific Northwest of the United States and in British Columbia precedes the fourth wave of migration. As I have asserted, the previous epochs of Russian migration shared common bonds through the dislocation and shared experience of the Soviet Union, forming communities with parallel institutions (cf. Breton, 1964: 5; Rosenberg & Jedwab, 1991) that appear in form to be diasporic (James, 1997). However, among my informants there did not appear to be an impetus to cluster ethnically. When I posed questions about their choice of residence



to my informants, they responded that the most important decision in choosing their residence was access to services, such as grocery stores and proximity to their location of employment or study. In this case, the migrants were clustered around the downtown core. The institutions of the third wave, the religious institutions in Côte-St. Luc and Outremont and the stores were not sites of importance for fourth wave migrants. In many cases these services assuaged the losses felt by an earlier generation and were dedicated to the needs of an earlier era. My informants felt disconnected from these groups and institutions. They instead sought out alternative sites in place making, sites of importance to them, but to which no ethnic community is attributable.

### *Settlement & place making*

During the frequent moves of the first few months, most of my informants sought to establish a 'place' for themselves in which to return, to find stability and in which to socialize. The diversity of downtown Montréal provided such spaces for my migrants. They were sites in which to formulate a social circle and network of friends or even to emulate the local fashion. These sites were often personally important, but held little social or cultural importance. Through their associations with particular places and spaces in Montréal, they came to associate with Montréal and indeed Canada. Karen Fog Olwig's research on children's place making among children of Caribbean origin noted that "[s]uch places included the local community and local neighbourhood where they had lived with their parents and siblings; the school where they had spend much of their time, obtaining an education and making friends; and the clubs where they had played sports against sports teams from other local areas" (2003: 231). For my participants, coffee shops in the village or near Concordia University, university associations, sports

bars and pubs and even malls constitute a large proportion of the sites of place making they utilized. They noted that the routinized manner in which they used such places helped them acclimate to Montréal. Much of the literature on migration asserts a connection between receiving organizations and place making (Schrover & Vermeulen, 2005); yet, my informants were not introduced to Montréal through ethnic organizations or receiving agencies, but through their own innovative 'places' that helped them organize their daily activities and introduce them to Montréal.

Maksim, who lived within three blocks of the Russian consulate in Montréal, enjoyed this location immensely. He was within biking distance of his studio, walking distance of grocery stores, restaurants and easily connected to other portions of the city. It was in the downtown core that he had found his "niche," as he said. His daily routine included buying bread and cheese at the local grocery store, coffee at the coffee shop near his studio, lunch at the neighbourhood Korean restaurant and a pint at the sports pub. He grew to know the proprietors of the local pub, he became friends with the Korean family and enjoyed seeing the same people at the coffee shop each morning, "they are always there," he said of the people he encountered. We sat one Saturday, at his pub, watching back-to-back sporting events throughout the afternoon and into the late-evening. Sitting in his usual spot adjacent to the back wall, we talked Russian politics, art, and my project. We were joined by people who would come and go, who knew to find Maksim in his usual spot. Without placing an order, the waitress brought us our drinks and sat with us. She, like the pub's proprietors, knew Maksim. She enjoyed telling him how she hated his favourite athletics club, and how their rivals would route them: "She's mad. Completely mad!" he said of her prognostications.

Maksim had been a regular at the pub because of the large televisions that would carry hard-to-find sporting events, particularly Ukrainian soccer, Premiership matches, and Kontinental Hockey League games. He had wandered by one day early in his stay to see a blackboard scribbled with the headline “Ukraine vs. Greece today.” From that first encounter he had become a regular, preparing for busy game night days in advance, selecting his particular jersey for that night, making sure it was washed and ready to be worn. What had started out as a just another pub had become a place of importance for Maksim, replete with rituals of adornment. His Montréal included the pub, his friends who regularly met him there, and the events that marked his week; it was his Friday night ritual. He spent hours with his friends laughing and watching sporting matches. Together, Maksim, his friends and I sat for hours talking about my project, laughing about my command of Russian and generally having a good time.

The geography of Maksim’s Montréal was defined by the places that made him feel “welcomed” and “at home,” places that he shared with his friends, and could share with strangers. The happenstance of walking into a pub one afternoon transformed his Montréal experience by anchoring him to a place that stood as the meeting ground for his social circles and networks and sites of leisure. He watched Ukraine lose to Greece, and walking home in horror, he still managed to say that it had been “a good night.”

For my informants, settlement and integration was a means of learning to get-along in Montréal, finding a social niche, a circle or network of friends that shared common interests, aspirations and leisure activities; a circle of friends who were similarly educated and descended from the same middle-class origins. Whether the high-end pub that Maksim frequented or purchasing brand-new IKEA furniture to furnish plush

downtown apartments, my informants engaged in forms of conspicuous consumption and residential organization that expressed the respectability of the Canadian middle class.

As Martin (2010) notes, African-American residents living in middle-class Caucasian neighbourhoods tend to maintain social ties with members of their own group despite the infrequent contact within a Caucasian-dominated group (2010: 234- 235). Russians living in Montréal and elsewhere have been noted to maintain contact, often involved in networks of exchange, networks that operate as a means of assuaging loss and rupture through aiding the place-making process, through providing hard-to-find goods, informally and at a discount. This form of social capital is most often used in the first few weeks and months after arrival, and were an important means of aiding my informants into life in Montréal.

## Chapter VII

### Network Analysis

To reiterate what has already been said in Chapter II networks are webs of affiliation in which people are bound to one another through mutual interest, need or support; it is in a broad sense a mesh of sociality (Mitchell, 1969: 3). Networks are social relationships linking individuals to groups, occupational organizations and to the world (cf. Castells, 2000). During my ethnographic fieldwork among Russians in Montréal, discussions of networks and their possible permutations arose in almost every interview. It is the means by which Russians gather a sense of place and stability in the period after their arrival to Canada. It is the means in which goods, services and support may be found to assuage the loss resulting from their migration. Network theory, unlike community does not assume a centre nor impose a collective identity (Amit, 2002: 3). Although networks of support and affiliation remain in operation, they do not eradicate the antagonisms and differences present between migrants. These are links created by these individuals themselves, perpetuated by them or avoided by them. Networks formed an integral mechanism of support structures in the Soviet Union hedging against the perpetual lack of resources. In Canada, its connotation has changed, but its mechanisms have not. In discussing networks, it is important to underscore that I do not necessarily imply a technological network (unless otherwise stated) nor formal organizational network such as a political lobby. By network, I follow what Mitchell (1969) has laid out regarding personal order network (10) in which I define the nodes as individuals, and the linkages are the forms of interaction (social, economic, kinship, etc). Among my Russian participants, the bond sustaining these networks is trust. These networks can in fact take on a transnational aspect, spanning multiple borders, and yet the networks that are in

place in one city may be radically different from each another. The latter portion of this section will deal more specifically with inter-city difference between Toronto and Montréal.

Initially I assumed that Russians had few or no personal connections with each other and my initial investigations seemed to support this presumption. I had made this assumption because of earlier ethnographic studies conducted in London and Amsterdam, in which the Russian population were “largely unaware of or indifferent to, the presence of their fellow citizens...” (Kopnina, 2005: 89), likening the presence to islands in the sea. Although Russians do remain largely independent of one another, they are in fact well aware of the presence of other Russians in the city, and are often knowledgeable about Russians residing in other cities in both Canada and the United States. Russians use this knowledge to form transmigrant networks that assuage the loss of moving and help introduce and integrate them into their surroundings. In a brief passage in Kopnina’s monograph, she states: “some informants, however, point out to the importance of informal relations, which are viewed as originating from old Soviet practices during the communist regime” (2005: 87). Although she does not detail the informal practices in her own work, they have come to represent an important piece of the ethnographic evidence I collected in the field. The thesis of this chapter, that for Russians immigrants in Montreal, networking is an important means of acquiring a sense of place, stability, a means to mitigate loss and to find economic and employment assistance is one not developed in the specific literature on Russian migration thus far, but one that is well developed in the broader literature on migration (cf. Bott, 1957; Conradson, et al, 2005; Granovetter, 1973; MacDonald, et al., 1964). Accounts of informal networking among Russians have

often been structured as representative of cultural traits of the Russian people particularly among disenfranchised minority groups (Caldwell, 2004; Ledeneva, 1998); however, they have yet to study the educated middle class, from which this project draws participants, and avoid assuming a strictly cultural basis for the phenomenon.

During an informal conversation with a friend, Maksim, we had discussed the concept of blat among Russians, to which he stated “everything is done by blat.” A fourth-wave migrant, he recounted stories of using “contacts” to acquire goods and services, such as shoes and alcohol. To my surprise, such exchanges did not take place in the nation of his birth, but rather here in Canada. In fact, I was told that such exchanges were rather common among Russians living in Canada. One was able to acquire goods or services that were nominally offered at a premium on the open market, but which could be secured for a greatly reduced price through ‘contacts.’ In an attempt to see just how effective these ‘contacts’ could be, I sought out an alcoholic beverage not available through Québec’s (or Ontario’s) provincially regulated liquor board. To my surprise, within a few short days I was in possession of this product. I found out later that the product I acquired had not been distributed in Montréal, but rather in Toronto and had been subsequently brought to Montréal and promptly sold. Although I am not directly privy to the particular connections that had made this possible, I did learn that Russians utilize one another for such systems of exchange, often informal networks governed by a code of conduct borrowed from the Soviet practice of blat and performed among a network of friends or contacts. More than merely an ability to acquire goods, exchanges through blat can transmit gossip and knowledge. One is able to get knowledge about

doctors or to find the best place to purchase certain hard-to-find delicacies, or whether or not certain individuals are ‘good people’.

Networks acting as anchoring devices, providing a modicum of stability can be in operation for months or even years following a move to Montréal. The linkages of the network can be varied, based upon friendship and trust or economic exchange. The Russian term *блат* (*blat*) literally meaning by pull or protection is an apt definition, indicating that the inter-personal networks that exist among Russian migrants are there for protection and support. Interestingly, these networks include both Russians and non-Russians (including Canadians: friends, spouses, etc) limiting the ethnic scope of the networks. Unlike other forms of informal networking, such as *guanxi* or *le piston* there are limited ethnic connotations (Ledeneva, 1998: 51). Those who learn the rules governing these forms of exchange are welcome to participate, irrespective of language or ethnicity.

