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NEGOTIATING THE DIVIDES:
HOW ADULT CHILDREN OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS
REMEMBER THEIR ENGAGEMENT WITH
THE POPULAR CULTURE OF THE 1950s

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY
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OTTAWA, ONTARIO

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ABSTRACT

NEGOTIATING THE DIVIDES: HOW ADULT CHILDREN OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS REMEMBER THEIR ENGAGEMENT WITH THE POPULAR CULTURE OF THE 1950s

This dissertation examines how Jewish children of Holocaust survivors (COS), growing up in the 1950s in a small city in Ontario engaged with popular culture. Set within the context of a predominantly English-speaking Christian environment, this culture frequently did not represent them. It often excluded their knowledge and lived experiences and thus forced them to be silent. Utilizing an oral history approach, nine children of survivors were interviewed about their elementary school years and growing up in the fifties.

The history of postwar Canada serves as the framework for how adults remember the meanings they made of their childhood experiences and how they incorporated these stories into the personal scripts of their lives. Their memories of childhood reflect the discourses that shaped them, discourses that are situated in the language and the images of a society and within the wider historical and social structure of that society.

Individuals, however, do not fit into neat categories. Positioning their stories within the larger context of postwar Canada, while also accommodating the diverse meanings they made from their historical positions required a multi-disciplinary orientation. Therefore, a historical framework anchors the narratives and serves as a backdrop for the personal childhood memories of children of survivors. Specifically, the thesis draws on four areas of literature: the literature on children of survivors;

cultural studies, which helps make sense of the variety of experiences, their relational character and the discourses through which they operate; various historical literatures which establish the historical context for the remembered accounts; and anti-racist education which provides some of the tools for analysis.

Through their oral testimonies, we begin to see how, as children, they entered, mediated and often transformed the representations of television and the movies to create their own subjective and social possibilities. Their “narratives of redemption” enabled them to negotiate the divides between the representations of themselves and the representations of the popular culture around them.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For me, being Jewish and being the child of Holocaust survivors growing up postwar Canada meant being invisible.¹ I believed that TV programmes such as *The Donna Reed Show* and *Father Knows Best* embodied family life in North America. Not restricted only to television, popular culture images manifested themselves throughout every aspect of the popular culture around me, offering up an endless array of subject positionings that reflected neither my Jewishness nor the Holocaust, excluding the most important experiences and meanings of my world. But because “human beings are characterised by an ideal or imaginary life, where will is cultivated, dreams dreamt, and categories developed.”² I found escape in the old movies I watched on TV. The ‘Fred and Ginger’ musicals provided the narratives I needed to order my life: narratives, says Richard Johnson, that we need to “tell ourselves when we get up in the morning [and] which help us to get up and get going.”³ I willingly and lovingly appropriated these stories for myself, supplying me with the discourses for my own personal script of who I was and who I wanted to be.

In his essay, “Changing Paradigms,” David Morley observes that people are shaped by the discourses that operate on them.⁴ These discourses, reflected in the language and the images of a society, are, at the same time, “located within wider historical and social

¹ For this study, ‘survivor’ is a self-identifying term. It refers to any Jew who calls him or herself a survivor of the Holocaust.

² Richard Johnson, “What Is Cultural Studies, Anyway?” paper presented at Department of English at Instituto Universitario Orientale in Naples (April 1983), 22.

³ Johnson, “What Is Cultural Studies,” 24.

⁴ David Morley, “Changing Paradigms in Audience Studies,” in *Remote Control: Television, Audiences, and Cultural Power*, ed. Ellen Seiter, Hans Borchers, Gabriele Kreutzner, and Eva-Maria Warth (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 21.

structures or relations."⁵ The meanings I made were taken from the larger context of my social and subjective being: social because of the diverse influences in my life: subjective because they were my own meanings. At times, I was pulled in different directions, at other times I pulled, and was transformed through these pulls.

One set of meanings – being Jewish – meant being separate, being the other, that which everyone else in my neighbourhood was not. Knowles and Mercer's description of feminists helps to describe how Jews were located, that "despite [their] political and theoretical diversity . . . they have in common a recognition of themselves as a social category separating them from and placing them in opposition to others."⁶ Paul Gilroy, drawing on W.E.B. Du Bois's work, speaks of a 'double consciousness', a sense of being simultaneously within and without.⁷ This concept, being *of* a group and apart, following two different sets of values and norms, is not unfamiliar to many Jews.⁸ Television, for example, exemplified this exclusion. There were no Jewish teens on *American Bandstand*, or at least

⁵ Graeme Turner, *British Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (Cambridge, MA: Unwin Hyman, Inc., 1996), 30.

⁶ Caroline Knowles and Sharmila Mercer, "Feminism and Anti-racism: An Exploration of the Political Possibilities," in "Race", *Culture and Difference*, ed. James Donald and Ali Rattansi (London: Sage, 1992), 105.

⁷ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Bantam, 1903 [1989]); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (London: Verso, 1993), 127. Du Bois's term was used to describe the conflict between Black and American cultural identities. Black Americans, excluded from mainstream America, were prevented from developing an autonomous sense of self, forcing them to regard and evaluate their black identities through the lens of the dominant white culture.

⁸ Much of the Jewish literature and often the titles, reflect the theme of 'alternating between two worlds': David Theo Goldberg and Michael Krausz, eds., *Jewish Identity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); David M. Gordis and Yoav Ben Horin, eds., *Jewish Identity in America* (Los Angeles: Wilstein Institute, 1991); Simon Herman, *Jewish Identity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1989); Jack Kugelmass, ed., *Between Two Worlds: Ethnographic Essays on American Jewry* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); Lynne Marks, "Kale Meydelach or Shulamith Girls: Cultural Change and Continuity Among Jewish Parents and Daughters—A Case Study of Toronto's Harbord Collegiate Institute in the 1920s," *Canadian Woman Studies* 7, no 3 (1986): 295-305; Rhea Tregebov, "Origins: Writing *The Big Storm*," in *From Memory to Transformation: Jewish Women's Voices*, ed. Sarah Silberstein Swartz and Margie Wolfe (Toronto: Second Story Press, 1998), 292.

none identified as such. No one looked familiar, nor did the images feel comfortable.⁹ But sometimes, I still longed to be one of them.

Being Jewish, though, was only one of a number of possible marginalities. I was also a child of Holocaust survivors. Even that most popular of Jewish Holocaust heroines, Anne Frank, perhaps not a child of survivors but the closest recognizable public figure, was 'de-Judaized': all television and filmic representations of her Jewish identity removed to avoid generating controversy.¹⁰ This sanitized, idealized and diluted historical portrayal was the dominant story for decades, silencing other possible depictions.¹¹

While questioning my own sense of being within and without, of being Jewish and being a child of Holocaust survivors, I have also wondered if that was the way other children of survivors felt. How did they, growing up in the parochial atmosphere of the 1950s, engage with the popular culture around them? How did they negotiate the exclusions in ways that allowed for their psychic survival? What stories did they create for themselves?

⁹ Indeed, it did seem as if the most 'ethnic' character on TV was Annette Funicello but her 'marking', despite her obviously Italian name, was mainstream. See below for a discussion of the process of 'whitening' public characters in the media.

¹⁰ Deborah E. Lipstadt, "America and the Memory of the Holocaust, 1950-1965," *Modern Judaism* 16, no. 3 (October 1996), 196.

¹¹ Anne Frank's portrayals in the popular culture evolved from being the 'poster child' for the children killed in World War II to Jewish heroine to spunky, teenager to anything else writers and directors wanted her to be and has itself become the subject of numerous articles and books. See: Deborah P. Britzman, "On the Second History of Anne Frank," *Children of the Shoah: Holocaust Literature and Education* (Special issue of *Canadian Children's Literature*, 95, 25:3 [Fall 1999]): 120-140; Judith E. Doneson, *The Holocaust in American Film* (Philadelphia, New York and Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1987 [5747]); Annette Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust* (New York and Toronto: Vintage Books, 1983); Lawrence L. Langer, "The Americanization of the Holocaust on Stage and Screen," in *From Hester Street to Hollywood: The Jewish-American Stage and Screen*, ed. Cohen, Sarah Blacher, 213-230 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1983); Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999); Alvin H. Rosenfeld, "Popularization and Memory: The Case of Anne Frank," in *Lesson and Legacies: The Meaning and the Holocaust in A Changing World*, ed. Peter Hayes, 243-278 (Evanston, ILL: Northwestern University Press, 1991). Alvin H. Rosenfeld, "The Americanization of the Holocaust," *Commentary* 99, no. 6 (June 1995): 35-40; Jeffrey Shandler, *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

In his history of the baby boomers, Doug Owsram states that anyone not in the white, middle-class category was outside the mainstream story of suburbanization and mass culture.¹² But he and others writing about the 1950s would agree that those who were not in this picture – or think they did not belong – still need to tell their story. How then, did postwar youth negotiate the normalizing discourses that told them who belonged and by extension, who did not?¹³

I began with a group I know – children of Holocaust survivors – and explored what it was like growing up in the 1950s, in a small town or city – attending school, watching television, going to the movies, doing the things children usually did in that era. In the area of research on children of survivors, a large volume of literature exists. A search of titles, both in the library and on the Internet, results in hundreds of titles. But, as historians Paula J. Draper and Richard Menkis point out, there is more to do.¹⁴ In addressing the call to expand the current literature, this study asks children of survivors, now speaking as adults, to reflect back on how it felt growing up in postwar Ontario. My thesis questions revolve around their feelings and identifications with postwar discourses. How did they negotiate the divides of their worlds, the pushes and the pulls of competing narratives? How did they recognize their differences, and their similarities? Out of the contradictions, what stories of subjective and social possibility have they created? What do their stories of growing up reveal how they manipulated the images? In a society filled with familial, institutional and

¹²Doug Owsram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), xiii. For the American context see also Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

¹³ Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble With Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 169-170.

¹⁴ Paula J. Draper and Richard Menkis, "Canada, The Holocaust and Survivors: Introductory Remarks," in *New Perspectives on Canada, the Holocaust and Survivors*, ix-xvi (Special issue of *Canadian Jewish Studies* vols. 4-5 [1996-1997]. N.p.: Association for Canadian Jewish Studies, 2000), xii-xiii.

cultural silences. how do these children of survivors. now adults. remember themselves and the popular culture representations around them?

There is, as well, another aspect to my research. My area of interest includes children and anti-racist education. As a teacher, I want to know more about how children “develop their notions of ‘racial’ and ‘national’ difference from a range of conflicting official and popular discourses.”¹⁵ As well, I need to document students’ exclusions, to help me understand their “perceptions, identifications, and the imaginative projection of human limits and possibilities.”¹⁶

This story is set within the context of the years following World War II when survivors and their children began arriving in Canada. The content and material of the interview questions delineated the time period so that much of the testimonies describe their elementary school years and growing up in the fifties. Interview questions did not go beyond grades 10 or 11, the early sixties, a time of transition for all of them. Childhood and adolescence were making way for other matters – university, going away, career and other such concerns. This, then, is the ‘postwar’ period of this thesis.

