

Naming Patterns of Recent Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union to Israel

Edwin D. Lawson¹
and
Irina Glushkovskaya²

To identify patterns of first names over three generations, two samples of 100 Jewish families from the former Soviet Union were interviewed. The first sample came mainly from Ukraine and European Russia; the second from Uzbekistan and Tadjhikistan. Both samples show that the traditional pattern of naming a child after a deceased relative remains strong although it is declining somewhat. Immigrants from European Russia tend to use a Russian name identified by the family and/or the Jewish community with a Hebrew name while those from Central Asia tend to use a Russian (or Farsi) name but one not identified with a Jewish name or a deceased relative.

Для выявления наиболее характерных имён трёх последних поколений был проведен опрос 100 еврейских семей - 1,400 репатриантов из бывшего Советского Союза.

В первую группу входили выходцы из Украины и Европейской части Советского Союза, во вторую - из Узбекистана и Таджикистана 1886 - 1992 годов рождения. Обе группы показывают, что традиции называть детей в честь умерших родственников достаточно сильна, хотя постепенно снижается. Первая группа выявляет явную тенденцию использования русских имён, которые легко ассоциируются с еврейскими именами, семьёй и еврейской общиной. Вторая группа показывает увеличение частоты употребления русских (или Фарси) имён не связанных с еврейскими именами или именами родственников.

Статистический анализ проводился с учётом таких факторов, как: профессия, степень религиозности, источник имени, популярность имени, источник популярности имени.

Introduction

The recent migration of approximately 250,000 Jews to Israel from the former Soviet Union provides an unusual opportunity to study the first-naming practices of peoples and cultures that have not previously been examined in detail.

Traditional Jewish naming practices in the Ashkenazi tradition require that a child be named after a deceased relative of either sex. This practice is not followed by Sefardic Jews, who frequently name a child after a living relative, often a father or a grandfather.

Cultural traditions — for Jews and non-Jews alike — were shaken by the Russian Revolution. Certain religious customs and institutions were denigrated from the revolution of 1917 well into the 1980s. We wanted to know if this pressure influenced naming patterns, and if its relaxation in the 1980s was reflected in the naming patterns which we encountered.

Questions to be raised concern:

1. Patterns of name-giving,
2. Changes in naming patterns over time,
3. Relationships between naming and political or social events.

Procedure

To study naming over time, we looked at patterns of naming over three generations. Since the traditional naming pattern for Russian Jews was to name a child after a deceased relative, we felt this would be evidence of continuity of naming in families. Data were obtained from 100 families by two Russian-born interviewers who visited homes, spoke with key family members, and obtained basic information about the names of family members, especially how these names were selected.

A preliminary analysis suggested that the data from the Central Asian republics might be somewhat different from that of European Russia and Ukraine. To test for this possibility, a second sample of 100 families, largely from Central Asia, was investigated. For convenience we will refer to Sample 1, which is 78% from Ukraine, Russia, and Byelorussia, as "European Russia" and Sample 2, which is 87% from Uzbekistan, Tadzhikistan, and Kazakhstan, as "Central Asia."

Results

A questionnaire was prepared to gather for each family member information on first names, the reason(s) for selecting the names, the language of their origin and derivation, their meaning, the family name, its origin and meaning, nickname(s) if any, the language(s) spoken at home, the year of birth, previous community in Russia, occupation, religion, level of religious observance, and whether or not there had been any change of name. References consulted for information on the names and their derivations include Ben Brit, Gorr, Gottlieb, the Holy Scriptures, Kaganoff, Kolatch, Lawson, and Sidi.

The Samples

Sample 1: European Russia

The 100 families in the sample from European Russia represented 748 people. We omitted 38 non-Jews who had intermarried because their naming had followed a different tradition. We also found that eight people had been counted twice since they were members of two families (as parents and as children), reducing the total number of people in the sample to 703. The sample was obtained mostly in the Ramla area of Israel. While most of the families originated in European Russia or Ukraine, more than 10% came from Central Asian Russia.

Sample 2: Central Asia

The number of people represented by the 100 families in the sample from Central Asia is 846. We omitted 94 individuals who had been counted more than once since they were members of more than one family (as a grandparent, a parent, or a child). We found no Jews in this sample who had intermarried. Nearly 70% of the sample came from Uzbekistan, 10% from Tadzhikistan, and 7% from Kazakhstan. The other 11 republics — plus Israel — had smaller percentages (some families had children after arriving in Israel). Most of the people in this sample were interviewed in housing centers in Ramla and Kfar Daniel.

The composition of the two samples is shown in Table 1 and the frequencies for the countries of origin of the respondents are shown in Table 2.

