

What culture is there for me?

Strategies of acculturation and cultural integration of Jewish and non-Jewish migrants in Brussels

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The city of Brussels is considered as a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic city with a unique mixture of ethnicities, religions and cultures. The meeting cross point of cultures is a fascinating way to learn about mutual influences between cultures where questions of openness versus closures and exchange are raised among new cultures that arrive as well as the host culture.

This presentation is aimed at looking into five main components of cultures in relation to cultural integration of migrant women living in Brussels. The study compares Jewish and non-Jewish migrants in each of those five cultural components.

The classic definition of culture in anthropological literature is that of Geertz (1973), who argues that culture is the complete way of life that includes technology and objects. Culture is all a person should know to become an active individual in society. Swidler (1986) states that culture is based on symbolic tools of meaning including beliefs, rituals, art, informal culture such as language, and gossip stories. These symbolic forms are the means through which social processes of sharing behavior and perceptions occur within a particular community.

For the purposes of this study, I will relate to the narrow definition of culture as the sum of symbols, language, values, norms and material objects. In the presentation I will discuss the extend migrants use these components in order to integrate or not in the host society and the choices they make in order when it comes to bequeath to the next generation.

Introduction

The classic definition of culture in anthropological literature is that of Geertz (Geertz, 1973) who argues that culture is the complete way of a people's life. This whole life also includes technology and objects. Culture is everything one needs to know in order to become an active individual in society and is based on symbolic tools of meaning including beliefs, rituals, crafts, and informal culture such as language, and gossip stories. These symbolic forms are the means through which social processes of behavior and perception share within a particular community (Swidler, 1986).

In this presentation I would relate to the focused definition of the term “culture” as a whole of values, beliefs, behavior and the material creation of human. There are five main components of culture: symbols, language, values, norms and material artifacts. Icons or symbols are essentially a world of meanings by which humans perceive the environment in which they live. The meanings of symbols vary from one society to another and even within the same culture over time. The language is a set of symbols that allows discourse between people who belong to the same society. It serves as a main tool of cultures for passing messages from generation to generation. Values are the benchmarks defined by culture to judge what is desirable, good or beautiful in a particular society. Norms are rules and expectations with which the company guides its members towards desired behavior. Material culture and technology are reflected in the values of a given culture. Material culture is the technology and knowledge that people in a particular society apply to live in a physical-geographical environment in which they live (Mashunis, 1999).

Media is a cultural component and as such it plays an important role in creating and reinforcing identity and identification. New immigrants watch news from their place of residence rather than local news from the new country to which they migrated (Christiansen, 2004; Malka and Kama, 2011) International communication provides immigrants with the illusion of living elsewhere, and also reinforces the feeling of insecurity in their new country (Kastoryano, 2007; Malka and Kama, 2011). Malka and Kama (2011) show that for Israelis in New Jersey, Israeli media consumption preserves and fosters identification with the Israeli experience. The variance preserves the sense of "Israeli home" at a distance with a few foreign influences. They can reconnect to the world they left, because they know what is going on in Israel. They can talk about it with other Israelis who live in Israel and create a sense of continuity. Cohen (Cohen, 2008) sees the role of media in the diaspora as a guardian

of the original culture and identities of ethnic groups. Cinema, especially films from the country of origin, provides "virtual space in a real place" (Featherstone, 2000). Films bring to a shared, emotional and solidarity of the experience.

In the next part I will describe the five components of culture and will discuss the role they play in providing a sense of integration in the new place.

Findings

Symbols and their meaning

The meaning of symbols is via their relationship to other symbols. It is the pattern that gives meaning to the symbol. Each symbol system is autonomous with its own rules. One cultural environment will interpret symbols in a particular way and differentiate them from the interpretation that is given by other cultures (Douglas, 1970). Jewish symbols are very significant to local Belgian Jews. Prominent symbols are the Star of David and "Chai" (Live) as necklace pendants. Dina, 25 year old local Jewish woman described:

What I brought with me is my necklace that I wear it all the time. I once wore a Star of David but switched to "Chai". "Living" is life. I replaced because the Star of David knows as a Jewish symbol and I am afraid. "Chai" nobody knows what it is. These are letters. I walk with it all the time. This is my identity, "who I am", my roots.