This practice of informal networking is neither a new phenomenon nor an isolated one. For example, the New Zealand working holidaymakers described by Conradson and Latham (2005) used personal networks as “systems through which new arrivals obtain accommodation, learn about job opportunities, and generally find their way through London” (290) and in a similar way, Russians use networks to procure items, learn about their surroundings and make friends. Ethnographic evidence of migrants utilizing networks for support is widespread (cf. Chavez, 1991; Collins, 2008; Conway, 2007; Reubens, 2009; Tilly, 2007) yet in each of the cited examples, the networks contain in them distinct transnational aspects connecting the place of their birth with their new residence. In Conradson and Latham’s case, the New Zealanders could trace their



networks back to Dunedin, New Zealand, the location of departure for their interlocutors (ibid). However, this 'transnational' aspect for Russian networks is obscure or non-existent. Katarina, with whom I would discuss the research on many occasions, noted that she had lost almost all contact with Russia throughout the years as she became increasingly connected to Montréal generally and Canada more broadly. Indeed all of my interlocutors noted a waning interest in their connection to the home and a greater interest in involvement with their new residence. This stands in contrast to the assumption of many transnational scholars, such as Portes and DeWind who claim that transnational activity increases with one's duration of time abroad (2008: 10). The majority of extra local networks among Russians extended between Montréal and Toronto, and were composed of 'weak' bonds in which there was little in the way of time, emotional investment or intimacy (Granovetter, 1973: 1371).

During my interview with her, Katarina, a young physician in Montréal recounted her first few months in Canada as a teenager. Katarina's mother, a Russian-trained scientist had found employment in Montréal after distributing applications on three continents. McGill University's response had landed her family in Canada rather serendipitously. Unfortunately for the family, they knew no one in the city and at that time had no relatives in North America. They settled into the city, eventually acquiring the paperwork to bring her father (a professional) over from Russia. When asked whether she had formed strong community bonds with Russians in the city, she stated that she had not, noting that being born "Jewish" had placed her into a social schism between Jews and Slavs further stating "I don't want to be put in the box of 'Russian community'". When queried whether she had been involved in any Russian events, I was surprised to

discover that yes, she was in fact involved in a guitar club, Russian music group and a trivia club. Additionally, she participated in Russian-day events! Such activities seemingly correspond to some coherence as a community; however, when again pushing community as an option she said “No, no... There is no feeling of a Russian community. It’s just weird. We’re too heterogeneous, there’s no concept of leadership as there are in traditional ones.”<sup>11</sup>

For new arrivals in Montréal, making contacts with other Russians is not a matter of joining local community groups or attending a community centre; but is often a matter of making personal connections with established locals. Katarina noted that hearing Russian being spoken in a park or on a bus would often prompt one to simply approach the speaker and introduce one’s self. Through a dialogue, there was the possibility of encountering a “connected” member, as she noted, someone who had friends who were Russian. These encounters were not constitutive of a coherent search for their compatriots but rather related both to the chance of hearing Russian-speakers as well as the desire of approaching that person and striking up a conversation. During my interviews with two young university students, one a Russian-Ukrainian and one a Russian-Belarusian, they indicated that this was really the most common and the most appropriate way of meeting fellow Russians. In certain regions of the city typically associated with Russian residence you would hear it being spoken more often, increasing your chances to make contact.

It is these chance encounters in public which shape the formation of personal links with Russians in Montreal. As was asserted in the introduction to this chapter, these networks are mediated by personal characteristics, reachability and founded upon trust.

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<sup>11</sup> By traditional ones, she meant ‘traditional cultures’ typically associated with community: i.e. Chinese.

All of my interlocutors were quick to note that additionally, networks were most often composed of members of a similar level of educational attainment, interests and background. Katarina noted that for her, it was important to network with Russians who were “cultured”, those who avoided “acting a culture” (acting out stereotypical roles). One’s place of origin in Russia factors into the ability to form and maintain networks. Muscovites are often seen as cultured or snobby, keeping up appearances for Canadian society. Katarina, who is originally from Moscow noted that this led to significant antagonisms and a relative inability to network with those Russian immigrants originating from outside of Moscow. During a candid interview, a Russian informant from south of Moscow, Viktor stated:

“Well, think about yourself. You don’t consort with a garbage man or an Imam. It’s not that you hate them, but you have nothing in common... okay, I dislike Ukrainians [laughs], I’ll give you that... but, no I’m kidding. It’s that I am Russian, sure, I don’t have anything in common with a Russian who doesn’t share interests or isn’t involved in the same stuff. I don’t hate them, but don’t come in contact. My networks are mostly with people I am similar to.”

Viktor and Pavel both indicated that out-going individuals were often more likely to have strong networks than those who were more cautious or those who possessed less interest. Introverted personality types, on the other hand, often relied on kinship based networks that could be maintained by several members of one’s close family and utilized by virtue of this relationship.

Maksim, a Ukrainian-born Russian migrant noted that it was rather uncommon to call upon friends for favours. He believed, though, that the most salient issue for networks was trust: “it’s because I can trust you” that he would call upon people for aid or for gossip, noting that it was difficult to ask friends for favours. Paradoxically, the weaker the links within a networker is, the more there is a need for trust. As Granovetter notes: “those whom we are weakly tied are more likely to move in circles different from our own and will thus have access to information different from that which we receive” (ibid: 1371). Unconnected networks pose an interesting question regarding trust. If, as Granovetter notes, weak ties indicate different networks (circles), then how can trust form amongst weakly connected networks?

Maksim, an artist, had come to Canada in the late 1990s to finish high school and avoid Russian military conscription. In the period just after his arrival, he had few connections outside of his immediate family with whom he was particularly close (strong bond). To assuage a sense of loss, he found contacts in Toronto that could help him acquire goods that he missed or to help his family out. These contacts form the bulk of his weak networks. He commented that his weak contacts were far more useful economically than socially as he was able to utilize them to acquire discounted goods or more broadly the contacts to acquire discounted goods. As with most arrivals, there was little money to be wasted, thus using the networks provided a means for Maksim’s family of securing inexpensive household objects or objects of nostalgic value, such as pickles, batteries and distilled spirits (cf. Berdahl, 1999; Lankauskas, 2006). In effect, a migrant has to engage in informal practices with members of his/her social networks on a certain amount of blind faith. It’s an unknown variable, whether the people with whom you

become friendly are not “bad people” and will follow the agreement. The continued use of these contacts forms the basis for trust. Tilly states that: “trust consists of placing valued outcomes at risk to other’s malfeasances, mistakes, or failures. Trust relationships include those in which people regularly take such risks” (2007: 7). It is through the regular use of these network links that trust is formed among migrants. The importance of trust for Russians was relayed as a result of a fear of being the victim of malfeasance resulting in financial loss. My informants noted that the immigration process was costly and as a result they had little in the way of any additional funds that could be lost without feeling the effects.

Both Katarina and Maksim indicated that immediately after arrival the sense of loss was tremendous, with Maksim going so far as to describe his initial emotions regarding Canada as hatred. Their ability to form social links with other Eastern European migrants to the city, which in turn helped them acquire goods and services served to assuage their initial sense of loss. Katarina noted that these networks helped her find a sense of place within the city. Her relatives were able to mitigate the stress of the move by finding support. Trust is an integral part in network formation; it comes through experience and is not imparted by default. Maksim’s prosaic comment “it’s because I can trust you,” underscores the necessity of trust as an important variable in networks.

The common anecdote that any good relationship is founded on trust is accordingly apt; yet for migrants, this anecdote takes on particular importance in a destabilized world in which change is rapid and a constant feature of their status as migrant. The formation of personal networks helps to stabilize their existence in the cities to which they have immigrated, and provide a modicum of control in what can otherwise

seem an uncontrollable situation. The networks that Russians utilize are most often used to assuage shortages, i.e. as a form of economic assistance. For particular groups of Russian and Eastern European migrants arriving in Canada, the assistance networks take on different forms. Professionals for instance, have the means to re-acquire the goods that they need with greater ease than those of with smaller incomes. This division in class puts a particular emphasis on trust and on the linkages of the networks that will come to define interaction with one another. Wealth is a particular indicator in the networks available to a migrant. Wealthiest immigrants have at their disposal a broader range of network opportunities. Social or cultural standing, for instance, informs the linkages (relationship between members) that form a salient portion of the network.

To reiterate, the content or linkages in networks are “among other possibilities, economic assistance, kinship obligations, religious cooperation or it may simply be friendship” (Epstein, 1969: 20). Interestingly, many of the participants noted that they had few networks which did not include some Russian contacts. In this case, making contact with a Russian capable of securing certain goods or items often meant the user would come into contact, eventually, with others who could procure such items. Such intersections provided a security to the network that meant one could trust that it would always be able to provide the necessary support. Speaking of (then) modern urban Africa, Epstein states (1969: 99):

In the towns, where social relationships are so often casual and transitory, and where the status of the African is so fundamentally uncertain and insecure, the maintenance of widespread ties of kinship helps to ensure that there will always

be someone around one can rely upon for support and assistance now and for the future.

The uncertain and insecure months and years during the initial process of settling in Canada pose a number of practical challenges for these migrants that range from the mundane to the institutional. Learning to navigate the metro system, local customs as well as wading through the immigration bureaucracy of Québec and Canada can be daunting and quite stressful. Similarly, the insecure immigration statuses, the challenges of transforming temporary visas to long term visas; mitigating the loss of friendship, close contact with family as well as a sense of place brought on by movement often takes the form of branching out to those who understand the stress caused by immigration and the loss felt from migration. Interlocutors stressed that new arrivals from Russia often possessed very little. The cost of importing one's furniture and household items and the incompatibility of currents for electrical objects and thus their uselessness in Canada means that much of what one owns must remain left behind.

Interlocutors noted that it was imperative to seek support networks for social contact as well as for assistance. In creating such personal contacts, one must invest time and energy in maintaining the links. Artem, a Russian immigrant from St. Petersburg recounted the support his family offered to a family of new arrivals that they had met. Having found out that they had very little, his family extended them an offer of support in the form of blankets, food and clothes. Artem's father, who knew of a job opening in their area facilitated contact with a friend who would later become their employer. The network, among other things offers the possibility of employment. The expansive network his family had created to mitigate their own needs after their arrival had included

a Russian entrepreneur in Montreal who was willing to employ the family. Having a long-term employment opportunity assuaged instability and allowed them to apply for longer-term visas. Dennis, from Kaliningrad, had met Russians while sitting in a coffee shop. He said of the serendipitous encounter: "They showed me where things were located, gave me information on the metro, showed me how things worked and helped me get stuff cheap." He was able to do all of this in his native tongue, something he said that helped him feel more at home. "Hearing your own language" Maksim said "makes you feel better about being far away."