160 Names 42.3 (September 1994)

Table 1: Composition of Samples

Category	Russia			Central Asia		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Original Total	367	381	748	422	424	846
Non-Jews	23	14	37	—	—	—
Duplicates	2	6	8	45	49	94
Net Total	342	361	703	377	375	752

Table 2: Countries of Origin

Country	Russia		Country	Central Asia	
	N	%		N	%
Ukraine	301	42.81	Uzbekistan	525	69.81
Russia	171	24.32	Tadzhikistan	75	9.97
Byelorussia	73	10.38	Kazakhstan	54	7.18
Uzbekistan	53	7.54	Azerbaijan	22	2.92
Moldava	31	4.41	Israel	18	2.39
Azerbaijan	27	3.84	Georgia	15	1.99
Georgia	11	1.56	Kyrgyzstan	15	1.99
Israel	8	1.14	Daghestan	10	1.33
Lithuania	7	1.00	Ukraine	5	.66
Armenia	6	.85	Iran	4	.53
Romania	4	.57	Birobidjan	3	.40
Kazakhstan	2	.57	Russia	3	.40
Caucasus	2	.57	Astrakhan	1	.13
Estonia	1	.14	Caucasus	1	.13
Latvia	1	.14	Turkmenistan	1	.13
Siberia	1	.14	Total	752	99.96
Don't Know	4	.57			
Total	703	99.70			

Socio-Economic Status

The occupations of the respondents, classified in a way similar to that used by the United States Bureau of the Census, are shown in Table 3. We find that in the European Russia sample there is a relatively high percentage of professionals — engineers, physicians and teachers. There are also significant numbers of skilled and semi-skilled workers. If we exclude the non-adults, it is clear that this sample contains a very high proportion of professionals.

The Central Asia sample presents a different picture. The largest group here is semi-skilled. This sample has a large number of children and students. The sample as a whole seems more oriented toward blue-collar work. Tailors are well represented, as are beauticians and barbers.

Table 3: Occupations of Respondents

	Russia		Asia	
	N	%	N	%
Professional	296	42.05	102	13.56
Executive	13	1.85	4	.53
Sales	5	.71	18	2.39
Agriculture	1	.14	5	.66
Skilled	64	9.09	71	9.44
Semi-skilled	70	9.94	159	21.14
Service	25	3.55	101	13.41
Student	114	16.19	135	17.92
Unskilled	48	6.82	57	7.58
Homemaker	36	5.11	46	6.11
Baby	25	3.55	48	6.38
Pensioner	—	—	3	.40
Don't Know	6	.85	3	.40
Total	703	99.80	752	99.96

Deviation from 100% in this and other tables is due to rounding.

162 Names 42.3 (September 1994)

Religious Observance

Religious customs and values have historically played an important role in Jewish naming practices. The level of religiosity would then appear to be closely related to actual naming patterns. The respondents were asked how many Jewish religious traditions they followed, whether one custom (such as lighting candles on Friday nights) or several customs. The number of traditions observed is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Levels of Religious Observance*

Level observed	Russia		Central Asia	
	N	%	N	%
No Traditions	330	46.94	2	.27
1 Tradition	206	29.30	1	.13
2 Traditions	21	2.99	1	.13
3 Traditions	15	2.13	4	.53
4 Traditions	—	—	7	.93
5 Traditions	—	—	75	9.96
All Traditions	125	17.78	549	73.00
Don't Know	6	.85	113	15.02
Totals	703	99.14	752	99.98

*The question on observance of traditions was not the same for the two samples. The Asian sample listed five traditions, the Russian only three.

While about 18% of the Russia sample followed all the customs, the overwhelming majority, about 76%, either followed no customs or only one. We may call the group "non-observant."

For the Central Asia sample, the questionnaire was slightly different. There was an additional choice: weekly synagogue attendance. The reason for this addition was that results of pilot studies of Jews from European Russia showed no synagogue attendance and the question did not seem relevant. However, results of pilot studies

with Jews from Central Asian Russia showed that the question was relevant for this group. The data are striking: 73% of the sample followed all six of the traditions listed, 10% followed five traditions. The "Don't Know" response of about 15% is probably due — at least in part — to those family members who are no longer alive. It seems clear that this group reports being quite observant of Jewish religious customs, in contrast to the European Russia sample.

The Names

Jewish males have two first names. From at least the twelfth century, every male Jew has had a *shem hakodesh* 'sacred name,' as decreed by the rabbis, who wanted a sacred name for religious purposes, and a *kinnui* or 'link-name' for business purposes. For a Jewish male to participate in the reading of the Torah, he has to have an acceptable Hebrew name. The only exceptions are men named *Alexander*, *Kalman*, *Gronim*, and *Todros*. (Women, historically, were not involved in the Torah reading so these rules were not applied as strictly to them).