Israelis described an attempt to hide Jewish or Israeli traits. They will not wear a necklace with a Star of David or "Living" pendant, or any Hebrew letters, they will not wear clothing with Hebrew caption and will also avoid speaking Hebrew in public places. This is how Keren, a 49-year-old Israeli immigrant, described:

There's more fear, that's why I didn't put a Mezuzah ... I feel like my house is not mine ... It's not true ... I miss it every time I leave home ... I miss something to kiss. I keep saying I have to put it on... I live outside the city. Not a surrounding that hugs. Each house is isolated from the other. I feel like I have to protect myself [...] I'm scared, especially at night when my husband is away. All the fields around me are not doing me any good. I think because of the environment I don't put a Mezuzah ...

Holidays are moments where many symbols play a significant role. One of the significant events for Israelis in Brussels is Israeli Independence Day. I had the opportunity to celebrate Independence Day on several occasions. In most cases, these were private celebrations in the

women's private pavilion. One way to celebrate is to watch old Israeli films that have become milestones in Israeli culture. Belgian Jews who were present at such events, such as Israeli women's partners, did not understand this tradition of watching the film while there were guests. Moreover, they had no interest in the film, because it was in Hebrew and despite their knowledge of Hebrew, it was difficult for them to understand it completely and it was even impolite. During the Israeli holiday, Israelis declare the relationship they have with each other and create a transparent boundary between 'we', the Israelis and 'you', the Belgian Jews. Choosing Israeli films in Hebrew as a strong symbol that creates a place where Israelis return to Israel and its culture. This is done in a closed Israeli bubble in which Israeli symbols stand out and are reinforced; food, music, movies and spoken language.

Compared to the Jews and Israelis who usually use a combination of Jewish and Israeli symbols, local Belgian non Jewish women have no significant connection to Belgium and its symbols or religious symbols, as Anita, a 58-year-old Belgian claimed:

I don't feel Belgian. I don't have the Belgian mentality even if I am part of the culture and language. I don't have this mentality. There are so many people from different cultures around me that I feel a citizen of the world.

For Silvia, the 44-year-old Belgian symbols are expressed with some pride in civic events, such as football or cinema:

The culture for me is all ... it's the art of everything that will allow us to get out of the materialistic side and I think it can be a Belgian culture if that's the case... but it can be any other culture as well. I do not know if Brussels markets the Belgian culture or puts it distinctly Belgian unique culture. Talk about Belgian actors because they are different from other French actors. It gives a certain sense of pride to know that your small country can be represented in sport too it can be there. The kids show some affiliation, show some pride when a Belgian football team defeated another team. I think we are connected to the country we live in.

Language and its usages

The French and Flemish languages are the official languages of Belgium (German in the German Ardennes). In Brussels the official languages are French and Flemish but most people speak French. The French language is a bridge to cultural relations. Language makes it possible to connect individuals on the basis of visible and hidden meanings.

Understanding a language is not only understanding its literal meanings but in many cases there are hidden meanings of using words or local slang that can cause awkward situations due to different interpretation of words or misuse of language. In the French language, for example, when contacting an older person, someone with certain authority or who is unfamiliar, the form of the plural “Vous” is requested. Many Israelis express this difficulty because it does not exist in Hebrew. This may create a situation that a person will use "you" in the “single form” (“Tu”) in conversation with unfamiliar people or professionals. This may cause some embarrassment to the other party. It goes more complicated in the Flemish part of Belgium where it is common to address people in a less formal way, especially when they speak French. The form of addressing a person expresses the social boundary of the person's name. Addressing a person in a private name also indicates proximity, familiarity. Often the use of a private name creates confusion among the other party, such as when someone with higher social status such as a doctor address to you by your first name, it raises questions such as how should you name that person in return? For interviewed immigrants, the boundaries that the language sometimes builds are confusing. Christine, a 50-year-old non Jewish immigrant from England, has outlined norms of maintaining the formal nature of relationships at the beginning of the acquaintance also toward other mothers in unofficial social situations such as at school:

... There are sides to English culture that are ... that I miss. The social side, the informality in the work environment you don't ... yourself. You use "you" Tu and no Vous and such. That's what surprised me at school. My daughter went to elementary school here. The first time I knew the other moms a. It was very difficult to get close to them... there was one or two that were exceptional, but in general they form a group ... Some has addressed me with VOUS for years. You can say TU, come on! There is no hierarchy involved between mothers. Yes ... I miss the lack of formality in some way.

Language is a set of symbols and signs. In order to understand the other side, the language must be understood in a layer that is beyond the mere verbal layer. In the first period of my arrival in Brussels, unfortunately I had to visit mourners. During that visit, an elderly woman told me that the food that was served was prepared by her “Belle fille”. Literally means "the beautiful daughter". I looked at the daughter and did not understand why the woman decided to reinforce the fact that the girl is beautiful. After the visit I asked my partner and he explained me that in fact the translation is "daughter in law". This anecdote and others

express a need to understand the language in its latent layers and not just the visible verbal ones, in the semiotic meaning of the words.

Language includes, of course, the nonverbal language. Body gestures are culture-dependent. The interpretation of body gesture depends on the culture in which it was created. Kissing on the cheek when meeting people is very common in Brussels. Beyond the fact that many people never know how many kisses to give, there are people who do not understand who to give a kiss and who you cannot. The non-verbal communication between humans (whether it is a kiss on the cheek, and if there are several kisses expected, be it a hug or a handshake) defines the relationship. These gestures challenged me thoughtfully as a researcher, but immigrants who come to a foreign country and are unfamiliar with the full range of verbal and non-verbal language may find themselves in very confusing and embarrassing situations. Like, for example, they lean over to give a kiss but the person standing in front of them giving his hand out for a handshake. Nonverbal messages can also come in the tone of speech. Ella, a 37-year-old Israeli immigrant described an incident where there was a misunderstanding due to nonverbal communication:

Early on when my partner was already speaking Hebrew, I found myself in a bit of a strange situation: we were invited to his parents for dinner at some point he and I talked to each other, about something banal, can't remember exactly what, his parents, who do not speak Hebrew, looked at us embarrassed... afterwards It turned out that they thought we were fighting. The tone, the volume and the dynamics of speech made them think we were angry at each other.

Language allows spontaneity in social relations because when both parties speak the same language there is an understanding that is beyond the words heard, and thus social relations form more spontaneously. People feel more comfortable and relaxed, as Sophie, a 35 year old woman, emigrated from France describes:

I think the language does a lot ... for me it's the language. I don't speak English so well ... it's much easier. I think the problem is language related. Speaking the same language also brings spontaneity. When I don't speak the same language, I lose my spontaneity. I have to think about how I want to say things so I lose spontaneity ... I think if I was Brazilian the problem was the same. Israelis have a different culture, a different mentality, they speak a different language. We feel there is an invisible barrier between us. For me it's a question of language. I see someone, I want to say something without thinking, I tell you because I know you

understand. If I see a woman with whom I have no common language instead of saying something, I say nothing. Too bad.

Most of Jewish and non-Jewish immigrant women spoke about the language barrier in cultural ties with the local community. Lily, a 36 year old Israeli immigrant described:

There is also the language barrier. I can't speak fluently. I can be myself when I speak Hebrew maximum English and not really ... If I can't show myself how can I be in relationship? I think the economic status affects that too. It belongs to the mentality. The bigger barrier is the language.