Their oral testimonies, individually and collectively, reveal how the cultural and social forces mitigated and shaped their experiences and the stories they live by today. This is *their* story.

¹⁵ Leslie G. Roman and Timothy J. Stanley, “Empires, Emigrés, and Aliens: Young People’s Negotiations of Official and Popular Racism in Canada,” in *Dangerous Territories: Struggles for Difference and Equality in Education*, ed. Leslie G. Roman and Linda Eyre, 205-231 (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 225.

¹⁶ Roger I. Simon, “Introduction,” in *Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Remembrance of Historical Trauma*, ed. Roger I. Simon, Sharon Rosenberg and Claudia Eppert, 1-8 (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2000), 1.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Much has been written about the postwar years. There has, as well, been a continuously growing output in the field of Holocaust studies. Yet despite the activity, inquiries and studies of the early experiences of children generally and of children of survivors specifically, while not entirely missing from the historical picture, have failed to answer the questions of how children of survivors made meanings from the popular culture images around them. How do they, as adults, now remember the meanings they made of their childhood experiences? What influence, if any, did the normalizing discourses of the fifties exert on their lives? The start of some of the answers begins within the existing literature, but not all are in archives and libraries: they are also in the memories of people whose stories contribute to a richer history. Privileging their 'small' history does not mean abandoning the larger histories of our nation, the political and the economic developments, or the laws and policies. Their stories build on the existing research, enhancing Canadian stories, informing and adding to "our understandings of the world we inhabit."¹

Individuals, however, do not fit into neat categories. Positioning their stories within the larger context of postwar Canada, while also accommodating the diverse meanings they made from their historical subjective positions required a multi-disciplinary approach. Therefore, an historical framework anchors the narratives and serves as a backdrop for the personal childhood memories of children of survivors. This framework incorporates the relevant ideas developed within the field of cultural studies which helps make sense of the variety of experiences, their relational character and the discourses through which they operate.

¹ Tim Stanley, "Why I Killed Canadian History: Towards an Anti-Racist History in Canada," in *Social History* (Fall, 2000), 102.

As well, the thesis draws on four areas of literature: the literature on children of survivors; the discipline of cultural studies, which provides the basis for the analysis of popular culture; various historical literatures which establish the historical contexts for the remembered accounts; and the work done within the area of anti-racist education which provides some of the tools for analysis.

Beginning with the children of survivors themselves, an examination of the existing literature reveals that much of the psychological literature of the sixties and seventies spoke of trauma, of children inheriting their parents' legacy and ultimately their emotional burden. There is a need to go beyond past assumptions of a 'pathology' and to include, instead, the complexities of their lives.

Research on Children of Survivors (COS)

In Canada, scholarly research on survivors and their families, came to the public's attention in the mid sixties, more than two decades after they first settled in their new country. Vivian Rakoff, a researcher at the Jewish General Hospital in Montreal was one of the first in this country to conduct research with Holocaust survivors and their children.² Dr. Rakoff's observations of severe trauma and stress were subsequently documented in countless studies and surveys carried out by various other social, academic and medical organizations.³ The symptoms that were observed included chronic anxiety, irrational fears, sleep disturbances, depression, apathy, violence, sexual dysfunction, and an inability to find

² Two of the earliest titles are: Vivian Rakoff, "Long Term Effects of the Concentration Camp Experience," *Viewpoints* (March, 1966): 17-22; John J. Sigal and N.B. Epstein, "Children and Families of Concentration Camp Survivors," *Canada Mental Health* 14 (1966): 24-26. Note: Dr. Rakoff was not the first. Research had already begun shortly after survivors settled in Israel and North America.

³ For an overview of the literature and a thorough summary of psychological activities, refer to the "Literature" section in John J. Sigal and Morton Weinfeld in *Trauma and Rebirth: Intergenerational Effects of the Holocaust* (New York and London: Praeger, 1989).

joy, feel empathy, express love or form close relationships.⁴ Some survivors sought help in group therapy with other survivors and their children while others dealt with their past through repression.⁵ Research continued in this clinical vein until the late seventies when the publication of two personal studies redirected the focus: Dorothy Rabinowitz's *New Lives* and Helen Epstein's popular *Children of the Holocaust*.⁶ Though American in origin, Epstein's book caused quite an impact in the Jewish community. Several of Epstein's subjects were, in fact, Canadian. There were public readings and lectures. Many COS felt *they* could have written that book. The coverage crossed over into the mainstream. Suddenly children of survivors were centre stage. Adopting a journalistic approach and expressing a distrust of the psychological and psychiatric studies, Epstein conferred a public voice to the complexity of being a child of survivors. The public heard about those children who carried with them the burden of not being told enough – or absolutely nothing, in certain cases – as well as those who bore the weight of too much knowledge. While many in the community she was writing about felt a relief, others outside the group were often overwhelmed by the revelations. But despite the various feelings, the recognition of these children was finally out in the open.

In the meantime, the academic research continued. By the late eighties, there began a shift in the literature. John J. Sigal and Morton Weinfeld, a psychologist and a sociologist respectively, carrying out their studies in Montreal, were struck by the variability of how survivors and their children had not necessarily succumbed, but seemed to have dealt with

⁴ Paula J. Draper, "Canadian Holocaust Survivors: From Liberation to Rebirth," in *New Perspectives on Canada, the Holocaust and Survivors*, 39-62 (Special issue of *Canadian Jewish Studies* vols. 4-5 [1996-1997]. N.p.: Association for Canadian Jewish Studies, 2000), 56.

⁵ Sigal and Weinfeld devote an entire introductory section documenting the existing literature related to these various findings.

⁶ Helen Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1979); Dorothy Rabinowitz, *New Lives: Survivors of the Holocaust Living in America* (New York: Knopf, 1976).

the trauma of the Holocaust. Sigal and Weinfeld saw a need for “a counterpoint to most of the clinical and academic literature . . . which ha[d] emphasized impairment or dysfunction.”⁷ Set in Montreal, this scientific study included control groups drawn from “unbiased, nonclinical, and nonself-selected populations”⁸ of survivors and their children. It remains a useful tool for students of sociology, ethnic studies, history and social work as well as being applicable to other ethnic and religious groups. It became clear that there were multiple responses to being a child of survivors, and pointed to the need for further inquiry into how these children lived and coped in their everyday lives. It also brought out the need for studying these groups in settings other than large urban centres.

However, most of the work was and still is coming out of the United States. One book, *Against All Odds*,⁹ loosely follows Sigal and Weinfeld’s original intent. William Helmreich describes how well many of the Holocaust survivors and their children adjusted to their new lives in America. Considered ‘greenhorns’ by the established Jewish community whom the newcomers considered cold and distant, these survivors turned instead to their own kind and to support communal organizations such as the *landsmanschaften*.¹⁰ Overwhelmingly energetic, willful and intelligent, they succeeded in terms of upward mobility. Some amassed huge fortunes and empires. The book, mostly about the survivors themselves, is of interest for its telling of how survivors expected their children to ‘Americanize’ and become highly educated professionals, placing considerable pressure on

⁷ Sigal and Weinfeld, *Trauma and Rebirth*, xv.

⁸ Sigal and Weinfeld, *Trauma and Rebirth*, xv.

⁹ William B. Helmreich, *Against All Odds: Holocaust Survivors and the Successful Lives they Made in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992).

¹⁰ Trans.: ‘*landsmans*’ means fellow countryman, ‘*schaften*’ means organizations. These organizations ranged from the more formal to the informal, offering a spectrum of services such as credit, money and the purely social. They were organized according to the members’ towns or regions in Europe. For a comprehensive discussion of the *landsmanschaften* in a Canadian context, see Stephen Speisman, *The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979).

the second generation. In certain respects, it was not dissimilar from the earlier waves of Jewish immigrants and yet, there was a particularity to the group because of who they were and what they had lived through. Its American point of view does not diminish its value for both Jewish and other histories, including this study.

Also from the United States is *In the Shadow of the Holocaust*.¹¹ Written by Aaron Hass, a clinical psychologist and professor and who is, himself, a child of survivors, the book successfully integrates his dual and dueling points of view: the observer and the observed, an American and an immigrant, being a part of the new world, yet knowing that he was different, the insider and the outsider – a dimension of what Sigal and Weinfeld had attempted to integrate into *Trauma and Rebirth*. Using a questionnaire and subsequent interviews, Hass emphasizes his wish to repudiate past assumptions of what he also refers to as the ‘pathology’ previously attributed to children of survivors. In fact, he writes, he found less pathology than past studies had recorded. Notably, what comes through clearly in his narrative is that the second generation and their parents are not a homogeneous group. Diverse external factors such as their economic class, where they came from or the families themselves, shaped their personalities. At the same time, however, for Hass’s subjects, the Holocaust was an inescapable influence in their lives. One participant in the book comments, with an obvious degree of humour and sarcasm, that the most important event in his life happened *before* he was born.¹²

¹¹ Aaron Hass, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1990).

¹² Humour by children of survivors and their relationships with their parents has now gone from the personal to the public performance, often with hilarious results. One comedienne, Deb Filler, an Australian daughter of survivors, has produced the popular review “Punch Me in the Stomach!” She toured across North America and the show has aired on PBS. See also Shai Oster, “Dark Laughter,” *Moment Magazine* (April 1999), 50-57. Some COS have expressed themselves through the visual and the performing arts.

In Canada, much of the already small body of work in this area has been confined to dissertations at the masters and doctoral level, journal articles or chapters in books. One related example is a PhD dissertation written by Mitchell Lerner, "Themes in the Life World of Children of Survivors of the Holocaust."¹³ Lerner, also a child of survivors, integrates Helen Epstein's *Children of the Holocaust* and the 'psychotheoretical' work done with survivors and their children.¹⁴ Lerner problematizes the relationship between the German Indemnification Legislation and the role the mental health professionals played in 'evaluating' survivors for reparations. It was Lerner's intention to look at the Holocaust "as a part of the phenomenological life-world of the survivors and the children of survivors."¹⁵ trying to make sense of how the traumatic experiences of his parents would affect him and other children of survivors. His thesis is relevant because it begins to question the notion of 'normal' in relation to the child of survivor.

Two books, though not entirely devoted to children of survivors, need to be included for their relevance to this discussion. The first, *Growing Up Jewish*¹⁶ is a collection of short personal anecdotes in celebration of the remarkable Jewish settlement in Canada during this century. Prominent Jewish Canadians recall their personal memories of their families' lives and experiences in Europe and Canada spanning the early years of the century and up until the 50s. In the first chapters, contributors remember the poverty and the persecution in a social climate that was seldom hospitable or helpful. It also describes their lives as immigrants and dealing with the antagonism of the older Jewish residents who were

¹³ Mitchell Lerner, "Themes in the Life World of Children of Survivors of the Holocaust" (Ph.D. diss., York University, 1989).

¹⁴ Lerner uses the umbrella term "psychotheoretical" to refer to the psychological, the psychiatric and the psychoanalytic work done on this topic.

