

Voices of Outreach: The Construction of Identity and Maintenance of Social Ties Among Chabad-Lubavitch Emissaries

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Fundamentalists typically avoid influences from the outside world and form intense social bonds with members of their own group. Yet, active fundamentalists must create relationships with the objects of their missionary action, the Other. In this article I address the connections between the cultural practice of missionary work and the formation and maintenance of social ties among ultra-Orthodox Jewish missionaries belonging to the fundamentalist Hasidic sect Chabad-Lubavitch. These missionaries attempt to bring Jews to the beliefs and practices of Chabad by hosting Jews at Sabbath meals. This missionary act is an utterance that “speaks” with multiple voices, indexing the missionaries as both friendly members of their local Jewish community and ideal Lubavitchers. Through these meals, the missionaries engage not only the local Jews but also other Lubavitchers in dialogue, constructing a community that transcends face-to-face interaction.

A week after I arrived in Robertsville, Great Britain, Rabbi Sandler and his wife invited me over for Sabbath lunch.¹ Nervous about my first extended interaction with ultra-Orthodox Jews and aware that Orthodox Jews demonstrate their respect for the Sabbath by looking their best, I dressed carefully.² I selected a long, dark skirt that covered not only my knees but my ankles as well. My long-sleeved shirt was suitably conservative in cut and color and I accented my outfit with pretty but simple jewelry.

Imagine my surprise, then, that the Sandlers barely batted an eye when Jared, another guest and fellow Reform Jew, showed up late on his bicycle dressed in jeans and a t-shirt.³ Rabbi Sandler, a mild mannered and unassuming man, registered little expression on his face even though riding bicycles on the Sabbath violates Jewish law. Mrs. Sandler, his outspoken and assertive wife, smiled with a mix of amusement and resignation as Jared noisily entered her home. The children obviously knew Jared quite well and were happy to see him.

The meal was typical of Sabbath meals at the Sandlers' home. Rabbi Sandler said a communal blessing over the bread. Mrs. Sandler placed a small loaf of bread in front of a slightly surprised Jared, explaining that if they have extra loaves of bread they give all men the opportunity to do

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¹ The name of the city has been changed to protect the identity of my consultants. The names of people have also been changed.

² Orthodox Jews believe that the Torah is divinely revealed. For the most part, they follow all laws in the Torah. Ultra-Orthodox Jews differ from Modern Orthodox Jews. Modern Orthodox Jews generally participate in secular culture. In contrast, ultra-Orthodox Jews live in separate neighborhoods, maintain their own school systems, and conform strictly to social and cultural laws (Wigoder, Skolnik, and Himelstein 2002).

³ Reform Judaism allows departures from Torah law, such as playing music in the synagogue, women sitting with men, changes in dress codes, and less rigorous conversion requirements (Wigoder, Skolnik, and Himelstein 2002).

a *mitzvah* (follow a commandment).⁴ After the meal, Mrs. Sandler, heavily pregnant, walked her child's friend home so that Jared and I could study a Jewish text with her husband. And, at the end of it all, Jared hopped on his bike and rode home with a full stomach, a little more knowledge of a Jewish text, and an invitation to lunch the next week. Little did he know that, in the eyes of the Sandlers, the many *mitzvot* (plural of *mitzvah*) he accomplished brought the Sandlers a little closer to their leader while also bringing the world one step closer to redemption through the coming of the messiah.

Jared would not have been a welcome visitor in most ultra-Orthodox homes. Most ultra-Orthodox Jews live in self-imposed ghettos and avoid as much as possible any contact with people outside of their sect (Heilman 1994:178; Ravitzky 1994:309; Shaffir 1974:21). Rabbi Sandler and his wife, however, were members of the sect Chabad-Lubavitch and, like many other Lubavitchers, were emissaries. Unlike the typical conception of a religious missionary, Lubavitchers do not attempt to convert non-Jews to Judaism. Rather, the Lubavitch mission is primarily directed toward Jews themselves (defined as anyone with a Jewish mother) with the ideal goal of bringing all Jews to take on Chabad beliefs and a Chabad lifestyle (Ravitzky 1994:304, 310, 315). Large numbers of Lubavitchers leave the self-imposed ghetto to which other ultra-Orthodox Jews cling to go on what they call *shlichus*, a mission in which they carry the message of their leader to the four corners of the earth (Friedman 1994:351). More than a job, this popular life choice is indeed for life. As a Chabad DVD states, of "the 3,649 families currently on *shlichus*, not one has departed to its destination with a return ticket in hand.⁵ They are there to stay. Until *Moshiach* [the messiah] comes, and beyond" (Shmotkin, Batt, and Krinsky 1999).

This article focuses on the only two families of Lubavitch missionaries in Robertsville and how, despite living far away from centers of Jewish and Lubavitch life, they maintain connections and social identities within a global Chabad network? Specifically, I analyze one proselytizing action central to these emissaries' mission, the Sabbath meal. In Lubavitch terminology, missionaries/emissaries are *shluchim* (singular *shliach*); hosting non-Lubavitch Jewish guests at a Sabbath meal is an act of "outreach" (Ehrlich 2004:166). The words "emissary," "missionary," and "outreach" are from the lexicon of Lubavitchers (Ehrlich 2001:171), but I have given them definitions that fit an etic interpretation. "Missionary" or "emissary" is a person whose career is devoted to outreach. "Outreach" is an act performed with the ideal goal of turning the Other into oneself, a goal that seems to be the explicit end of not only Lubavitch but also many religious missionary activities (Montgomery 1999:46; Salamone 1994:71). To achieve such a goal missionaries clearly must create relationships with the Other, relationships that most likely require change and adaptation (Huber 1988:21). How do these relationships with non-Lubavitchers that emissaries must create affect the identities of the emissaries themselves and their social ties with other Lubavitchers?

In the commonsense understanding of evangelism, missionaries try to change people. Although the Lubavitch emissaries do indeed aspire to such an ideal, they also define success in such a way that they can perform successful outreach without changing any beliefs or life-habits of another Jew. When emissaries establish bonds with non-Lubavitch Jews they also create social ties and a social network within Chabad. Combining theories of ritual with theories of language brings me to the conclusion that the hosting of non-Lubavitch Jews at a Sabbath meal can be understood not only as ritual but also, in Bakhtin's (1986) language, as an "utterance." This Sabbath meal is a hybrid utterance through which the Lubavitchers speak with two voices. Voice

⁴ *Mitzvah* literally means "commandment." To do a *mitzvah* means to follow a commandment. The commandments include kosher laws such as not eating pork, ritual practices such as saying a blessing, and moral laws such as helping the poor (Zborowski and Herzog 1952:191).