Values and norms

A meeting between cultures give rise to meeting of different values. Women I spoke to and interviewed talked about tension when it relates to values. Immigrants to Belgium see Belgian values as more liberated whether at work or in marital relations. Migrants, mothers of children, seek to educate their children for more conservative values. For example, Naoko, a 37-year-old Japanese immigrant:

I know my mentality is occidental. My values are European values I would like to say. In many ways, from many perspectives. I know my education is also Japanese education and there is a slightly different way of thinking about the Belgians or the Occidentals, for example I have a sense of language that is looser. There are some values that are looser. In terms of work, sometimes there is a behavior in relationships that I completely do not understand. They are more liberated.

- Liberated?

For example, there is a woman who is in a couple and she will go out to a nightclub, with a girlfriend. I do not understand such things if you are in a relationship and it is serious to have minimum things that you no longer do. There are things to do when we are single and there are things to do when we are in a relationship but I think it's a bit of my mother's old school mentality that I think is slightly different. Yes ... Sometimes there are people in relationships who keep an open doorway. They are in relationships but they leave an opening to realize that it is not completely closed.

Values of openness or sexual permissiveness in Belgium make immigrant women think about their set of values, and especially about the way they would like to educate their children. For

example, Christine, a 50-year-old England woman has difficulty accepting the connection between the Catholic state and the possibility of starting a different-style family.

Belgium ... It confuses me. On the one hand it is quite traditional and there are strong family values and I love it. The kids are more sacred ... Not too much ... I don't think, entering a phase of destructive teenage rock 'n' roll drugs and sex and things like that. I think. The childhood is longer. On the other hand, it is very permissive. It's a Catholic state and everything can be done to have children. A woman can bring a baby from the sperm bank and all that stuff, gay marriage ... Hey, it's too fast.

The values of the society here?

Yes ... what are the values? That's what I don't understand so much. Not many people go to church here ... You have Catholic families with, I exaggerate, with many kids but most people don't go to church.

Among Jewish women, there is a tendency to accept more Jewish values over values of the Belgian state. Jewish women tend to educate their children based on the values of Judaism the way they see them. For example, described Dana, a 33-year-old local Belgian Jew:

It gives me a very important role for education and the values we want to convey. These are the values of Jewish daily life. Something I would like to convey to children is that it gives me responsibility for how to see things. It is a matter of education. For me it communicates. This is not pure Judaism.

Ora, a 37-year-old local Jew, described the need to educate her children according to Jewish values. The reason she described is the sense of responsibility for Jewish continuity. Ora explained:

I will try my best to give them Jewish values. There is a role of continuity and responsibility - the great responsibility is that they will be good and proud to be Jews. I think we give them amazing tools to ensure a happy family and happy children.

Naama, a 42-year-old Belgian Jew, also sees the importance of preserving Jewish values as paramount. Naama added that the values of Judaism are values as she sees them related to Jewish history and the values of helping others:

I think I have values and are related to Judaism, my Judaism. I want to pass these values on to my girls. It affects me. What I want is that they know they were Jewish, that they know their history and would continue their Judaism. I'm trying to convey Jewish values. Some are not

particularly Jewish, but some, yes. I want them to know that they are Jewish and that this will be a very important element of their identity. That there are values to fight for, that there are things they cannot accept. I want them to know how to protect themselves and to know some anti-Semitic acts. [...] What is important is to know how to share, because it is more important to give to others than to keep it all to you. Is it usually Jewish? I do not know. It's Jewish, after all. I think Jewish culture has a notion of sacrifice. I think if you don't have an idea of sacrifice, there are values you don't transmit. It is different from someone who is not Jewish and lives in Belgium. It's less important to him.

Compared to Jewish women, Belgian non-Jews seek to give their offspring more universal values and are less related to a local Belgian set of values. This view relates to the women's regard of themselves not as Belgian but more European or international women. This is how Jacqueline, a 56-year-old local Belgian described:

I have leftist sources with a father who was not... who wasn't a rich man... he was not a boss he was more than the other side. My mom from a source ... like that. If not, I continued those values.

