2023

Between Kedusha and the Sitra Achra: Factors That Contribute to Individuals Leaving ultra-Orthodoxy

Batya Weinstein

Between Kedusha and the Sitra Achra: Factors That Contribute to Individuals Leaving ultra-Orthodoxy

Batya Weinstein, M.S.

A DOCTORAL DISSERTATION SUBMITTED

TO THE FACULTY OF

THE GRADUATE STUDIES PROGRAM

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

POST CAMPUS LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY

April 24, 2023

MAJOR DIVISION: PSYCHOLOGY

SPONSORING COMMITTEE:

_____ _4/25/2023_____

Orly Calderon, Psy.D. DATE

_____ __4/24/2023_____

Camilo Ortiz, PH.D. DATE

_____ _4/24/2023_____

Linnea L. Mavrides, Psy.D.

Between Kedusha and the Sitra Achra:

Factors That Contribute to Individuals Leaving ultra-Orthodoxy

Batya Weinstein

Long Island University Post

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to understand the most frequently cited factors contributing to individuals leaving ultra-Orthodoxy, as well as the psycho-social implications of doing so. Indeed, there is a dearth of quantitative research on the factors and implications of leaving. Previous research has shown that contributing factors include intellectual contradictions, gender inequality, lack of acceptance of differences, and experiencing physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. The psychosocial implications of leaving include social and educational barriers to integration into secular life and increased depression and loneliness. The current study employed a quantitative, descriptive design to examine the hypothesis that emotional reasons are more frequently cited than intellectual reasons for leaving ultra-orthodoxy. We also examined the hypothesis that leaving ultra-orthodoxy leads to increases in depression and anxiety scores, decreases in well-being, and a loss of social support. Participants completed a questionnaire that assessed the different factors contributing to leaving ultra-orthodoxy using a Likert scale. They were then administered four psychosocial measures to assess anxiety, depression, wellness, and social support. The results showed no significant difference between individuals' levels of agreement with intellectual and emotional reasons to leave. The results indicated elevations in measures of depression and anxiety, but not in measures of social support, after leaving ultra-orthodoxy suggesting that individuals have a hard time with emotional adjustment despite the presence of social support. Finally, there were no significant differences in gender or ultra-Orthodox sect regarding levels of agreement and psychosocial measures. Future studies should build on these findings to further investigate why individuals leave their ultra-Orthodox communities and the psychosocial implications of leaving.

Keywords: religious disaffiliation, covenantal communities, ultra-orthodoxy

Between Kedusha and the Sitra Achra: Factors That Contribute to Individuals Leaving ultra-orthodoxy

Within the past few years, there has been increasing media coverage of individuals transitioning from their ultra-Orthodox upbringing into secular life. TV shows such as Unorthodox on Netflix and memoirs by former members of the ultra-Orthodox community such as *All Who Go Do Not Return* (Deen, 2015) illustrate the difficult journey of leaving an insular community. These individuals are considered by their communities to have abandoned a life of holiness (Kedusha) for the sake of a tainted life (Sitra Achra). However, little empirical research has examined why people leave, and the obstacles and consequences they face. Most of the research literature that has studied this phenomenon is qualitative (Behr, 2018; Berger, 2015; Davidman, 2014; Newfield, 2020; Weiskopf, 2016) and examines the disaffiliation process, which Davidman (2007) defines as leaving a religious group. The two quantitative studies that examine what predisposes individuals to leave are a market, non-academic study (Trencher, 2016) and a study done by Engelman et al. (2020).

What is Jewish, ultra-Orthodoxy?

It is helpful to understand an ultra-Orthodox community's unique and insular way of living to understand what makes leaving it so consequential. Jewish Orthodox individuals adhere to four general principles: believing that G-d wrote the Torah (Bible), observance of the Shabbat, observance of a kosher diet, and maintaining the laws of sexual relations (Weiskopf, 2016). Within Jewish Orthodoxy, ultra-Orthodox sects abide by a strict interpretation of Jewish law, extending to a lifestyle that includes rules regarding dress, behavior, arranged marriages, and an absence of secular education (Weiskopf, 2016). In general, individuals who identify as ultra-

Orthodox live in insular communities with their own police and ambulance forces, schools, and stores, and have limited contact and exposure to the outside secular world (Weiskopf, 2016). Ultra-Orthodoxy can be further divided into numerous subsects based on their own rules and customs (Newfield, 2020). These subsects usually fall into two groups: non-Hasidic and Hasidic (Newfield 2020).

Hasidic Judaism was created in the 18th century by Israel ben Elazar, also known as the Bal Shem Tov, as an alternative to the more intellectual and rabbinic Judaism that preceded it. The movement offered a way of life that included having a Rebbe, a charismatic and pious leader who served as the spiritual authority on Judaism for his followers. The Hasidic population in North America grew in the late 19th century, with many settling in Brooklyn, New York. There are numerous Hasidic subsects, each originating in a different part of Europe and eventually settling in different parts of the United States (Belcove-Shalin, 1995).

The Lubavitcher Hasidic sect, started by Rabbi Shneur Zalman in the late 1700s, integrated the Bal Shem Tov's principles with traditional Rabbinic teachings. Lubavitchers today are the least insular Hasidic sect and are actively involved in outreach efforts to bring individuals closer to Judaism (Pearl, 2014). The Bobover Hasidim originated in the town of Bobowa in Western Poland and settled in Boro Park, Brooklyn, where they established a successful community (Epstein, 1995). They dress in elegant garb and are known for their aesthetic flair (Belcove-Shalin, 1995). Satmarer Hasidim, founded by Yo'el Teitelbaum in Hungary, established the Satmar Hasidic Court in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. They are notoriously anti-Zionistic and are known for their insular and rigid lifestyles (Belcove-Stalin, 1995; Clevstrom, 2006; Nadler, 2010). The Stoliner Hasidim, founded by Aharon ben Ya'akov in Lithuania, was known for its ecstatic and elaborate prayer practices, which were opposed by

Misnadgim (Nadler, 2010). The Skver Hasidic sect originated in the Ukrainian town Skver and is based in New Square, a highly insular community with stricter regulations than any other Hasidic sect (Assouline, 2015).

Non-Hasidic people usually fall into the category of being Litvish. The Litvak community was created in America in 1930 and followed the Lithuanian model, where Torah scholarship was of utmost importance (Weiskopf, 2016). The Litvak community originated in Lithuania and was formerly known as "Misnagdim," which means opponents. They were opposed to the Hasidic Revolution that occurred in Eastern Europe. In addition, they disagreed with the Hasidic practices of its insularity, singing and dancing during prayer, and its cult-like status of the "Rebbe" (Belcove-Shalin, 1995). They were opposed to these practices because they diminished the importance of studying torah and emphasized prayer. They also believed that the average person was not capable of having a mystical connection with God (Nadler, 2010).

Literature Review on Individuals Leaving Religion

There is a dearth of research examining the psychological experiences of leaving religion. Specifically, little research has examined those leaving insular religions, which are termed "covenantal" religious communities (Engelman et al., 2020). Engelman operationally defined a covenantal community as having a theological foundation for the social expectations of its members. These expectations include ways of dressing, eating, speaking, gender roles, and family hierarchies. These religious communities operate separately from the larger secular societies in which they reside (Engelman et al., 2020). Previous research has studied individuals who were disaffiliated with Jehovah's Witness, which is considered a covenantal religious group (Ransom et al., 2020). Specifically, the study examined former members' experience of being shunned and their identification with secular society after they left to determine if that was

associated with impairment in their psychological well-being and identity transition success. They found that the more devout the participants were in their religious practice during their membership in JW, the more ostracism they experienced after leaving. Furthermore, they found that the more devout they were to their religion, the lower their post-exit self-esteem (Ransom et al., 2020).

Another study conducted on individuals in conventional religions examined participants who left their former Amish communities (Faulkner, 2017). Specifically, the study sought to examine the narratives of the participants' religious exit and identity. Faulkner (2017) found three broad narrative categories, which include "engaged Amishness," "Amish rootedness," and "marginalizing Amishness." The individuals in the first two categories reported positive associations with their Amish identity and non-Amish society. The marginalizing Amish reported tension between their non-Amish society and their Amishness (Faulkner, 2017).

There is a paucity of quantitative studies examining the factors contributing to individuals leaving ultra-orthodoxy. A market researcher conducted a quantitative study to investigate why people disaffiliate from orthodox Judaism (Trencher, 2016). The study was conducted via administering a survey questionnaire. The results showed that 19% of individuals cited things they read, contradictions, and a lack of proof, contributing to why they left. 14% said that they left because of intellectual reasons. 11% said they left because of doubt and loss of faith. 6% said that gossip, rumors, and not being accepted as contributing to why they left. Finally, 6% said they left because of physical or sexual abuse and or domestic violence (Trencher, 2016).