⁵ This DVD, published by Chabad in 1999, states that there were 3,649 families on *shlichus*, but does not describe how the number of families are counted. In addition, since these data are from 1999, it seems likely that there are many more families on *shlichus* at the time of this article's publication.

I is oriented to their guests and the Jewish community in Robertsville. Voice II indexes a very different identity and is addressed to Lubavitch friends and family on *shlichus* elsewhere or living among Chabad peers.⁶ Consequently, although hosting a Sabbath meal is a single act performed by a single family, it contains “two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two ‘languages’, two semantic and axiological belief systems,” and two addressees (Bakhtin 1981:304–05).

By indexing missionaries as ideal Lubavitchers, emissary work allows *shluchim* to speak to each other and to the Lubavitch world. Their display of Lubavitchness, moreover, is contingent on interactions with non-Lubavitchers. Outreach is essential to their Lubavitch identity. *Shluchim* cannot, therefore, maintain that identity without also constructing an identity as a Jewish Robertsvillean (see also Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:239). In this way, emissaries create one identity with their Jewish guests so that they can simultaneously, and unbeknownst to their guests, create a different identity and social ties with Lubavitchers. Through talking to the Other, *shluchim* enter into dialogue with each other.

JUDAISM, RITUAL, UTTERANCES, AND MISSIONARIES

The Lubavitch drive to change other Jews is unique among ultra-Orthodox groups (Finkelman 2002; Heilman 1994:178; Marty and Appleby 1991:821). The few ultra-Orthodox Jews who lived in my fieldsite of Robertsville spoke wistfully of various neighborhoods in Brooklyn where one might walk all day without encountering a gentile or non-Orthodox Jew. In these lands of milk and honey men haggle in Yiddish on the corners and the streets are lined with kosher grocery stores, Jewish clothing shops, and bookstores selling Jewish texts. Chabad-Lubavitch central in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, shares these characteristics of standard ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods (Harris 1985:56–60).

Ritual is a central feature of Orthodox life (Heilman and Cohen 1989:85). Jewish law demands that men pray three times a day in a quorum of at least 10 men (Heilman 1976:96). The Sabbath is a weekly ritual that involves both long hours of communal prayer and long hours of socializing around the ritually prescribed Sabbath dinner table. Orthodox life, in fact, seems to be a textbook case of Durkheim’s ([1912] 1995) argument that religion comes into being only in assembled groups and serves to create and maintain mental states within those groups. Like Durkheim, Geertz (1966:28) argued that participation in ritual unites members into a community and creates a “really real” within that community. Similarly, Rappaport (1979:181) highlighted the creative power of ritual, relating it to Austin’s (1975:235) arguments about speech acts. Rappaport noted that the Goodenough Islander, in giving away numerous material goods, “is not simply claiming to be a big man. He is *displaying the fact* that he is.” Ritual creates not only belief but also social positions and identities. It “contains within itself not simply a symbolic representation of social contract, but tacit social contract itself” (Rappaport 1999:465).

Ritual carries close ties to the semiotic functions of language (Bell 1992:72–73, 110–14; Douglas 1970:41, 97, 178; Leach 1976:45). We might, therefore, see ritual as well as speech as both performative and communicative: performing identities, sending messages, and creating “social contracts.” Sabbath meals are utterance acts, subject to all of the semiotic analyses we might apply to language. Specifically, utterances necessitate at least two if not more parties: “speakers” and “hearers”/“addressees.”⁷

⁶ I use “index” in the linguistic anthropological sense best exemplified by Peirce (1932:134–55). An “index” is a pointer, a marker, a sign connected in some manner to its referent that declares something about that referent, be it a location in space or time, a gender, an actual person, or an identity.

⁷ Goffman (1981:129) uses the words “speakers” and “hearers” while Bakhtin (1986:99) uses the word “addressee” instead of “hearer.” “Speaker,” “hearer,” and “addressee” are in scare quotes because of Goffman’s (1981) compelling argument that these categories are not clear-cut.

If Sabbath meals as utterances carry communicative messages and involve both speakers and addressees, and as rituals create social bonds and contracts between those speakers and addressees, who are the addressees of the Sabbath meals? The people present during the meal are Lubavitchers and their guests. One might guess, therefore, that the addressees of the meal are those guests. However, Bakhtin (1981:304–05, 1986) argues that utterances can contain two or more voices representative of speech genres that index certain identities and features of the speaker. Recognition of these voices is dependent on addressees' interpretations of the semiotic code. I, a Jewish-American member of the middle class, would not understand a Goodenough Islander's action in giving away goods as a representation of his social position. Similarly, non-Lubavitch guests at a meal lack sufficient knowledge to interpret the Sabbath meals as acts of outreach and to interpret the emissaries as Lubavitchers constructing their ideal identity. Consequently, Sabbath meals must also be addressed to someone with that knowledge, Lubavitchers.

The multiple voices and addressees of Sabbath meal rituals hosted by emissaries make evident the irony of the missionary situation: to interact in a meaningful way with the Other, missionaries' actions must involve at least one voice that the Other can understand (Beidelman 1982:60–71; Miller 1994:115–16; Salamone 1994:71). The missionary, then, faces a dilemma because “responding effectively to local conditions often means compromising the projects' ideals” (Huber 1988:21). But, the dilemma is not always as dire for missionaries as Huber suggests. Through double voicing, missionaries can both respond effectively to local conditions and perpetuate their identity and social ties among their peers. To use Silverstein's (1996) differentiation between language and speech communities, the Lubavitch and non-Lubavitch Jews of Robertsville are part of the same language community but different speech communities. Although these people share a code, English, a Sabbath meal carries different indexical values for members of the two different groups. Through outreach, emissaries reinforce and create their Lubavitch identity while at the same time fitting into the non-Lubavitch world.