-What values? Working?

Solidarity. Even if I can't do it, practically speaking, in my life ... openness to the other. Which group can you belong to? Ahhh ... if it's political, for example, I don't know if that's what is expected, politically I don't feel ... I feel more like workers, no. It's not my life anymore. But somewhere I like the values that have made people with more equality between them.

Norms: "Everybody wants to keep his secret garden" (Anita)

Behavioral norms are common rules that guide behavior and define it as correct or appropriate under certain social circumstances. One of the many examples of Israeli immigrants towards Belgium was the issue of setting play times for children. While the Israelis express a more spontaneous approach, and determine more "flowing" times of play, Belgians, including Belgian Jews, are very well-planned and each visit requires prior coordination. Another example is about invitations for meals. In general, an invitation to a person's home in Belgium is not spontaneous and is made after significant social relations have been created. Anita, a 58-year-old Belgian of Flemish origin, answered the following question as to whether her co-workers were with her or had she stayed with them:

Very few. Very few. It's more in a form of "going out". I think everyone wants to keep their secret garden ... maybe it feels like an intrusion into life ... for the intimacy of life. And I think

not all husbands or spouses were willing to share it. Maybe people with many children do not have an opportunity ... [...] I have a feeling that over the years everyone became secret guard of the intimate bubble. We want to go out, want something to drink but not get into intimacy...

Surprisingly, however, Belgians women interviewed for the study see Belgian society very closed. For example, describes Abigail, a 50-year-old Belgian her relationships with other Belgians:

I do not like. I really don't like it. Because I don't think it's real. I have a problem with that. I think it's false because they will come, it will be nice that day and then the next day ... what is it? The next day they will come to you because you took out the trash earlier ... what do they care? Why is it so bad? Maybe it's me putting ideas in my head because ... I should have got a piece of furniture but I'm working. I rang next door I explained that I will have furniture delivered this week and asked if it would be possible to write on a piece of paper to come to you because I am not here. They answered yes, no problem, etc. I did. I want to say that sometimes everything in my head ... they are like that, you see like a plate they don't say anything but maybe I got the idea that they are closed like that. But maybe if I go ... maybe that's me. I know that when I lived here I had chickens one day with a rooster. I thought I was crazy. In the evening there is no rooster, in the morning there is - there is a problem. It was the neighbor did not know what to do with his rooster so he put it in my garden. He didn't ask me, just put him there.

Material culture

There are other cultural artifacts that express a sense of integration. Clothing is one of them. One morning when I brought my children to the school they attend, I was surprised to see that many women were wearing the same coats. I had a strong feeling that they all looked the same. Fashion among the Jews is moving fast and women are adapting to the new fashion rules. Beyond the clothing, there are certain bags that many women carry. When asked if immigration has changed anything in your female image, a 41-year-old Israeli woman, Dorit answered that the noticeable change was external:

Yes. It renewed something. I can see it in more beautiful attire. I live in this neighborhood that doesn't really represent Belgium. All of these women in beautiful, makeup, every hair is in place ... I think they look great! It sharpens it ... I feel like a tourist... I say if I'm here why not? Let's try things ... all kinds of little things. For example, I'm a member in a gym club who doesn't really represent Belgian society. There I can feel fat and I'm not fat. That's where I see 100-year-old grandmothers wearing this matching lingerie! I look at them and what is it to be

comfortable? I look at them and say how beautiful it is, so why not? I went to the store. In fact, here it is very available ... in Israel you pay a lot of money on these things and here you have all the colors and all kinds and very cheap. I bought and I enjoy it...