Thus far, I have attempted to show that networking among Russian migrants is a strategy which can build social ties and bonds of support. They are created, quite often, through chance encounters, and are used most often during the first few months or years after arrival. Establishing trust through continued contact and positive outcomes through support ensure one's continuing connections to the network and one's "good name." As migrants are able to form local roots and other kinds of social links, involvement in their Russian networks of support decreases. Maksim noted that his use of personal networks with Russians has decreased throughout the years as he is able to more readily rely on non-ethnically based social relationships for social connection or assistance. He also noted that many of the assistance networks he had been involved with had translated into personal friendships, thus rendering the original intent of the network irrelevant. Of my informants who had recently arrived, many were still well connected to the people they had bonded with early on, and used the networks rather frequently. The duration of the networks depended on one's class standing. Wealthier migrants possessed a greater capacity to acquire goods on their own, and often used the networks to acquire items of



nostalgic value, such as sheet music, hard-to-find delicacies, and alcohol such as local wines or brandies. These consumption practices did not correspond with the necessities that were often sought out by those of a lower-class standing. This can be seen in the vignette by Artem in which his family provided blankets, hand-me-downs, and foodstuffs.

Networks utilized by migrants, whether Russians, New Zealand working holidaymakers or by even students for example (cf. Collins, 2008) are important features of stabilization, support and exchange. Russians gather a sense of place and stability from their connection to other Russians. As my interlocutors developed roots, became involved in social events and connected to their surroundings they often developed new social networks closely related to their interests and beliefs. Maksim became involved in the arts scene in North America; Viktor was involved in the gay community of Montréal as well as networks of professional athletics and Katarina was involved with networks related to her career as physician and scientist as well as religious organizations. All had in their own way utilized networks of support and exchange to mitigate the feeling of distance from their homes and family, and to help accrue possessions. In most cases, the use of the Russian networks ceased in time and depending on the migrant, usually within six to eighteen months. In most cases, people simply lost touch, or remained in contact through digital means. Katarina and Maksim indicated that email and facebook had given them a means of maintaining infrequent contact.

When I had initially posed the question of whether or not there was a Russian community, what I had not taken into account was the possibility of the migrants being involved in communities that existed outside of any ethnic definition. My informants, for

instance, were involved in communities based on their interests or aspects of their identity. Viktor, for instance, became involved in the gay community, acting as an advocate and aiding young men in coming-out. He volunteered at community centres, was involved in after-school programs and even offered free help in health and exercise. Katarina became heavily involved in her religious community, through tutoring students, working with families through the synagogue, attending meetings and volunteering her time. This included many hours of volunteering outside of her normally heavily schedule, often on weekends and during evenings. My informants found that Montréal specifically, and Canada more broadly, offered many venues through which to pursue their interests, aspirations and goals, while becoming involved in communities that meant a great deal to them. The tense situation of Judaism in Russia or the lack of safety for homosexuals in Eastern Europe gave my informants a sense of purpose in communities not imbued with ethnic connotations. This is a particularly interesting revelation given Montréal's history of strong ethnic community formation and ethnic self-segregation (cf. Rosenberg & Jedwab, 1992). More than merely ambivalent about the concept of a Russian community, quite often it was openly lambasted by the participants in my research project. Each of my informants had particular reasons for avoiding any involvement in an ethnic community, be it homophobia, religious tension or the desire to avoid 'parochial' compatriots.

One of the guiding assumptions of this project regarding the connection between migration and invisibility has been that the lack of a defined community has resulted in an over-all invisibility, both as a lived reality and in the literature regarding their presence. Community remains a fundamental feature of migration research in the sense

that it provides a coherent group from which to draw ethnographic subjects, form policy to conduct censuses. Community is commonly imbued with ethnic connotations (Glick Schiller, et al, 2006) and has come to be commonly defined in social science literature as a “form of collective cultural consciousness” (Amit, 2002: 6). In this regard community is particularly useful for social scientists to gauge group cohesion and commonality, which of course has ramifications politically and economically. For instance, groups with high levels of consciousness have often created “parallel institutions” focused more closely on community needs (Rosenberg & Jedwab, 1992: 268). This may be the lobbying various governmental organization. Mexican-American lobbying groups have sought to change policy in various state legislatures and in Washington in support of their compatriots, using their growing population in the United States as a means of achieving particular political goals (de la Garza & DeSipio, 1998). Croatian immigrants in Canada and Australia have displayed high rates of community consciousness which have translated to political organization and support for the home state (Colic-Peisker, 2008; Winland, 2007). Such ethnic organizing with the goal of establishing parallel institutions, such as day schools and culturally-based community organizations involved in support of the local population as well as the home state, has not been a feature of fourth-wave Russian migrants.

Viktor and Katarina had indicated that social tensions were a preeminent cause of social divisions among Russians. Katarina went so far as to state that “there is a lot of personal-level animosity... tension... so we don’t really mix.” There has been a history of animosity among Russians. In previous sections it was shown that the first and second waves of Russian migration had open disagreements about the Soviet Union, and their

recollections of the past. Second wave migrants escaping torture and fear campaigns were all too aware of what the Soviet leadership had done, and were not as optimistic or nostalgic for Russia as the first wave. My informants detailed that fourth wave migrants like themselves, were divided by such social issues and differences as religion, ethnicity, politics, memory and personal animosity.

Religion in the Soviet Union existed under tenuous circumstances; the Soviet Union's official policy was that of a secular state, or no state bias; however, waves of repression and official atheism in the 1920s and 1930s had left many religious communities with little protection. Groups of Jews, for instance, were allowed to leave the Soviet Union for Israel and the West, while those Jews who remained, as well as members of other religious groups faced systematic oppression. Since the collapse of the USSR in 1991, there has been an explosion of diverse religious engagements with evangelical Christian sects coming to Russia (Caldwell, 2005a/2005b; Uzzell, 2004), as well as Hare Krishna, Buddhism and a reinvigoration of Jewish and Muslim life. Many of my informants were involved in religious life: Pavel was involved in evangelical Christianity, having been converted in Russia; Katarina was quite involved in Jewish life in Montréal. One of the most common refrains from non-religious Russians was that the majority of Russians in Montréal were Jews, and they wanted nothing to do with them. One informant estimated that roughly seventy percent of Russians in Montreal were Jews; while another believed the number was closer to ninety. During a formal interview, Katarina noted that there existed a deep divide between religious Russians and non-religious Russians which she saw as comparable to that of Anglo-Franco-Québécois relations, in which there are intersecting groups, interests and commonalities; however, at

the heart of it, it is a relationship fraught with divisions, and is often particularly heated. She noted that even her birth certificate indicated that she was born to a mixed-national family: her parentage defined by her father's status as a Russian and mother as Jewish. She noted that as a result she often avoided defining herself as a "Russian" despite the language being her mother tongue and the fact that she had been born in the Russian capital, residing there much of her life. She explained that as a result of tense religious relations in Russia ethnic strife would often occur. Particular groups associated with religious activities, such as Islam in southern Russia, or even Evangelical sects in urban Russia would be targeted, identified as non-Russians in the media or have their support of the state questioned in popular discourse. Such issues transferred abroad, perpetuating stereotypes and as a result the divides that exist in Russia. Katarina noted that as a result of the sentiment towards observant Jews from Russia, her connection to other Russians was limited, instead aligning herself with the Jewish community and engaging with Canadians who she saw as having a much less divided opinion of religious groups.

Russia, like Canada, is home to many minority ethnic and national groups (cf. Åslund & Kuchins, 2009). Migrants from Russia often possess Russian citizenship but define themselves through other identities, such as Chechen, Ukrainian, etc. Conversely, many Russians are currently living outside of their national borders in the near-abroad, do not possess citizenship, but define themselves as Russians. The scale of this is actually quite staggering. Graham Smith (1999) estimates around twenty-five million Russians currently live outside of their national borders (500). During the course of fieldwork, I encountered "Russians" who had in fact never been to Russia, or had only been in Russia in-transit to somewhere else. Of these, I met Belarusian-Russians, Ukrainian-Russians

and a Russian from Lithuania. All three individuals identified themselves as Russians but had confided in me that they were not taken to be Russian by the Russian-born population. Unfortunately for many 'diasporic Russians' (to borrow from Smith), emergent national movements have seen citizenship laws change, stripping them of rights to passports which would normally have been conferred by their birth in that nation. In many such cases, state officials are unwilling to extend legal or political protection to non-citizens (Thiele, 1999). Rights guaranteed to members of the emerging states often do not extend to resident aliens; in addition to being barred from voting and being counted among the 'foreign' population, in some cases basic rights are not furnished, and despite being born in the nation, are not given any means of acquiring legal status.

My informants, however, who were required to pursue documents to prove that they were in fact born in a particular country, often elementary school transcripts, hospital documents and Soviet documents of employment, were granted citizenship in their nations of birth, despite continued identification as "Russian." Maksim, a Ukrainian-born Russian immigrant indicated that to an immigrant who had been born in Russia, it would be apparent he hadn't been born in Russia, which led to tension. He recounted a time when some Russians had indicated that they were upset that he was feigning Russian identity when in fact he was (in their view) a liar. Although he speaks their language with their accent, his lack of knowledge of localized slang and his duration of residence in Canada has limited his knowledge of Russian pop-culture. Ethnic and political tension, such as support for Vladimir Putin or questioning of one's 'Russianness,' sets the stage for deep-seated personal animosities resulting in the lack of motivation to form ongoing

groups. I had asked informants for information regarding other Russians, and quite often, I would get the refrain “no, not them.”

Kopnina working in London and Amsterdam had noted a similar trend, of Russians warning the informant regarding other Russians, their personality and temperament (Kopnina, 2005: 92-93). In her research, it had come to light that many Russians were disgusted by the culture of complaints that had arisen among them in the United Kingdom and Netherlands; complaints centered around the social services provided to citizens (ibid) while in Québec they centered on the disparity between the schooling and health system in Québec and other Canadian provinces. Although this culture of complaints did not present itself during my fieldwork, the tendency to dissuade the ethnographer from making contact with ‘inappropriate’ people was indeed apparent. Most often, this information was relayed to me through informants who wanted to protect me. This is an all-too-common occurrence in fieldwork; however, it underscores a particular contradictory truth about networks: that despite personal tension, despite significant differences politically or culturally, they were often involved in networks with people whom they disliked.