Leo, and its variants, is an example of a *kinnui* name. *Leo* 'lion' is from Latin and Greek. When used by observant Jews, it is traced to Gen. 49:9 where Jacob in his final blessing compared his son Jacob to a "lion's whelp." Thus, *Leo* is linked to *Judah* (and in some cases to the Hebrew *Arieh*, also 'lion'). In the Jewish community everyone would know that the Hebrew name for a person named Leo was *Yehuda*, Hebrew for *Judah*.

However, not all *kinnui* names have clear biblical links. Some may be linked by similarity of sound, as *Boris* (Russian 'battle'), which is the *kinnui* name for many Jews named *Baruch* (Hebrew 'blessed'). In some cases the link may be so clear that most members of the Jewish community would be aware of the linkage, as with *Leonid*. Other linkages may be so opaque that only members of the family would be aware of them. (For further information on *kinnui* names, see Kaganoff). The Appendix (see Note 1) shows the names and their sources as reported by our informants. Many *kinnui* names have more than one possible source.

In evaluating the names, we examined the language, meaning, and source(s) of each name. Each name was classified by language

and language of origin. Since most names were given in memory of an individual, that person's name and language were also included. An *Avram*, *Joseph*, or *Michael* who was named after a grandfather or a *Dina*, *Leah*, or *Rivka* named after a grandmother are directly traceable to the Bible. Yiddish names taken directly were less common. These include *Frida* and *Golda* for women; *Gersh* (a Russian form of *Hirsch*) and *Leib* for men.

There were also some Russian first names for those who were named after relatives with Russian first names; a *Boris* after a grandfather named *Boris*, a *Catherine* after a grandmother named *Catherine*. Of course, we can speculate that the Boris and Catherine may have had Hebrew names but that these have been lost. From the interviews, it became clear that many names involved careful evaluation. It was also helpful to us to consider the nicknames and names of grandparents.

Those names which were derived from a name in another language required more thorough investigation. Some of the names come from Farsi (*Nekhadam* 'lucky'), from Georgian (*Nanna* 'mother'), and Tadjik (*Sivio* 'new').

The data analysis was more complicated than we had expected. Many of the responses for the younger people presented no problems, since it was known for whom they were named. A substantial number, however, especially of those born before 1950, did not know. Furthermore, some people, probably because of their experiences in the Soviet Union, were extremely suspicious of interviewers asking what appeared to be prying questions. Where a name was clearly Hebrew or Yiddish or when a clearly Jewish nickname was given, we assumed that a traditional memorial naming pattern had been originally followed even though it was not known (or acknowledged) for whom the person was named. The reason for this appears to be that before 1920 naming for a deceased relative was standard practice, and this practice continued, although perhaps at a reduced level. It is possible that some people, even those with Jewish nicknames or Jewish names on Soviet documents, had been named traditionally, i. e., from the Torah but not after a person. For these reasons the data have to be interpreted cautiously. In making these inferences we were helped a great deal by the names which were reported on marriage certificates and government records.

Naming Patterns of Recent Immigrants to Israel 165

We divided the sample into four roughly equal time periods: 1894-1919, 1920-1949, 1950-1969, and 1970-1992 (for the Central Asia sample, the first period is 1886-1919) in order to determine whether the upheavals during these periods were accompanied by changes in naming patterns.

The language origins of the names are shown in Table 5. In the European Russia sample the Hebrew names which were derived from Hebrew and Yiddish show little fluctuation over time. Most of these are names which were given in memory of a deceased relative. A small percentage are traditional (Biblical) names or are associated with a Jewish holiday festival rather than a person. Thus, a name may be selected because it occurred during a Torah reading of the week or because it was associated with a holiday at the time of birth. Some girls have been named *Esther* because they were born at the time of Purim. These names do not refer to deceased relatives nor do they show much fluctuation over time. Names from Russian sources and Russian names which were derived from Hebrew or Yiddish, however, show a definite increase over the four time periods, from less than 3% in the earliest time period to 31% in the most recent period.

In the Central Asia sample, Hebrew names derived from Hebrew sources show an increase from 13% to almost 32% over the four periods. This may not be a true increase, however; it is probably correlated with the decline of those in the "Don't Know" category where Hebrew names were probably linked but not known. The Hebrew names drawn from Russian or Yiddish language sources are insignificant. The Russian names drawn from Russian sources are less than 1% in the first period and progress to 4% in the last two time periods.

As was the case in Sample 1, a small but noticeable percentage of the names are those of Hebrew origin that do not commemorate a deceased person. These names, shown in Table 5, show a slight decrease over time, from about 8% in the 1886-1919 group to about 6% in the 1970-1992 group. As we saw above, some Russian names are linked to the memory of a person, but most Russian names are not.