¹⁵ Lerner, "Themes," n.p.

¹⁶ Rosalie Sharp, Irving Abella and Edwin Goodman, eds. *Growing Up Jewish: Canadians Tell Their Own Stories* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1997).

disturbed by the newcomers' behaviour and appearance. Also, in reaction to and because of the restrictive real estate covenants, immigrant Jews tended to band together in the small downtown areas of Toronto, Winnipeg and Montreal where they found others like themselves, a situation still evident in the fifties. The last chapter of the collection, entitled "The Holocaust," shows how effective individual testimonies can be in conveying the poignant and the personal. In "From Cardiff to Canada," Julia Koschitzky relates how being only one of a handful of Jews at Northern Secondary shaped her identity.¹⁷ Becoming adept at explanations for her absences during Jewish holidays or taking part in the school choir activities – but only mouthing the words to Handel's *Messiah* at Massey Hall – were some of the strategies she used. Was it a compromise? Perhaps. Nevertheless, these ways of manoeuvring in a new environment meant more than simply surviving. They allowed her to feel as if she were like everyone else around her. She was part of the school culture. Another strategy, getting along even with kids who called you 'dirty Jew' is described in a second piece by Rosie Silberman Abella. She and her sister "learned to make friends with everyone The neighbourhood and public-school culture felt seamless, and we were an integrated part of it."¹⁸ That extra effort at pretending to be just like everyone, of wanting to fit in, is a familiar desire in the lives of many immigrants. However, Abella's remembrance opens with, "My parents spent four years in concentration camps."¹⁹ Being Jewish added an extra element into the mix: being a child of survivors, it will be shown, added even more of an edge.

¹⁷ Julia Koschitzky, "From Cardiff to Canada," in *Growing Up Jewish: Canadians Tell Their Own Stories*, ed. Rosalie Sharp, Irving Abella, and Edwin Goodman, 191-195 (McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1997), 193.

¹⁸ Rosie Abella, "Holocaust Imprint," in *Growing Up Jewish: Canadians Tell Their Own Stories*, eds. Rosalie Sharp, Irving Abella, and Edwin Goodman, 215-218 (McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1997), 216-217.

¹⁹ Abella, "Holocaust Imprint," 215.

The second book, *From Memory to Transformation: Jewish Women's Voices*, is also a collection of essays, but this book addresses the silences and absences in Jewish women's lives.²⁰ Two short contributions by daughters of survivors talk of their attempts, through various means and expressions, to come to terms with their heritage, reconciling their history with their real-life experiences. In one, Helena Feinstadt and Sandra Finkelman, both therapists and both daughters of survivors, together with others like them, have shown how difficult it is to separate the Holocaust from the many other influences in their lives.²¹ Factors such as gender, being an immigrant, being Jewish and one's birth order were some of the issues the women explored in their bi-weekly sessions, the summary of which appears in this volume. The use of first-person recollections brings an immediacy to the topic and the beginnings of an understanding of how daughters of Holocaust survivors resisted and survived in an unfamiliar cultural environment. Their sessions and issues, the bonds between survivor and child, along with the fact that children of survivors make up a substantial portion of the Jewish community, points to the need to expand the discussion within the historical context.

These voices lead to more questions. What stories did these children of survivors tell themselves? Did the Holocaust affect the *lived* experiences of the children? How did one's multiple loyalties – for example, being Jewish in a Christian country – play itself out? These questions are, writes Morton Weinfeld, now part of the fastest growing areas of Holocaust research and writing in both the United States and Israel.²² Weinfeld divides the

²⁰ Sarah Silberstein Swartz and Margie Wolfe, eds. *From Memory to Transformation: Jewish Women's Voices* (Toronto: Second Story Press, 1998).

²¹ Helena Feinstadt and Sandra Finkelman, "Daughters of Holocaust Survivors: Some Central Issues," in *From Memory to Transformation: Jewish Women's Voices*, ed. Sarah Silberstein Swartz and Margie Wolfe, 62-71 (Toronto: Second Story Press, 1998).

²² Morton Weinfeld, "Research on Holocaust Survivors in Canada," in *New Perspectives on Canada, the Holocaust and Survivors* (Special issue of *Canadian Jewish Studies* vols. 4-5 [1996-1997]), ed. Paula J. Draper and Richard Menkis, 135-138 (N.p.: Association for Canadian Jewish Studies, 2000), 136.

field into three areas of focus: the first chronicles the individual struggles of survivors and their families – that includes the psychological effects and economic consequences; the second deals with the various relationships between the host Jewish communities and the arrival of the survivors; and the third talks about the larger host society and its policies. However, Weinfeld adds, “published Canadian scholarly literature on these themes is sparse.”²³

Another book, though mostly concerned with survivors, Franklin Bialystok’s volume *Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community*, finally presents a wholly Canadian perspective. By integrating both oral testimony and written historical sources, Bialystok, again also a child of survivors, answers two major questions: what was the impact of the Holocaust on the Canadian Jewish Community; and what were the reasons for the delay in acknowledging their experiences and their voices? Two of the book’s chapters, “*Greener and Gayle: The Arrival of Survivors in the Late 1940s*” and “‘Europe’s ghosts in Canadian living rooms’: The Canadian Jewish Community in the 1950s,” tell the story from the survivors’ point of view, the first treatment that has documented this subject so comprehensively. These two chapters in particular are extremely valuable because they provide data and interviews conducted with survivors who settled in Canada after the war. The book fulfills several requirements for this thesis: it adds to the context of the Jewish secondary literature; and it is Canadian, a needed contribution in the usual flood of American titles. We have still to hear from how the children adjusted to their new Canadian environment because Bialystok has chosen to interview only those survivors who were politically active within the community.²⁴ Also, Bialystok’s survivor

²³ Weinfeld, “Research,” 137.

²⁴ This was a deliberate decision made by the author: *Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities*, ACJS (Association of Canadian Jewish Studies), Friday, May 25, 2001.

communities are, like most of the existing literature, situated in larger urban centers, ignoring the vital pockets of Jewish life which thrived in smaller cities and towns.²⁵ Accordingly, my thesis seeks out those children of survivors who did not have the support of large numbers of children like themselves. How did they, a minority within a minority, manage in a culture that often told them they did not belong, even if some were born here and knew no other country? They were Jewish and their parents were Holocaust survivors. So how did these factors influence their childhood meanings – if they did at all – and how do they now remember their early childhood and adolescent experiences?

In summary, a review of the literature shows the importance of avoiding assumptions of pathology. It also shows the need for a focus on children as an important addition to the literature. But privileging and analyzing the meanings children of survivors made from the culture around them, required more than one singular approach.

²⁵ There are charming examples of personal memoirs, oral histories, biographies and larger histories written about growing up in smaller Jewish communities in Canada. However, the authors and the characters tend to be one or two generations removed from the immigrant experience. A few titles are: Alison Joanne Kahn, *Listen While I Tell You: A Story of the Jews of St. John's Newfoundland* (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1987); Sharon Kirsh, "A Handful of Memories," in *From Memory to Transformation: Jewish Women's Voices*, eds. Sarah Silberstein Swartz and Margie Wolfe, 294-298 (Toronto: Second Story Press, 1998); Fredelle Bruser Maynard, *Raisins and Almonds* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1972); Morley Torgov, *A Good Place to Come From* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986). Kirsh has also written a delightful young adult novel, *Fitting In*, that describes the antisemitism of her childhood in the 1960s in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Cultural Studies

In order to account for the plurality of people's historical subjective positions and their engagements with popular culture, the theoretical orientation of this thesis incorporates ideas developed in cultural studies, a field that "recognizes the relationship between culture, cultural production and asymmetrical power relations in society."²⁶ Cultural studies is not only committed to examining and understanding the conditions and practices of cultural production, it is also constant in its challenge of the status quo. Cultural studies provides a means of inquiry that studies not only culture but also the "readings" of culture. Its commitment to the "local" and the social, helps to contextualize how culture is consumed and read by individuals and groups on many different levels. It is about individuals who exist "severally, holding within themselves different and contending conceptions of their place in the world."²⁷

Cultural studies, writes Richard Johnson, treats subjectivity as a sociocultural construction and "is about the historical forms of consciousness or subjectivity, or the subjective forms we live by."²⁸ Subjectivity within cultural studies is "the process by which individuals work themselves into social structures." It is not essential or biological but is historically produced and contingent and therefore open to change.²⁹ The process is about people who "have existed severally, holding within themselves different and contending conceptions of their place in the world."³⁰ Their meanings are to be found in social

²⁶ Frances Henry and Carol Tator, *Racist Discourse in Canada's English Print Media* (Toronto: The Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2000), 14.

²⁷ Joy Parr, "Gender History and Historical Practice," in *Gender and History in Canada*, ed. Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld, 8-27 (Toronto: Copp Clark Ltd., 1996), 16.

²⁸ Richard Johnson, "What Is Cultural Studies Anyway?" paper presented at Department of English at Instituto Universitario Orientale in Naples (April 1983), 22.

²⁹ Frigga Haug, ed. *Female Sexualization*, trans. Erica Carter (London: Verso, 1987), 59.

³⁰ Parr, "Gender History," 16.

relations, communication and cultural politics. The historical framework of this study is influenced by the theoretical approach offered by cultural studies.

When a shift occurred in the relationships between literature and art on the one hand and history and contemporary society on the other, cultural studies grew out of "a belief that reality can only be made sense of through language or other cultural systems which are embedded within history."³¹ The field appropriated elements from various disciplines to analyze the popular culture of "the people", those not-so-famous, those who had not been heard from before.³² The "local" and the familiar became topics of interest and study. Cultural studies accommodates stories of how human beings live, become conscious and sustain themselves subjectively.

Richard Johnson talks of the production, circulation and the consumption of cultural products and of subjective forms as central to the cultural studies project.³³ The "reading" of "cultural products, social practices, even institutions, as 'texts' [is perhaps] the most important theoretical strategy cultural studies has developed."³⁴ This includes the analysis of a text or texts, the reading and the interpretation. As well, the notions of desire and power are implicated within the readings.³⁵ But cultural studies is not just about analyzing texts: it is about how texts get used in particular ways: what is being produced outside and inside the reader. Rather than a text which stands "as a self-sufficient entity that bears its own

³¹ Tony Watkins, "Cultural Studies, New Historicism and Children's Literature," in *Literature for Children: Contemporary Criticism*, ed. Peter Hunt, 173-195 (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 175.

³² See also Kay Anderson and Fay Gale, "Introduction," in *Inventing Places: Studies in Cultural Geography*, ed. Kay Anderson and Fay Gale, 1-12 (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire/Wiley Halsted Press, 1992).

³³ Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies," 26-30.

³⁴ Graeme Turner, *British Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (Cambridge, MA: Unwin Hyman, Inc., 1996), 81.

³⁵ Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies," 40. See also Watkins, "Cultural Studies."

meaning and exerts a similar influence on all its readers."³⁶ in cultural studies, the text is a means: a 'place' where meaning is struggled for and where individuals negotiate within specific historical settings and circumstances.