Maksim confessed that despite his disdain for certain people with whom he was involved, he could trust them, knowing they were not prone to chicanery, and thus he could place himself in a position of vulnerability. This is an interesting revelation, despite the emphasis on trust and personal connection, in some instances trust had been formed between two individuals who did not particularly like one another. Maksim’s friend, Anton, whom I met on several occasions was one such case. Although they helped each other, Maksim confessed that he found Anton to be boorish, jingoistic and pushy. He did

not respect his behaviour or attitude, but knew he would keep to his word and could thus trust that if he needed Anton, he could rely on him. This sort of inter-personal animosity underscores the paradox that often defines the relationships formed within networks of support and exchange.

Viktor, a professional athlete and trainer stated that “Russians are macho, overly so... I do not much like my own people.” Viktor who is openly gay had commented on the level of homophobia present in Russian society and political discourse. He then stated that “I have my friends that are Russian, a few, but that’s about it.” He noted that he was an outsider, and as an outsider he could see networks for what they were: a tool to keep each other at arm’s reach. Since networks could be activated or left quiescent, one did not have to come into contact with other Russians on a regular basis. Distance, he asserted, helped Russians integrate into life in Canada. When I posed this question to Katarina during an interview, she said that she generally agreed. She gave the example of a Russian day school (analogous to a Hebrew day school or Christian school) and said that there would be little to no interest on behalf of the Russian community. She said that many of the private schools offered Saturday lessons in Russian and Russian culture, but that her own sister detested this and dropped out. Her sister had not wanted to give up a Saturday to be in school, learning something she saw as useless.

Katarina believed that the mindset of her sister and the Russians she knew, - something that I would hear over and over again from almost everyone I interviewed - was that they wanted to fit in. She said: “We’re all Canadians; we’re trying to build a life. We’re a mosaic of individuals.” Even amongst the most mobile of informants, there was a sense that Canada was a great place in which to settle and earn a living, a place in



which they hoped to build a life. Viktor said that at first Canada was just a place to go, a stepping stone out of Mexico to another opportunity, but in the interim he had grown fond of Canada, and although he wasn't altogether sure, he was considering staying in Canada for the long term.

Many of my interlocutors had said that they didn't fear for the Russian culture, or its language, and thus were willing to integrate into Canadian society. Katarina stated "Passing the torch? Russia exists and will exist. So will Dostoyevsky. I keep Russian for the family; I'm not afraid for the culture itself, not like Yiddish. It's not going away." The interlocutors with whom I worked reiterated this similar point on a number of occasions, indicating that they were always going to retain some aspects of Russian culture. When I asked whether they missed Russia, many were rather ambivalent. Maksim explained that the memories could be quite painful and that many of the Russians of the earlier generations were "living in the past."

A history of suffering, of shortages and repression permeated their memory. Irina and Sasha stated that their parents had attempted to blot out these memories and as they said "to live fully in Canada." As Erika Bourguignon has shown, the conscious effort to forget has been a mechanism employed by those who have faced terror (2005: 65). Although I do not claim that the Holocaust and Soviet repression are comparable, the memories of Soviet repression, political and economic forces are at work, prompting many fourth wave migrants to attempt to 'forget' their past in the Soviet Union. The fourth wave migrants who have left Russia have done so of their own volition, and have sought a new life abroad, unlike the previous waves who were forced from their homes and their lives against their will. Quite often the antagonistic relationship between

second/third and fourth wave migrants is a result of the latter's lack of interest in maintaining a connection with the home. Fourth wave migrants indicated that they felt that earlier waves of migrants were caught in an idealized version of the past. Katarina explained that many of those who currently are involved in the community are actually the descendents of earlier waves of immigrants and are thus not fully aware of the suffering that played out in the USSR and never lived through the shortages and repression. As Daphne Berdahl has noted, there is often a nostalgic invocation of positive memories that minimize the actual scope of the suffering while promoting positive recollections of their collective past, recalling, quite often, a past that never existed (1999: 198). Yet for fourth wave migrants, having only recently left, the memories are far more fresh and the social and political problems they experienced in Russia still ring true. For this reason, fourth wave migrants seek to involve themselves in Canada's economic and social life, working towards a better future by acquiring some measure of wealth.

As I noted in the section on class there is an emphasis placed on completing an education among the young fourth-wave migrants. When I asked how they were perceived by previous generations of Russian immigrants, they indicated that they were seen as cultural 'let-downs,' materialistic and hedonistic. This is in fact a rather common retort. In both Koprina's and Winland's work, their informants were seen as money-grubbing and individualistic with Winland stating that "Croats who had emigrated to Canada in the 1980s were also faulted by Croats who came to Canada earlier—for dissociating themselves from other Toronto Croats" (2007: 73).

My interlocutors stated that it took effort to act, talk and live like Canadians; it became a badge of honour for them to integrate into the society at large. Katarina stated

that there was “something about Canadian culture, especially English that attracted people, attracting people to give up their language.” This is a salient issue in the formation of personal networks among Russian migrants in Canada. Maksim, who had spent a great deal of time in Toronto, indicated that there was a marked difference between Montréal Russian-immigrants and Russian-immigrants in Toronto. Katarina noted Québécois society was much more closed and harder to penetrate. Having knowledge of English prior to their arrival, most Russians quickly adapted to life in English-Canada, but found Québec to be more of a challenge. Maksim said of Russians in Montréal “they’re real characters. A real breed! The French thing, we know English before we get here, but French we have to learn. It’s more difficult to find work.”

Both Katarina and Maksim noted that it was common for Russians to land in Montréal and to reside for a period until they could secure a job, through contacts, in another Canadian city, particularly Toronto. Maksim said of Toronto that it was more of a family city, a place to find work. Networks used to provide assistance, in some instances helped to direct Russians out of the city of Montréal. This isn’t all that surprising given that Montreal, Canada’s second largest city is also Canada’s third largest recipient of immigrants, significantly behind both Vancouver and Toronto (Hou & Bourne, 2006:1506). A bilingual metropolis, the city often serves as a stopover between the initial arrival into Canada and the final destination of many immigrants. Hou & Bourne note the tendency of Montréal to fail to attract high-skilled university educated migrants while simultaneously losing low-skilled migrants. Of this they state: “Montréal never had a significant gain in migrants with university education, although the city also tended to

lose working-age population with less than high-school education. Whereas the other two cities more or less gained visible minorities, Montréal lost them” (2006:1513).

When I had asked Katarina whether she would remain in Québec, she indicated that she would; but not out of any emotional attachment to Québec, but because of family and social obligations. The other participants were much more willing to relocate.

Maksim said he had not originally made plans to be anywhere, but that it was increasingly likely that he would go to Toronto: “I’m there, you’re there, he’s there. Everyone I know will be there, working. Maybe that’s where I should go, too.”

Migrant networks have continued to remain an important feature of migration analyses. As Karen Fog Olwig notes networks have “allowed for the study of local as well as translocal relations, individual agency as well as social structure; change as well as continuity” (2007: 9). As I have described in the above passage, Russians utilize networks to protect their interests, to gain stability and to find a sense of place in a rapidly evolving social situation. It highlights their individuality and their connectedness, the change they face and yet are reminiscent of their past. I have alluded to inter-city differences between Montréal and Toronto. In the dialogue of Russians, Toronto is the immigrant-friendly city of opportunity. The next chapter will discuss the differences between Montréal and Toronto and the impact on invisibility.

#### *Comparative Analysis: Montréal and Toronto ‘A real breed of character’*

Networks offered my informants many necessary tools to provide stability. One such feature was a tacit knowledge of the institutional structures of Québec’s government, whether health, educational or immigration (cf. Linde, 2001). Wading through provincial bureaucracy was noted to be the most unpleasant aspect of

immigration. It was seen as a time of uncertainty and of constant paperwork that never really resolved any issues. Because of these experiences among my informants, I posed the question of relocation to my informants triggering discussions on the differences between Montréal and Toronto. Katarina described Toronto as a 'grown up city', a place where Russians can integrate into the social world or have better opportunities for employment. When I asked what she meant by integration, she had indicated that in Québec, there was a sense of being on the periphery or dislocated from the dominant population. This was reiterated by Maksim, formerly a resident of Toronto now calling Montréal home. In his view the utmost goal for Russian migrants was economic success and social integration and that both were far easier to achieve in Toronto than in Montréal. In interviews with my informants, a comparison was drawn between the two cities, which often highlighted discontent with Montréal. It was not, however, until our discussions in follow-up interviews that I would grasp the depth of the discontent with Montréal, manifesting itself in secondary migration to Toronto, Canada's largest and wealthiest city. In analyzing the invisibility of Russian migrants, their propensity to relocate outside of the city and province provides a key detail in this study.

When I tried to arrange a follow-up interview with the proprietor of a Russian deli, I discovered that within a short period of time he had sold his business and relocated to Ontario to begin a new venture. Maksim, who had introduced us, told me that it was not just the store proprietor who had left, but Pavel, Viktor and Sergei had all relocated to Toronto since we had last spoken. Maksim explained that Montréal was not a place in which most Russians would consider residing permanently. Economic success, integration and stability were just not available in Montréal and although Montréal, by his

own admission is an “awesome” city, several concerns caused Russian migrants to opt for Toronto over Montréal. Of such issues, he noted that “French and the economy” were of utmost importance.

To begin with, many of my informants had noted that prior to their arrival in Canada, they had received at least some formal training in English. Maksim indicated that it would have been uncommon for a Russian to come to Canada without at least an ability to express basic ideas in English. This converges with the statistics on Russians released by the Government of Ontario, in which only 2.6% of Russian immigrants had no knowledge of either of Canada’s official language, while 85.5% per cent spoke English, 1% spoke French exclusively and 11.8% could speak both (Ontario Immigration, 2006: 2). The immigrants participating in my study all spoke English and all could speak at least passable French. In fact, my informants who had resided in Montréal longer than 10 years (3) all spoke nearly fluent or fluent French while those who had been in Montréal less than 10 years spoke at least some French, with two (Pavel, Viktor) speaking nearly-fluent French. Katarina who arrived in the late-1990s was immediately placed in an immersion school as was Sergei. Sergei said of the transition “that the school was rough. I couldn’t speak French, and so I suffered for the first year. Eventually, I caught on. I took French courses on the weekend and listened to tapes at bed time.” Many of my informants took supplementary French courses on the weekends to expedite the transition into French schools.