Table 5: Language Origins of Traditional Names

Russia:	1894-1919		1920-1949		1950-1969		1970-1992		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
H<H	16	11.51	46	15.98	25	18.52	22	15.60	109	14.49
H<Y	2	1.44	3	1.04	2	1.48	—	—	7	.93
Y<Y	9	96.47	23	7.99	18	13.33	8	5.67	58	7.71
R<R	—	—	10	3.47	10	7.41	17	12.05	37	4.92
R<H	1	.72	9	3.13	12	8.88	16	11.35	38	5.05
R<Y	3	2.16	11	3.82	16	11.85	11	7.80	41	5.45
TRNSP	5	3.60	2	.69	2	1.48	4	2.83	13	1.73
In Memory	36	25.90	104	36.12	85	62.95	78	55.30	303	40.29
Total	139	19.77	288	40.96	135	19.20	141	20.06	703	99.99

Thus, the 139 people in the 1894-1919 period comprise 19.77% of the total of 703. The symbol < indicates a name which is derived from someone who has been memorialized. Thus H<H refers to someone who has a Hebrew name and who has been named in memory of someone who also had a Hebrew name. Y = Yiddish, R = Russian, F = Farsi, the major language of Iran. TRNSP = Traditional Name Not for a Specific Person and refers to a traditional Hebrew name which is from the culture or the Bible but not for a deceased relative.

Table 5: Language Origins of Traditional Names

Asia:	1886-1919		1920-1949		1950-1969		1970-1992		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
H<H	16	13.01	31	12.25	36	20.93	64	31.22	147	19.55
H<Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	.49	1	.13
H<R	-	-	-	-	1	.58	-	-	1	.13
Y<F	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	.50	2	.50
Y<H	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	.13	1	.13
Y<Y	1	.81	3	1.19	3	1.74	1	.49	8	1.06
R<H	1	.81	3	1.19	9	5.23	8	4.65	21	2.79
R<R	-	-	1	.40	8	4.65	9	4.39	18	2.39
R<Y	-	-	-	-	1	.58	1	.49	2	.50
F<F	1	.81	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	.13
TNNSP	10	8.13	31	12.25	25	14.53	12	5.85	78	10.37
In Memory	29	23.58	69	27.38	83	48.25	99	48.29	280	37.23
Total	123	16.36	252	33.51	172	22.87	205	27.26	752	100.00

Reasons for First Names

One of the major considerations of this investigation was to determine the basis for selecting the first name. The traditional naming pattern, as mentioned above, is to name a child after a deceased relative, often a grandparent. However, with the political changes in Russia beginning with the Revolution, and coupled with the decline of religion, there was reason to hypothesize that there would also be an accompanying decline in the traditional Jewish naming pattern.

The "Don't Know" group (Table 6) is different. While some might argue that they, too, were traditionally named (and many of them probably were), we took a more conservative approach in our tabulations and have listed them separately. As noted, the "Probably Traditional" and the "Don't Know" groups decrease over time.

The trend to notice is in the "Liked" category. Here, individuals were not named after anyone in particular. Parents and others in the family chose the name for a variety of reasons, but not according to a religious tradition. In the European Russia sample, as Table 6 shows, the "Liked" category increases from about 3% in the first period to almost 32% in the final period. Over one-half of these were Russian names.

Another way of demonstrating these changes is shown in Figures 1 and 2. In these Figures the "Traditional" and "Probably Traditional" categories have been combined. As we can see, in the Russian sample (Table 6 and Figure 1) there is no clear trend for the decline of traditional naming practices. There is, however, a decline in the "Don't Know" category and an increase in the "Liked" category.

For the Central Asia sample (Table 6 and Figure 2), the "Liked Name" category increases from about 5% in the first period (1886-1919) to almost 43% in the final period (1970-1992). Of the total of 162 names in the "Liked" category, 60 were Russian names. Of these 60, 47 were chosen during the most recent time period. There is a clear trend in the decline of traditional naming practices, a decline in the "Don't Know" category and a clear increase in the "Liked" category.