In this way, actions that seem to contradict a missionary's ideals, such as allowing local music at a church service, may not be contradictions at all. Such actions may be the very method through which missionaries become part of their group, a conclusion supported by literature that speaks of missionary work as a method of socialization for the missionaries themselves (Miller 1994:50–52; Robert 2002:59). Along these lines, Shaffir (1978:39) argues that outreach among Lubavitchers in a large Lubavitch community in Montreal, rather than serving to convert Jews to Chabad, actually reinforces their own Lubavitch identity. Similarly, it is “in the mission field that many young Mormons—both male and female—become meaningful participants in the authority structure of the LDS Church for the first time” (see also Parry 1994:182; Shepherd and Shepherd 1994:175). Huber (1988:68) suggests that the heroic period of a Catholic mission of the Society of the Divine Word in New Guinea was the 10 years of material growth and economic success that gave the missionaries social power. Hogan (1979:157) sees the success of the Irish missionary movement in the leaders' depictions of missionaries as adventurous, romantic, spiritual, and socially admirable. These scholars' emphases on the social rewards of missionary work within the missionary community itself allow us to see that the irony of missionary work may not be the fact that missionaries frequently relax their ideals in order to accomplish their goals. Rather, the irony is that it is precisely through leaving the self-imposed ghetto and adapting to the local situation that *shluchim* join a global Lubavitch network.

Lubavitch Outreach

The present day surge in outreach is tied to the now deceased Lubavitcher Rebbe.⁸ At 770 Eastern Parkway in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, Chabad's main synagogue and business center,

⁸ For extensive analyses of the relationship between Lubavitchers and their Rebbe, see Shaffir (1974, 1978), Mitchell and Plotnicov (1975), Berger-Sofer (1984), Harris (1985:119), Friedman (1993: 349), Ravitzky (1994), Ehrlich (2000:289–407, 2004), Davidman (2001:100), Dein (2001:5), and Fishkoff (2003:66–88).

Menachem Mendel Schneerson preached to thousands of devoted listeners before his death in 1994 (Ehrlich 2004:70–80, 216). Acclaimed by a vocal minority as the messiah, Schneerson stands out from most rebbes. Nevertheless, his influence over his people was partly the outcome of the structure of Hasidic sects. Rebbes, unlike rabbis, are charismatic leaders of Hasidic movements who have unique, personal connections with God, are viewed by their followers as prophets, and are understood to have supernatural powers (Feldman 2003:26–27).⁹

Under Schneerson's influence, the mission program grew considerably at the end of the 20th century. Youthful Lubavitchers in major Lubavitch localities wander the streets searching for a Jew who might be convinced to do Jewish rituals (Friedman 1994:349). Emissaries depart to both nearby towns and far off lands to open Chabad centers that organize outreach activities, nursery schools, summer camps, and Jewish programming. Many Chabad centers are in university towns and target college students (Ehrlich 2004:167–68). Other emissaries become rabbis for populations in desperate need (in Chabad's opinion) of Orthodox influence. Although a central office in Crown Heights and new material accessible via the Internet provide resources and help to place new families who wish to embark on *shlichus*, emissaries are largely independent. They do their own fundraising and execute their mission according to their own personal style (Anonymous 2007; Fishkoff 2003:115, 120).

The goal is to bring the messiah. In contrast to most Jews, Lubavitchers actively anticipate the messiah's imminent arrival (Feldman 2003:33). Partly for this reason, Lubavitchers emphasize getting Jews to do *mitzvot*. Each extra act could be the rock that tips the scale. A Lubavitcher could get a Jew to say a prayer and this one little *mitzvah* could bring the messiah and all that the messiah includes: utopia, the rebirth of the dead, the end of persecution and anti-Semitism, the joyful gathering of all Jews in Israel (Wigoder, Skolnik, and Himelstein 2002:522–24).

Not all Lubavitchers become full-time emissaries. Some, according to one emissary, live "a Lubavitch life" with other Lubavitchers.¹⁰ According to another, however, within Chabad becoming an emissary is "a normal thing, of course you're going to go on *shlichus*, it's a societal norm." In some graduating classes at the Lubavitch Yeshiva in Crown Heights, said a third, almost everybody goes on *shlichus*, in other classes only half.

Robertsville, Britain

Two such emissary families, the Slanders and the Levis, lived their lives practicing outreach in the city of Robertsville where I conducted two and a half months of fieldwork. One family had lived in Robertsville for 35 years, the other for only seven. One man served as the rabbi for all of the Jewish university students in Robertsville while the other headed a Chabad house that organized Jewish activities, ran a nursery school, and a learning service every Saturday. The husbands and wives grew up in a variety of places: London, Pennsylvania, and Crown Heights. Two were not born Lubavitch but had turned to Chabad later in life. Both families had children they sent away to school. One seven-year-old son already attended school in a different town, coming home only occasionally for weekends or vacations.

I lived with non-Lubavitch members of the Jewish community who introduced me to the Slanders and the Levis at the main synagogue. I never hid the fact that I was conducting research on Lubavitchers and outreach and I never claimed to be interested in joining Chabad. Nevertheless, the Lubavitchers interpreted my many questions about Chabad life, my practice of Orthodox

⁹ Hasidic Jews are ultra-Orthodox. All Hasidim are ultra-Orthodox but not all ultra-Orthodox Jews are Hasidic. Hasidic sects differ from non-Hasidic ultra-Orthodox groups in that they are centered around a Rebbe. For more information on Hasidic groups, see Buber (1988), Hundert (1991), Fishman (1992), Werthwim (1992), Belcove-Shalin (1995), Idel (1995), Rabinowicz (1996), Davidman (2001).

¹⁰ Any text in quotations comes from recorded and transcribed interviews. When I state what people in my fieldsite said or did, the information comes from my fieldnotes.

Judaism, and my pointed interest in outreach as signs of a person on the verge of becoming Lubavitch. Their frequent invitations to Sabbath meals were part of their outreach agenda. Therefore, my relationship with the Lubavitchers was as a researcher, a guest, and a potential convert. I observed as a participant, elicited information, and recorded informal interviews in which I asked questions about their life history, why they chose to become a missionary, and how they felt about their work. I also made friends with many of the non-Lubavitch Jews whom I met at the Lubavitchers' tables and other members of the Jewish community of Robertsville. Most lived in a three-mile square area of a suburb outside of the city.

Recognizing a need to see if these families' missionary experiences were fundamentally different from others', I briefly visited two other families in Britain, the Greenmans and the Shermans, who lived in the cities of Lolton and Haytown. Nothing that I observed among the Greenmans and Shermans led me to believe that the Levis' and the Sandlers' practices of outreach differed significantly from those of other isolated emissaries in Great Britain. All *shluchim* had attended seminaries or yeshivas, graduated, gotten married, and then decided to embark on *shlichus*. All were committed, dedicated. All at times found life difficult in places where, as one said, the biggest challenge was "being on your own in a community that doesn't think . . . doesn't have the same upbringing as you." Although all pursued their mission in different ways (some running Chabad houses, others becoming community rabbis), all *shluchim* regularly invited Jews over to eat as part of their outreach projects.