Stuart Hall and David Morley attempt to account for the social positions people take up in this reading process in response to media models. In this area of cultural inquiry, reading becomes a negotiation between the reader and the text – in resistance to or compliance with the dominant culture. By not restricting itself exclusively to print, cultural studies analyzes "how textual, aural, and visual representations are produced, organized and distributed through a variety of cultural forms such as the media, popular culture, film, advertising, mass communications, and other modes of cultural production."³⁷ Postwar popular culture, it will be shown, exerted a tremendous social influence, particularly those representations broadcast through the new medium of television. These images played a powerful and transforming role in society.

The concepts and approaches of cultural studies may vary, but the object of study is still culture and the most essential concept in understanding culture is language: language on its own or language appropriated for understanding other cultural systems. Graeme Turner credits Ferdinand de Saussure for our fuller understanding of how the word is constructed, not given. "Language is cultural, not natural, and so the meanings it generates are too."³⁸ When language becomes understood as a system of relationships, of categories and distinctions within the culture, it allows for a means of applying linguistic principles to non-linguistic systems. Moreover, if cultural systems can be analyzed like languages,

³⁶ Watkins, "Cultural Studies," 176.

³⁷ Henry A. Giroux, "Doing Cultural Studies: Youth and the Challenge of Pedagogy," *Harvard Educational Review* 64, 3 (1994), 299.

³⁸ Turner, *British Cultural Studies*, 13.

culture itself becomes a *signifying* practice with its own product – culture such as that depicted on 1950s television – where meaning is generated and experienced, where people’s social realities are experienced, constructed, and interpreted. TV, its images and discourses, becomes a text for analysis.

A textual analysis within a cultural studies framework takes into account signs, the smallest unit of communication. A culturally enriched sign, which can be a word, a photograph, an image or a sound, can be stitched together with other signs – similar to the metaphor – to reinforce the stories we live by, stories which become taken-for-granted, the norm. The combinations of signs in the language system – advertising and television being clear demonstrations of the processes of signification – produce culturally specific discourses within historical moments. In this case, the term *discourse* “refers to socially produced groups of ideas or ways of thinking that can be tracked in individual texts or groups of texts, but that also demand to be located within wider historical and social structures or relations.”³⁹ Discourses help us make sense of the events and people in our lives. As a child, watching the old movies on television, contextual sites such as the Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers musicals constituted one of the spaces where I, an immigrant child, could negotiate and express multiple and oppositional meanings in relation to the dominant North American culture around me.⁴⁰ Fred and Ginger were added to the repertoire of the other myths I created for myself. But just as I willingly appropriated the texts of the musicals for their codes of romance and elegance, so too, do today’s teenagers when they watch a television programme such as “Friends”. Here they can seek transformation and renewal in the perfect bodies of the characters, their perfect relationships and their perfect

³⁹ Turner, *British Cultural Studies*, 30.

⁴⁰ David Morley, “Changing Paradigms in Audience Studies,” in *Remote Control: Television, Audiences, and Cultural Power*, ed. Ellen Seiter, Hans Borchers, Gabriele Kreutzner and Eva-Maria Warth, 16–43 (London and New York: Routledge, 1989).

lives. In Angela McRobbie's world, meanings come together on the streets of West London where multi-cultural, often violent subcultures, intersected by 'race', ethnicity, gender and sexuality, routinely appropriate different cultural forms and make them their own.⁴¹ In Canadian suburbs, white, middle-class boys listen to the white 'gangsta' rapper Eminem: they walk the walk and talk the talk, buying into the discourses of violence and rebellion and creating their own history. Icons of pop culture such as Madonna embody the endless transformative possibilities. Anywhere could stand in as a site of contestations.

Culture is always dynamic, often mimetic and our lived experiences are formed within the culture *through* these varied discourses – not *by* discourses – and are connected to every aspect of our lives: from social institutions, aesthetic productions, political systems and economic structures to ideological belief systems and to the material circumstances of life. Experience constructs identities and yet, identities are never fixed. They assume specificity in a given context, in a certain social setting or they occur within a particular set of historical circumstances. Avtar Brah writes: "Our struggles over meaning are also our struggles over different modes of being."⁴² and our different identities are distinguished by a wide range of individual differences, intersected by 'race', ethnicity, gender, class and age. Stuart Hall, in accounting for the pluralism of being black, utilizes the principles of cultural studies:

What is at issue here is the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category black: that is, the recognition that black is essentially a politically and culturally *constructed* category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed transcultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantees in Nature.⁴³

⁴¹ Angela McRobbie, *Postmodernism and Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

⁴² Avtar Brah, "Difference, Diversity and Differentiation," in *'Race', Culture and Difference* 126-145 (London: Sage, 1992), 142.

⁴³ Stuart Hall, "New Ethnicities," in *'Race', Culture and Difference*, eds. James Donald and Ali Rattansi, 252-259 (London: SAGE, 1992), 254.

As with Hall's community of Black youth, children of Holocaust survivors were positioned at the intersection of multiple subjectivities that were socially and historically contingent. Cultural studies allows a 'reading' of how they created representations of themselves out of the popular cultural images of their youth. Their discourses are tied in to a major principle of cultural studies and that is ideology.

Ideology

Questions of what Hall refers to as the "extraordinary diversity" of individual subject positions and negotiations is central to the basic tenet that is at the very foundation of cultural studies: ideology.⁴⁴ For Graeme Turner, it is *the* most important conceptual category. Ideology, inextricably tied into language and held together by discourses, is a system of beliefs and ideas which forms and shapes our consciousness of reality. The cultural perspective, "through which men interpret, make sense of, experience and 'live' the material conditions in which they find themselves."⁴⁵ draws on *critical* Marxism and on Althusserian interpretations of ideology.⁴⁶ Ideology, a conceptual framework, becomes a site of contestation and resistance against the dominant discourse as it is "linked to perceived needs, hopes, and fears."⁴⁷ Ideologies, in turn, are inextricably tied into the concept of 'hegemony', "the processes by which people's everyday common-sense understandings are shaped by, and brought into conformity with, the existing social and economic system."⁴⁸ Theorists such as Morley and Hall and sociologists Frances Henry and

⁴⁴ Watkins, "Cultural Studies," 177.

⁴⁵ Turner, *British Cultural Studies*, 25.

⁴⁶ Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies;" Turner, *British Cultural Studies*; Watkins, "Cultural Studies."

⁴⁷ Henry and Tator, *Racist Discourse*, 15.

⁴⁸ Barry Troyna and Richard Hatcher, *Racism in Children's Lives: A Study of Mainly-White Primary Schools* (London: Routledge, 1992), 46.

Carol Tator reveal how dominant media discourses can be manipulated to normalize the status quo. But this line of inquiry reaches beyond simply the social practices of media production. Ideology organizes our ideas and systems of communication and language and it is language which saturates ideology and infuses power into those discourses. Never neutral or objective, language and discourse draw upon myth and fantasy in the bombardment of the messages around us everyday. It is because of these elements that Turner describes cultural studies as a means "of inquiry into the material, social and historical conditions of ideological formations."⁴⁹ One key word here is 'material'. Ideology, in this discussion, is not wholly autonomous or the *only* determining influence in people's lives. Neither is material reality "skirted if not ignored outright."⁵⁰ as some critics fear. It will be shown that often, transformation, agency and hegemonic resistance do take place within material structures such as class. One need not be slavish to one idea over another in order to use those methodological innovations needed for a research study.⁵¹

It is important to repeat the idea that culture is not static. Raymond Williams asserts that it is the most difficult word in the world. Nor is culture rigidly dependent on the forces of the economy. Culture, within the project of cultural studies, is a process that attempts to interrogate a variety of ideological discourses in terms of how human beings value, interact, articulate and gain knowledge and meaning of their lives and society. The ability to act as a thinking, feeling subjective being leads to the individual's identity, the ability to play out his or her script in a particular time and place. Cultural studies, to counter the criticism that it is

⁴⁹ Turner, *British Cultural Studies*, 25.

⁵⁰ Bryan D. Palmer, *Descent into Discourse: The Reification of Language and the Writing of Social History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 201.

⁵¹ Mariana Valverde, "As if Subjects Existed: Analysing Social Discourses," *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 28, 2 (May 1991), 177.

sheer romanticism, is a "dual commitment to description and intervention."⁵² a way of liberating silenced subjugated knowledges and voices too long out at the margins. It can be a subversive project on behalf of and by the marginalized and oppressed in society, trying to make sense of the conditions of production. Stereotypes, for example, are one kind of manifestation. Based on the belief that individuals have some capacity for agency and for resistance and are perhaps able to exert some influence on the world, the value of cultural studies for this study goes beyond mere idealism to a process of raising awareness and thus challenging a status quo.

Identity

It is the individual, his or her identity, that is another key element within the cultural studies framework. Two aspects of identity pertain more particularly to this study: first is the challenge of the Enlightenment notion of a unified self, an identity which reacts uniformly to the cultural processes operating in the world; and second is the premise that the individual within this analytic positioning is a social being, one who possesses a socially produced sense of identity, one who can exist severally within categories of being. Stuart Hall, working with forms of narrative in people's lives and whose cultural research influences the cultural studies impulse of this thesis, argues that the concept of identity is not a stable, reified thing but is, in our fragmented and fractured times, relational, subject to history, constantly in the process of change and transformation:⁵³ not biological or somehow natural, states cultural theorist Graeme Turner, but a subject who is socially

⁵² Jennifer Daryl Slack and Laurie Anne Whitt, "Ethics and Cultural Studies," in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler, 571-592 (New York: Routledge, 1992), 572.

⁵³ Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," in *Modernity and Its Futures (Understanding Modern Societies: An Introduction)*, ed. Stuart Hall, David Held and Tony McGrew, 273-325 (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992).

constructed. "inhabiting a range of competing and apparently inconsistent subjectivities."⁵⁴ Treating one independently of the others inevitably creates distortions and misrepresentations. Individuals might be products of those discourses acting on them but discourses are also where their experiences become comprehensible. Whether discourses manifest themselves in oral, manuscript or informational form, they have the power not only to "regulate social practices as well as understandings of self and other, they make possible articulations of the subject...of history itself."⁵⁵ In turn, when subject beings experience a text such as television or film, to name only two possible sites, they have the opportunity to transform the product, often remaking discourses for their own purposes in order to make sense of the world.⁵⁶

Textual and intra-textual readings cannot simply remain culturally specific. For Richard Johnson, as previously stated, the text is only a *means* to understanding the 'moment' of circulation – the historical context.⁵⁷ Dealing with such complex concepts requires problematizing the "different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions."⁵⁸ A person's subjectivity is not constructed in uncomplicated, homogenous ways and therefore must be contextualized within the historical period. Hall's theory of text allows for a measure of negotiated or oppositional readings of the text by the 'readers'. This insight means that individuals do not necessarily passively accept a textual meaning intended by the originator of the text. Operating on the premise that identification

⁵⁴ Turner, *British Cultural Studies*, 29.