Table 6: Patterns of Naming by Time Periods

Russia:	1894-1919		1920-1949		1950-1969		1970-1972		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Traditional	39	28.05	111	38.54	96	71.11	94	66.66	340	48.57
Traditional?	55	39.57	66	22.91	2	1.48	--	--	123	17.57
Liked	4	2.88	44	15.27	30	22.22	45	31.91	123	17.57
Don't Know	41	29.50	67	22.92	7	5.19	1	.71	116	16.58
Totals	139	100.00	288	99.64	135	100.00	141	99.28	703	100.00

Asia:	1886-1919		1920-1949		1950-1969		1970-1992		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Traditional	31	25.20	74	29.36	90	52.32	113	55.12	308	40.96
Traditional?	67	54.47	110	43.65	19	11.05	--	--	196	26.06
Liked	6	4.88	20	7.94	49	28.49	87	42.44	162	21.54
Don't Know	18	14.63	47	18.65	12	6.98	3	1.46	80	10.63
Others	1	.81	1	.40	2	1.16	2	.98	6	.80
Totals	123	99.99	252	100.00	172	100.00	205	100.00	752	99.99

170 Names 42.3 (September 1994)

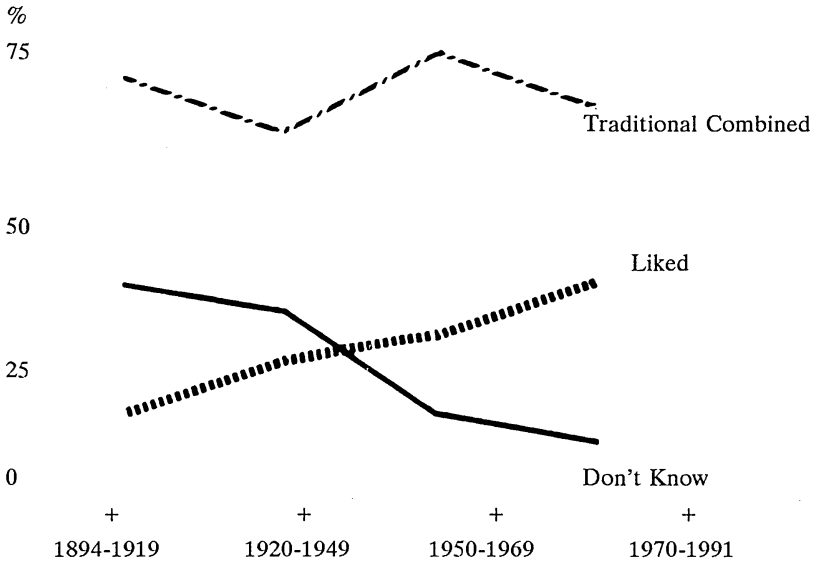
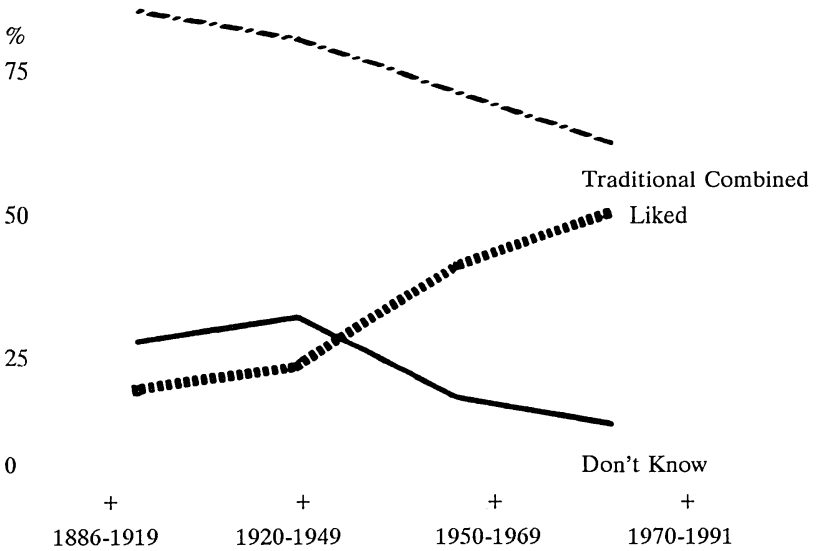


Figure 1: Naming Practices Over Time - Russia



Most Common Names

One item of interest is the most popular names. We selected the 10 most popular names for men and for women among the source names.

In the European Russia sample (Table 7), we find *Michael*, *Alexander*, *Joseph*, *Lev*, *Avram*, and *David*, which are clearly Hebrew names. A comment is due on *Alexander*. While *Alexander* is not of Hebrew origin, it has been acceptable as a Jewish name since at least the twelfth century (Kaganoff 49). Although *Michael* has not historically been a common Jewish name, its choice by Jews seems to have been favorably affected by the Russian milieu where St. Michael is an important figure in the Orthodox Church. *Lev* is a name which can be ambiguous in its origin. It has a clearly Russian root (meaning 'lion') and also a Hebrew root (meaning 'heart'). The Hebrew association is discussed below. Because of its dual status, we suggest that *Lev* (or one of its other related forms, such as *Leonid*) was popular with Jews.