Despite my work with the Greenmans and Shermans, this article is still a short-term case study. Although my conclusions must be tentative, they do suggest alternative ways of theorizing. The hypotheses I develop have theoretical implications for our understanding of Chabad and missionaries and provide a basis for further studies of the performative and community-generating aspects of proselytizing.

VOICE I: SPEAKING IN A ROBERTSVILLE TONGUE

The identity indexed by the Sabbath meal in the Jewish world of Robertsville was one of friendly, Orthodox members of the Jewish community. The Lubavitchers indexed this identity in two ways: first, to conduct outreach they used a general Jewish ritual that Robertsville Jews typically enjoy as an expression of companionship, the Sabbath meal; second, they persuaded through friendship and example as opposed to through words or confrontations.

The Sabbath Meal as a General Jewish Ritual of Friendship

Emissaries are able to fit themselves into a Robertsvillian world even while acting distinctively Lubavitch partly because Jews of many stripes are expected to have guests for meals and/or enjoy the Sabbath. The Sabbath in Judaism begins at nightfall Friday and goes until nightfall Saturday. During this time Orthodox Jews do not work. Instead, they pray, sing, sleep, and eat three very large ritually regulated meals on Friday night, Saturday midday, and Saturday evening. The meal begins with the blessing over the wine, said by the male head of house, who presides over an elegantly laid table. The party adjourns to the kitchen to wash their hands and then returns silently to the table until they have broken bread. The guests then enjoy the bread, fish, dips, the main meal, and dessert. The men may sing during the meal, and prayers are scattered throughout. The male head might give a speech or discuss the liturgy of the week.

All of the Orthodox Jews in Robertsville regularly had guests or were guests for meals. Roughly, there seemed to be more than 10 but less than 40 families of modern Orthodox Jews in Robertsville (see note 2). The ultra-Orthodox population consisted of the two Lubavitch

families and a handful of families from the community kollel.¹¹ Most of the few thousand Jews in Robertsville were nominally Orthodox (Jews who belong to an Orthodox congregation but do not follow most, if any, laws) but even these less strict Jews were capable of appreciating the celebration of the Sabbath. Some families enjoy meals on Friday or Saturday night. Others, when asked, said that they were aware that the Sabbath is a day of social gathering. Thus, accepting an invitation to a Sabbath meal was, for many Jews in Robertsville, nothing out of the ordinary and for others, a chance to get a good meal. Inviting guests to eat on the Sabbath in Robertsville spoke of Jewish companionship, not necessarily anything more.

Why Don't They Speak?

The emissaries constructed a local identity for themselves by persuading through friendship and example and by avoiding, as much as possible, verbal persuasion. For example, Jared was not told to stop riding a bicycle on the Sabbath, nor was he told that formal clothes are more appropriate for the occasion. He was politely asked, not commanded, to say the blessing over the bread, and no one suggested that Jared ought to continue the pattern of saying blessings when he was not in the Sandlers' house. Although he eagerly approached studying the Tanya, a Chabad-specific religious text, he told me that his interest was more cultural than religious. He studied other (non-Lubavitch) Jewish texts with members of the kollel as well. Considering the meek and apologetic way Rabbi Sandler asked me if I wanted to study, it was clear that although Rabbi Sandler may raise the idea of studying, he did not apply pressure to convince someone to do so.

Another example of emissaries avoiding verbal persuasion was when an outspoken student derided Israel for only legalizing Orthodox weddings. The Sandlers listened politely as she argued for her right to a Reform wedding in Israel even though all ultra-Orthodox Jews consider Reform weddings invalid. From the tone of her voice it was clear that the student was expressing her opinion, not trying to antagonize the Sandlers. Nor was she aware, it seemed, that her views might inspire dissent. If the Sandlers were disturbed, moreover, they did not show it. Mrs. Sandler's only objection was that Reform weddings should not be called religious. Once they had agreed to call the weddings Jewish as opposed to religious, Mrs. Sandler left the subject alone. Although it is possible that Mrs. Sandler and the student were thinking of different definitions of both "Jewish" and "religious," Mrs. Sandler did not explicitly try to convince the student to have an Orthodox wedding.

Some families, of course, used more verbal persuasion than others. Nonetheless, I never heard an individual directly asked to change anything about his or her beliefs or lifestyle. Even in the most verbally explicit household a female guest contently ate the Sabbath meal wearing short sleeves and a skirt with a slit. In addition, although *shluchim* may avoid words in order to create rapport to allow for more explicit teaching later, many guests never reach the more explicit path.

Why don't the Lubavitchers speak? In the words of Rabbi Sherman: "If it would work we'd probably do it, but it doesn't." He argued that explicit pressure might drive Jews away. Shaffir (1978:48) and Fishkoff (2003:52–53), however, report that Lubavitchers in Montreal and New York are frequently explicit, such as when they tell Jews on the street to do a *mitzvah*. An additional reason, therefore, why frontier *shluchim* are not explicit may be because the demands of living as a Robertsvillean are different than the demands of living among Lubavitchers. Some in town said that one emissary, who had previously been very abrupt with unobservant Jews, had

¹¹ Kollels are centers where men study Jewish law and can be considered similar to graduate school and adult education centers. Many married men engage in full-time study at a kollel for a couple of years after marriage, for which they receive a stipend in a manner similar to Ph.D. students (Wigoder, Skolnik, and Himelstein 2002). Some people also study part-time while maintaining other jobs.

become, by the time of my visit, much less verbally demanding. Living among the Other may force *shluchim* in Robertsville and similarly isolated areas to speak in a voice and construct an identity that the Jews of Robertsville will accept.

Persuasion Through Friendship and by Example

Instead of telling, therefore, *shluchim* make friends and wait (Rabbi Sherman). Jared was quite friendly with the Sandlers. The student who disliked Orthodox weddings also seemed to frequently relax in the Sandlers' home. One couple considered themselves to be confidants of the Levis' having, in the couple's words, "a very very good relationship with them." Still another couple spent time at the Sandlers' studying the Tanya; one night the couple and the Sandlers went out to a bar instead. The emissaries also became friends with other ultra-Orthodox Jews in Robertsville. "Do you try to bring people to Hasidism or just to Judaism?" I asked Rabbi Sandler. "Well," he responded, "I taught Tanya to some members of the kollel," implying that he was also interested in bringing already ultra-Orthodox Jews in the kollel to Hasidism. Moreover, since Lubavitchers view other Hasidic groups as inauthentic, bringing the kollel members to Hasidism implies bringing those people to Chabad specifically (Ravitzky 1994:310–11).

