

**Robert Brym and Randal F. Schnoor (eds.),
*The Ever-Dying People? Canada's Jews in Comparative
 Perspective* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2023),
 361 pp., ISBN: 978-1487528775.**

First, a confession: I have always felt that I should know more about Canadian Jewry than I do. Despite growing up in Niagara Falls—albeit on the US side, close enough to the border that one could hear the Lower Niagara River on a quiet night—for most of my life, my exposure to Canadian Jewry was limited to occasional visits to Toronto, a few friends met through youth group or who brought home stories from attending Jewish camps in Canada during the summer, or members of our synagogue who crossed the border for work. My academic career has been primarily focused on the Jewish community in the United States, largely because this is where I live, where the funders of my research want me to direct my efforts, and where there is a much larger Jewish population to study. I read the occasional journal article or research report on Canadian Jewry when it is published, and I consider Morton Weinfeld's *Like Everyone Else but Different* (2018) to be an excellent primer on Canadian Jewish life, but I want to learn more.

For scholars who share that desire, *The Ever-Dying People? Canada's Jews in Comparative Perspective*, edited by sociologists Robert Brym and Randal Schnoor, joins Weinfeld's volume as a valuable addition to the canon on Canadian Jewish life. The book is divided into four sections presenting multiple perspectives on the Canadian Jewish experience. The first section functions as an introduction to the basic contours of the Canadian Jewish community, providing a series of profiles of Canadian Jewry in terms of history, demography, antisemitism, and Jewish education. For readers who are not steeped in Canadian Jewish history and culture, these chapters provide critical background without which key details will be overlooked in the sections that follow.

The second section adds depth to the profile of Canadian Jews by breaking down their social characteristics, with chapters devoted to Jewish identity, residential patterns, contrasting portraits of immigrants and non-immigrants, comparisons between Montreal and Toronto, the experience of Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union in Toronto, and attitudes and activism about Israel. As I write this review, Israel is currently at war with Hamas, and although Elizabeth Moorehouse-Stein's chapter does not compare Canadian Jews' perspectives on Israel with those of other national Jewish populations, her description and analysis of the central issues will help readers familiar with these other contexts to relate to Canadian Jewry.

The third section compares Canadian Jews to other Canadians: Muslims, Christians, Chinese, and Métis, plus a comparison of Jewish and non-Jewish medical students at

the University of Toronto. These chapters help the reader understand how Canadian Jews fit into the society around them. They illuminate both similarities and differences between the experiences of Jews in Canada and members of other religious and ethnic groups, both in terms of how they have succeeded in integrating themselves as valued and successful but still distinct segments of Canada's multicultural society, and where they face ongoing challenges to full inclusion.

Finally, the fourth section illustrates how closely Canadian Jews resemble or diverge from the Jewish populations of other countries across varying social dimensions, both general and specific: demographic comparisons among nine countries; an assessment of intermarriage in Canada and the United States; the experience of Jews from the former Soviet Union in Canada and the United States; antisemitism in Canada, Britain, and France; marriage and mobility patterns of Moroccan Jews in Montreal and Paris; and Jewish engagement in Canada and Australia. These chapters highlight a variety of ways that the Jewish experience maintains a common thread across nations that is ineluctably influenced by the nature of its interaction with local culture and contexts.

The diversity of topics covered in each section is mirrored by diversity in the chapter authors' methodological approaches—historical and empirical; quantitative and qualitative; macro-, meso-, and microsociological. Although the methods are sophisticated, the authors take care to make their approaches as accessible as possible, and although, for example, explaining demographic formulae or multivariate regression analysis to a lay audience is challenging, they have been largely successful. This volume is a model that could and should be replicated in other Diaspora Jewish communities, with a primary focus on the inner workings of the Jewish community of the country of interest, both on its own and in comparison to other minority groups, and additional chapters comparing that community with others around the world. Notably, this approach is reminiscent of another recent addition to the study of Canadian Jewry: the 2020 volume of essays, *No Better Home? Jews, Canada, and the Sense of Belonging*, edited by David S. Koffman.

However, Brym and Schnoor's success in compiling a comprehensive series of essays may have inadvertently contributed to several of the chapters reading as though a few hundred additional words would make them much stronger. Chapter authors likely did the best they could with the space they had available but appeared to have more to say. In several chapters, readers would have benefited from appendices that provide greater detail on analytical techniques or the statistical significance of reported findings. It is possible that word or page limits also contributed to the sole item that concerned me in the entire volume. In their chapter on ethnic representation at the University of Toronto Medical School, Jordan Chad and Robert Brym note, "Existing theories of Jewish intellectual exceptionalism are of little use in ex-

plaining [Jews' declining representation in certain high-achievement circles]" (230). They then provide a partial list of such theories, including ones promoted by the disgraced evolutionary psychologist Kevin MacDonald, the twentieth-century sociologist and prominent segregationist Ernest van den Haag, and the English eugenicist and antisemite Cyril Darlington.

In MacDonald's case, Chad and Brym fail to note that MacDonald is a "scholar" (a term I use very loosely in his case) whose work fellow evolutionary psychologists have roundly condemned for circular thinking designed to promote antisemitic conspiracy theories. They likewise fail to identify the social positions that undergirded van den Haag and Darlington's work. I believe Chad and Brym are aware that these "scholars" are deeply problematic. However, because they did not provide additional context, a reader unfamiliar with the history of scientific racism may come away from this chapter thinking they are legitimate sources of information whose work merely did not stand up to scrutiny. Mistakes happen in every realm of scholarship, and science progresses by positing theories that can be accepted or rejected based on empirical evidence. But these are examples of pseudoscience, not science. It would be preferable for readers to understand that these are pseudoscientific claims promoted to justify bigotry, including against Jews, and not as complimentary as claims about Jewish intellectual exceptionalism might seem on the surface. Under the circumstances, it would be advisable to follow the example of Sander Gilman, who, in writing about similar theories, has taken great care to identify their racialized, bigoted, and occasionally self-serving aspects, without merely noting their theoretical deficiencies.

In highlighting the apparent challenges of page and word limits and accessibility, my intent is not to question the editors' choices. There is no doubt that curating such an expansive volume demands difficult editorial decisions that, in turn, require important material to be left out. Striving for accessibility may obscure details that are critical for scholars but confusing and unnecessary for an educated lay reader. Overall, Brym and Schnoor's choices are sound, and I hope their success will create more opportunities for similar volumes that will further enhance our collective understanding of Canadian Jewry.

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