The second quantitative study sought to understand the psychological predisposing factors and effects of disaffiliation from ultra-Orthodoxy through the lens of an immigration

psychology perspective (Engelman, 2020). An immigration psychology perspective examines the psychological course that immigrants go through, which involves factors that "push" an individual to leave their community and factors that "pull" an individual to a new community. Push factors involve immigrants being pushed to leave a dysfunctional environment, physical threat, or discrimination; pull factors involve immigrants being pulled to communities with improved quality of life and economic opportunities (Ravenstein, 1889, as cited in Engelman, 2020). These two factors have been associated with the immigrant's wellness, acculturation, and integration into their new community. "Push" factors are associated with situations that negatively affect the quality of life, and "pull" factors are associated with general well-being once the individual migrates (Engelman et al., 2020).

In Engelman's (2020) study, 222 participants who were formerly ultra-Orthodox completed several surveys which included "push" and "pull" measures, the Perceived Wellness Survey (Adams et al., 1998), the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen et al., 1983), measures that tapped into psychological and physical health, and timeline and accomplishments of disaffiliation measures. Engelman (2020) hypothesized that "Push" factors will be negatively associated with high scores on measures of wellness, and "Pull" factors will be positively associated with high scores on measures of wellness, goal attainment of disaffiliation will be positively associated with high scores on measures of wellness. In addition, "push" and "pull" factors will be endorsed differently between males and females. The regression analysis revealed that reasons to disaffiliate predicted well-being. They found that higher levels of "push" were associated with lower levels of psychological and emotional wellness but that "pull" was not significantly related. Lastly, males and females endorsed push and pull items differently, where females scored higher on the push and pull measures (Engelman, 2020). This gender difference,

where women experienced more significant push and pull towards disaffiliation, can be attributed to different gender roles in the ultra-Orthodox community. Women are more exposed to secular life because of their being slightly more educated than the men. They also deal with the outside world more, such as shopping. Therefore, they are exposed to being "pulled" towards elements of secular society such as secular dress and ideology. In addition, in rituals and leadership, women occupy a secondary role in religious life, so they experience greater "push" from their religious communities (Engelman, 2020).

In terms of qualitative research literature, a case study was conducted looking at the disaffiliation process, or what the author terms "defection," where an individual from the ultra-Orthodox community leaves the group they grew up in (Davidman, 2014). The study found that three general childhood experiences among the interviewed individuals predisposed them to leave their ultra-Orthodox life. The first significant experience found across individuals who left ultra-orthodoxy was those with prior exposure to secular life, either through the media or relatives. The second commonality among the participants was that many reported growing up in a family that deviated from the ideal. These situations included individuals coming from families where there was divorce, emotional, sexual, or physical abuse, or one of the parents was less religiously observant than the other parent. This childhood experience led to individuals feeling shunned because they did not meet the expectation of being part of a normative, cohesive family that was represented as the ideal. As a result, they did not know whether they should trust the community whose expectations they, or their parents, disappointed. Furthermore, Davidman (2014) found that half of the female participants reported experiencing themselves as occupying a strictly maternal role and being relegated to the sidelines. These women could not see

themselves occupying this role. The gender inequality that they observed served as an impetus for them to eventually leave their community.

An exploratory qualitative dissertation was conducted to investigate the change process involved in individuals disaffiliated with their ultra-Orthodox communities (Weiskopf, 2016). The author found that the change process followed a trajectory similar to that of the transtheoretical model of change developed by Prochaska and DiClemente (1992). This model delineates the components and processes that lead to the decision to change behavior. While this model was initially created to help individuals struggling with addiction, Weiskopf (2016) used this framework to understand the decision-making progress through which individuals leaving ultra-orthodoxy go through. The first stage of change that Prochaska and DiClemente (1992) describe is termed "pre-contemplation." At this stage, an individual is unaware that there is even a problem or something they want to change. The next stage in Prochaska and DiClemente's (1992) model is called "contemplation," when an individual is cognizant of a problem and is thinking about fixing it. However, they have not committed to taking any action to fix it. Following is the "preparation" stage, when an individual intends to take steps to make a change. The next stage, "action," is when an individual actively changes their habits and environment. The last stage, "maintenance," is when the individual maintains the new behavior.

Using Prochaska and DiClemente's (1992) model, in the pre-contemplation stage, Weiskopf (2016) posits that ultra-Orthodox individuals are fully immersed in their way of life and have no problems with it. In the contemplation phase, Weiskopf (2016) posits that this would correlate to when ultra-Orthodox individuals begin to experience doubts in their beliefs and religious institutions. In the preparation stage of change, Weiskopf (2016) expected that formerly ultra-Orthodox individuals would begin to make small changes in their religious

practices. In the action stage, Weiskopf (2016) projects a turning point during this stage, when the ultra-Orthodox individual decides to leave their community and former way of life. Finally, in the maintenance stage, Weiskopf (2016) anticipates that it is during this time that the formerly ultra-Orthodox individual comes to terms with their past, their decision to leave, and the uncertainty about what their future will bring.

Weiskopf's (2016) study followed Prochaska and DiClemente's (1992) model of change. Weiskopf (2016) found that in the pre-contemplation stage, participants in the study were fully immersed in their communities. She found that participants experienced a stage of contemplation which consisted of her participants struggling with their religious practices and beliefs. She found that her participants found different ways of engaging with the secular world during the preparation stage. However, Weiskopf (2016) found that turning point experiences hypothesized to be essential impetuses for change did not occur in her sample. Instead, her participants described a long process between preparation and action. Weiskopf (2016) found that her participants had an experience of "officially" leaving the community, which supports the action stage that she hypothesized. Finally, her participants endorsed participating in traditional events, indicating that they had progressed to the maintenance stage.

An original model for describing exit narratives separates socio-emotional from intellectual reasons for why individuals leave their ultra-Orthodox community (Newfield, 2020). The study was conducted on the exit narratives of both Satmar and Lubavitch individuals. Two general types of exit narratives, social-emotional and intellectual, were found. Intellectual narratives pertain to individuals who left because of intellectual disagreements, including internal contradictions between beliefs and practices. They also had external critiques on the belief and practices. On the other hand, socio-emotional narratives contain individuals who attribute

leaving the community to the emotional suffering they experienced, as well as feelings of alienation or persecution they felt while living in the community (Newfield, 2020).

Psycho-Social Implications of Leaving

Disaffiliating from a religious community has many psycho-social implications (Berger, 2015). These consequences are especially pertinent to individuals who leave "high-cost" religions, which are defined as religious groups that are theologically, socially, and culturally exclusive to the extent that the individual would lose social and communal support if one were to leave. These individuals report better health than those who come from less demanding religious communities. However, they found that those who left "high cost" religions reported worse health after leaving than those who left less demanding religious communities (Scheitle and Adamczyk, 2010). Scheitle and Adamczyk's (2010) research shows that the more culturally and socially exclusive a religious group is, the more consequential it is for members of the ultra-Orthodox community to leave. Thus, abandoning ultra-orthodoxy, a tight-knit, insular, and all-encompassing religious community, leaves an individual bereft of tools to navigate the secular world, such as education, an understanding of cultural norms, and financial and social resources (Berger 2015). Owing to the emotional stressors associated with leaving, some data suggest that a high rate of suicide exists among those who leave. Sargon (2015), a journalist, chronicled a string of suicides within five years by former members of the ultra-Orthodox community. These suicides were attributed to emotional stressors in leaving and mental health issues that were not addressed by the ultra-Orthodox community. Furthermore, a study found that barriers to leaving included academic obstacles that involved individuals reporting that they were not equipped academically to pursue a career in the secular world, feelings of guilt in that they did not want to disappoint their families, and fear of retribution by G-d if they broke laws such as the Sabbath

(Weiskopf, 2016). In addition, it was found that participants experienced feelings of depression, loneliness, and isolation during their process of leaving their religion (Weiskopf, 2016).

Gaps in the Literature

Based on the above research, common factors and themes that contribute to individuals leaving their ultra-Orthodox communities have been identified (Davidman, 2014; Engelman, 2020; Newfield, 2020; Trencher, 2016; Weiskopf, 2016). Additionally, it has been found that individuals face considerable hardship upon leaving (Berger, 2015; Ungar-Sargon, 2015; Weiskopf, 2016). This study seeks to build on Newfield's (2020) study that was able to identify two general themes across the narratives of his participants that included intellectual and emotional reasons for leaving. Previous research has demonstrated that reasons for disaffiliation predict well-being, therefore understanding the factors that contribute to individuals' leaving may have implications for their psychosocial well-being (Engelman 2020). Furthermore, this study seeks to build on past research that has examined the psychosocial implications involved when an individual decides to leave by examining individuals' levels of depression and anxiety, which have not been studied before.