Lubavitchers tried to persuade by setting an example of how Jews should live. By participating in a Sabbath meal guests were able to observe a Jewish family practicing and believing as *shluchim* believe Jews should. Guests at meals engage in customs that they might not do on their own (nor ever again). A guest at the Levis' learned the prayers after the meal. Both Jared and I heard the children talk about the liturgy. I obligingly checked Mrs. Sandlers' lettuce for bugs when I was helping her prepare food, thereby learning about kosher laws. All non-Orthodox Jews present at a meal conduct more rituals than they would normally do at home. Other members of the community noticed the role-model status of the emissaries, calling the Sandlers a "positive example of Judaism." The *shluchim* had carved a niche for themselves in the Robertsvilleian world.

Robertsville Jews "Hear" Voice I and Overlook Voice II

The guests' participation in the Sabbath meal does not necessitate that they see the meal as an act intended to draw them deeper toward Chabad. Rather, "to an anthropological outsider it is clear that the message the missionaries send is often not the one their audience receives" (Salamone 1994:85). Guests did receive one of the messages sent, Voice I, the message of friendship. But, guests overlooked Voice II in that they did not comprehend the significance, for the missionaries, of their presence in the Lubavitchers' homes.

For example, Jared did not even know that the Sandlers were members of Chabad. In this way, although he received a message of friendship (Voice I), he failed to perceive the outreach aspect of his hosts' actions (Voice II). Unaware that the Sandlers were members of Chabad, Jared was also unaware of their desire for Jews to join Chabad and the orientation of their actions around that goal.¹² Others knew that the Lubavitchers were Lubavitch, but many nevertheless misinterpreted the Lubavitchers' intentions toward themselves. Considering the student's lack of reserve when arguing for her right to Reform weddings, she was likely unaware that the Sandlers

¹² It seems hard to imagine that Jared did not know that the Sandlers were members of Chabad given that he studied the Tanya with them for many months, but it seems to be true. When Jared and I were both eating with another family in Robertsville, not a Lubavitch family, Jared was surprised when I said that the Sandlers were members of Chabad. He clearly lacked a detailed understanding of the sect Chabad-Lubavitch. Most likely, he viewed the Tanya as a Jewish and Hasidic text but did not connect the text as solely, or even mostly, the territory of Lubavitchers. Jared left town a week after I arrived so I was unable to interview him at length.

would disapprove of her views. A nominally Orthodox Jew, in turn, thought that although others were the foci of outreach, she herself was not. She stated:

Outreach is really bringing people who are not involved into the community. But, I've always been involved in the community, so I don't know if outreach is really the word that I would describe for myself. *And also I'm perfectly friendly with these people.* (emphasis added)

She used her friendship with the Lubavitchers as proof that she herself was not a target of outreach. Another Jew recognized that some of the *shluchim's* activities were meant for him but added that they were meant to increase his involvement in the community, not to increase his observance or to encourage him to follow more laws. Many Jews of Robertsville, therefore, read the Lubavitchers' actions as indicative of friendship, not as indicative of outreach.

Not everybody was unaware of outreach. A contingent of the Robertsville Jewish community was hostile toward the Lubavitchers and much of their hostility, they told me, stemmed from a dislike of outreach. However, the handful of Jews who regarded Lubavitchers with hostility were never guests at the Lubavitchers' homes, and therefore were not addressees of the ritual meals. Clearly, the Lubavitchers' guests were self-selecting. Only those who had some desire to experience a Jewish meal or get closer to the Sandlers or the Levis agreed to come. Their desire to experience the meal and become friends with the Lubavitchers, however, did not require that they recognize outreach as such. Moreover, although some read the outreach in the act, they were still not part of the same speech community as Lubavitchers because, I will show, they did not comprehend the meals' indexical significance within Chabad discourse.

VOICE II: SPEAKING WITH A LUBAVITCH TONGUE

From the point of view of other Lubavitchers, the presence of guests at a Sabbath meal declares that the Lubavitcher is performing outreach, that the Lubavitcher is a successful *shliach* blessed by the Rebbe, that the Lubavitcher is an ideal Jew. Although the Jews in Robertsville sometimes managed to understand the first level of meaning, the existence of outreach, they could not appreciate the deeper significance that outreach carries.

An Index of Outreach

The presence of a non-Lubavitch Jew at a Sabbath meal is an immediate index of outreach, at least to another Lubavitcher. Mrs. Sandler's mother (also Lubavitch), when asked if she participated in outreach work, replied, "I used to, I used to have people over for dinner all the time." Similarly, Rabbi Sandler, when asked if the Levis were also involved in outreach, responded: "Yes, the Levis' table on *Shabbas* [the Sabbath] usually has nine to twelve people at it." Here, the Sandlers use meals as evidence of outreach.

Moreover, the emissaries were prolific in their invitations to dinner. I was invited to the Levis' all the time even though in the beginning of my fieldwork I barely knew them. Their table was invariably full with Jews who had recently learned that they were Jewish, nominally Orthodox Jews who varied from practicing relatively little on their own to barely practicing at all, some modern Orthodox Jews, visiting rabbis, and so on. Once, a woman who lived in the country and commuted to Robertsville for the Sabbath struck up a conversation with Rabbi Sandler at the synagogue. He did not remember her and had to be reminded that he helped her jumpstart her car a couple of years ago. Nevertheless, a minute later Rabbi Sandler invited her for dinner.

An Index of Success

Non-Lubavitch Jewish dinner guests are not only markers of outreach, their presence is also a Lubavitch index of success. According to *shluchim*, success does not, contrary to what one might expect, require making a Jew Lubavitch. Rather, Lubavitchers view a range of actions as constituting varying degrees of success: (1) bringing Jews to Chabad; (2) making Jews more religious; and (3) doing *mitzvot*. Accomplishments in the bottom tier, doing *mitzvot*, are recognized as success only by Lubavitchers themselves.