⁵⁵ Carmen Luke, *Constructing The Child Viewer: A History of the American Discourse on Television and Children, 1950-1980* (New York: Praeger, 1990), 5.

⁵⁶ Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies and the Centre: Some Problematics and Problems," in *Culture, Media, Language*, ed. Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe, and Paul Willis, 15-47 (London: Hutchinson, 1980), 33.

⁵⁷ Johnson, *What is Cultural Studies*, 58.

⁵⁸ Stuart Hall, *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 4.

is not a simple process and accounting for a person's cultural background and history, it can be seen that some people might accept most or some of the text's message, while others reject it almost entirely, preferring an oppositional reading of the text.⁵⁹ My questions deal with each person's historical subjective position to learn if she or he is part of a shared context or are they completely different or more likely, combinations thereof. This approach is an integral aspect of theorist Paul Gilroy's work. His critique of ethnic absolutism – the idea that identity or identification is unchanging – addresses cultural processes that are, it seems, always in a state of flux.⁶⁰ Both he and Hall provide strong arguments for how subjects – in both their cases, black youth – can occupy numerous identifications and not have to choose one over the other.⁶¹ I also attempt to understand how adults, through their memories of childhood, develop their discursive relationships with the culture around them, how they understood what it meant to be 'normal', how they learned who belonged and why. In this thesis, the gaze will be directed towards children of Holocaust survivors living in smaller Jewish communities in postwar Ontario.

The multiplicity of approaches in cultural studies, to paraphrase Stuart Hall, gathers every intellectual resource to understand the lives we live and the society we live in. I sought to bring to this study, "a hitherto neglected layer of analysis . . . namely the importance of local and regional identities."⁶² Cultural studies offered a new vocabulary and a new language which moved from a simplistic model of identity to a discussion of the possibilities of multiple identifications: being within and without, not one or the other but

⁵⁹ Stuart Hall, "New Ethnicities," 255.

⁶⁰ Paul Gilroy, "Ethnic Absolutism and Cultural Studies," in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992).

⁶¹ Stuart Hall, "New Ethnicities."

⁶² David Parker, *Through Different Eyes: The Cultural Identities of Young Chinese People in Britain* (Brookfield, VT: Avebury, 1995), 31.

being and belonging severally. It is a subjectivity born of desire and possibility and transformation. Another reason for wanting to speak is the need to be heard, to not “just record stories [but] needing to relate them to broader historical movements and social relations.”⁶³ The narrative process and its collective re-telling ties together “the disparate discursive elements into a meaningful construction around which lives are structured and evaluated.”⁶⁴ Not only is there an element of unity and constancy in these stories, there is as well the beginning of addressing past omissions in historical narratives.

Cultural studies is an extremely useful perspective because it appropriates those disciplines the researcher deems necessary in order to achieve a richer understanding of practices that do not always fall neatly into universal categories. Individual consumption and production can be contentious and painful; it can be hopeful and optimistic. In fact, it can be combinations of a myriad of human practices and expressions. In addition to the historical framework underpinning this dissertation, the narratives of individuals required interpretive tools developed by both theoreticians and practitioners who have worked with language and narrative, with memory and the strategies adopted and adapted by people trying to make sense of their experiences. Often, and without noticing, “each of us imposes a ‘plot’ on our daily existence, picking and choosing and arranging details to make sense of it and prepare each day for the next one.”⁶⁵ The theories incorporated in this thesis are shaped by linguistic approaches, exploring the construction of subjectivity and cultural meaning through language. These positions generally argue that “experience has no

⁶³ Parker, *Through Different Eyes*, 32.

⁶⁴ Parker, *Through Different Eyes*, 33.

⁶⁵ Anderson and Gale, “Introduction,” 2

inherent essential meaning.”⁶⁶ because each one of us takes up multiple subject positions in our lives.

This study draws and builds on the work of authors who view culture as a *process* in which people are actively engaged. Culture in this sense is “a dynamic mix of symbols, beliefs, languages and practices that people create,”⁶⁷ which people use to construct their own culture made up of their own stories. Practitioners such as Carolyn Steedman and Roger Simon, and theoreticians such as Peter Brooks and Frigga Haug work to discover how fragmented and conflicted memories are engaged.⁶⁸ Their theories and ideas were guideposts that went into the construction of the historical structure.

Peter Brooks’s conceptual framework for analyzing literature departs from what he describes as the ‘embarrassing’ and ‘traditional’ psychoanalytic literary criticism that imposed reductive structures of meaning on their objects of analysis – the author, the reader, or the fictive persons of the text.⁶⁹ Instead, Brooks argues that the plots in people’s stories, which are the threads linking the dynamic processes of the narrative, should be the object of analysis. It is the stories themselves that reflect the stubborn attempts of individuals trying to make sense of their lives.⁷⁰ Narrative – Brooks calls it a ‘desire machine’ – “is kinetic and intimately bound with and by dynamics of memory, hope and desire.”⁷¹ The internal

⁶⁶ Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Post-structuralist Theory* (Oxford and New York: Basic Blackwell, 1987), 34.

⁶⁷ Anderson and Gale, “Introduction,” 3.

⁶⁸ Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984) and *Psychoanalysis and Storytelling* (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1994); Frigga Haug, ed. *Female Sexualization*, trans. by Erica Carter (London: Verso, 1987); Carolyn Steedman, *The Tidy House*, (London: Virago, 1982). See below for further discussion.

⁶⁹ Brooks, *Psychoanalysis*, 20-21.

⁷⁰ Brooks, *Reading*, 323.

⁷¹ Judith P. Robertson, Eugenia Gritziotis and Tony Campbell, “The Psychological Uses of Ruthlessness in a Children’s Fantasy Tale: Beatrix Potter and *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*,” *Changing English* 7, 2 (2000), 180.

energies and tensions, the compulsions, the resistances and the desires are a way of coping with the reality of our being, in the body and in our time. Brooks's adaptation of psychoanalysis to literary criticism helps the listener/interviewer – in this case, the researcher – look for and recognize the intertwining forces of desire operating in the narrative. The value of the psychoanalytic model of reading for Brooks is a “referential function where reference is understood not as a naming of the world.”⁷² but rather, the “*movement of reference*” occurring in the transference of narrative between the teller and the listener, in both directions. In the movement, change is produced and with this change comes interpretation and construction: “the tale told makes a difference.”⁷³

The social and the cultural, however, need a framework to describe the historical context of the early years of these children of survivors. Therefore, this thesis incorporates the multiple historical literatures of the postwar years in Canada. This body of literature, it will be shown, serves as a cultural and social backdrop to the childhood memories of the participants in this study.

As well, the literature includes various American sources. The proximity and the unavoidable exposure to the images coming out of New York and Los Angeles requires the discussion and inclusion of the relevant historical literature as it applies to Canada in the years following World War II.

⁷² Brooks, *Psychoanalysis*, 72.

⁷³ Brooks, *Psychoanalysis*, 72.

Historical Literature

The 1950s

In the years following 1945, the United States was in its ascendancy. Canada, also enjoying the benefits of peace, was soon to share in the era of unprecedented prosperity.⁷⁴ It was a time of change. Prosperity was on the minds of Canadians and at the heart of St. Laurent's 1949 election platform.⁷⁵ Media such as magazines, and shortly television, depicted an ideal domestic world of happy families. It seemed as if adorable Dick and Jane prototypes – the ever-popular books read by parents and their children – grew up to be clean-cut boys in white buckskin shoes and perky, pony-tailed girls in pink, poodle skirts. Images depicted families who were living in newly-built suburban houses with a brand new car parked in the driveway, shiny in all its chromed glory. But as Valerie Korinek demonstrates in her analysis of *Chatelaine* magazines in the 50s and 60s, there were cracks beneath the shiny surface.⁷⁶ The story of the fifties reveals a complex reality that requires delving through its multiple layers. Therefore, in unraveling the stories, diverse sources and materials are incorporated, some of which might not necessarily “fit within the predominant nationalist framework that shapes most historical writing about Canada.”⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Robert Bothwell, Ian M. Drummond and John England, eds., *Canada Since 1945: Power, Politics, and Provincialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989); J.M. Bumsted, “Canada and American Culture in the 1950s,” in *Interpreting Canada's Past*, ed. J.M. Bumsted, 398–411 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986); Francois Ricard, *The Lyric Generation: The Life and Times of the Baby Boomers*, trans. Donald Winkler (Don Mills, ON: Stoddart, 1994); Alexander Ross, *The Booming Fifties: 1850/1960* (Toronto: Natural Science of Canada, Limited, 1977).

⁷⁵ Bothwell et al. *Canada Since 1945*, 117, 477.

⁷⁶ Valerie J. Korinek, *Roughing it in the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000). See also Joy Parr, ed., *A Diversity of Women* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992). These are by no means the only two titles. Others I found useful are incorporated during the course of this discussion.

⁷⁷ Stanley, “Why, I Killed,” 80. See also Sharon Anne Cook, Lorna R. McLean and Kate O'Rourke, eds., *Framing Our Past: Canadian Women's History in the Twentieth Century* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill University Press, 2001).

In *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History*, editors Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman state that history "is a retelling and rethinking of human experience."⁷⁸ Therefore, before examining how individuals in this study were affected, it serves this discussion to present an overview of Canada in the years following the war. Robert Bothwell's historical account, *Canada Since 1945*, is an excellent starting point for a nationalist point of view. References from many sources such as *The Canada Year Book*, *The Canadian Encyclopedia* and Statistics Canada provide both a solid statistical and empirical foundation to the events and the people who shaped the political and economic landscape of postwar Canada and which also affected the lives of immigrants. The authors, drawing from various related fields, include more scholarly works, key institutional papers, memoirs and established writers.⁷⁹ Recognizing that there was no *one* development that had priority in the shaping of our society, the authors interweave the political with the social and, significantly for this discussion, the cultural developments. The inclusion of cultural moments – both 'high' and 'low' – are part of the historical retelling and underline the importance of popular culture in the life of a country.

A history such as Bothwell's, however, with its focus primarily on those who participated in the critical events in the building of this country and even with the inclusion of the social and cultural contexts, has resulted in a retelling of one view of Canada's history, one that affected *all* its citizens.⁸⁰ Bothwell himself writes that there are gaps. Certainly, there have always been attempts to tell other people's stories but the movement towards inclusion gained greater impetus when feminist scholars began to question the

⁷⁸ Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman, "Introduction," in *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History*, eds. Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman, 1-10 (Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1997), 1.

⁷⁹ Refer to Bothwell et al, Chapter 1, "Beginnings" and to "Select Bibliography".

⁸⁰ A.B. McKillop, "Who Killed Canadian History? A View from the Trenches," *Canadian Historical Review* 80, 2 (June 1999), 273.

absences and the silences of historical analysis.⁸¹ We needed, they asserted, to tell those other stories which were part of history but had been left in the shadows.⁸² It was felt that if men alone were the makers of history, how difficult it must have been for others to see themselves in the picture. Most of these others – the majority of the population – had too often been left out. The exclusion of native peoples, eastern and western citizens, rural folk, most working class members, non-charter ethnic groups, almost all women, and children distorted our picture of society.