Purpose of Current Study

The purpose of this study is to provide a descriptive picture of the antecedents and consequences of leaving an ultra-orthodox Jewish community. This study had three primary aims. First, it examined whether people's decisions to leave is driven more by intellectual versus emotional reasons. Second, it quantified the prevalence of certain life experiences that occurred while living in the community. Third, it examined the psychosocial implications of disaffiliation, such as a lack of social and emotional support, and mental and physical health. It is important to

research people's experiences before and after leaving so that proper interventions can be employed both within the community and in the broader social and mental health services.

Hypotheses

1. It is hypothesized that individuals will self-report higher agreement for leaving due to emotional reasons versus intellectual reasons.
2. Based on prior research indicating lower psychosocial functioning after disaffiliation (Berger, 2015; Ungar-Sargon, 2015; Weiskopf, 2016), it is hypothesized that at 6 months or more after leaving ultra-Orthodoxy, individuals will show clinically significant scores on measures of depression and anxiety, and low scores on measures of social support and wellness.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited via snowball sampling methodology. This was done by the author posting a recruitment flyer for the study on several Facebook groups dedicated to the formerly ultra-orthodox. In addition, the author passed along the recruitment flyer to friends and acquaintances who met the inclusion criteria and asked them to pass it along to people they knew. A total of 413 individuals attempted to take the survey. Of those individuals, 355 individuals were excluded either because they did not fill out the survey, did not meet the inclusion criteria, or they were automated robot responses that were identified based on pattern of responding that the technician of CampusLab was able to identify and then subsequently remove. Inclusion criteria include growing up in an ultra-Orthodox, Jewish home, are adults 18 years old or older, stopped being observant for at least six months, and are physically disengaged from the community. The final sample was comprised of 58 participants. Of those 58

participants, only 52 participants completed the full survey. The data that assess for psycho-social measures were based on the responses of the 58 participants; the data that assess for participants reasons for leaving were based on 52 participants. See Table 1 for the participants' demographic information.

Table 1

Demographic information for participants

	N	%	M	SD
Age			32.8	7.5
Gender				
Male	17	23.3		
Female	31	42.5		
Transgender/non-binary	4	7.69		
Ultra-Orthodox Sect				
Chassidish	30	52.63		
Lubavitch	14	52.63		
Satmar	5	20.83		
Skver	3	8.33		
Other	3	12.5		
Yeshivish/Litvish	23	40.35		
Other	4	7		

Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive design.

Procedure

Long Island University's Institutional Review Board approved this study before any data was collected. First, all the participants were provided with an online, written description of the study and its risks. In addition, they signed informed consent with an electronic signature. Next, individuals were screened via a brief online survey questionnaire to determine whether they met the criteria to be part of the study. If they met the criteria, participants completed a questionnaire that taps into different factors of why people leave, which was rated on a Likert scale. They were then be given four psycho-social measures via an electronic link. The surveys were administered through CampusLab. Anonymity was preserved by turning on "anonymous responses" and further the survey questions did not ask for any identifiable information, such as names.

Measures

Screener Survey (Appendix 1)

The screener survey consisted of demographic questions to determine the participants' eligibility to participate in the study based on exclusion and inclusion criteria.

Beck Depression Inventory Second Edition (BDI II; Beck, et al., 1996 – Appendix 2).

This instrument was used to measure depression as per the second hypothesis. The BDI II is a 21-item self-report measure of depressive emotional, cognitive, and behavioral symptoms. It assesses the presence and severity of depressive symptoms over the span of the past two weeks. Each item is rated on an ordinal scale from 0, "not at all/never" to 3 "extremely/every day". Total BDI-II score are calculated by summing the ratings of each item, and higher scores indicate greater depression. Scores from 0 through 9 signify no or minimal depression, scores falling between 10 and 18 indicate mild to moderate depression, scores from 19 through 29 show moderate to severe depression, and scores from 30 through

63 demonstrate severe depression (Beck et al., 1988). The BDI-II has shown high internal reliability in a college student sample (Dozois et al., 1998) and good divergent and convergent validity in a sample of multiple sclerosis patients (Sacco et al., 2016). Structurally, a review of factor analyses of the BDI-II by Wang and Gorenstein (2013) found that it is consistently defined by two depression dimensions: cognitive-affective and somatic-vegetative. In summary, thorough psychometric investigations of the BDI-II over the past 25 years indicate it renders highly valid scores for the construct of depression.

Beck Anxiety Inventory Second Edition, BAI (Beck & Steer, 1993 – Appendix 3).

The BAI (Beck & Steer, 1993) was used to measure anxiety per the second hypothesis. The Beck Anxiety Inventory is a 21 item self-reporting rating inventory that measures characteristic attitudes and symptoms of anxiety. The scale ranges from 0, which indicates "not at all," to 4, which indicates that the participant is experiencing the symptom "a lot" or "severely." It measures anxiety along its physical and cognitive dimensions. The items are scored as 0, 1, 2, or 3. The score ranges between 0 and 63. A total score of 0–7 is classified as an individual having anxiety in the minimal range, a score between 8 and 15 is considered to be mild anxiety, a score between 16 and 25 is moderate anxiety, and an individual who scored between 26 and 63 is considered to have severe anxiety. The BAI has shown good reliability and validity as tested on a Caucasian and American Latinos sample (Contreras et al., 2004). Contreras et al., (2004) tested for the cultural equivalence for the reliability of the BAI on Latino college students. The results showed that there is good internal consistency and equivalency between both groups. The authors note that assessing for cultural equivalency is important because the United States is becoming more diverse (Contreras et al., 2004).

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS-Appendix 4).

This measure evaluated perceived social support as a psycho-social outcome as per the second hypothesis. The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support is a survey developed by Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley (1988). It contains 12 items that assess how an individual perceives their level of social support and contains subscales which include four items for family, friends, and significant others. Each item's response is measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "very strongly disagree" to "very strongly agree." The mean scores of the Significant Other, Family, and Friends subscales are calculated by summing the items that fall under their respective scales and dividing them by four to obtain their mean. To get a total score, all items are summed and then divided by 12. A mean scale score ranging from 1 to 2.9 is considered low support; a score of 3 to 5 is considered moderate support, and a score from 5.1 to 7 is deemed high support (Zimet et al., 1988). The MSPSS has shown strong internal consistency in prior research (Dahlem, Zimet, & Walker, 1991; Zimet, Powell, Farley, & Werkman, 1990). Zimet et al., (1990) attempted to extend the original psychometric study by testing for internal reliability across different population groups which included pregnant women, adolescents living abroad, and pediatric residents. The results showed that reliability was attained with a Cronbach alpha of .84 to .92 for the scale (Zimet, Powell, Farley, & Werkman, 1990).

Perceived Wellness Survey (PWS – Appendix 5).

This instrument measured the psycho-social outcome in terms of self-perception as per the second hypothesis. The Perceived Wellness Survey is a survey constructed by Adams, Benzer, Garner, and Woodruff (1998) and contains a total of 36 items that assess for an individual's perceived level of wellness. There are six items for each dimension:

psychological health, emotional health, social health, physical health, spiritual health, and intellectual health. Each item's response is measured on a 6-point Likert scale for positive and negative questions and is assigned "completely agree," "agree," "somewhat agree," "somewhat disagree," "disagree," and "completely disagree," which correspond to the numerical value of 1 "very strongly disagree" to 6 "very strongly agree." Some items are reverse coded and denoted with an asterisk next to the item. The purpose of the reverse coding items is to increase reliability by checking for response bias. The PWS composite score is the sum of the subscale means divided by a denominator that includes the standard deviation among the subscales where higher scores show greater wellness (Bezner et al., 1988). The PWS has demonstrated good construct validation (Adams et al., 1998). Adams et al., (1988) wanted to assess the construct validity of the PWS being that it is a unique tool that assesses for both the perceived cognitive and biological components of wellness. They administered the PWS to college student participants and conducted a one-way ANOVA to determine if subscales on the PWS correlated with objective measures of physical, spiritual, social, emotional, intellectual, and psychological heath. The results showed good construct validity for the PWS (Adams et al., 1998).

Trencher Survey (Appendix 6).