Returning to the point of the acceptance of the name *Michael* by Orthodox Russians, we may note Gerhart, who says

Orthodox Russians (in essence, all Russians) also tended to avoid certain names, considering them Jewish in spite of the fact that many such names were in the list of saints *sbyatzbi*. Such names were: Abram, Adam, David, Isaak, Lazar, Manuel, Moise, Solomon, Emanuel, Dina, Leah, Mariamna, Rachel, Roza, Ruph (Ruth), Sara, Esther. (28)

We now turn to the non-Jewish names and examine their possible relationship to Jewish names.

Boris, twenty-one men. Four linked the name to *Baruch*, two to the Yiddish *Berel* which in turn is a kinnui for *Issachar*, one to *Bracha*, one to *Benjamin*. For 13 there was no linkage. In these cases the initial letter of the memorialized name was retained.

Leonid, fourteen men. *Leonid* is another popular name, but for the Jewish population its meaning ('lion') was linked to Judah, the son of Jacob, the third patriarch. This is because Jacob, on his deathbed, blessed his sons and compared each of them to an animal. In the case of Judah, it was a lion. Since the Middle Ages (and probably before), the name *Arieh* ('lion' in Hebrew) or one of its

172 Names 42.3 (September 1994)

Table 7: Most Common First Names

Russia:

Men	N	Rank	Women	N	Rank
Michael	25	1	Anna/Chana	12	2
Alexander	23	2	(Hannah)		
Boris	21	3	Helena	12	2
Leonid	14	4	Irene/Irina	12	2
Joseph	12	5.5	Eugenia	11	4
Lev	12	5.5	Galina	10	5.5
Vladimir	9	9	Rachel	10	5.5
Grigory	9	9	Lubov	8	7
Avram/	9	9	Alexandra	7	10
Avraham			Marina	7	10
David	9	9	Nina	7	10
Igor	9	9	Sophia	7	10
			Svetlana	7	10

Asia:

Men	N	Rank	Women	N	Rank
Michael	23	1	Tamara	19	1
Boris	19	2	Svetlana/	14	2
Yacov/Jacob	14	3	Sveta		
Joseph/Josiph/Josef	13	4	Esther	13	3
Yuri	12	5	Berta/	11	4
Alexander	11	6.5	Bertha		
David	11	6.5	Maria	9	6.5
Shlomo (Solomon)	10	8	Rosa	9	6.5
Roman	7	9	Sara	9	6.5
Arthur	6	11.5	Zoya	9	6.5
Gavriel (Gabriel)	6	11.5	Nelia	8	9.5
Moshe (Moses)	6	11.5	Olga	8	9.5
Rachmim	6	11.5			

Naming Patterns of Recent Immigrants to Israel 173

variants has been linked to the name *Judah* (Hebrew 'Yehuda'). Three linked to *Leonid*, one each to *Helena*, *Lazar*, *Leopold*, *Lev*, *Lubov*, and *Nahum*. For five, no linkage was found.

Lev, twelve men. *Lev*, as mentioned above, can be from the Hebrew for 'heart' or from the Russian for 'lion.' In this sense it is an ambiguous name. Five men traced their name to the Yiddish *Leibe* 'lion,' a kinnui for *Yehuda* (*Judah*), three linked the name to *Yehuda*, one was named after Leo Tolstoy, one after a relative named *Levi*, and for two there was no information.

Vladimir, nine men. Two traced the name to the Yiddish *Velvel* 'wolf,' a kinnui for *Benjamin*, and one linked to *Zev*. For six there were no links.

Igor, nine men. Three linked the name to *Yaakov*, one each to *Yisrael*, *Yitzchak*, and *Ida*. For three there were no links.

Of the top women's names only two are of Hebrew origin: *Anna* and *Rachel*. The others are of Russian origin and many have links to the Hebrew names of relatives.

Helena, twelve women. One each linked to *Lev*, *Henry* (*Chana*), *Leah*, and *Hiena*. No links for eight.

Irene, twelve women. One link each to *Eliyahu*, *Esther*, *Ita*, *Rachel*, and *Riva*. One link to Russian *Irina*. No links for six.

Eugenia, eleven women. Two linked to *Genya*, one each to *Eugeny*, *Sheiva*, and *Shendele*, for six there were no links.

Galina, ten women. Two linked to *Genya*, one each to *Batya*, *Gittyal*, *Grisha*, and *Golda*. One was a convert. For three there were no links.

Alexandra, seven women. Two had links to an *Alexandra*, one each to *Abram*, *Sara*, *Shoolya* (*Meshulam*), *Sho'el* (*Saul*), and *Yitzchak*.

Marina, seven women. Two linked to *Miriam*, one each to *Michael* and *Moshe*, three no links.

Nina, seven women. Two linked to *Nehama*, one each to *Nina*, *Nunya*, and *Tzipora*, two no links. We believe that *Nina* is a shortened form of the Hebrew *Pnina*.