It seems then that motivation was not lacking and all attempted to at least learn the language; however, both Katarina and Maksim noted that there was a general sense that the Franco- Québécois culture was more closed off to Russians than English-

speaking, Quebec and Canadian culture. Katarina relayed this in an example between Toronto and Montréal, stating that Toronto inspired one to give up their language and culture, whereas Montréal protected it. She indicated, as others would, that English speaking Canadians are not overly concerned with the proper use of the language and are instead impressed by effort. She said that “the English environment inspires people to lose their language, attracting people to give up language.” Pavel explained that between the two languages, he felt more at ease speaking English versus French. When I queried other participants whether they had an anxiety speaking French, many indicated that it had not necessarily impeded them from making friends; however, all qualified it by stating that they would socialize in mixed language groups rather than in strictly francophone social gatherings and that they felt uncomfortable in the French language.

Pavel and Sergei even discussed past relationships with Québécoise, commenting that he had grown “fed-up” with constantly being corrected or people commenting on his accent: “I’m [expletive deleted] Russian, I get it.” He found Anglo-Canadians were more concerned with showing their knowledge of Russia, or showing solidarity with the people, rather than ensuring the proper use of the language. In this sense he felt English Canada was more receptive to difference and willing to accept him despite his heavy accent.

Comments regarding a schism between the Québécois and Russian population often became heated with the informants feeling, at times, open animosity towards the Québécois population. They had felt that because they couldn’t speak fluent French they were treated as lesser-citizens. When I had asked about this, they said that people would switch from French to English with them, or would explain each mistake in their spoken

French. They believed that this had held them back from jobs they were well qualified for but for which they never received call backs. Such sentiments correspond to the findings of the Bouchard - Taylor Commission which indicate that English-speaking residents were more likely to have positive associations with ethnic-minorities than Francophones who felt there was too much accommodation to minorities (2008: 21-22). Such over accommodation is expressed as an anxiety of language acquisition and use, an issue of utmost importance to francophone Quebecers who see it as fundamental to national preservation (ibid: 39). Russians too view language as being a part of them, expressive of their emotions and personality (Wierzbicka, 1998: 474-475) and felt offended by recurrent critiques of their capacity to speak the French language. My informants felt that this was a critique of their personality and not merely their capacity to speak a language. Pavel, who became rather angry while discussing this, said:

Oh [expletive deleted] them, like I don't know. They switch languages; you know... umm... like unless you're off the Island when they just look at you weird or get rude. I had a guy in the South Shore who [expletive deleted] ignored me. Just pretended I wasn't there.

Conversely, when I spoke Russian to my informants they became ecstatic. They smiled and laughed. Pavel said "it makes you... it's just that people never learn... no one can speak Russian... so for a foreigner to know it... uh.. is just amazing."

Despite these critiques the Russians I interviewed felt that the francophone atmosphere of Montréal gave the city a distinctive character in contrast to the "nearly soulless" Toronto. Although the Russians were not well-integrated into Québécois



society in Montréal, they all enjoyed its by-products, such as distinctive fashion and art. Both Pavel and Viktor said there was a “buzz” about Montréal, one that emanated from the numerous events such as concerts, parties, and festivals. I met both Pavel and Viktor at various outdoor activities during the summer. Both informants found the street life of Montréal to be something very different from their experience in Russia. Viktor said he could “feel an electricity,” connecting him to other people (cf. Durkheim, 1972).

Maksim noted that of all the cities in which he had lived, Montréal was easily one of his favourite cities, a place where the cost of rent was quite low yet offered all of the amenities of larger cities. The city offered diverse opportunities to continue forming contacts and gaining experience in his professional milieu; however, unlike smaller cities with strong art communities, he could withdraw and actively pursue other interests that the city offered. He loved the street life that existed in Montréal and loved that unlike Toronto, people were often not walking between places, but walking around the city, something he saw as being particularly ‘European.’ It was this pub and terrace culture, the aimlessly meandering at a slow pace, the nightlife and restaurant culture that created for the Russians an experience that demarcated a major shift from public life in the former Soviet Union and Canada. In contrast public life in Russia was marked by statist displays of nationalism and pride while city planning often created large housing structures which held little if any social space and very little aesthetic value. Such aesthetic and social cleavages represented a positive change for my informants who loved the scenery of Montréal and the streets. Though Toronto, too, is a distinct break from the cities of Russia, Viktor referred to it as a “concrete cage” and as so large that he felt lost.

He said of Toronto “you can hardly see the sky, you can see it a little... it’s so big. Everything is big.”

For the Russian participants in my study, Montréal is a break from the statist public displays and the anxiety that could arise from non-sanctioned social action. It was this symbolic economy of culture (Zukin, 1995: 2-3) in Montréal that provided its distinctiveness. Unlike Montréal, Toronto was viewed as very hardworking, very business oriented, very global and as a result did not possess the exuberance of Montréal’s nightlife and artistic venues. It was thus seen as less interesting yet viewed as a more desirable place to live. Montréal is a temporary stop-over between the here and the there. Though socially Toronto may not be as interesting to Russian immigrants as Montréal, it is an economic giant that offers them the hope of better gains and stability. Most participants cited economic concerns as the motivation to seek residence abroad (cf. Kopnina, 2005: 30-31 for comparative study of London/Amsterdam; Shevtsova, 1994: 245-246). But they see Montréal as a difficult city in which to gain lucrative employment.

Their lack of knowledge of technical French and their oft-cited disconnect from the Francophone population meant that many Russians entered non-traditional forms of employment such as entrepreneurial activities during their time in post-secondary education and often even after. Of my participants, Katarina was the only one in Montréal involved in traditional employment (physician) while the remaining participants were students in fields such as business, software engineering and fine arts. All cited family insistence on academic success as fundamental to future earnings and integration into life abroad. Maksim said such pressure often manifested itself in studies relating to the fields known to possess readily available jobs, high levels of remuneration and long-term

stability, which would explain the large number of Russians whom I encountered in the business and engineering fields. In this respect, Montréal's affordable cost of living and inexpensive tuition spurred many to accept positions in the province, no matter how temporary, to increase their educational skills for the more lucrative markets of English Canada.

This trend is generally supported in the literature which has noted a trend for the city to lose educated migrants while the cities of Toronto and Vancouver gain them (Hou & Bourne, 2006: 1517):

Montreal lost long-term immigrants... [t]he net loss was heavily concentrated among those with university or some postsecondary education and among visible minorities... human capital is highly mobile, and in this case Montreal appears to be losing in the competition for talented immigrants.

Russian migrants utilize Montréal to acquire skills and accumulate capital that can be used for benefit in other markets in Canada or abroad, a commonly noted feature of transmigrants (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998: 5-6). Though they loved the city's atmosphere, there was a disdain for the perpetual lack of opportunity, the high taxes and a political system that they felt was too "dramatic."

For many ethnic communities in Québec during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, their early settlement in the province were defined by the government's refusal to regulate education resulting in a lack of educational opportunities for many groups who, in response, set up parallel institutions (Rosenberg & Jedwab, 1992: 271). Examples include day schools

created around the Jewish, Greek and Armenian communities, which sought a space for their children to learn in an academically challenging environment on a level playing field. Anxiety and even hostility towards migrants is a continuing problem in Québec. The Bouchard Taylor Commission describes the need for preservation of the Québécois national culture and identity in the face of a globalizing world (2008: 73). The participants in my project felt that they were passed-over for jobs they were qualified for and often felt slighted when attempting to speak French, either by being ignored, mocked or constantly corrected in a demeaning manner. The migrant's perception of cultural trends is supported by the commission which states (Bouchard & Taylor, 2008: 39):

Anxiety over language is not an important factor in English Canada; minority insecurity is not found there; there is no longer a majority ethnic group in Canada (citizens of British origin account for 34% of the population, while citizens of French-Canadian origin make up a strong majority of the population in Québec, i.e. roughly 77%); it follows that in English Canada, there is less concern for the preservation of a founding cultural tradition than for national cohesion.

Maksim felt that politics in the province reminded him of Italy and the Ukraine, places where very few changes occur due to constant fighting among politicians. Citing examples of squabbles between the Parti Québécois (PQ) and the Parti Libéral du Québec (PLQ) he felt that real issues were not being dealt with, while issues of minimal importance, like nationalism and language dominated debates. He stated "what did nationalism get Russia? Or Ukraine? Canada's politics are nice because there is less drama and more work. Politics shouldn't be interesting." Katarina shared similar views as Maksim: "We're all Canadians," she said. Katarina described pamphlets that arrived to

her residence from the Liberal and Conservative governments outlining their support for her religion. Though she did not particularly want such attention, she noted that at least the federal government attempted to extend themselves to each group, making them feel at home in Canada. In Québec, the primacy of a single cultural entity felt exclusionary, as though they were not truly welcome in the province, more akin to long-term, though not permanent, residents.

To conclude, Toronto came to represent in the minds of the Russians I interviewed, a city distant from the social and political tensions of Québec, where they could enter more formal arenas of economic activity and find their sought after security. Despite their aspirations for the city of Toronto, they felt that there were fewer social and cultural events to be involved with. Engagement by Russian migrants with the city of Montréal was tempered by their view that their time in this city was just a temporary stop over. In following Baumgartner, who noted that suburban residents had “high rates of mobility from place to place” which meant in fact that the “bonds between persons are frequently ruptured and replaced with equally temporary ones, so that relationships often have short pasts and futures” (1988: 91), the engagement of Russian migrants with Montréal was limited to temporary relationships, particularly networks, that helped them gauge the city, gather a sense of place, but then move on. It was used as a city in which they could acquire a greater degree of education (all of my participants had acquired post-secondary education in the city) then transfer this to another place. In effect, Montréal is a stepping-stone city for Russians and is engaged with as such; while Toronto is seen as a final destination, where they can utilize their skills in long-term employment.