The present study used a modified version of the Trencher (2016) survey which included questions regarding demographics, factors that contributed to leaving ultra-orthodoxy, organizational memberships, Jewish identity and connection, and need, priorities, and satisfaction. In the original measure (Trencher, 2016), the qualitative questions in the survey were analyzed by grouping the full text of the responses and categorized them against a list that the measurers developed of approximately 50 reasons that people were giving for

leaving. The researchers divided the responses into two groups: push and pull factors. Push factors represented perceptions or awareness regarding things that participants did not like about their community, which therefore "pushed" them away from their community. Pull factors represented perceptions that participants found aversive about their community and therefore "pulled" them out the community. The reasons that could not be categorized were placed in a third category which was titled "intermediate". For questions that forced a mandatory response, responses were collected as frequencies and transformed into percentages. Results for every question were divided into four sub-segments: Modern Orthodox, Chasidic excluding Chabad, Chabad, and Yeshivish. For use in the present study, the questions on this survey were modified to quantify the questions. Questions on the survey were modified under the subsection of "factors changing religious views". The first question under the section, question 18, was changed from being an open-ended question, to a forced choice question. The participant was forced to choose one reason from 5 choices to answer the question: "Please think back to when you started moving away in belief and practice from the Orthodox community in which you were raised. What were the key things that caused your beliefs and practices to change? In addition, "were" in this question was changed to "is". The second modification involved deleting question 19, which formerly asked, "Sill thinking about the time when you started moving away from the Orthodox community, were there any organizations or people that helped you in making that transition?". This question was replaced with "For the following statements, please indicate how much the statement is true for your reasons in leaving your ultra-Orthodox community." Two statements were provided, "I left for intellectual reasons" and "I left for emotional reasons," where the participant was asked to rate both of those statements on a 4-point Likert scale from

"strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The third change involved deleting question 20, which formerly asked, "Are there resources (people, organizations, etc.) you didn't have available at that time, but wished you had? and replaced with the question, "Are there certain experiences that you had while growing up and living in your community? Please select all that apply". The participant then had 11 statements to choose from which included "Grew up in a divorced home" and "Emotional abuse", etc. The modification was assessed for face validity in that several non-participants were asked to take the survey and comment on its clarity and time it took to complete**.**

Data Analysis

Preliminary analysis included visual inspection of study variable distributions which informed whether to conduct statistical tests on the distributions for non-normality and outliers. Descriptive statistics were conducted to examine the demographic information of participants. To test hypothesis one, a paired samples *t*-test was used to determine if there is a difference between the means of intellectual versus emotional reasons for leaving. To test the second hypothesis, the scores on the BAI, BDI II, PWS, and MSPSS were compared to their respective cut- off scores, as recommended by the measure developers. Exploratory analyses such as *t*-tests were conducted to explore the roles of gender and ultra-orthodox communities on the reasons for leaving and psychosocial functioning of the individuals who leave.

Results

Participants' Reported Experience

In response to item #18 on the Trencher (2016) survey, participants selected key experiences that caused their beliefs and practices to change. See Table 2 for participants' reported experiences that caused their beliefs and practices to change.

Table 2

Participants reported intellectual experience.

Key experiences causing beliefs and practices to change	N	%
Lack of proof	15	28.30
Doubt and loss of faith	12	22.64
Did not feel accepted by my community	8	15.09
Experienced sexual/verbal/physical abuse	5	9.43
Did not appreciate strict gender roles	3	5.66
Other	10	18.87
All of/Some of the above	7	70.00

Key experiences that are socio-emotional in nature, such as feeling unaccepted by the community or experiencing abuse, and key experiences that are intellectual in nature, such as a lack of proof and doubts/loss of faith, accounted for 50% of the data, respectively.

Another item on the survey asked participants to select emotional experiences that they had while growing up and living in the community, which included being part of minority populations such as the LGBTQ+ community or growing up in a divorced or non-traditional family (See Table 3).

Table 3

Participants' reported emotional experience

Experiences while growing up in the community	N	%
Emotional Abuse	36	25.17
Parents were Ba'al Teshuvos	23	16.08
Physical Abuse	19	13.29
Sexual Abuse	15	10.49
Mental Illness	15	10.49
Part of LGBTQ+ Community	12	8.39
Divorced Home	8	5.59
Medical Condition	6	4.20
Learning Disability	6	4.20

Part of Racial Group that is non-white	2	1.4

More than half of the participants reported experiencing some form of abuse and a high percentage of participants reported that their parents were Ba'al Teshuvos, which are individuals who grew up secular but became religious later in life.

Hypothesis 1

To examine Hypothesis 1, which was that participants would more strongly endorse emotional reasons for leaving compared to intellectual reasons, a paired sample *t*-test was performed. This was tested via responses to question 108 and 109 on the survey that asked participants to indicate how much the statement(s) "I left for intellectual reasons" and "I left for emotional reasons", respectively, is true for their reasons in leaving their ultra-Orthodox community. They were asked to rate each statement on a 4-point Likert scale with how much they agreed/disagreed (0 = "strongly disagree", 4 = "strongly agree"). On average, participants reported that they "agreed" with the statement that they left their ultra-Orthodox community for intellectual reasons (M =3.3, SD = 0.85). Interestingly the mode, the most common response, was endorsing "strongly agree." On average, participants "agreed" to the statement that they left their ultra-Orthodox community for emotional reasons (M = 3.2, SD = 0.79). Prior to conducting the paired samples *t*-test, assumptions of normality were checked to ensure skewness and kurtosis values were within acceptable ranges. The skew and kurtosis for leaving for emotional reasons and intellectual reasons were with the acceptable ranges posited by George and Mallery (2010), Hair and colleagues (2010), and Bryne (2010); however, when the skew was divided by its standard error, the values exceed -/+2 and thus these variables were not normally distributed within the current sample. The variable for

level of agreement that they left for intellectual reasons was not normally distributed with skewness of -1.23 (SE = 0.33) and kurtosis of 1.13 (SE = 0.64). The level of agreement that they left for emotional reasons was also not normally distributed with a skewness of -0.981 (SE = 0.33) and kurtosis of 0.83 (SE = 0.65). The non-normality of the data may thus detract from the accuracy of the results reported herein. Results indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference (t (51) = .067, $p > .05$) between individuals' levels of agreement for leaving for intellectual reasons (M = 3.35, SD = 0.79) and emotional reasons (M = 3.24, SD = .079) and thus Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Additional exploratory analyses were conducted to examine the effect of gender on individuals' reasons for leaving the ultra-Orthodox community using Independent Samples t-tests. On average, men endorsed higher ratings for leaving due to intellectual reasons (M = 3.47 SD = 0.87) compared to women (M = 3.16, *SD = 0.86*; however, this difference was not statistically significant (t(46) = 1.185, $p > .05$). On the other hand, women endorsed higher ratings for leaving due to emotional reasons (M = 3.32*,* SD = 0.70) compared to men (M = 3.13, *SD = 0.96*); however, this difference was not statistically significant (t(45) = -0.81, $p >$ .05). Therefore, there was no significant difference between males and females on the level of endorsing either emotional or intellectual reasons for leaving. Moreover, additional exploratory analyses were conducted to examine differences in reported reasons for leaving based on prior community membership. To investigate this, a one-way ANOVA was performed to compare the association between various ultra-Orthodox communities and leaving for emotional reasons and intellectual reasons. First, for both reasons for leaving, the following communities were compared: Chabad, Satmar, Skver, Litvish, and Other. A one-way ANOVA revealed that there was not a statistically significant difference in leaving due

to emotional reasons between the groups ($F(4, 47) = 0.71$, $p = .59$). Similarly, there was not a statistically significant difference in leaving due to intellectual reasons among the groups ($F(4, 49) = 0.37$, $p = .83$). Second, for both reasons for leaving, individuals who were previously affiliated with Chasidish, irrespective of Chassidic sect Yeshivish/Litvish, and Other communities were compared. A one-way ANOVA revealed that there was not a statistically significant difference in leaving due to emotional reasons between the Chasidish, Yeshivish/Litvish, and Other communities ($F(2, 49) = 1.41$, $p = .26$). Similarly, there was not a statistically significant difference in leaving due to intellectual reasons among the groups ($F(2, 50) = 0.35$, $p = .71$). Thus, taken together, results suggest that there were no overall differences in leaving for emotional or intellectual reasons based on gender or specific ultra-Orthodox community affiliations.

Hypothesis 2

To examine Hypothesis 2, which predicted that disaffiliated individuals would show clinically significant scores on psychosocial measures, participants' scores on the Beck Depression Inventory, Second Edition (BDI-II), Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI), Perceived Social Support (PWS), and The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) were compared to their respective cut-off scores. See *Table 4* for descriptive statistics on all four variables. Prior to comparing these scores to the established cut-off scores, assumptions of normality were checked for each variable. All self-report measures were found to have skew and kurtosis values within acceptable ranges; however, when the skew was divided by its standard error, the values exceed -/+2 and thus these variables were not normally distributed within the current sample (*Table 4*). Results indicated that on the BDI, participants on average ($M = 16.69$, $SD = 13.55$) scored in the mild to moderate

depression range. On the BAI, participants on average scored (M = 10.52, SD = 9.88) in the mild anxiety range. On MSPSS, participants on average scored (M = 4.28, SD=1.4) in the moderate range of social support. On the PWS, participants on average scored (M = 10.92, SD= 2.89) lower than the average. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was partially supported, as participants reported elevated levels of depression, anxiety, and loneliness but not low levels of social support compared to pre-established cut-offs.