But moving other people's histories to centre stage and affirming that yes, they do matter, has been a hard sell. Often, there is a reluctance to accept their experiences as worthy of examination.⁸³ For example, a culture rooted in friendships and family, in its rituals and traditions, even in private organizations and institutions, does not lend itself to the same interrogation as men's or the elite's culture.⁸⁴ Expanding the boundaries and allowing alternate voices to speak would result, however, in an analysis that helps to understand the world we *all* inhabit.⁸⁵ Drawing from diverse written and oral sources offers

⁸¹ See Alison Prentice, Alison Bourne, Gail Cuthbert Brandt, Beth Light, Wendy Mitchinson and Naomi Black, "Introduction," in *Canadian Women: A History 12-15* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Company, Canada, 1996).

⁸² Strong-Boag and Fellman, "Introduction," 1.

⁸³ For a discussion of the debate see McKillop, "Who Killed Canadian History?"

⁸⁴ Refer to Jean Burnet, ed., *Looking into My Sister's Eyes: An Exploration in Women's History* (Toronto: Multicultural Historical Society of Ontario, 1986); Ruth A. Frager, *Sweatshop Strife: Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement of Toronto 1900-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Dominique Jean, "Family Allowances and Family Autonomy: Quebec Families Encounter the Welfare State, 1945-1955," in *Canadian Family History*, ed. Bettina Bradbury, 401-437 (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1992); Meg Luxton, "Two Hands for the Clock: Changing Patterns in the Gendered Division of Labour in the Home," in *Canadian Family History*, ed. Bettina Bradbury 304-318 (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1992); Carmela Patrias and Ruth A. Frager, "'This Is Our Country, These Are Our Rights': Minorities and the Origins of Ontario's Human Rights Campaigns," in *The Canadian Historical Review* 92, 1 (March 2001): 1-35; Joan Sangster, *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920-1950* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1989); Shirley Tillotson, "Human Rights Law as Prism: Women's Organizations, Unions, and Ontario's Female Employees Fair Remuneration Act, 1951," *Canadian Historical Review*, LXXII, 4 (December 1991): 532-557.

⁸⁵ Stanley, "Why I Killed," 102.

a re-framing of history, one that is more inclusive while still adhering to the “generally accepted standards of historical criticism.”⁸⁶

Drawing on many of the same “official” sources as Bothwell’s history, Joy Parr’s *Domestic Goods: The Material, the Moral, and the Economic in the Postwar Years*.⁸⁷ focuses on the more intimate and personal aspects of women’s lives. She utilizes a wide array of research data that includes government policies, economic theory and design literature, as well as interviews with women. Cutting across several disciplines, Parr reveals how the economic and political developments directly affected the individuals she interviewed, as they did the participants that were interviewed for this thesis. By pointing the lens of inquiry at the Canadian consumer, in a particular time and place, Parr demonstrates how the actions and laws of a government could affect individuals and vice versa. Parr is at her best describing the view from below, the daily life and concerns of Canadian housewives and the roles they played in the history of the fifties. It is a view that positions consumption and the new postwar products as a central concern of postwar life.

She begins by presenting two commonly held but opposing views of postwar Canada: that Canadians were part of the consumer trends occurring within American society; or that Canadians were extraordinarily prudent and careful in their buying habits. Parr treads the middle ground on these two issues. Borrowing the words of two British geographers, Parr notes that Canadians were indeed “characteristically more subdued”⁸⁸ in their consumption habits. Parr’s book reveals how Canadians exhibited a level of resistance

⁸⁶ Stanley, “Why I Killed,” 80.

⁸⁷ Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods: The Material, the Moral, and the Economic in the Postwar Years* (Toronto, London and New York: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

⁸⁸ Parr, *Domestic Goods*, 267.

to what was being offered.⁸⁹ It is a history about individuals and the choices they made everyday.

Individuals and the choices they faced is also the subject matter of two books: *The Trouble with Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality* and *Normalizing the Ideal: Psychology, Schooling, and the Family in Postwar Canada*.⁹⁰ Authors Mary Louise Adams and Mona Gleason both explore how the notion of ‘normalcy’ gripped the Canadian psyche as peace began to re-establish itself in the years immediately following the war. So-called experts, usually males, from every field and occupation took part in this campaign. Psychiatrists, psychologists, radio hosts, ministers, all seemed to be preoccupied with defining who was normal and by extension, who was not. Both formal and informal venues and institutions participated: programmes on TV, sermons from the pulpit and sex education in schools joined in the crusade to make sure the message was sent out. However, the consequences of this postwar social climate often caused those who did not fit in great pain. The strength of both these books is, again, their ability to blend both traditional and contemporary resources, pulling together the necessary materials and data to offer their revealing accounts. The books, which offer two different viewpoints – one from a sexual and moral viewpoint of youth, the other from within the filiocentric model – attempt to answer some of the questions relating to how youth in the 1940s and 1950s, which includes those in this study, were affected by the power and effects of the discourses built around sexuality and ‘normalcy’.

⁸⁹ Parr, *Domestic Goods*, 270.

⁹⁰ Mona Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal: Psychology, Schooling, and the Family in Postwar* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

These and related discourses, popular in Canada in the 1950s, were disseminated by ‘experts’ such as Canadians Brock Chisholm and William Blatz who between them held degrees in psychiatry, pediatrics and psychology and who appeared regularly in the popular media.⁹¹ As regular contributors to popular magazines such as *Chatelaine* and *Star Weekly*, they promoted and fueled the ‘pop’ psychology trend. Instead of helping, however, their advice would often serve to further distress parents, causing an anxiety that, according to Doug Owrarn, “the children of postwar years have carried with them through their life.”⁹²

Mid-century was a child-obsessed age. With the publication of *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* and its subsequent revisions, “the issue of liberating the child . . . invaded the family itself.”⁹³ Professionals in various fields advised parents to discourage children’s bad behaviour not by thwarting it but diverting it with affection and play: “In fact, it had become a duty to have fun with one’s child.”⁹⁴ These expert pronouncements, often coming from bachelors or childless men, “were clipped from newspapers, passed by word of mouth, and taught in high-school classrooms and family-studies books.”⁹⁵ Dr. Blatz could fill Massey Hall.⁹⁶ Researchers studying the 1950s community of ‘Crestwood Heights’, a pseudonym for Toronto’s Forest Hill, were struck by how women were slavish in their devotion to “each passing fad in child-rearing and in the social and psychological

⁹¹ Owrarn, *Born*, 34–45.

⁹² Owrarn, *Born*, 40.

⁹³ John Sommerville, *The Rise and Fall of Childhood* (Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1982), 224.

⁹⁴ Sommerville, *The Rise*, 226.

⁹⁵ Owrarn, *Born*, 33.

⁹⁶ Jocelyn Motyer Raymond, *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

professions generally."⁹⁷ choosing to reject their own experience in favour of some formula. The child's welfare became a primary concern of every 'good' parent. Harmony and co-operation were essential elements of a stable, normal family.⁹⁸ Guilt now took centre stage. Even if you had never read the manuals and even if you did not want to listen, you often had no choice because "for most it was unavoidable."⁹⁹ Interestingly, the child might have been at the centre but did not, for the most part, have a speaking role in his or her life. The forces and the treatment that affected children evolved over time but still, we had not heard directly from them or about how the pressure to conform, to be 'normal' affected their lives.

Elaine Tyler May's *Homeward Bound*¹⁰⁰ is another relevant book that emphasizes the everyday. Though American in content, it is frequently cited and quoted in social histories of the postwar. Its theme revolves around the fixation on domesticity and the obsession with the notion of normalcy. Though May's history focuses on the married woman who, she writes, was not always the contented, dutiful housewife, the book speaks to how the ideology of 'containment' imposed an unrelenting pressure to conform. Here again, there is the powerful message of conforming to a standard of normalcy and having to fit in, notions that underscore much of the literature on the period. These societal pressures were not restricted to women alone: they had an impact on children, as well.

Doug Owrarn's *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation*, large portions of which are based on American statistics and studies, is a sociocultural history that looks at postwar Canada from the point of view of the baby boomers and their

⁹⁷ John R. Seeley, R. Alexander Sim and Elizabeth W. Loosley in collaboration with Norman W. Bell and D.F. Fleming, *Crestwood Heights: A Study of the Culture of Suburban Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1956).

⁹⁸ Seeley et al., *Crestwood Heights*, 165.

⁹⁹ Owrarn, *Born*, 34.

¹⁰⁰ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

parents. This latter point is significant because Owrām's book is not just about the boomers: it is also about their parents, as is the story of the children of survivors who were and are tied into their parents' stories.

Boomers, more than any previous group, Owrām argues, had the money, the attention and the influence on their own and future generations. After all, there were so many of them. And although not everyone was included in Owrām's 'baby boomer' group, the spirit of the time was felt, and still is, by North American society. By his own admission, he has, like Elaine May, intentionally focussed on the white, urban, Euro-Canadian mainstream group. Acknowledging the class-based leaning of their studies, both Owrām and May offer their arguments. For May, it was the white, nuclear family that came to represent for Americans the anchor in a troubled sea, the source of emotional security and status. For her, "the values of the white middle class . . . shaped the dominant political and economic institutions that affected all Americans."¹⁰¹ While the author notes that others such as rural, working-class, black and gay Americans were part of society, she chose not to include them in her book. Owrām writes in his introduction that those other players "had a very different experience and, just as they did not fully participate in the generational sense of self, so they are not fully part of this story."¹⁰² However, both point out the need for the histories of the unaffiliated to be heard, "to right an imbalance in historical records, which have favored the literate and the formally educated."¹⁰³ Both Owrām and May's histories are valuable for the historical background and the issues they discuss. Applying the contemporary tools of the social historian to their sociocultural perspective – Hollywood

¹⁰¹ May, *Homeward Bound*, 13.

¹⁰² Owrām, *Born*, xiii.

¹⁰³ David K. Dunaway, "Introduction: The Interdisciplinarity of Oral History," in *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, eds. David K. Dunaway and Willa K. Baum, 7-22 (Walnut Creek, MO: Altamira Press/Sage Publications, Inc., 1996), 12.

movies, mass circulation magazines and longitudinal survey research in *Homeward Bound*, statistics and popular and academic prescriptive literature in *Born at the Right Time* – the two histories complement each other.

Owram's book added to my historical research in several ways. The first five chapters which structure the organizing themes of the book – postwar domesticity, suburbanization, leisure, schooling, and the teenager – constructed a structural framework that often paralleled the lives of the group I was researching. These chapter divisions served as convenient guideposts for questioning deeper issues such as the attitudes and behaviour of both the parents and the children. Granted, not everybody enjoyed all of the increased benefits of the new economy, yet many still participated in one way or another. Owram's history points out the need to ask more questions to fill in some of the gaps. What about the hopes and fears of those who did not quite match the white middle-class demographics? Were the concerns of the middle-class the same for the others? Could immigrant children identify with those images that Owram describes? If not, how did they negotiate the messages of the culture around them? Did they withdraw? Was there a pattern in people's strategies? Was the American influence as pervasive as Owram contends and did it affect others?