## Chapter VIII

### Acculturation:

At the confluence of the variables mentioned in the previous chapter stands acculturation which is a process by which migrants and migrant groups, consciously adopt “the customs, values, and social attributes of the host society to the extent that the immigrant becomes indistinguishable from the majority” (Phythian, et al. 2006: 2). Acculturation produces a class of migrant that, in large part, goes unnoticed or unacknowledged by the broader society. For Russians in Canada, the goal is to be accepted as equals, on a par with their Canadian neighbours. They seek to fit in and assimilate with Canadians. Despite their various backgrounds and histories, my informants actively sought to be unseen or unacknowledged. In doing so, they felt as if they had succeeded, that they had made a long sojourn across the ocean and as a result of their efforts had become accepted as equals among their Canadian peers. They, of course, could recognize the differences between themselves and their Canadian counterparts; yet, that did not matter. For them, it was this lack of an acknowledged difference that defined success.

The previous chapters have outlined issues of importance in the production of an invisible population, a population which can easily access visas and status cards, a population that holds a particular position regarding their class standing and social mobility, the use of networks to help acquire the facets of their life, like household goods, that they were forced to leave behind. Networks additionally mitigate against having to take from shelters or aid organizations. Fourth-wave, middle-class Russian immigrants also seek to adapt to their environment, taking on many of the traits they see in their

Canadian counterparts. This process, called acculturation, is at the heart of invisibility, a state of being unknown, or unacknowledged.

Studies of acculturation in ethnography are in fact quite diverse and quite old. Boasian (1940 [1888]; 1986[1928]: 134-138) analyses of acculturation began as studies of cultural change among “primitive” groups; among African-Americans and among indigenous groups (1986: 135-136). Boas postulated that cultural change or acculturation happened most rapidly through the influences of European culture and as such was intimately linked to conquest, evangelism or other concrete acts taken by the more developed cultures.

Writing in a similar era, Redfield, Linton and Herskovits’ seminal piece on acculturation, *Memorandum for the study of acculturation* (1936) is a much more technical piece, offering philosophical insights as well as methodological support for the study of acculturation. Within the article published in *American Anthropologist*, they define the process as “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups” (1936: 149). The definition used in the late-1930s and recent definitions, as we can see from above, do not differ significantly from one another (cf. Berry, 2003; Lalonde & Cameron, 1993; Morrison & James, 2009)

Redfield, Linton and Herskovits’ methodological proposals in investigating the concept of acculturation include “[d]irect observation of acculturation in process” and “acculturation studied through interviews with members of acculturated groups” (1936: 150). As I elaborated in chapter one of my thesis, my methodological approach included both semi-structured interviews and participant observation, which as I noted, was carried

out from June to September of 2009. Interviews of participants provide insight into the data gathered through participant observation, which was most often carried out at large social gatherings that included Russians and non-Russians, such as concert venues, dinner parties, public gatherings and art shows. In this way, my participants acted more as ethnographers in helping translate and define the information I had acquired through the often informal participant observation.

Participant observation is an appropriate method for studies of acculturation given that it provides a forum from which one can derive general principles. Sergei, with whom I attended a dinner party, brought drinks for the event, a selection of gourmet juices and specifically selected wines from France to match the main course. He had taken an evening course in the culinary arts and gastronomy. A large component of this was wine tasting and pairing, an activity he thought would showcase his cultural knowledge, a source of pride. Maksim had noted that in Russia, despite opening borders, certain wines were unavailable or incredibly expensive, thus the standard wines drunk in Russia were Georgian. Maksim would explain that for a Russian to know “good” wines, which include their worth, bouquet, etc, is to showcase a particular intelligence and capacity. Canadians, Maksim felt, particularly in Québec and Ontario were oenophiles and were able to cheaply acquire quality beverages that would be unavailable to the majority in Russia.

In this way, direct participation with my informants helped provide insight into acculturation as a rational, lived experience. Sergei sought to attach himself to acceptable middle class society through knowledge of the vintner’s art. It was both Sergei’s standing, as a middle-class, university student involved in a cooperative program that



provided him an above-average salary. As Phythian et al., note in their analysis of acculturation, “implicit is the assumption that economic parity with the native-born is necessary for immigrant assimilation or integration” (2006: 3). Such parity, as I have detailed in chapter six, on immigration policy, is often elusive, with immigrants never quite possessing the intended upward mobility. However, among the university age participants I studied, many had taken advantage of cooperative programs that would provide them with a salary that matched their Canadian-born colleagues, offering them the chance to engage in particular practices of conspicuous consumption.

I’ve used conspicuous consumption as an example of the process of acculturation, because it is one that is relatable. In showing that Sergei, a fourth-wave immigrant was able to acquire the necessary visas for Canada, and succeed academically because of a strong command of the language that he had acquired abroad, entering into a business-track program at a university that furnishes him with a paid cooperative program that allows him to spend money on culinary arts courses, and in forms of conspicuous consumption that indicate to others his position within the social hierarchy, as a middle class, educated, European male with a good taste for a respectable middle class life. Following a strictly interview-based formula would have only presented acculturation as a fact, not a process, which had been noted by scholars as a continuing problem (Berry, 2003; Phythian, 2006). In this way, I have chosen to elaborate on acculturation through the story of Maksim, a close informant whose story displays acculturation as a lived reality, rather than through the impersonal gaze of quantitative analyses.

Maksim was born in a small city in the ethnically Russian regions of eastern Ukraine to a Jewish family of engineers and computer programmers. When he recounts

his first days of elementary school, he describes his childhood as average. He talks about the early morning swimming lesson involving a quick immersion into the pool, literally sink-or-swim, as none of them could swim. This was followed by lunch, which did not change from day-to-day and consisted of cabbage and nothing else. Rather than a post-lunch kindergarten nap, they were instead given hammers, nails, planks of wood and screw-drivers and enlisted to help with building repairs,. It was here that he learned how painful a hammer hit to the skull could be, which was however not nearly as painful as having a nail driven through one's hand. Both incidences, he says, were commonplace. The playground equipment, what little they did have, was rusted-out and dangerous. Instead they stood on a metal table and attempted to knock one another off onto the cement, no doubt injuring some children. All this occurred prior to the elocution for the day.

As a child, his family had to “pull some strings” to get him into his elementary school. Unlike the other schools, this one had a reputation for success, and his parents were not willing to give up that opportunity. They enlisted his maternal uncle, a noted surgeon, to call his friends on the council and get Maksim in. Just before the school year began, he was given permission to attend. In retrospect, however, he said this was not an enjoyable place, and he often feigned illness to avoid having to attend class. The students were yelled at and had their lessons drilled into them. The school's striving for success had placed an unusually heavy burden on the students who were categorized by their capacity to handle the stress. During his early years at the school he was told that because he was unable to do the snowflake cut-outs as other students were, he was in fact most probably intellectually handicapped and should be at a special school. This is particularly

ironic given that as an adult he is an award winning artist with shows all over Canada, the United States and in Berlin.

Life in eastern Ukraine was difficult, replete with shortages, crime and an increasingly unreliable social service system. As middle class Jews, Maksim's family were the target of insults, often socially isolated because of their religion. As the Soviet economy fell increasingly behind the Western economies in terms of income and purchasing power, they began to face increasingly prolonged and severe shortages on consumer goods, such as food and clothes. In the later years of the Soviet Union currency became scarce compounding many of the already dire problems (cf. Kotkin, 1991). Maksim's family began to consider leaving the Soviet Union, but it was complicated to arrange exit visas from the Soviet Union. Despite Gorbachev's policies of perestroika and glasnost (Gorbachev, 1987) which slightly opened the visa regimes allowing the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Jews, they were not able to acquire the visas that others had.

In the early 1990s, Maksim's family arranged for exit-visas from the Soviet Union and sought out residence in a Tel Aviv suburb. As I've noted, their departure coincides with one of the largest exoduses of Jews from the Soviet Union, with over four-hundred thousand leaving in a four year period. In total, over nine-hundred thousand Soviets fled between 1987 and 1991 (Shevtsova, 1992: 241-242). Maksim's family was finally able to leave for Israel, - a place Maksim described as the "Hawaii of the Mediterranean" - just as the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

Arriving from the Soviet Union, life in Israel was immediately quite different. They were in a country that boasted "stocked grocery stores and busy streets," yet what he found to be the most different was dentistry. An incredibly painful and unpleasant

experience in the Soviet Union, dentists in Israel had topical anaesthetics to make their procedures painless. When he first underwent dental surgery in Israel, he had thought that the Israeli dentist had only said he had done the work, and was stealing his family's scant money. "It was incredible. I could get what I wanted fixed and I didn't ache for three days afterwards. I went home and had supper. It was amazing!"

Within a few weeks Maksim was forced to transition from a small city in Ukraine with shortages in everything from food to apparel to modern Israel with its stocked shelves, clean streets and unbroken pavement, in a city where the buildings all looked slightly different and had colour. He had never seen so many cars in a single place, and couldn't fathom what people were using them for: "My uncle had a car in Ukraine, but they don't come with seatbelts, and they are uncomfortable. We took car rides once in a while, but only for specific reasons otherwise you took buses, trams or trains." From the outset, their arrival in Israel was one of jubilation. They had been able to take up residence in a safe portion of the Tel Aviv suburbs, were able to buy what they pleased and able to do pretty much as they pleased.

His first days of school in Israel, however, were quite difficult. Having grown up around Jewish relatives he was able to speak conversational Hebrew; however, this left him significantly behind the students who had grown up in Israel and were fluent. In Ukraine, second-language education options are German, English and French, not Hebrew. He had been educated in English for the majority of his youth and as a result spoke English and Russian early on during his stay in the Tel Aviv suburbs. He barely spoke to other people, and simply went home directly from school, spending a lot of time with his family: "At first, I just went to school and home, I didn't have many friends. I

didn't know anybody. I mostly went fishing." He first began to make friends among Russian-expatriates living in Israel as he could communicate with them. He did note, however, that this was a temporary solution, as he did not quite get along with the Russian students in his school:

The Russians were tough. My first day one of them pulled a knife on me and plunged it into my stomach. I screamed like a girl until I realized it was plastic and folded in on itself. They had grown up in the cities where there was a lot of crime and they had to be really tough to get by.

Despite his connection to the Soviet-Russian immigrants, Maksim sought to sever ties with the Russians in his school. They reminded him of his past, and they reminded him of what his family had left behind. He sought instead to make friends with the Israeli students and to the expatriate population living in Tel Aviv, who he saw as being more worldly and exciting.