1) Ideally, Lubavitchers want all Jews to be Lubavitch. First, their actions demonstrate that they would like to bring Jews to a relationship with their spiritual leader the Rebbe. Since no other Jewish sect organizes itself around a relationship with the Lubavitcher Rebbe, the desire to bring Jews to the Rebbe necessarily means bringing Jews to Chabad. For example, one *shliach* said excitedly to his son during an explanatory service, “I think we are getting them. They were asking questions about the Rebbe!” Rabbi Greenman agreed that teaching about the Rebbe is an ideal goal, arguing that as an emissary:

you keep it [thoughts about the Rebbe] in the back of your mind. You don't have to say that [talk about the Rebbe] for them [other Jews] to pick up. They can pick up quickly . . . those subtle references to my link to Lubavitch and how one of the things that keeps me ticking, is this link to the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Second, Rabbi Sandler taught a number of people, including already observant Jews, the Tanya, the central Lubavitch text. In teaching the Tanya Rabbi Sandler wanted his students, including Orthodox Jews, to join Chabad. Moreover, Rabbi Sandler stated that he taught observant Jews the Tanya in order to bring them to Hasidism. The Tanya and the Rebbe are among the main items that distinguish Chabad from other Hasidic sects and are central to what Lubavitchers try to teach (Loewenthal 1990:43, 47; Shaffir 1974:59). Hence, bringing Jews to Chabad is the ideal, albeit infrequently realized, goal.

2) Lubavitchers also aspire to make Jews more religious. Rabbi Sherman's parents were, according to him, “not yet” observant—meaning that he wished and expected them to become so in the future. Rabbi Sandler also preferred to call Jews “not yet” observant as opposed to “nonobservant.” He bemoaned the fact that he frequently relaxed his own ideals. Unfortunately, he said,

not everybody really wants to be taught. It turns out just being a friendly relationship, which is also good but sometimes that's the most you [can get]. You can start with that and hope at some later point that the person will take it further, or it might become relevant when major decisions come up, like marriage. But [for] some people the most we can hope is that they marry Jewish. So there's sort of an adjusting of goals.

In adjusting his goals, Rabbi Sandler counts smaller accomplishments, like getting Jews to marry Jewish, as successes. Numerous emissaries Fishkoff (2003:31) spoke with similarly asserted that they would like Jews to lead a “Torah-true life.” In this way, bringing Jews to Judaism as a whole, even if they do not become members of Chabad, is a success for Lubavitchers.

3) Finally, each extra *mitzvah* performed indicates a degree of success. If a Lubavitcher succeeds in causing one *mitzvah* to occur, the act of outreach has been successful, regardless of whether that Jew does anything Jewish ever again. According to Rabbi Sandler, for example, success is really relative to each person, to each situation. Let's

say someone really wants to learn. For them, it might be to have an ongoing class with them; that would be a success. Whereas for a person who really [hates] religious people generally, just the fact that you might have them over for a meal one time could be a success.

As Rabbi Sandler saw it, the fact that a student argued for Reform weddings in Israel did not signify a failure. When the student arrived in Robertsville she had a distinct dislike of Orthodox Jews, but after interacting with Rabbi Sandler she respected Orthodox Jews. The fact that she felt comfortable expressing her views meant the Sandlers had succeeded. Her respect, and the fact that Rabbi Sandler had brought her to that respect, was a beginning regardless of the fact that she was secular. Therefore, Rabbi Sandler and the student had accomplished *mitzvot*.

Although in the case above a Jew did change something about her character, change is not necessary to do *mitzvot*. In every instant that a Jew who would not normally be at a Sabbath meal participates in a meal, that Jew does *mitzvot*. Rabbi Sherman, in fact, said that making people completely religious was never the goal for any Lubavitcher. He argued that Lubavitchers have no specific objective for outreach but instead “live as Jews and want others to follow the same ideals and practices.” Similarly, Rabbi Krinsky, in response to people who claim that Chabad wishes to convert all Jews to their way of life, said: “Nothing could be further from the truth.” Lubavitchers, he continued, merely wish to “awaken [Jews’] dormant Jewish consciousness and lead them naturally to start doing *mitzvahs*” (Fishkoff 2003:31).

Emissaries, in fact, do *mitzvot* simply by virtue of being on a mission. Outreach, as Rabbi Sandler states, is the end as well as the means to the end. Since the Torah writes “Thou shalt love thy fellow Jew as thyself” (Lev 19:18), and since outreach is an act of love toward all Jews, the act of outreach in and of itself is a success.

This hierarchy of three goals makes success seem more clear-cut than it truly is. Rabbi Greenman demonstrated the complexity of the Lubavitchers’ approach when he argued that the secret to their success lies in a lack of specific goals that allows them to catch people unaware. His statement seems contradictory—success depends on no goals, but catching people unaware implies a goal that they are shielding. But, the presence of a higher ideal that they at times hide does not exclude a lack of specific ends. *Shluchim*’s actions have multiple goals, and they pick and choose which ones to verbalize and focus on in any given situation. Furthermore, if they did not count each *mitzvah* as a success, how would *shluchim* manage to maintain their optimism and happiness? Although each individual *shliach* frequently succeeds in accomplishing *mitzvot*, they only rarely, if ever, succeed at bringing Jews to Chabad.

The nuances of the emissaries’ model of success highlights how, in practicing outreach, emissaries cross indexical boundaries. Only Lubavitchers are in tune with the many different kinds of outreach that can constitute a success and only Lubavitchers read these various acts as indices of success. Other Orthodox Jews do not agree that each *mitzvah* is successful even though they generally want all Jews to be observant. An ultra-Orthodox husband and wife in Robertsville argued that the Lubavitchers mistakenly focus on the short term: “Which is not to say that Jews have to become completely religious,” the wife added, “but that a Jew ought to be traveling in the direction of religiosity. It is a good thing to put on *tefillin* once, but it is not a major achievement.” A modern Orthodox Jew concurred, stating that in his opinion a success depends on whether someone starts keeping the Sabbath. He did not think that the Lubavitchers in Robertsville were very successful because they did not bring many people to religiosity. Hence, the idea that their guests’ lives need not change for outreach to have value is a belief specific to a Lubavitch speech community. These small acts of success allow Lubavitchers to perform successful outreach while simultaneously performing as a friendly Robertsvilleian community member, possibly hiding forever their hope that ideally that Jew will become Lubavitch.