Regarding the differences in the way Israeli women and Belgian Jewish women dress up differently. Israeli immigrants expressed that they realize that the local Jewish Belgians are looking at them critically. Israelis in Belgium usually dress in more comfortable and less fancy clothes when they drive the children to school whereas Belgian Jews dress in urban clothes when they leave home. A 42-year-old Israeli immigrant described:

I'm more of a farmer. Only when I was a lawyer and I had to be in court so yes, did I dress well. I don't like makeup. Impress other women who come to put their kids in school, It's not for me. I won't. They talk about it all the time. How do they name us? Those from the village, the village girls ... they talk about us all the time, about how we dress.

Another aspect is the Israeli media consumption. In general, new immigrant media consumption is very high. In Brussels, many Israelis watch Israeli channels. They watch Israeli series, news from Israel and feed on information that content is often the subject of conversation. The connection to Israeli television creates continuity with life for Israelis in Brussels. When they visit Israel, they can discuss topics on the Israeli agenda, including information from TV series and reality shows such as "Big Brother." This is actually a statement of their temporality: they belong to Israel and they are Israeli. This finding is very similar to New Jersey Jews, as found by Malka and Kama (Malka and Kama 2011) and in Melbourne (Cohen, 2008). Cohen (Cohen, 2008) explains that in Australia, Jewish radio helps to maintain an Israeli national identity. The feeling for Israel, as expressed in the interviews, is a mixture of a desire to leave Israel and live with a commitment to it and, on the other hand, constant thoughts of return. In Brussels, Israeli media channel, including the virtual one, plays an important role in preserving Israelis' identity. Limor, a 37-year-old immigrant from Israel, described the need for receiving news from Israel:

I am an Israeli. For me where I am today, my dominant past is Israeli, no matter how many years I have lived in Israel. Today if after looking at the emails I go to YNET to see what is happening in Israel. I don't see what's going on in Belgium. I don't see what's happening in the world. The first thing I want to know is what's happening in Israel. I think it's something I can't ignore. It is more than.

Jewish women tend to avoid Belgian media because they feel a range of negative feelings towards it; from fear, anger, manipulation, sadness and frustration. In many cases, Jewish women express their sense of insecurity when they watch, in their opinion, the one-sided communication that does not allow real exchange of views. If Jewish women understand Hebrew, they turn to Israeli channels. These channels give them a safe place even if they disagree with the actions of the Israeli government. Many Israelis prefer English TV channels, as they do not have much knowledge of one of the local languages. Eva, a 42-year-old local Jew explained:

It is very touching on what is on television, constantly against Israel. I'm not always in favor of Israel. When they make mistakes I'm ready to discuss. I'm not 100% blind for Israel. True, anti-Semitism, anti-Israel. . . If it is out of ignorance it affects me strongly. I try to explain to people, to talk to people. Most of the people I meet, not even Jews, are educated, intelligent people. We can talk.

Artists from the country of origin have come to Brussels on several occasions. Israelis organized events in which Israeli actors appeared, for both children and adults. These events were open to everyone, but only Israelis actually participated. One of the main reasons is that these events took place in Hebrew. Israelis create an invisible separation between them and the Belgian community. Furthermore, bringing in Israeli actors and comedians was possible due to the fact that many Israelis know them as they get information about all cultural events that are happening in Israel via the Israeli media or simply by visiting Israel often. This way, Israelis create a sense of continuity with life in Israel. These cultural events are in Hebrew, and therefore the congregants closed a distinct Israeli place. Even though the boundaries are not physical, they are certainly noticeable.

Israeli music is very popular with Israeli and Belgian Jews. At many events such as Bar/ Bat mitzvahs, weddings and community events, people dance to the sounds of contemporary Israeli music. Israeli artists are present on many occasions, such as the Israeli Independence Day community celebration, community holiday celebrations, youth movement activities in which Israeli music accompanied the activity, and in one of the schools Israeli music is played in the morning. Israeli music is present in the lives of Jews and Israelis in Brussels. It expresses another way to move a person to another place. It declares boundaries that provide a place where experiences and emotions are shared. It creates a sense of home when it brings together memories, souvenirs and emotions.