Owram's history highlights two main points that were significant for this thesis. First, it related how the boomers were tied in to their parents' generation. This resonated with the experiences of children of survivors in this study. The second point relates to the tremendous effect popular culture had on all North America, especially the products and images from the United States.

Popular Culture of the 1950s

Culture, as Owsen illustrates throughout his book, played a crucial role in the lives of boomers and their parents in the fifties and sixties. One need not have had lots of money to enjoy the endless stream of mostly American messages and products that transformed and shaped North American lives in diverse ways, even if their actual arrival did not occur until the sixties, as Parr's book illustrates. Robert Bothwell, as well, while admitting to a 'town vs. gown' snobbishness towards the popular media, recognizes the importance of popular culture. There is a chapter devoted to culture in each of the book's sections. Though popular media, according to Bothwell, fails to deliver "accurate and unbiased information in sufficient quantity."¹⁰⁴ Elvis is not completely forgotten, but neither are Stratford, the Massey Commission and other equally elite enterprises of the time.¹⁰⁵ The children of Holocaust survivors grew up ingesting *American Bandstand*, Elvis and the *Ed Sullivan Show* as Canada's CBC and other homegrown products and programming fell by the wayside in the popular psyche.

The American trends in this period underline the role of culture in people's lives. Many of the historians writing about postwar Canada cite American sources. Two titles helpful in backgrounding the significant role of popular culture in North America are Thomas Hine's *Populuxe* and Peter Lewis's *The Fifties*.¹⁰⁶ Lewis's book does not restrict itself to the United States but does, as Elaine Tyler May's book, describe the international influence of American culture. These books reinforce how messages outside Canada influenced or paralleled the cultural developments in Canada. Though the effect of

¹⁰⁴ Bothwell et al. *Canada Since 1945*, 7.

¹⁰⁵ Bothwell et al. *Canada Since 1945*, 151-162.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas Hine, *Populuxe: The Look and Life of America in the 50s and 60s* (New York: Knopf, 1986).

American images and representations cannot be uncritically applied to the Canadian context and neither can it be assumed that culture was consumed by everyone in a uniform way, the looming presence of American representations will be considered in this analysis.

This American influence on our country's cultural psyche is the focus of a series of essays in *The Beaver Bites Back?: American Popular Culture in Canada*.¹⁰⁷ The book reinforces the role American popular culture played – and still does – in Canada while also stating that “it has evoked surprisingly little scholarly research.”¹⁰⁸ How “the beaver bites back” and how Canadians have consumed, selected and ultimately transformed American cultural products is the central theme. The editors suggest that perhaps it is in popular culture where Canadian-ness “finds its most meaningful and potent expression.”¹⁰⁹ Frank Manning, an editor and a contributor, emphasizes how Canadian popular culture has been associated more with the aspect of “domination” than with the idea of resistance.¹¹⁰ The duality of acceptance and rejection underlines the complexities of the issues of Canadian and American culture. The relationship between the two nations is not one-dimensional though there is a strong strand of that idea in some of the articles. This must be considered when interpreting the stories in this study.

Culture is the raw material out of which people make their meanings. And television stands out as a major influence beginning with its introduction and in the first decade. How this new medium forever affected our culture in North America is a central component of

¹⁰⁷ David H. Flaherty and Frank E. Manning, eds., *The Beaver Bites Back?: American Popular Culture in Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993).

¹⁰⁸ Flaherty and Manning, *The Beaver Bites Back?*, xi.

¹⁰⁹ Flaherty and Manning, *The Beaver Bites Back?*, xiii.

¹¹⁰ Frank E. Manning, “Reversible Resistance: Canadian Popular Culture and the American Other,” in *The Beaver Bites Back?: American Popular Culture in Canada*, ed. David H. Flaherty and Frank E. Manning, 3-28 (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993).

this thesis. Paul Rutherford's *When Television Was Young*,¹¹¹ which utilizes primary sources ranging from manuscript collections to periodicals and series, to interviews and to the programmes and commercials themselves, is an excellent resource. The treatment of the 'golden days' of television balances and encompasses both Canadian and American programming. The book's last chapter, "On Viewing" followed by an "Afterword: Understanding Television," is particularly relevant. It draws from various disciplines such as sociology and semiotics to discuss – good or bad – the impact and effects of television on its audiences. The work of cultural theorists such as Marshall McLuhan, Sut Jhally and Raymond Williams supplies a vocabulary and a means of reading how children and adults consumed the new product in a multitude of contradictory ways, reflecting a wide range of experiences. The book, which captures the tele-media habits of a generation and the tremendous role it played in the lives of many Canadians, avoids making reductive assumptions about the audience. How and if other specific individuals or groups dealt with the media is left open for further study. Other useful Canadian titles for this discussion are Mary Jane Miller's *Turn Up the Contrast* and Rutherford's earlier book *The Making of the Canadian Media*.¹¹²

Todd Gitlin's *Inside Prime Time* and Hal Himmelstein's *Television Myth and the American Mind*¹¹³ added the American points of view and analysis of many of the programmes that were seen in Canada from the early days of television. The multi-volumed

¹¹¹ Paul Rutherford, *When Television Was Young: Prime Time Canada 1952-1967* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

¹¹² Mary Jane Miller, *Turn Up The Contrast: CBC Television Drama Since 1952*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987); Paul Rutherford, *The Making of the Canadian Media* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1978).

¹¹³ Todd Gitlin, *Inside Prime Time* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985); Hal Himmelstein, *Television Myth and the American Mind* (New York: Praeger, 1984).

series entitled *Television: The Critical View*.¹¹⁴ was extremely useful in its discussions of how television messages were produced, distributed and consumed by their audiences. However, much of the existing literature, besides being American, does not deal with how those *not* in the picture dealt with the representations.

One title that is directly related to the discussion of the media and minorities in Canada is Alan Smith's "Seeing Things: Race, Image, and National Identity in Canadian and American Movies and Television." How film and television depicted minorities in the years following the war is included in the discussion. Citing several social factors such as the disclosure of Nazi excess, the emerging Civil Rights movement and the influence of academic disciplines, Smith traces the various stages of how minorities were portrayed, paralleling much of what Jews experienced.¹¹⁵ The American images were extremely potent.

¹¹⁴ Horace Newcomb, *Television: The Critical View* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976, 1979, 1982, 1987).

¹¹⁵ The sources used in this thesis include: Terry Barr, "Eating Kosher, Staying Closer," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 24, no. 3 (Fall 1996): 134-144; Sarah Blacher Cohen, ed., *From Hester Street to Hollywood: The Jewish-American Stage and Screen* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983); David Desser and Lester Friedman, *American-Jewish Filmmakers* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Doneson, *The Holocaust in American Film*; Patricia Brett Erens, "No Closer to Eden," *Sight and Sound* 6 (June 1993): 20-22; Patricia Brett Erens, *The Jew in American Cinema* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984); Annette Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows*; Simon Louvish, "Out of the Shadows," *Sight and Sound* 3, no. 6 (June 1993): 18-20; Alvin H. Rosenfeld, "The Americanization of the Holocaust,"; Jeffrey Shandler, "Is There a Jewish Way to Watch Television? Notes From a Tuned-In Ethnographer," *Jewish Folklore & Ethnology* 161, no. 1 (1994): 19-22; Shandler, *While America Watches*.

Growing Up

Children – now speaking as adults – their memories of their childhood experiences and the meanings they made are what this thesis is about. But we rarely hear from them directly. The maxim that children should be seen and not heard indeed seems to apply to most of the available research. In the history of childhood, the key event, many historians agree, was the extension of school education and the removal of children from the labour force for longer periods of time. Children, no longer responsible for earning wages – “in principle if not immediately in fact”¹¹⁶ – became valuable in a different way, supposedly now stepping in to fill an emotional function.

Another contributing factor in the reconceptualizing of children was the modern belief in science. Orthodox medicine had improved life span, but many people – those who could afford it – began to look towards science to contribute “to the understanding of children’s instincts as well as their minds.”¹¹⁷

Carolyn Steedman writes that adults have always observed and written about children – records exist of the utterances of royal and aristocratic nurseries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – but recording the natural history of their development was, in the nineteenth century “the self-elected task of many upper-middle-class women.”¹¹⁸ One famous father who published his child’s developmental diaries was Charles Darwin. Freud and Piaget were two more prominent names who influenced child study in the early years of the twentieth century. Drawing on various scientific disciplines, child studies by the 1920s established itself as “a field in its own right.”¹¹⁹ It was, Steedman contends,

¹¹⁶ Cunningham, *Children and Childhood*, 17.

¹¹⁷ Sommerville, *The Rise and Fall*, 170.

¹¹⁸ Steedman, *The Tidy House*, 85.

¹¹⁹ Sommerville, *The Rise and Fall*, 215.

mostly about the understanding of boys. Girls were described usually only in comparison to their brothers.¹²⁰ Still, if children and childhood were presented, it was through the eyes of adults – experts who interpreted and did not allow their subjects the opportunity to offer their opinions and reflections.¹²¹ Children’s voices were not given a chance at expressing themselves, to tell us of their fears and how they held these fears at bay.

In the last two decades, a category of childhood history has emerged that is a product of the ‘new’ social history of the 1970s and which reconceptualizes childhood, arguing that it is a social construction peopled with living, breathing human beings capable of being and doing in addition to what is being done to them.¹²² Utilizing the ideas drawn from the relatively recent field of identity and culture, it is about “where the unspeakable stories of subjectivity meet the narratives of history, of a culture.”¹²³ It is about the varied and lived experiences of children who have been shaped by their times and who have, in turn, grown up to shape the history of their later times.¹²⁴

Neil Sutherland’s *Children in English Canadian Society*,¹²⁵ first published in 1976, places Canadian children at the centre of the story and historicizes how children fared because of the increased attention to their welfare between the 1870s and the 1920s. The reforms and campaigns of twentieth century public health, family law and schooling, set in

¹²⁰ Steedman, *The Tidy House*, 88.

¹²¹ Steedman, *The Tidy House*, 92.

¹²² Russell Smandych et al., “Introduction: Dimensions of Childhood in Canadian History,” in *Dimensions of Childhood: Essays on the History of Children and Youth in Canada*, eds. Russell Smandych, Gordon Dodds, and Alvin Esau, 1-12 (University of Manitoba: Legal Research Institute, 1991), 1.

¹²³ Stuart Hall, “Minimal Selves,” in ICA Document No. 7, *Black Film British Cinema* (London: ICA, 1987), 44; quoted in Parker, 32.