An Index of Lubavitch Identity

By communicating the fact that they are doing successful outreach through virtue of being on a mission and having guests at a meal, emissaries also speak to the fact that they are ideal Lubavitchers. Lubavitchers are defined, both by themselves and by others, as people who have a close relationship with the Rebbe. People gain a close relationship with the Rebbe through the

practice of outreach (Shaffir 1974:58). Outreach, then, indexes not only success but also an ideal Lubavitch identity.

According to Rabbi Sandler, Lubavitchers believe that deep down all Jews (i.e., anyone with a Jewish mother) are Lubavitchers. Every Jewish soul is connected to the Lubavitcher Rebbe (Ravitzky 1994:310). Rabbi Sandler preferred the word “inreach” to outreach because, as he saw it, every Jew is really already a member of Chabad. Rabbi Sherman agreed, for he does not “like calling people distant.”

Lubavitchers frequently consider specific Jews to be Lubavitch who do not themselves identify as such. These people, according to Shaffir (1974:74), are also known as *shtikls*. I once asked Rabbi Sandler if I could get on an e-mail list for Lubavitchers even though I was not Lubavitch. He responded: “Who said you are not Lubavitch?” People in this middle category, perceived as Lubavitch by Lubavitchers but not by themselves, can be very unobservant. Rabbi Sherman referred to a woman who occasionally attended synagogue, did not keep kosher, and wore extremely tight and short outfits, as Lubavitch. After all, he said, she was interested in Judaism and the Rebbe, the “religious part would come later.”

Finally, those who self-identify as Lubavitch do so because they feel a close connection to the Rebbe; this connection comes through the practice of outreach (Shaffir 1974:75). First, emissaries see themselves as imitating the Rebbe. For example, Rabbi Greenman compares his work against the Rebbe’s:

You wonder why...who chose this place for you? You wonder if there’s a thing as a place too far gone and no hope...and then you see the Lubavitcher Rebbe...My interaction with the community of [Lolton] is nothing compared to his interaction with certain far-flung communities and people and relations.

Rabbi Sandler concurred with Rabbi Greenman, arguing that the Rebbe was an example for him because the Rebbe gave his time to Jews of all levels of observance:

When you see the Rebbe’s example...how he, although he could be [doing different things that would make a lot more money], still gave so much time to all different types of people.

As emissaries and as Lubavitchers Rabbi Sandler and Rabbi Greenman tried to mold themselves into what they perceived the Rebbe to be, a practitioner of outreach.

Second, emissaries understand themselves to be the handpicked disciples of the Rebbe. Rabbi Sandler argued that the distinguishing factor between emissaries and other Lubavitchers, all of whom do some outreach work, is that emissaries have the blessing of the Rebbe. One Lubavitcher told me that she went on *shlichus* because the Rebbe sent her. When pressed, she explained that she and her husband decided on their own to go on *shlichus*. Only after having made the decision did they go to the Rebbe to ask for his blessing. Nevertheless, this Lubavitcher, like the Sandler, “did feel that the Rebbe sent us.”¹³

Third, through outreach emissaries feel closer to the Rebbe. As Rabbi Sherman said, outreach work “does, certainly [make you feel closer to the Rebbe], you’re distant physically and close

¹³ In the past, emissaries were actually handpicked by the Rebbe (Rabbi Sandler; Fishman 1992:90). For the past couple of decades, Lubavitchers have decided to go on missions themselves. Before his death, their contact with the Rebbe came after making the decision to go on a mission; the prospective emissary asked for the Rebbe’s blessing. Now that he is dead, emissaries still see themselves as sent on missions by the Rebbe. According to Rabbi Sandler, Jewish law states that if a person is sent on a mission, his actions related to that mission are attributed to the sender. So, any act performed by an emissary who was sent on his mission by the Rebbe is attributed to the sender, that is, the Rebbe. If an emissary who was sent by the Rebbe sends another Lubavitcher on a mission, this act of sending is also attributed ultimately to the Rebbe. The law creates a chain of senders with the Rebbe at the top, and all of the actions that the *shluchim* do are seen as being done by the Rebbe.

spiritually.” Mrs. Sandler said that as a young child she saw how much pleasure it gave the Rebbe to send his disciples out into the world. She decided to be a *shliach*, she said, because she wanted to be a “part of the special relationship that disciples had with the Rebbe.” In this way the practice of outreach gives emissaries in particular, more than other Lubavitchers, the identity of a unique connection to the Rebbe. Since Lubavitchers are defined by their relationship with the Rebbe, the practice of *shlichus* also indexes, and communicates, a Lubavitch identity. Outreach utters Lubavitchness.

PRAGMATIC EFFECTS OF MULTIPLE VOICES: MULTIPLE COMMUNITIES

Through their multiple identities Lubavitchers exist in, participate in, and erect social bonds with members of multiple communities. The Lubavitchers’ methods of communicating with and maintaining two specific communities, the local and the missionary, shed light on how missionaries in general maintain and perpetuate their identities. It should now be clear how outreach enters the emissaries into dialogue with the Jews of Robertsville, making the missionaries into friends and role models. More intricate analysis, however, is required to understand how outreach is also a form of dialogue with the larger Lubavitch world.

Bringing Lubavitchers to Robertsville

First, despite their physical isolation all *shluchim* have a small component of the Lubavitch world with them: they have their family. As the basic unit of social life within a religion that “has no place for singles,” the Jewish family is also the primary unit that observes the rituals of the Sabbath (Davidman and Stocks 1995:115). Because the Sabbath meal is the primary form of outreach and the Sabbath meal always includes the family unit, outreach is inherently a family affair. Husband and wife support each other, work together, and speak to each other through the language of the Sabbath meal. Regardless of whether the guests recognize outreach, both the husband and the wife know when they are doing *mitzvot*. Moreover, children of *shluchim* seem to pick up on the messages contained in outreach. One family’s son had already returned to Robertsville to carry on his father’s, and the Rebbe’s, work. Two other children told me that they wanted to be emissaries when they grew up. Children of emissaries, according to Rabbi Greenman, “learn to run before they learn to walk.” They are strong, he continued, because living in a place where there is not much Judaism forces them to grow up and get in tune with the Rebbe and with outreach quicker than other children.¹⁴

Outside of their immediate family the *shluchim* in Robertsville were indeed physically isolated. Living among Jews who attend synagogue but once a year is not the same as living among Lubavitchers. The Lubavitchers in Robertsville did not, through their outreach activities, create any new Lubavitchers with whom they could establish a Lubavitch circle of friends. Although the Levis’ and Sandler’s work did encourage more Judaism among some, none of these people became Orthodox, much less Lubavitch. Rabbi Sandler regretted the lack of a study partner, which he might have had if there was another Lubavitch male his age in town (Rabbi Levi and Rabbi Sandler differed greatly in age). Outside of their family, the Lubavitch-specific messages contained in outreach went unacknowledged and unappreciated by their neighbors. Those messages were sent, instead, to others in the Lubavitch world.