In the Jewish tradition food has a very important place. Every Jewish holiday has its own traditional food, which varies according to human origin. Food is another example where Israeli migrants bring Israel to Belgium. Many Israelis enjoy a wide variety of restaurants in Brussels, but Israeli food remains an important component in their identity. Although Israelis are trying new ways to cook and enjoy variant cuisines, there are some special items of Israeli food that women reported missing in Brussels. Some women have told me that when they go to Israel, they bring back to Belgium many food items that they cannot find in Belgium or that they are not as much to their liking as the Israeli ones. Food is a way for Israelis to bring the known to the unknown and create a familiar sense of home. Food brings with it smell, appearance and taste, memories and familiarity. It is a celebration of a number of senses in the process of making a place into a home.

Israelis migrants spend most of their vacations in Israel. They feel the need to come back time after time. During the first years of emigration from Israel to Brussels, the frequency of visits is very high. A temporary return to Israel has been described by some women as "breathable air". With their return, women share stories of their experiences in the country, including new restaurants they visited and new places they discovered. Most stories are very positive. Stories about Israel make it a more tangible place among Israelis in Brussels. Stories of their experiences in Israel lead to a more positive social identity. This positive identity facilitates the formation of the group, which ultimately creates the Israeli bubble.

Conclusions

In terms of the cultural integration of women interviewed, there is a tendency for women to maintain and preserve their culture. Attempts by non-Jewish immigrants to become culturally integrated into Belgian society are not always successful. Despite the diverse nature of the city, the creation of cultural groups is strong. Compared to non-Jewish immigrants, Jewish immigrants, including Israelis, preserve Jewish or Israeli culture. They reconnect to Jewish culture and choose customs and practices to preserve it. The sense of cultural integration of Jewish women is mainly for the Jewish group where they feel comfortable and secure. Women tend to say that attempts to connect with non-Jews have also failed because the worlds and interests are too far away.

Symbolically, Jewish people use Jewish symbols in official or even private ceremonies such as a pendant on a necklace. Israelis tend to use Israeli symbols such as the Israeli flag. For

non-Jewish Belgians the connection to Belgian symbols is mainly at events such as the European Football Cup where the flag colors are particularly prominent.

In terms of language, French is the most widely spoken language in Brussels, despite the city's bilingual status, creates meanings that are beyond the verbal language that express formal and thus distance between people. Language affects both Jewish and non-Jewish migrants. It eliminates spontaneity in social relationships and creates distance. Nonverbal communication also creates awkward situations like the tone of Israeli speech or the use of body language such as the custom of kissing friends or co-workers when seen.

A cross-cultural encounter often creates a meeting of values. Belgium, on the one hand, is seen as a conservative, very formal Catholic country, but on the other, there is a great sense of permissiveness. Jews and Israelis mainly talked about Jewish cultural values that they try to pass it on to the next generation.

Social norms are an outflow of corporate values. There are cultural norms in Brussels that prevent the cultural integration of immigrant women. The Belgian formality of setting a time for hosting children or hosting a meal by friends and colleagues is very formal comparing to Israel what create a feeling among Israelis of lack of acceptance and closure of the other group. Collaborations with colleagues are mainly at work but when social relations are involved they usually prefer to go out for meals instead of inviting colleagues at home. Few make these connections into real intimate social relationships.

Material culture appears to be the easiest to create cultural change. The main change that Israeli immigrant women have talked about is physical change in their attire. Similarities allow women to feel part of the group around them, to look like other women and still maintain their culture inside.

In terms of media consumption, Israeli women report a tendency to consume Israeli communications more than internationally. This way they keep a strong Israeli identity.

Whereas Jewish and Israeli women tend to look for the familiarity, other migrants to Brussels try to integrate more into the Belgian culture. They learn the language rapidly what makes cultural events more available to them and ease social relations.

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