Sophia, seven women. One each linked to *Sara*, *Shaina*, and *Sophia*. Four had no links.

174 Names 42.3 (September 1994)

Svetlana, seven women. One each linked to *Sivio*, *Solomon*, and *Sonya*. One was linked to Stalin's daughter. Three had no links.

In the Central Asia sample, we find *Michael*, *Yacob*, *Joseph*, *Alexander*, *David*, *Shlomo*, *Gavriel*, *Moshe* and *Rachmim*. *Michael* and *Alexander* were commented on above. *Gavriel* (*Gabriel*) occupies a position somewhat similar to that of *Michael* — not particularly popular in Judaism but popular in the Russian Orthodox religion, as was mentioned above regarding the Russian sample.

The Non-Jewish Names.

Boris, nineteen men. Twelve linked the name to a *Bechor*, four to a *Baruch*, one to a *Berel* (Yiddish 'bear'), one to a *Chaim*, and one "parents just liked the name." In these cases the initial letter of the memorialized name was retained so that there was some sound similarity.

Yuri, twelve men. Russian form of *George* 'farmer.' Four linked it to a *Yehuda*, two to a *Nuriel*, two to a *Yochanan*, one to a *Uriel*, one to a *Yechizkiyahu*, one to a *Yair*, and one had no link.

Roman, eight men. Slavic name meaning 'Roman.' Also a popular saint's name. Two linked it to a *Rachmim*, one to an *Eliyahu*, one to a *Nataniel*, two possibly to other names. Two were named because parents liked the name.

In Table 7 we can see the familiar Jewish women's names *Tamara*, *Esther*, and *Sara* from Hebrew. *Rosa* is from Yiddish. *Svetlana*, *Maria*, *Berta*, *Nelia*, *Zoya*, and *Olga* have non-Jewish origins or associations.

Svetlana/Sveta, fourteen women. Russian 'light.' Three linked the name directly to a *Zviya*, one each to a *Sara* and a *Suria*. Nine had no direct links but possibly indirect links of which they were not aware. The Farsi name *Sivio* was involved as the "religious" name for eight of the *Svetlanas*. We understand that the name was often given to a child born at the time of the new year.

Berta/Bertha, eleven women. *Berta* is the Russian form of the German *Bertha* 'bright.' Four linked the name to *Bracha* (Hebrew 'blessed'), two to *Batya* (Hebrew 'daughter of God'), one linked to *Bakhmal* (Farsi 'velvet'), one to *Blor* (Farsi 'mirror'). For three, the parents just liked the name.

Naming Patterns of Recent Immigrants to Israel 175

Maria, nine women. Russian form of *Mary*. The Hebrew form is *Miryam*, the precise meaning is not agreed upon. Some consider the meaning 'bitter,' others as 'sea of bitterness.' However, since the name *Maria* was acceptable in Russia, Jews used it and made their own associations. Two linked it to *Miriam*, two to *Malka* (Hebrew 'queen'), one to *Maphrat*, a name we cannot yet identify. Parents just liked the name in four cases.

Rosa, nine women. As noted above, *Rosa* is a name used mostly, if not entirely, by Jews in Russia. Four were used as a Yiddish form of the Hebrew *Shoshana* 'rose.' The rest are not clear in their associations.

Zoya, nine women. This name may be of Arabic origin but the meaning is not clear. One person linked it to *Leah*, one to the Hebrew *Ziva* 'light, glory,' one to the Farsi *Zaravshan* (a river in Iran, but the word can also mean 'someone who radiates gold'). Others had no linkage.

Nelia, eight women. This is possibly a form of Latin *Cornelia*, the feminine of *Cornelius*. However, in our sample all of the Nelias were traced to the Farsi name *Nekhadam* 'happiness'.

Olga, eight women. Russian 'holy'. There were five links to the Hebrew *Abigail*, one to the Hebrew *Osnat* (*Asnat*), the wife of Joseph. The other two had no links.

Sources for the Most Common Names

Table 8 shows the most common names, or sources, after which the children were named. In each sample, both the men's and women's names are all from Hebrew, with the exception of the Farsi name *Nekhadam* in Sample 2.

Change of First Name

In both samples, we were able to identify individuals who had changed their names in their original country or in Israel. These are shown in Table 9. The men in the Russian sample did the most name-changing, almost 11%. The other three groups are around 3%. As the table shows, most of the name changing was done upon arriving in Israel. Most of the names were changed to a Hebrew name or form, e.g., *Evgeni* to *Gal*, *Helena* to *Ilana*.