Additional exploratory Independent Samples t-tests were conducted to examine the effect of gender on total BDI-II, BAI, MSPSS, and PWS total scores. Results indicate that women reported slightly higher BDI-II scores (M = 16.71, SD = 15.16) compared to men (M = 16.47, SD = 12.47); however, this difference was not statistically significant ($t(46) = -0.06$, $p > .05$). Similarly, results indicate that women reported slightly higher BAI scores (M = 10.86, SD = 11.48) compared to men (M = 10.06, SD = 8.71); however, this difference was not statistically significant ($t(44) = -0.25$, $p > .05$). Moreover, results indicated a similar pattern of results for the PWS total score, whereby women had slightly higher average scores (M = 11.07, SD = 3.13) compared to men (M = 11.01, SD = *2.83*); however, this difference was not statistically significant ($t(46) = -0.06$, $p > .05$). Lastly, men had slightly higher MSPSS scores (M = 4.53, SD = 1.15) compared to women (M = 4.11, SD = 1.48); however, this difference was not statistically significant ($t(45) = 0.99$, $p > .05$). Therefore, results suggest that individuals are experiencing elevated levels of depression, anxiety, and loneliness regardless of gender.

Table 4

Descriptive statistics of psycho-social measures

Measure	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Skewness	Skew/SE	Kurtosis
BDI-II	16.68	13	7	13.55	1.24	4.07	1.11

BAI	10.52	7	4	9.88	1.48	4.78	2.07
PWS	10.92	10.72	4.98	2.89	0.34	1.08	-0.39
MSPSS	4.27	4.5	2.58	1.4	-0.41	-1.33	-0.63

Discussion

The aim of the current study was to examine the factors that contribute to individuals leaving ultra-Orthodoxy and to assess for the psycho-social implications of leaving. To address this aim, a quantitative, descriptive design was employed such that 52 participants completed online surveys assessing various reasons for leaving ultra-Orthodoxy and psychosocial functioning. Based on prior research (e.g., Davidman, 2014; Newfield, 2020; Trencher, 2016), the present study focused on intellectual and emotional reasons for disaffiliation. The first hypothesis was that emotional reasons would be endorsed at a higher frequency than intellectual reasons for why they decided to leave their ultra-Orthodox community. The second hypothesis was that individuals would show clinically significant scores on measures of depression and anxiety and low social support and wellness after at least six months after leaving ultra-Orthodoxy.

For the first hypothesis, results of a paired sample *t*-test indicate that participants' endorsements of leaving for emotional and intellectual reasons did not support the hypothesis that individuals left more for emotional reasons. Although the average rating for leaving due to intellectual reasons was slightly higher than leaving due to intellectual reasons, this difference was not statistically significant. The current results show that, on average, individuals reported moderate to strong agreement with leaving for *both* emotional and intellectual reasons. These results are different from past research which delineated two distinct constructs, intellectual and emotional reasons, respectively, that contribute to individuals leaving their ultra-orthodox communities (Newfield, 2020). Therefore,

individuals may not leave ultra-Orthodoxy for a single reason but rather a combination of reasons. Indeed, participants reported a host of experiences that span both emotional and intellectual reasons for disaffiliation. The frequencies of reported experiences are similar to that found by Trencher (2016) and Davidman (2014); however, unlike the results by Trencher (2016), who found that individuals left for more intellectual reasons, the results of the current study indicate that participants endorsed, on average, an equal division in leaving for both emotional and intellectual reasons. Again, it is likely that these experiences did not occur in isolation and may be interdependent and thus have a compounding effect. Another possible reason that there was not a significant difference in average rating for leaving due to emotional and intellectual reasons is the relatively small sample size of the current study. A post-hoc power analysis conducted on G*Power Version 3.1.9.6 indicated that the actual power of the current results was 0.22, which implies a low probability of detecting a statistically significant effect with the current sample size.

Additional exploratory analyses were conducted to investigate the type of ultra-Orthodox sect and gender differences in individuals' reasons for leaving the ultra-Orthodox community. Results indicate that there were no significant differences between males and females or ultra-Orthodox sect in endorsed reasons for leaving the ultra-Orthodox community. With regards to a lack of difference found for gender, this is surprising considering that in prior research (Engelman, 2020) gender differences were found among "push" and "pull" factors that are involved in individuals leaving their ultra-orthodox communities. Those differences were attributed to the different gender roles in the community which were thought to play a role in whether an individual decides to leave for intellectual or emotional reasons. It is possible that there is another variable other than gender

or ultra-Orthodox sect that influences whether individuals left more for intellectual versus emotional reasons, such as personality style or specific life experiences.

For the second hypothesis, participant's scores on measures of The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI), Perceived Social Support (PWS), and The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) were compared to their respective cut- off scores. Results indicate that, on average, participants scored in the mild to moderate range for depression, the mild range for anxiety, the moderate range for social support, and in the lower-than-average range for wellness. Moreover, exploratory analyses indicate that there were no gender differences in measures of socio-emotional functioning. Thus, the results partially support the hypothesis, as participants scored in the clinically significant range for depression. Although only the depression measure fell in the clinically significant range, these results suggest that overall individuals who have left ultra-Orthodoxy are experiencing difficulties with anxiety, depression, and overall wellness but not with social support. These findings are in line with previous research demonstrating that participants who disaffiliated from ultra-Orthodox communities are experiencing feelings of depression, and isolation (Weiskopf, 2016), a heightened risk for suicide (Ungar-Sargon, 2015), and lower overall health and wellbeing (Scheitle & Adamczyk, 2010). It is important to mention that the observed relationship is correlational, not causal in nature due to the study design. The moderate average score on social support was unexpected, as it was predicted that individuals may experience lower levels of social support after leaving their communities as past work demonstrated that such individuals experience higher levels of loneliness (Weiskopf, 2016). It is possible that social support was less of a concern in the present sample due to increased opportunities to connect with others through organizations

such as Footsteps and social media groups that have proliferated over the past few years. Indeed, participants in the current study were in-part recruited via social media support groups, and thus the participants may feel socially connected through groups such as these. The contrast between the moderate levels of social support and the elevated levels of depression, anxiety, and loneliness was unexpected given past work indicating that social support acts as a buffer to the effects of adversity and mental health concerns (Alloway & Bebbington, 1987). These results suggest that the presence of social support may not be sufficient to address the emotional needs of this population.

Results also highlight implications for clinical work with these individuals. For example, the present results suggest that individuals that leave ultra-Orthodox communities may be a population with unmet clinical needs and thus outreach efforts should target this population to connect them with clinical services to address the elevated mental health concerns discovered here. Moreover, the differential levels of mental health concerns and social support also have important clinical implications, as these results suggest that social support may not be sufficiently buffering the adverse effects of adversity experienced in ultra-Orthodox communities and further highlight the need for supportive clinical services.. Furthermore, should such individuals seek psychotherapy services, interventions could be adapted to focus on addressing and resolving identity issues as it relates to their relationship with religion and their family. Additionally, considering the high percentage of reported experiences of abuse by the participants, there could be unresolved trauma that account for the elevated scores on depression and anxiety. Given that the present results suggested lower psychosocial functioning within this population, it is important that clinical interventions as designed to target both their presenting concerns and the context from which they may have

emerged (e.g., leaving ultra-Orthodox communities) and possible trauma. Taken together, the present study speaks to the myriad of reasons that contribute to disaffiliation and highlights that the psychological needs of these individuals may be unmet at present.

There were several strengths to the present study. First, this work is among the first quantitative studies examining the reasons individuals leave ultra-Orthodox communities and thus contributes to a small but growing body of literature. In addition, the present study not only examined reasons for leaving but also examined psychosocial functioning with a host of measures and thus facilitated a broader examination of participants' functioning.

However, the current study had several limitations. First, there may be limitations to the generalizability of the results due to multiple reasons. One reason is that the sample size was relatively small, which may not represent the larger population of individuals who disaffiliated from ultra-Orthodoxy. Despite 413 individuals attempting to take the survey, only a few completed it. There are several possible reasons for this, including an automated robot hacking the study, which resulted in the removal of their responses. Additionally, pre-response survey fatigue may have occurred due to the many measures that participants were asked to fill out. Lastly, given the vulnerability of this population where disaffiliation has psycho-social implications for them and their families, participants may be hesitant to share private information, especially around questions that tap into their mental health and experiences they had while growing up in their communities. Furthermore, the generalizability of the results may be limited since the sample was recruited through snowball sampling, which may not be representative of the larger population. Moreover, the specific items included in the study surveys precluded certain questions from being examined. For instance, for hypothesis 1, the survey did not inquire about which was the

main reason for disaffiliation or if they left for emotional *or* intellectual reasons. Further, for hypothesis 2, the present study did not include psychosocial measures before and after disaffiliation and thus changes in psychosocial functioning could not be examined. Therefore, it is difficult to determine whether their (low) scores are the result of the difficulties associated with leaving their community or if they struggled psychologically prior to leaving. These limitations highlight important areas for future studies to examine. To begin, future research should expand upon the current study to ask similar questions with a larger sample size as doing so may afford the study more power to detect significant effects. Moreover, a larger sample size may also increase the generalizability of results as a larger sample size would likely be more representative of the large population of individuals who disaffiliate from ultra-Orthodoxy. In addition, future research could include more nuanced questions in data collection to further understand the specific reasons for leaving and their relative weight in the decision-making process. Additionally, future studies should test other constructs, or the interplay among constructs that may contribute to leaving rather than focus on this dichotomous model. An important goal for future research would be to understand possible changes in psychosocial functioning after disaffiliation. To do so, psychosocial functioning would have to be captured prior to disaffiliation, either by collecting such data while individuals are within ultra-Orthodox communities or by asking about psychosocial functioning retrospectively during a post-disaffiliation survey.