By the time he entered high school, he had become fluent in Hebrew and had become used to his local area, making close Israeli friends. He found school in Israel to be far more agreeable, something he said had made it hard for him to be motivated. Unlike the tough schools in the Soviet Union, Israel relied on the students to submit their work. If you failed to finish an assignment, you were simply given a poor grade. There was neither corporal punishment nor calls to your family. Because of this, he found himself rather enjoying his time, taking extended Friday lunch breaks to enjoy a beer at a local pub, wandering the streets of Tel Aviv instead of completing his assignments.

When I asked him about his experiences in Israel, he stated that it was like Hawaii, a tropical oasis away from his home. The regimented existence his family had in Ukraine was replaced by one of greater leisure and freedom, where he could do as he pleased with little in the way of disciplinary action taken against his truancy. Despite his love of Israel, his family had become weary of living in Tel Aviv. They felt that the salaries were too low, that they had less opportunity than in other parts of the world, and the spectre of terrorism bothered them. Maksim described bombings as a car accident: “you don’t get up worried about traffic accidents, but people die every day.”

Escalating violence in the late 1990s in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, attacks on public transportation and public places, such as malls and restaurants had begun to scare his family and led them to question their safety in Israel. They additionally sought to keep him from conscripted military service in both Ukraine and Israel. Allowing his Ukrainian passport to expire, he was no longer admissible into the armed forces of Ukraine; yet, as his eighteenth birthday drew nearer, his family realized that he might have to perform service in the Israeli Defence Force, which at the time was heavily engaged in fighting. Maksim himself had longed to serve in the Israeli Defence Forces; however, his family knew the horrors of military services from their experiences with the Red Army and again sought a new place to live. They began the job hunt that would take them out of Israel.

“There were two options” he said, “Australia or Canada. And no one wanted to go to Australia.” As I stated in chapter four, increasingly stringent immigration policies have begun to shift the tide away from applying for U.S.-based employment to opportunities found in Canada (Rybakovsky & Ryazantsev, 2005: 9). Cognizant of the difficulties in

securing U.S.-bound visas, they concentrated their employment search on and around Toronto, Ontario. When I asked him why Toronto over other Canadian cities he said that “if you have the choice, you’ll go to Toronto. It’s bigger, there’s more opportunity, more money.”

After a short search, they were able to find employment and secure visas arriving in Canada during the mid-summer 1998, just prior to his sixteenth birthday. “It was terrible” he said of arriving in Canada. Although he found Toronto to be “an epic city” he was quite alone, finding himself yet again in a nation where he could not yet fluently speak the language: “I had studied English and French in both Israel and Ukraine, and I could understand everything that was said to me but I had a terrible accent, I was embarrassed to speak to Canadians.” Residing in the North York portion of Toronto, he was surrounded by other immigrants, predominantly Iranian and Eastern European immigrants. Many of them spoke Russian; yet, he said, he avoided contact with them: “they remind you of what you left behind, it’s constant. The only thing we had to talk about was back there, and as far as I was concerned, there was no back there.” He found that many of the immigrants cloistered themselves in their little enclave, particularly the older generation of immigrants from eastern and central Europe. He instead relished being in a city with professional athletics teams, such as basketball and hockey. He was able to attend Toronto Raptors games and even Toronto Maple Leafs games. “There is so much to see and do in Toronto and many of them just stay in their neighbourhood day after day.”

The move to Toronto had been a great help to the family. His father’s income was significantly above what it had been in Israel, furnishing them with greater financial

security than they had previously enjoyed. As a result they were able to afford stylish clothes; and in particular Maksim was able to buy a genuine leather jacket, a commodity unavailable to the vast majority of Russians and Ukrainians. “We bought a house and even got a car. A Pontiac! I couldn’t believe it, it was the first time we were able to afford a vehicle.”

For the majority of immigrants to Canada, employment in their field of education is often difficult to secure and as a result they are often underemployed, earning significantly less than what their educational background should command (Beach, et al., 2003; Liu & Kerr, 2003; Gerard, Smith & Renaud, 2008). However, Maksim’s father, an engineer, who had received instruction in English in Ukraine had been employed in a related field in Israel, providing the necessary skills recognition to earn a salary comparable to Canadian born or foreign-born but Canadian educated professionals (McBride & Sweetman, 2003: 433). Although unbeknownst to them at the time, their move to Israel proved fortuitous as it provided a key transition period in which to acquire western skills that are marketable in Canada, offering them significantly higher salary potential than immigrants who have not had this opportunity.

As a result of their higher salary, they were furnished with a significantly higher standard of living than they had enjoyed in Israel. As I’ve noted, they were able to purchase nicer clothes, better food and to allocate greater sums of money for entertainment. Included in this were investments in “augmentative studies” outside of high school. His family paid for Maksim’s courses in French and art. They insisted on scholastics as a means of success in Canada, and had hoped that with additional courses he would be able to succeed in whatever field he chose. “My parent’s philosophy was



that if I was going to become an artist, they would do what they could so that I could succeed... and not end up in jail.” Art became Maksim’s preferred academic path, and he began to involve himself with the Toronto art-scene and artists, visiting museums, listening to public lectures and taking part in workshops. His family’s insistence on scholastic endeavours, he felt, was related to their desire for him to “live a normal middle class Canadian life” which included a university education, learning to drive, mastering the English language and “being better off than your parents were.”

Language was an area in which Maksim felt particularly vulnerable. He had given up attempting to lose his Russian accent: “I’m really really bad at accents,” and as a result of this “failure”, he became “a Russian right-winger destined to live on the fringes.” He believes this, despite his flawless English, command of Hebrew, German, Dutch and conversational French. For Maksim and his family, learning a local language expressed their willingness to engage with the nation, and with its people. As they had done in Israel, they immersed themselves in the language, taking classes and using it in public. To be seen as Canadians, they felt it important to talk like them and act like them. In this manner, being Canadian was not merely possessing the passport, but in fact learning to live like their neighbours.

This is not to assert that the rights and obligations conferred by citizenship were not important. It, in fact, remained an important step in Maksim’s family’s plans. He recalled the period just prior to their citizenship test when he would notice his mother and father studying at the dinner table for the exam. Maksim, however, “couldn’t be bothered” and opted to take the exam without studying: “I had done two years of high school in Canada. What didn’t I already know?” He later found out that the exam was

much more difficult than he had anticipated it to be and was reduced to educated guesses on the exam, while his mother and father easily breezed through. “They relentlessly mocked me for that. I couldn’t live it down.” He noted that his family’s desire to do as well as they could on the exam showed their commitment and if it required nightly studying, then that is what they would do.

For Maksim and his parents, the possession of citizenship had become a symbol of permanence. They were no longer on visas or resident cards that they felt could be lost or taken away, and they could now vote in Canadian elections thus partaking in public debates with their new country: “my parents were thrilled to vote. They do find that Canadian politics are anti-dramatic, but that’s the way it should be. They get to vote on real issues and things will get done.”

In the years following their acquisition of citizenship, Maksim’s family were guaranteed safe passage into Eastern Europe. He recounted his attempt to get a visa to visit Russia while on a school exchange in the Netherlands: “They asked for my second grade report card, a list of living relatives, hundreds of dollars and there was still no guarantee.” Even with an Israeli passport, passage into Russia is often fraught with problems at check-points; however, the Canadian passport provided much more in the way of guaranteed security, a passport “everyone accepts.” Yet, despite this, Maksim’s family decided against any travel to their place of origin and instead opted for vacations in the United States and Cuba. In spite of the assertions occurring in transnational migration theory, which posits an increase of transnational activity in the period following the establishment of one’s new residence (Portes & DeWind, 2008: 10), Maksim’s family (as with the other participants of this project) noted a marked decrease

in their connection to their families abroad. Maksim cited family jealousy, distance and their changing lives as the primary factors behind this decreasing connection. Although there were exchanges of phone calls and emails, the connection grew weak. He was no longer up on the local lingo, current events and knew few of the people where he formerly resided. Maksim did cite a desire to visit his relatives in rural Ukraine, possibly during a sojourn in Europe; however, he had not established any concrete plans and they remained rather vague.

Maksim, an award-winning artist, considers himself a Canadian artist, despite the themes and images conjured up in his work. Images of urban centres in the USSR, Ladas and communal apartment blocks give his work a distinctive flair. Yet, he calls it Canadian—his artistic formation was supported through the capacity of Canadian universities, by predominantly Canadian academics and funded by Canadian organizations. His youth may have provided the inspiration, but it was here that he developed.

We sipped Georgian wine in his apartment, reviewing his art, photorealistic Soviet iconography, propaganda, and images. His Russian accent boomed as we laughed and drank. He took a moment to show me a video displaying life in the Soviet Union set to the Soviet national anthem. He said simply “it’s all a lie. Life was never like that.” Maksim was quite prosaic about life in the Soviet Union and life in Canada. Although he uses networks of Russians to acquire Armenian Brandy and Georgian wine, he seems quite content to identify Canada as his country, and Toronto as the city of his future: “My life is in Toronto, my friends, my family, my career. I’ll go back, because that’s where I belong.” No longer wandering the world, Maksim defines himself by his adopted

country, and despite his quips about his accent, has begun self defining as an English-speaker. Portes & DeWind state that for immigrants in America, “the question is not whether assimilation will take place, but to what segment of American society will migrants assimilate” (2008: 17). Maksim, his family and indeed all my informants, assimilated to the middle echelon of Canadian society, alongside other upwardly mobile, educated Canadians. They became invisible, so to speak, by adopting a lifestyle in Canada that most Canadians are themselves involved in, in cities so diverse that they go unnoticed. Invisibility for them is an achievement, a success story to be proud of and one they do not lament.

Maksim’s story is emblematic of many middle class Russian narratives that were recounted in interviews and during conversations. Maksim’s narrative was chosen as a means of telling a particular fact about acculturation, one not well developed in the literature. As many have aptly noted, acculturation is reliant on public policy and the ideology of the host society (Berry, 2003; Morrison & James, 2009); however, what is ignored is the capability and willingness of the migrants themselves to acculturate. Middle class Russian ideology states that there is a need to pursue higher education to live a “respectable” middle class life. Canada, in that sense offers such possibilities. All of my informants, for instance, had been bred in middle class, intellectual environments in well-educated Russian families. Their relative position within Soviet society had allowed them the opportunity to learn English and travel abroad, something denied to most Russians. What, for them defined acculturation, was the sense that it was their obligation to “fit in” as Maksim would say, among Canadians, adopting their behaviours, their fashion, and the demeanour.