176 Names 42.3 (September 1994)

Table 8: Sources for the Most Common First Names

Russia:

Men	N	Rank	Women	N	Rank
Michael	19	1	Chana	21	1
Avram	15	2	(Hannah)		
Yitzchak (Isaac)	13	3	Rivka	11	2
Yehuda (Judah)	12	3	(Rebecca)		
David	12	5.5	Rachel	8	3
Moshe (Moses)	12	5.5	Esther	7	5
Yaakov (Jacob)	12	5.5	Miriam	7	5
Lieb	11	8	Sara	7	5
Alexander	10	9	Dvora	6	7.5
Gershel/Hirsh	9	10	Debora	6	7.5
			Leah	6	7.5
			Dina	5	9.5
			Faigel	5	9.5

Asia:

Men	N	Rank	Women	N	Rank
Michael	16	1	Esther	17	1.5
Moshe (Moses)	14	3	Tamar	17	1.5
Shlomo	14	3	Sara	15	3
(Solomon)			Mazal	14	4.5
Yosef (Joseph)	14	3	Yafa	14	4.5
Yaakov (Jacob)	13	5	Rachel	13	6
Avram/Avraham	12	6.5	Leah	10	7.5
Bechor	12	6.5	Miryam	10	7.5
David	11	8	(Miriam)		
Eliyahu (Elihu)	9	10	Malka	9	9
Gavriel (Gabriel)	9	10	Nekhadam	8	10.5
Rachmim	9	10	Shoshana	8	10.5

Naming Patterns of Recent Immigrants to Israel 177

Table 9: Location of Change of First Name

Russia:	Men		Women	
	N	%*	N	%
In Israel	33	9.64	11	3.05
In Russia	4	1.17	—	—
Totals	37	10.82	11	3.05

Asia:				
In Israel	12	3.18	10	2.67
in Asia	1	.27	—	—
Totals	13	3.45	10	2.67

*Comparisons of sex within sample, e.g., 9.64% of the total number of 342 Russian men changed their first names in Israel.

Table 10: Cross-sex First Name Derivation

	Male < Female		Female < Male	
	N	%	N	%
Russian	13	3.80	30	8.31
Asian	2	.53	—	—

Thus, in Sample 1, 13 males had names derived from female relatives.

Cross-Sex First Name Derivation

The Russian sample shows some cross-sex name derivation (Table 10). We find an *Ilia* who was named for a *Leah*, a *Yuli* who was named after a *Yehuda*. In Sample 1, 30 females had names derived from those of male relatives, but only 13 males had names derived from female relatives. In Sample 2, there were only two names of males derived from females and none for female names derived from those of males.

Discussion

We now return to the questions raised earlier concerning the naming trends of Jews in Soviet Russia. At least seven factors of difference have been demonstrated. These are summarized in Table 11 below.

It appears that the European Russian Jews had a higher intermarriage rate, higher occupational status and virtually no religious observance, and yet maintained their traditional naming patterns. The Central Asian Jews, who had no intermarriage, lower occupational status and more religious observance, had a decrease in the traditional naming pattern with an accompanying increase in non-Jewish names.

Other differences in the two samples indicate that the European Russian Jews, especially the men, had a higher rate of name change — usually to a Hebrew name — than did the Jews from Central Asia.

Table 11: Summary

Measures	Russia	Asia
Intermarriage	Some	None
Occupation	Higher	Lower
Religious Observance	Lower	Higher
"Traditional" Naming	Higher	Lower
"Liked" Name	Lower	Higher
Name Changes	Higher	Lower
Male Names < Female	Higher	Lower
Female Names < Male	Higher	Lower

We also note that cross-sex name derivation was more common with Jews from European Russia than with those from Central Asia, and furthermore that more women had their names derived from male relatives rather than vice versa.

We can only speculate on the reasons for these differences. Central Asian Jews may have been freer than Russian Jews to

Naming Patterns of Recent Immigrants to Israel 179

practice their religion since they lived in a Muslim-dominated area in which the open practice of Judaism was at least tolerated. We have the impression that in European Russia open practice of any religion was discouraged.

We think, then, that the Central Asian Jews were more confident of their Jewish identity and felt freer to pick a Russian (or Farsi) name. In contrast, the European Russian Jews were faced with more pressure. One of the few acts showing positive affirmation of their identity in a world of conformity was the way they named their children. This is how they showed their continued identity, a conclusion which is reinforced by examining the name change patterns.

State University of New York, Fredonia
Ramla, Israel

Notes

¹A complete list of the sources of the names, their variants, frequencies, and other information can be found in an appendix to this article. The appendix, at more than 50 pages, is too long to be included here. However, a copy has been deposited in the Lurline Coltharp Onomastics Collection at the University of Texas, El Paso, library. The entire article (including the appendix) is available through the Educational Resources Information Center as ERIC document ED 368 189, referenced in RIE 29 #8.

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