References

Adams T, Benzer J, Garner L, Woodruff S. (1998) Construct validation of the perceived wellness survey. *American Journal of Health Studies*. 14:212–219.

Adams, T., Bezner, J., & Steinhardt, M. (1997). The conceptualization and measurement of perceived wellness: Integrating balance across and within dimensions. *American Journal of health promotion*, *11*(3), 208-218.Assouline, D. (2015). Linguistic outcomes of a Hasidic renewal: The case of Skver. *Language & Communication*, *42*, 141-146.

Alloway, R., & Bebbington, P. (1987). The buffer theory of social support–a review of the literature. *Psychological medicine*, *17*(1), 91-108.

Beck, A. T., Steer, R. A., & Brown, G. (1996). Beck depression inventory–II. *Psychological assessment*.

Beck, A.T., & Steer, R.A. (1993). Beck Anxiety Inventory Manual. San Antonio, TX: Psychological Corporation

Berger, R. (2015). Challenges and coping strategies in leavening an ultra-Orthodox community. *Qualitative Social Work*, *14*(5), 670-686.

Bezner, J. R., Adams, T. B., & Whistler, L. S. (1999). The relationship between physical activity and indicators of perceived wellness. *American Journal of Health Studies, 15*(3), 130-138.

Byrne, B.M. (2010). Structural Equation Modeling with AMOS: Basic Concepts, Applications, and Programming. Taylor and Francis Group Publication

Carrel, B. G. (2008).Shattered Vessels That Contain Divine Sparks: Unveiling Hasidic Women's Dress Code. In *The Veil* (pp. 44-59). University of California Press.

Clevstrom, J. (2006, January) Family feud: Will the real Satmar please stand up? *The Brooklyn Rail*

Contreras, S., Fernandez, S., Malcarne, V. L., Ingram, R. E., & Vaccarino, V. R. (2004). Reliability and validity of the Beck depression and anxiety inventories in Caucasian Americans and Latinos. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, *26*(4), 446-462.

Dahlem, N. W., Zimet, G. D., & Walker, R. R. (1991). The multidimensional scale of perceived social support: A confirmation study. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 47, 756–761.

Davidman, L. (2015). *Becoming un-orthodox: Stories of ex-Hasidic Jews*. Oxford University Press, USA.

D'Ambrosio, A., Tedeschi, G. and Gallo, A. (2016), Psychometric properties and validity of Beck Depression Inventory II in multiple sclerosis. *European Journal of Neurology*, 23: 744-750.

Deen, S. (2015). All who go do not return: A memoir. Graywolf Press.

Dozois, D. J. A., Dobson, K. S., & Ahnberg, J. L. (1998). A psychometric evaluation of the beck depression Inventory–II. *Psychological Assessment, 10*(2), 83-89.

Engelman, J., Milstein, G., Schonfeld, I. S., & Grubbs, J. B. (2020). Leaving a covenantal religion: Orthodox Jewish disaffiliation from an immigration psychology perspective. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 23(2), 153–172.

Epstein, S. (1995). The Bobover Hasidim Piremshpiyl: From folk drama for Purim to a ritual of transcending the Holocaust. *New World Hasidim: Ethnographic Studies of Hasidic Jews in America*, 237-55.

Faulkner, C. L. (2017). Identity change among ethno-religious border crossers: The case of the former Amish. *Review of Religious Research*, *59*(4), 447-470.

George, D., & Mallery, P. (2010). SPSS for Windows step by step. A simple study guide and

reference (10. Baskı). *GEN, Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc*, *10*, 152-165.

Loewenthal, N. (2010, August 27). Lubavitch Hasidism. YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe.

Nadler, A. (2010, August 17). Karlin-Stolin Hasidic Dynasty. YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe. Retrieved September 22, 2021, f

Nadler, A. (2010, October 27). Misnagdim. YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe..

Nadler, A. (2010, October 14). Satmar Hasidic Dynasty. YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe..

Newfield, S. Z. (2020). *Degrees of separation: Identity formation while leaving ultra-Orthodox Judaism*. Temple University Press

Prochaska, J. O., DiClemente, C. C., & Norcross, J. C. (1992). In search of how people change: applications to addictive behaviors. *American psychologist*, 47(9), 1102

Ravenstein, E. G. (1889). The laws of migration. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 52(2), 241–305. https://doi.org/10.2307/2979333

Sacco, R., Santangelo, G., Stamenova, S., Bisecco, A., Bonavita, S., Lavorgna, L., Trojano, L.,

Pearl, S. (2014). Exceptions to the rule: Chabad-Lubavitch and the digital sphere. *Journal of Media and Religion*, *13*(3), 123-137.

Ransom, H. J., Monk, R. L., Qureshi, A., & Heim, D. (2021). Life after social death: Leaving the Jehovah's witnesses, identity transition and recovery. *Pastoral Psychology*, *70*(1), 53-69.

Scheitle, C. P., & Adamczyk, A. (2010). High-cost religion, religious switching, and health. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*,

51(3),325342.https://doi.org/10.1177/0022146510378236

Ungar-Sargon, Batya (2015-08-12). “Why Do So Many Jews Who Leave The Ultra-Orthodox Community Commit Suicide?”. Gothamist.

Wang, Y. P., & Gorenstein, C. (2013). Psychometric properties of the Beck Depression Inventory-II: a comprehensive review. *Brazilian Journal of Psychiatry*, *35*, 416-431.

Weiskopf, R. (2016). *Exploring the subjective experience of ultra-Orthodox defectors* (Doctoral dissertation, William James College).

Zimet, G. D., Dahlem, N. W., Zimet, S. G., & Farley, G. K. (1988). The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 52(1), 30–41. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa5201_2

Zimet, G. D., Powell, S. S., Farley, G. K., & Werkman, S. (1990). Psychometric characteristics of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 55, 610–617.

Appendix 1

Study Eligibility Questionnaire

Are you 18 years of age or older
- Yes
- No

Are you a former member of an ultra-orthodox, Jewish sect?
- Yes
- No

If yes, which ultra-orthodox community were you a part of?
- Chabad
- Satmar
- Stoliner
- Bobover
- Skver
- Litvish
- Other: _____

Have you stopped being religious for at least 6 months?
- Yes
- No

Have you physically left your religious community of origin?
- Yes
- No

Appendix 2

Beck's Depression Inventory (BDI II; Beck, et al., 1996).

This depression inventory can be self-scored. The scoring scale is at the end of the questionnaire. 1.

0 I do not feel sad.

1 I feel sad

2 I am sad all the time and I can't snap out of it.

3 I am so sad and unhappy that I can't stand it.

2.

0 I am not particularly discouraged about the future.

1 I feel discouraged about the future.

2 I feel I have nothing to look forward to.

3 I feel the future is hopeless and that things cannot improve.

3.

0 I do not feel like a failure.

1 I feel I have failed more than the average person.

2 As I look back on my life, all I can see is a lot of failures.

3 I feel I am a complete failure as a person.

4.

0 I get as much satisfaction out of things as I used to.

1 I don't enjoy things the way I used to.

2 I don't get real satisfaction out of anything anymore.

3 I am dissatisfied or bored with everything.

5.

0 I don't feel particularly guilty

1 I feel guilty a good part of the time.

2 I feel quite guilty most of the time.

3 I feel guilty all of the time.

6.

0 I don't feel I am being punished.

1 I feel I may be punished.

2 I expect to be punished.

3 I feel I am being punished.

7.

0 I don't feel disappointed in myself.

1 I am disappointed in myself.

2 I am disgusted with myself.

3 I hate myself.

8.

0 I don't feel I am any worse than anybody else.

1 I am critical of myself for my weaknesses or mistakes.

2 I blame myself all the time for my faults.

3 I blame myself for everything bad that happens.

9.

0 I don't have any thoughts of killing myself.

1 I have thoughts of killing myself, but I would not carry them out.

2 I would like to kill myself.

3 I would kill myself if I had the chance.

10.