¹⁴ There is little information on how many children of full-time emissaries stay in Chabad, become emissaries themselves, or leave Chabad. According to informants, all emissary children eventually go to a full-time Lubavitch yeshiva or seminary in their teenage years. Ehrlich (2004:178) mentions an increase in defections from Chabad since the death of Schneerson, and says that emissaries’ contacts with the non-ultra-Orthodox world made their departure from Chabad more viable.

A Global Lubavitch Imaginary

That world is one where utterances communicate across distance and social ties are constructed and maintained through modern technology. The Sandler's telephone was always busy. I was generally unable to reach the Greenmans by telephone. All of the *shluchim* sent their children away to school, constructing ties with larger Lubavitch localities a couple of hours away. Chabad has recently created an online school for the children of *shluchim*. The children sign on to the computer at certain hours of the day, are taught by a teacher whom they hear through headsets, and ask questions and socialize with peers through the computer, creating a global circle of friends (Silberstein 2007:2). Once a year, moreover, *shluchim* have the opportunity to attend the *shluchim* convention held in Crown Heights. To Rabbi Greenman this conference is "Israel, it's the holy water, it's not just the average conference that rabbis go to. This is the going back to your center, core of Lubavitch."

Through maintaining connections, outreach creates a global Lubavitch community that transcends face-to-face interaction. *Shluchim*, according to Rabbi Greenman, put their communities on "the Lubavitch map, which is by definition the Jewish map." One of his congregation members was fortunate enough to go on a Chabad-organized cruise in Florida. On this cruise, he responded to inquiries into his origins with little expectation of recognition, for what Jew would have any reason to know of Lolton? Much to his surprise, when hearing of Lolton, a Lubavitcher immediately exclaimed: "Oh, Rabbi Greenman!" He "couldn't believe it," said Rabbi Greenman, "he met a worldwide network right on the spot." Lubavitchers, and now this Jew, Rabbi Greenman continued, know that "no matter how isolated you are, if your community has a Lubavitch rabbi, then people are out there talking about you, you're in the books. You're linked to a worldwide organization and so you've broken a major part of the isolation." The Lubavitch world, therefore, is imagined by Lubavitchers as a global entity where *shluchim* live among the Other but are connected to each other.

Outreach creates a global Lubavitch community because as a dialogue-forming enterprise it connects Lubavitchers who live on the four corners of the earth. This nature of outreach as a Lubavitch-Lubavitch community building endeavor stands in stark contrast with the common-sense idea, exemplified by Burrige (1978:13), that missionaries build communities by converting Others. The ultimate aim of a mission, Burrige argues, "is the creation of a viable indigenous clergy and support personnel capable of maintaining an authentic Christian identity" in the new location. But, Shaffir (1974:190) asserts that even in areas with many Lubavitchers, such as Montreal, outreach was largely ineffective in bringing Jews to Chabad. Similarly, the increase of Lubavitch families, from one to two in Robertsville and from one to five in Haytown, was due entirely to immigration of new *shluchim*, not to conversion. I do not suggest that no Lubavitchers ever bring Jews to Chabad. As Rabbi Sandler, Mrs. Sandler's parents, and Rabbi Greenman all became Lubavitch later in life, clearly, somewhere in the world, Jews are becoming Lubavitch. However, those who do become Lubavitch add to the global group as a whole, not just to each locality where they live. Just as individual cells can work apart from each other but contribute to the whole, so does the work of dispersed, individual Lubavitchers contribute to building a collective that is integrated in Chabad's global imagination.

CONCLUSION

Arguments about the diffusion and spread of religions frequently hinge on missionaries as agents of change who bring a new religion to others (Montgomery 1999:45). The "chief interest of missions" must be "the moral and religious transformations which they effect" (Allon 1985:viii). In this case study, I question this conception of missionaries as well as a model of outreach as community forming through encouraging conversion. Lubavitchers are, in some

respects, unique as missionaries. They preach only to those who, some might say, are already a part of their community. Yet, their focus on other Jews may not make them particularly different. Many Christian missionaries believe that their job is to save everybody's soul. In a similar way, Lubavitchers believe that their job is to reach out to everyone with a Jewish mother. The basic idea is the same, the target population is different.

Outreach, by definition, is an act that crosses indexical boundaries. Therefore, acts of outreach or proselytizing must be multi-voiced, allowing missionaries to bridge two speech communities. One can only maintain an ideal goal of changing the practices or self-identity of Others if some dimension of one's work brings one into contact with an Other. As an Other that person is part of a different speech community and lacks the necessary knowledge to understand the indexical significance of outreach. Since the Other cannot appreciate the missionary, missionaries' actions can only have meaning if those actions are also methods of constituting their identity as members of the missionary group.

To practice outreach missionaries need not only a belief about how the world ought to be, but also a belief about who they themselves ought to be. All the ultra-Orthodox and many of the modern Orthodox Jews in this study agreed that all people with a Jewish mother should follow all Jewish laws. Yet, quiescent Jews seek isolation within a self-imposed ghetto and feel no necessity to act. The Lubavitchers with whom I interacted, in contrast, feel guilty if they "just go into business" (Rabbi Greenman). They feel it to be incumbent upon themselves to create change and be a person who, through outreach, brings the Rebbe, all Jews, and the messiah closer. They go on missions, in other words, partly because of a belief that they should cultivate the very identity that outreach, through Voice II, creates.

Without the belief that communication with the Other is integral to one's identity, religions would be centripetal, inward-seeking movements like most ultra-Orthodox sects. If communicating with Others were not also a means of communicating with one's own family and friends, then missionary work would be endlessly centrifugal. Lacking any tie to the center, missionaries spread out around the world would slowly become different from one another and cease to consider themselves a group, a network, an imagined community (Anderson 1991). One of the things that ties Lubavitch emissaries to their center is their work itself. The action of outreach is the mechanism that enters Lubavitchers into dialogues that construct Lubavitch identities and inter-Lubavitch global relationships dependent on the very fact that *shluchim* live among the Other.

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