Though the literature has developed in-depth analysis of income, and earning, they are lacking a grounded approach to the migrant sentiments themselves. Morrison & James (2009) for instance term acculturation, or cultural change, between dichotomous tropes, such as fear/excitement and nostalgia and anticipation. But they ignore the fundamental issue of individual willingness to change. They lump generations and classes together without first dissecting the differences implicitly laden within each group. As informants would keenly note, their elderly relatives were resistant to change, having lived the vast majority of their lives a certain way. Lower-class Russians often clung to their culture, having little else.

Phythian et al., note that existing literature also suggests that visible minority status, ethnic relations, perceptions of discrimination, and political participation are also related to assimilation and integration (2006: 4). My Russian informants, as Viktor and Katarina said, were “drawn into Canada” and Canadian culture. Discrimination based on race or ethnicity was limited, and despite antagonisms between English and French, they found Canadians very open to them, often showing interest in the country, in their culture and their language. I attended a party with Maksim in early September for a group of distantly related relatives visiting from Russia and Ukraine. Maksim and I were chatting when he quietly told me he no longer fit in. As had happened in Israel, he had increasingly “grown apart” from Russians, no longer interested in keeping up with news or gossip from back home, he found himself having little to say to them, talking frequently about sports or the goings-on in Canada. Upon leaving the party he confessed to having more fun with Canadians than Russians, and though he could communicate with them and understand what they were saying, he had lost much of the requisite

cultural knowledge, such as popular music, or many references to the goings-on of pop-culture in Eastern Europe.

As a process, acculturation is dependent on many factors, among which are public policy, particularly immigration and economic policy; discrimination, perceptions of the immigrant population by members of the host society; the cultural ideology of the immigrant population; and perhaps most importantly, the willingness of the migrants themselves. Acculturation is a process that brings two, often times disparate groups in close proximity to one another, indelibly changing one of them or even both groups. My informants sought to establish themselves in Canada, setting up local roots that helped them find their place.

Phythian et al., states that a product of the process of acculturation is that the population becomes “indistinguishable from the majority” (2006: 2). If they become indistinguishable, it is then, quite likely that as an *ethnonational* category, they would be invisible that is, unseen or unacknowledged by the host population. Acculturation is then a feature of a socially invisible population, one that lives amongst the majority population.

## Conclusion

When I set out into the field with this project, I had sought to find the hidden aspects of the Russian presence that had motivated the concealment of their identity. Engaging with Russian immigrants had shown that I had been asking the wrong questions, looking in the wrong places. What had motivated my project was an interest in clandestinity and circular migration, two relatively common themes in the literature of migration; however, a fatal flaw in this logic had been in avoiding the realities that govern migration to Canada. Set forth by the Canadian and Québec governments immigration to Canada is strictly regulated with particular requirements. This realization later informed my approach to research, forcing me to accept that states truly do retain the means of coercive power within their own borders (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998) and despite living in an increasingly open world, a state's action will have certain, measurable ramifications for the migrant population residing within their borders.

Because of current trends in immigration policy, my informants were positioned within the nation amongst other young middle class students. Without the obligations of families, of mortgages and other burdensome responsibilities, my informants engaged in rather serendipitous or improvised moves, accepting opportunities abroad with little or no hard information, often transiting through a number of intermediary states on a journey that eventually terminated with their arrival in Canada.

Close contact with the host society was an inevitability with their arrival into the university system and labour markets. In time, this changed my informants. They adapted to the cultural traits, the behaviours, dress and comportment of Canadians. Becoming like their hosts was seen as a success, a feat of capability and intelligence that they carried

with honour. Many of my informants would explain that to be just like other Canadians was a mark of success—since in their view Canada is a successful nation and being invisible meant that they, too, had become successful. Invisibility is then not a lack of autonomy in political or social fields, but rather a process of re-identification; of change that renders them invisible not only to each other, but to Canadians.

Looking at it as a process, invisibility is not merely the function of an individual's strive for success, but rather, the product of a variety of variables. Immigration policy for instance selects migrants with the necessary skills and qualifications for success in Canada, furnishing visas to those that are deemed adaptable. By virtue of their birth within educated families, my informants possessed a better-than-average knowledge of Russian, and were often had a strong command of the English technical words of their vocational field; a key feature of adaptability for acquiring visas. The culture of educational success in which they were bred, transplanted to Canada, found them striving in their academic paths, seeking middle class jobs that would simply be unavailable in their native Russia. They aligned themselves with their classmates, becoming over time, increasingly Canadian. Many of my informants now identify themselves as Canadian, stating that because of the time that's passed, they could no longer consider themselves as strictly Russian and see themselves being closer to Canadian culture than Russian.



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Fig. 1

## CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research on “**Russian Community Invisibility in Montréal**” being conducted by **Phillip Gingras, M.A. Candidate** under the supervision of **Professor Vered Amit Ph.D** in the context of the fieldwork component of the M.A. in Social and Cultural Anthropology offered by Concordia University.

### PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is to inquire into how Russians in the city of Montréal may be “invisible,” that is, not seen by the broader society. This research will hopefully understand how Russians in Montréal come to be in contact with one another through networking, and how these networks operate. I understand that this project poses no risks or direct benefits.

### PROCEDURE

The research will be conducted at a local most appropriate for the interlocutor. I understand that I will be interviewed and/or observed for the information concerning this project. I am aware that the time taken for the research will be based on the extent of my participation.

### CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- \* I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time without negative consequences.
- \* I understand that my participation in this study is:  
  
\_\_\_ Confidential (the researcher will know my identity, but not disclose it)
- \* I understand that the data from this study will form the basis of a thesis and may be published.
- \* I understand the purpose of this study and know that there is no hidden motive of which I have not been informed.

I have carefully studied the above and understand this agreement. I freely consent and agree to participate in this study.

NAME (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

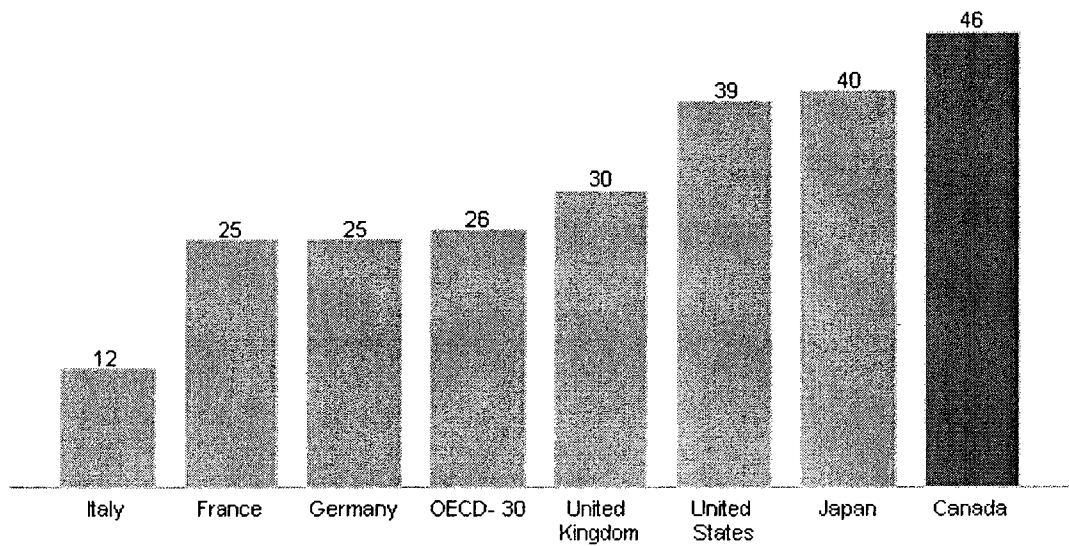
SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

The researcher is available at the following contact information to address any concerns at:  
XXX-XXX-XXXX or through email at xxx.xxx.xxx@xxxxx.com

Fig. 2

**Completion of post-secondary education, population 25-64 years, Canada, G-7 countries and OECD-30 average, 2005  
(percent)**



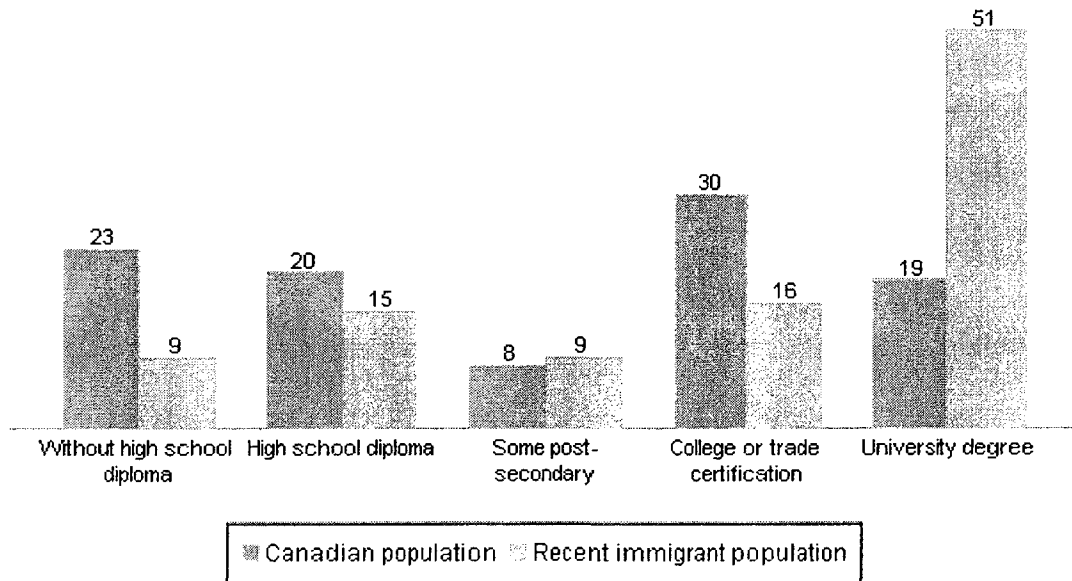
**Note:** The OECD definition of tertiary education does not include trade or vocational certification.

**Source:** Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). *Education at a Glance 2007*, (see table A1.3a) *Population that has attained tertiary education (2005)* OECD Statistics. November, 2008



Fig. 3

**Level of education, recent immigrant population, aged 25-64 years, 2006  
(percent)**



Source: Statistics Canada. *Educational Portrait of Canada, Census 2006*. Ottawa, Statistics Canada, 2008 (Cat. No. 97-560-X2006001).