0 I don't cry any more than usual.

1 I cry more now than I used to.

2 I cry all the time now.

3 I used to be able to cry, but now I can't cry even though I want to.

11.

0 I am no more irritated by things than I ever was.

1 I am slightly more irritated now than usual.

2 I am quite annoyed or irritated a good deal of the time.

3 I feel irritated all the time.

12.

0 I have not lost interest in other people.

1 I am less interested in other people than I used to be.

2 I have lost most of my interest in other people.

3 I have lost all of my interest in other people.

13.

0 I make decisions about as well as I ever could.

1 I put off making decisions more than I used to.

2 I have greater difficulty in making decisions more than I used to.

3 I can't make decisions at all anymore.

14.

0 I don't feel that I look any worse than I used to.

1 I am worried that I am looking old or unattractive.

2 I feel there are permanent changes in my appearance that make me look unattractive

3 I believe that I look ugly.

15.

0 I can work about as well as before.

1 It takes an extra effort to get started at doing something.

2 I have to push myself very hard to do anything.

3 I can't do any work at all.

16.

0 I can sleep as well as usual.

1 I don't sleep as well as I used to.

2 I wake up 1-2 hours earlier than usual and find it hard to get back to sleep.

3 I wake up several hours earlier than I used to and cannot get back to sleep.

17.

0 I don't get more tired than usual.

1 I get tired more easily than I used to.

2 I get tired from doing almost anything.

3 I am too tired to do anything.

18.

0 My appetite is no worse than usual.

1 My appetite is not as good as it used to be.

2 My appetite is much worse now.

3 I have no appetite at all anymore.

19.

0 I haven't lost much weight, if any, lately.

1 I have lost more than five pounds.

2 I have lost more than ten pounds.

3 I have lost more than fifteen pounds.

20.

0 I am no more worried about my health than usual.

1 I am worried about physical problems like aches, pains, upset stomach, or constipation.

2 I am very worried about physical problems and it's hard to think of much else.

3 I am so worried about my physical problems that I cannot think of anything else.

21.

0 I have not noticed any recent change in my interest in sex.

1 I am less interested in sex than I used to be.

2 I have almost no interest in sex.

3 I have lost interest in sex completely.

Appendix 3

Beck Anxiety Inventory, BAI (Beck & Steer, 1993)

Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI)

Below is a list of common symptoms of anxiety. Please carefully read each item in the list. Indicate how much you have been bothered by that symptom during the past month, including today, by circling the number in the corresponding space in the column next to each symptom.

	Not at all	Mildly, but it didn't bother me much	Moderately – it wasn't pleasant at times	Severely – it bothered me a lot
Numbness or tingling	0	1	2	3
Feeling hot	0	1	2	3
Wobbliness in legs	0	1	2	3
Unable to relax	0	1	2	3
Fear of worst happening	0	1	2	3
Dizzy or lightheaded	0	1	2	3
Heart pounding / racing	0	1	2	3
Unsteady	0	1	2	3
Terrified or afraid	0	1	2	3
Nervous	0	1	2	3
Feeling of choking	0	1	2	3
Hands trembling	0	1	2	3
Shaky / unsteady	0	1	2	3
Fear of losing control	0	1	2	3
Difficulty in breathing	0	1	2	3
Fear of dying	0	1	2	3
Scared	0	1	2	3
Indigestion	0	1	2	3
Faint / lightheaded	0	1	2	3
Face flushed	0	1	2	3
Hot / cold sweats	0	1	2	3

Appendix 4

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley, 1988)

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support

Instructions: We are interested in how you feel about the following statements. Read each statement carefully. Indicate how you feel about each statement.

Circle the "1" if you **Very Strongly Disagree**
Circle the "2" if you **Strongly Disagree**
Circle the "3" if you **Mildly Disagree**
Circle the "4" if you are **Neutral**
Circle the "5" if you **Mildly Agree**
Circle the "6" if you **Strongly Agree**
Circle the "7" if you **Very Strongly Agree**

	Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Neutral	Mildly Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
1. There is a special person who is around when I am in need.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. There is a special person with whom I can share joys and sorrows.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. My family really tries to help me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I get the emotional help & support I need from my family.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. My friends really try to help me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I can count on my friends when things go wrong.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I can talk about my problems with my family.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. My family is willing to help me make decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I can talk about my problems with my friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix 5

Perceived Wellness Survey, (Adams, Benzer, Garner, and Woodruff, 1998)

Perceived Wellness Survey

The following statements are designed to provide information about your wellness perceptions. Please carefully and thoughtfully consider each statement, then select the one response option with which you most agree.

	Very Strongly Disagree					Very Strongly Agree
1. I am always optimistic about my future.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. There have been times when I felt inferior to most of the people I knew.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Members of my family come to me for support.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. My physical health has restricted me in the past.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I believe there is a real purpose for my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I will always seek out activities that challenge me to think and reason.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I rarely count on good things happening to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. In general, I feel confident about my abilities.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Sometimes I wonder if my family will really be there for me when I am in need.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. My body seems to resist physical illness very well.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Life does not hold much future promise for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. I avoid activities which require me to concentrate.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I always look on the bright side of things.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. I sometimes think I am a worthless individual.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. My friends know they can always confide in me and ask me for advice.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. My physical health is excellent.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. Sometimes I don't understand what life is all about.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. Generally, I feel pleased with the amount of intellectual stimulation I receive in my daily life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. In the past, I have expected the best.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. I am uncertain about my ability to do things well in the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. My family has been available to support me in the past.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. Compared to people I know, my past physical health has been excellent.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. I feel a sense of mission about my future.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. The amount of information that I process in a typical day is just about right for me (i.e., not too much and not too little).	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. In the past, I hardly ever expected things to go my way.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. I will always be secure with who I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. In the past, I have not always had friends with whom I could share my joys and sorrows.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. I expect to always be physically healthy.	1	2	3	4	5	6
29. I have felt in the past that my life was meaningless.	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. In the past, I have generally found intellectual challenges to be vital to my overall well-being.	1	2	3	4	5	6
31. Things will not work out the way I want them to in the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32. In the past, I have felt sure of myself among strangers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33. My friends will be there for me when I need help.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34. I expect my physical health to get worse.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35. It seems that my life has always had purpose.	1	2	3	4	5	6
36. My life has often seemed void of positive mental stimulation.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Appendix 6

MODIFIED Survey of Those Who are Questioning, Leaving, or Have Left an Orthodox Community March 2016

Introduction

Survey of Those Who are Questioning, Leaving, or Have Left an Orthodox Community

While there have been many studies done among the Orthodox, there is little research among those who had an Orthodox upbringing but who have questioned or left their original community. This survey seeks to develop a deeper understanding of the Jewish identity, beliefs, practices and needs of these individuals, who are a fledgling segment of the larger Jewish community (and sometimes referred to as the "OTD community").

This survey takes about 15 minutes to complete and is 100% confidential.

Screener

Q1. Please indicate if …

1. Either or both of your parents were or are Baalei Teshuvah
2. Either or both of your parents had converted to Judais

Q2. Your parents were never part of any Orthodox community Scale:

- Yes
- No
- Not sure / No response

Q3. What type of Orthodox community were you a member of?

1. Chasidish
2. Yeshivish/Litvish
3. Other – Please describe

ASK IF Q3=1

Q4. What type of Chasidish community were you a member of?

1. Belz
2. Bobov

3. Lubavitch / Chabad
4. Ger
5. Satmar
6. Skver
7. Vizhnitz
8. Other Chasidish– Please describe

Q5. Which of the following best describes how you see your Jewish affiliation at this time?

1. Cultural/ethnic Jewish (or "just Jewish")
2. Secular/Humanist Jewish
3. Traditional
4. Orthoprax
5. Conservative
6. Reform
7. Modern Orthodox
8. I do not consider myself Jewish
9. Other – Please describe

Demographics

Q6. What is your current marital/relationship status?

1. Married
2. Living with a partner
3. In a long-term relationship
4. Single
5. Divorced
6. Separated
7. Widowed

Q7. What was your marital status when you first STARTED moving away from the Orthodox community in which you were raised?

1. Married to the same person to whom I am now married
2. Married to a spouse from whom I am now divorced or separated
3. Living with a partner
4. In a long-term relationship
5. Single
6. Divorced
7. Separated
8. Widowed

Q8. Did you have children at that time (when you first started moving away from the Orthodox community in which you were raised)?

1. Yes – Please enter number of children
2. No

ASK IF Q8=1

Q9. How would you describe your child(ren)'s current religious orientation?

1. Fully or mostly religious
2. Fully or mostly secular
3. Mixed religious/secular
4. Other – Please describe

ASK IF Q8=1

Q10. What type of school(s) do your child(ren) currently attend? Please check all that apply.

1. Jewish Religious School
2. Jewish Non-Orthodox School
3. Public or Private Non-Jewish School
4. None – they are not school age
5. Other – Please describe

Factors Affecting Changing Religious Views

The next few questions explore how people decide to change their religious views and practices.

Q11. Please think back to when you started moving away in belief or practice from the Orthodox community in which you were raised. What are the key things that caused your beliefs and practices to change?

1. Lack of proof to substantiate what I was taught in religious school and at home
2. Doubt and loss of faith
3. I did not feel accepted by my community
4. I experienced sexual, verbal, or physical abuse
5. I did not appreciate the strict gender roles
6. Other – Please describe

Q12. For the following statements, please indicate how much the statement is true for your reasons in leaving your ultra-Orthodox community.

I left for intellectual reasons

1.Strongly disagree

2. Disagree

3. Agree

4.Strongly agree

I left for emotional reasons

1.Strongly disagree

2. Disagree

3. Agree
4.Strongly agree

Q13. Are there certain experiences that you had while growing up and living in your community? Please select all that apply.

1. Sexual abuse
2. Physical abuse
3. Emotional abuse
4. Grew up in a divorced home
5. Had a learning disability
6. Identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community
7. Have a physical disability
8. Have a medical condition
9. Have a mental illness
10. Identify as being part of a racial group that is not white
11. One or both of my parents were Ba'al Teshuvos

Organizational Memberships

Q14. Are you currently a member of, associated with, or receive services from any organization or support group that deals with Jewish community issues?

1. Yes
2. No

Q15. Are you currently associated with or receive services from any online group that deals with Jewish community issues?

Jewish Identity, Connection & Community Differences

The next few questions explore personal and Jewish community identity. Some of these questions were included in the Pew Survey; your answers will allow us to find out whether there are distinct characteristics shared by those who have left their communities of origin.

Q16. Right now, how important is being Jewish in your life?

1. Very important
2. Somewhat important
3. Not very important
4. Not at all important
5. I do not consider myself Jewish
6. Don't know

Q17. Right now, how important is it to you to be part of a Jewish community?

1. Very important
2. Somewhat important
3. Not very important
4. Not at all important
5. Don't know

Q18. Would you say your sense of belonging to the Jewish people is:

1. Very strong
2. Somewhat strong
3. Not so strong
4. Not strong at all
5. Don't know

Q19. Are you currently active in, or do you want to be active in, social issues that affect the Jewish community?

1. I am currently active on Jewish communal social issue(s)
2. I am currently not active, but I want to become active
3. I am currently not active, and have no plans to become active

ASK IF Q19=1

Q20. In what Jewish communal social issue(s) are you currently active?

ASK IF Q19=2

Q21. In what Jewish communal social issue(s) do you want to become active?

Q22. Do you agree with the statement: "God exists"?

1. Strongly agree
2. Somewhat agree

Neither agree nor disagree

3. Somewhat disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. I do not find this statement relevant to me

Q23. To what extent would it upset you if a child of yours married a non-Jew who did not convert to Judaism?

1. Very much
2. Somewhat
3. Slightly
4. Not at all
5. Don't know

Q24. To what extent do you currently dress the same way as when you were in the Orthodox community whereyou grew up?

1. To a great extent
2. To some extent
3. A little
4. Not at all

Q25. How is your current relationship with each of the following?

1. Your father
2. Your mother
3. Your oldest sibling
4. Your youngest sibling
5. Your child(ren)

Scale:

- Very positive
- Somewhat positive
- Mixed relationship
- Somewhat negative
- Very negative
- Not relevant / no such person in my life

Q26. Thinking of your birth family, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?

1. They accept me as I am.
2. I meet with them / visit them.
3. I am more in contact with my family now than when I first left the community.
4. They understand the decisions I've made relating to my religious practices and beliefs.

They have come to accept me, despite my decisions. Scale:

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Statement not relevant to me

Q27. Do you agree with the following statements?

1. I still feel connected to the Orthodox community in which I grew up.
2. I currently feel connected to a new Jewish community (not the one in which I grew up).
3. I currently feel connected to a community where being Jewish has little or no relevance.
4. I am happy with the "community connections" that I have.
5. I feel something is missing from my "community connections." Scale:

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree

- Strongly disagree
- Statement not relevant to me

ASK IF Q27.5=1-2

Q28. You say that you feel something is missing from your community connections. Can you explain why you say this?

Q29. How often do you …

1. Participate in a Friday night Shabbos meal?
2. Visit Jewish websites or look for Jewish information online?
3. Have Shabbos candles lit in your home?
4. Listen to Jewish music?
5. Visit a Jewish Community Center?
6. Engage in Jewish learning / spiritual inquiry? Scale:

- Regularly
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Q30. Which of the following best describes you in terms of keeping kosher?

1. Strictly kosher
2. Mostly kosher
3. Somewhat kosher
4. Not at kosher
5. Not sure / No response

Q31. Do you …

1. Send your school-age child(ren) to a Jewish day school?
2. Send your camp-age child(ren) to a Jewish summer camp? Scale:

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes or some of them
- I do not have children of that age, or custodial decision-making

Q32. How emotionally attached are you to Israel?

1. Very attached
2. Somewhat attached
3. Not very attached
4. Not at all attached
5. Don't know

Q33. In general, how would you describe your political views?

1. Very conservative
2. Conservative
3. Moderate
4. Liberal
5. Very liberal
6. I am not political
7. Other – Please Describe

Needs, Priorities & Satisfaction

The next few questions will explore community services that are important to you and whether you are satisfiedwith the support you may have received.

Q34. In the list below, please check the most important needs you may have at this time (up to 5).

1. Educational counseling, e.g., getting a GED/TASC high school degree, finding scholarship funding
2. Help in finding a job and/or developing a career vision and plan
3. Help in finding a place to live
4. Help in learning new skills and how to participate in society
5. Help in relating to dating and relationships
6. Help relating to divorce or child custody
7. Help/counseling for your parents/family
8. Finding a therapist
9. Helping you feel that you are part of a Jewish community
10. Help in giving you emotional support, to figure out "who you are"
11. Help in giving you referrals to people you could speak with for various needs
12. Help in giving you opportunities to socialize more with people like yourself
13. Helping you to feel Jewish
14. Help finding answers to religious and spiritual questions
15. ANCHORED Other – Please describe
16. ANCHORED None of the above

Q35. Thinking of the various support services you may have needed since you started moving away from yourcommunity, where did you go for such services? Please check all that apply.

1. Friends
2. Relatives
3. Community leaders, rabbis, etc.
4. Facebook group or other social media
5. Footsteps
6. Project Makom
7. Other organizations/resources in the Jewish community – Please describe.
8. Organizations/resources outside the Jewish community – Please describe

9. I did not go to any of the above
10. I have not needed such support services

Market Sizing

Q36. Think back to your close original peer group growing up, for example your family, classmates, etc. How would you complete the following sentence? **Among my close original peer group growing up, I would guess that of them <u>have left their Orthodox community</u>.** (Please enter your best estimate/guess.)

1. None
2. One or two
3. Three or four
4. 5 to 9
5. 10 to 19
6. 20 to 29
7. 30 to 49
8. 50 or more
9. I have no idea

Q37. Think back to your close original peer group growing up, for example your family, classmates, etc. How would you complete the following sentence? **Among my close original peer group growing up, I would guess that of them <u>might leave their Orthodox community in the future</u>.** (Please enter your best estimate/guess.)

1. None
2. One or two
3. Three or four
4. 5 to 9
5. 10 to 19
6. 20 to 29
7. 30 to 49
8. 50 or more
9. I have no idea

Additional Demographics

We want to learn a little bit more about you. This will be helpful when we combine all the responses and do our analysis.

Q38. What is your gender?

1. Male
2. Female
3. Transgender
4. Other --- Please describe

Q39. In what year were you born?

Q40. What languages were commonly spoken in your home, when you were growing up? Please check all thatapply.

1. English
2. Yiddish
3. Hebrew
4. Other(s) – Please describe

Q41. What is the highest level of secular studies schooling you have completed or the highest degree you havereceived?

1. Less than high school (Grades 1-8 or no formal schooling)
2. High school incomplete (Grades 9-11 or Grade 12 with NO diploma)
3. High school graduate (Grade 12 with diploma or GED certificate)
4. Some college, no degree (includes community college)
5. Two year associate degree from a college or university
6. Four year college or university degree/Bachelor's degree
7. Some postgraduate or professional schooling, no postgraduate degree
8. Postgraduate or professional degree, including master's, doctorate, medical or law degree

Q42. Which of these best describes your current employment status?

1. Employed full-time
2. Employed part-time
3. Student
4. Working or volunteering - non-paid
5. Self-employed
6. Retired
7. Not presently employed

Q43. What is your annual household income?

1. Under $10,000
2. $10,000 --- $29,999
3. $30,000 --- $49,999
4. $50,000 --- $74,999
5. $75,000 --- $99,999
6. $100,000 --- $149,999
7. $150,000 or more