¹²⁴ Neil Sutherland and Jean Barman, “Out of the Shadows: Retrieving the History of Urban Education and Urban Childhood in Canada,” in *The City and Education in Four Nations*, eds. Ronald K. Goodenow and William E. Marsden, 87-108 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

¹²⁵ Neil Sutherland, *Children in English-Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth-Century Consensus* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1976).

place to help some children has, nevertheless, left others powerless. The context of this child-directed activity illustrates how it came about and how it thrives today. Two other Canadian publications, *Studies in Childhood History: A Canadian Perspective* and *Childhood and Family in Canadian History*, have also contributed to the field of 'childhood and family history'.¹²⁶

Mary Ashworth's *The Forces Which Shaped Them*.¹²⁷ bold in its subject matter, relates how children have paid dearly when society fails to examine their lives. Ashworth describes the severe consequences of deliberate, institutional racism that affected the lives of five minority groups of children in British Columbia. While it is not in the scope of this study to evaluate the degree of racism suffered by these children, the value of Ashworth's book rests in its subject matter. These books relate what has been done for and to children. The ideas of experts along with the policies that have attempted to order and regulate children's lives have certainly affected Canadian children. Still, the children remain silent.

Recent historical scholarship has added to our knowledge of the realm of Canadian children's real lives and the power and influence of those in charge of children's interest and welfare. In a special issue of *The Canadian Historical Review*, social historians contextualize the forces acting on these two groups. Two of the essays, "A Postscript for Father': Defining a New Fatherhood in Interwar Canada," and "Psychology and the Construction of the 'Normal' Family in Postwar Canada," written by Cynthia Comacchio and Mona Gleason respectively, examine how professionals from various fields defined the

¹²⁶ Joy Parr, ed., *Childhood and Family in Canadian History* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982); Patricia T. Rooke and R.L. Schnell, ed., *Studies in Childhood History: A Canadian Perspective* (Calgary, AB: Detselig Enterprises Limited, 1982).

¹²⁷ Mary Ashworth, *The Forces Which Shaped Them: A History of the Education of Minority Group Children in British Columbia* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1979).

ideal of ‘mother’, ‘father’, and ‘family’ within society, socially constructing concepts that sent the message that middle-class, Anglo-Saxon was the norm.

Mona Gleason’s “Psychology and the Construction of the ‘Normal’ Family in Postwar Canada, 1945-1960.” deals with the oft-neglected father.¹²⁸ Arising out of the popular postwar discourse of normalcy, the pressure to conform became a standard to live up to if one did not want to be labelled different or deviant. Gleason’s history emphasizes how children, who were also affected by the discourses operating around them, were not being given a voice – quite remarkable considering the numbers of individuals and groups whose responsibility it was to take care of them. The study of children and families in the postwar years, writes Neil Sutherland, is still an under-researched area.¹²⁹

Neil Sutherland’s child-centred history, *Growing Up: Childhood in English Canada from the Great War to the Age of Television*,¹³⁰ attempts to hear from the children themselves, and in the process, highlights the gap between the ideals and the real practices of relationships within the family and between the family and society. Sutherland opens with a chapter entitled “Listening to the Winds of Childhood,” devoted entirely to the various considerations taken into account when hearing personal testimonies. He argues that employing personal memory – even with its accompanying pitfalls – rather than being mere quaint reminiscences, is another analytic tool critical in revealing the true nature of childhood. Backed by an impressive arsenal of literature on the subject of memory from the areas of

¹²⁸ Mona Gleason, “Psychology and the Construction of the ‘Normal’ Family in Postwar Canada, 1945-1960.” *The Canadian Historical Review* (Special Issue) 78, no. 3 (September 1997): 442-477.

¹²⁹ Special Issue on Childhood and Family in the Twentieth Century, *The Canadian Historical Review* 78, no. 3 (September 1997); Neil Sutherland, “Introduction,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 78, no. 3 (September 1997), 384. As Neil Sutherland points out in his introduction to the issue, the four articles “only suggest rather than represent the wide range of work being conducted by Canadian historians on children and childhood, on families and the family.”

¹³⁰ Neil Sutherland, *Growing Up: Childhood in English Canada from the Great War to the Age of Television* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

history, mythology, storytelling and psychology, he presents a strong argument for the importance of hearing from the participants themselves.¹³¹ This he does in subsequent chapters, recounting over 200 adult memories of family, kinship, school, friends, work and play. As well, we learn about the physical and emotional aspects of their lives, how they operated within the confines of their class, their gender and the values around them. Readers experience the elements and forces that drove these children's lives. Sutherland would contend that these life forces struck a chord even greater than 'history' itself. The bigger 'stuff' out there seems to have mattered less than the children's personal experiences. Their 'overlapping memories' emphasized the common rituals and structures of their lives.

However, Sutherland has grouped his subjects as one, without consideration to their diverse geographical and social backgrounds. His argument is that certain recollections – referred to as 'scripts' or 'schemata' by psychologists, and as 'recurrent events' by historians – organize all our lives. The sampling includes predominately white and mainstream English-Canadians with some Jewish voices. He, like many of the authors previously discussed, includes a qualifier in his introduction that recognizes the need to hear more voices.¹³²

Another point that needs to be addressed relates to how Sutherland captures childhood memories, but then stops. He does not delve into the possible reasons for these stories. Not venturing beyond the merely descriptive leaves one wondering what happened with these memories. How, for example, did their everyday childhood encounters and relationships shape their sense of self? What strategies did they devise in reaction to the forces affecting them? How did the culture impose its meanings on these children and how

¹³¹ An expanded discussion of memory and its role in historical inquiry is discussed in the Methodology below.

¹³² Sutherland, *Growing Up*, xii.

did they, in turn, create their own knowledge of the world? The issues of speaking and silence would be taken up mostly by feminist historians.

Bettina Bradbury, in a review of 'feminist historians and family history in Canada', considers the contribution of feminist scholars during the 1990s as is "the major influence transforming the history of families in Canada over the past decade."¹³³ Four areas refashioned family history: gender, families and other institutions, the state and motherhood and the discourses around gender, sexuality and heterosexuality. While not dismissing the work of other historians who have enriched many key aspects of family history – she notes Owrham and Sutherland, to name only two – she contends that gender and women's historians, whether inspired by a poststructuralist or a materialist perspective, "have made critical contributions to reimagining the past of Canadian families."¹³⁴ The field has also been enhanced by feminist writings where "experience became the foundation on which much historical inquiry of the 1970s and 1980s was lodged."¹³⁵ where one could begin to understand about difference and how the discrepancies between men and women were played out. For example, seemingly mundane activities such as shopping for a stove or making a home in the suburbs take into account women's real-life concerns and hold them up against "the bolder canvas of men's statecraft."¹³⁶ Raising women's consciousness laid the groundwork, making it possible for the emergence of other social and ethnic histories. Realizing that individuals do not easily fit into neatly labelled categories, fields of study

¹³³ Bettina Bradbury, "Feminist Historians and Family History in Canada in the 1990s," *Journal of Family History* 25, 3 (July 2000), 363.

¹³⁴ Bradbury, "Feminist Historians and Family History in Canada in the 1990s."

¹³⁵ Joy Parr, "Gender History and Historical Practice," 15.

¹³⁶ Beverly Boutilier and Alison Prentice, "Introduction: Locating Women in the Work of History," in *Creating Historical Memory: English-Canadian Women and the Work of History*, eds. Beverly Boutilier and Alison Prentice, 1-10 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 8.

would expand and in some cases, merge.¹³⁷ Questions, though, would remain: What did others, who did not fit this ideal, aspire to in their lives? How did they negotiate their differences in the face of postwar representations? How did the domestic 'ideal' fit in with the reality of being Jewish and being a child of survivors? These are the questions in this thesis that will be addressed within the historical context of the fifties and early sixties.

Reacting against the grand historical narrative, the approach suggested by feminist scholars addresses the issues of inequality and alternative forms of resistance where agency and resistance make change possible. However, broader material and social influences are never isolated from this discussion. Carolyn Steedman's subjects in her essay, "'Listen, how the caged bird sings': Amarjit's song,"¹³⁸ and in her book, *The Tidy House*, reflect a shift in the history of childhood. Located within a pedagogical space, Steedman's subjects are not passive inheritors of their own history but neither do they universally fit the dominant and accepted pedagogical narratives that purport to explain children's positions. Rather, children actively use, exploit and enter their own experience of the world around them. How are teachers to understand a girl like Amarjit, a 9-year-old Punjabi girl who reads a book and then creates her own song? Amarjit's fiction illustrates how children confront the way things are and how they imagine what or who they might be. Far from being merely play, her song sings of dislocation as well as being "a journey . . . to a powerful synthesis."¹³⁹ In *The Tidy House*, Steedman offers further insights into children's

¹³⁷ Norman Buchignani, "Canadian Ethnic Research and Multiculturalism" *Journal of Canadian Studies* 17, 1 (Spring 1982): 16-34; Dirk Hoerder, "Ethnic Studies in Canada from the 1880s to 1962: A Historiographical Perspective and Critique," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* XXVI, 1 (1994): 1-18; Howard Palmer, "Canadian Immigration and Ethnic History in the 1970s and 1980s," *International Migration Review*, (Fall, 1981): 35-50; Roberto Perin, "Clio as an Ethnic: The Third Force in Canadian Historiography," *Canadian Historical Review* LXIV, 4 (1983): 441-467.

¹³⁸ Carolyn Steedman, "'Listen, how the caged bird sings': Amarjit's song," in *Language, Gender and Childhood*, ed. Carolyn Steedman, Cathy Urwin and Valerie Walkerdine, 137-163 (London, Boston and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985).

¹³⁹ Steedman, "'Listen,'" 138.

socialization from underneath, from the vantage point of little girls who, faced with the conflicts of their working-class lives, can still somehow mediate and manipulate the reality around them. What is missing from a deeper knowledge of knowing children and their childhood, Steedman writes, is a reluctance to consider *their* constructions of their social and material worlds.

In this thesis, I want to take up this challenge within the historical context of postwar Canada. I want to see how these adult children of survivors, practising their remembrances, individually and collectively, learned to cope with the challenges of *their* lives. Steedman's work, as well, offers a set of analytic tools that adapt well to how the participants in my study were positioned, like Amarjit and the *Tidy House* girls, between the intersections of representations from without and within, from how the world perceived them and how they perceived themselves and how they created and invented new selves. Children do not make policy; they do not run corporations; nor do they exert direct power over national events, if at all. However, the private or domestic sphere is where children live. It is here that their consumption of popular culture discourse occurs.

The Teenager

In his introduction to *Born at the Right Time*, Doug Owram writes this about the postwar generation: "From the time the baby boomers were born, it was extraordinarily powerful and, from a young age, it thought of itself as a group distinct from previous generations."¹⁴⁰ Up until the forties, he continues, there had been no such thing as a teenager and yet, by the fifties, teenyboppers became a force to be reckoned with. By 1954, in Canada, many fourteen- to-seventeen year-olds were in school and by the early 1960s,

¹⁴⁰ Owram, *Born*, ix.

this number rose to seventy-five per cent.¹⁴¹ Suddenly, the world seemed to revolve around teenagers.

The popular culture notion of the ‘teenager’ was an American invention designed as an ideal spending machine suited for its day, and in no time, “television, magazines, and the general pervasiveness of American culture quickly carried it north of the border.”¹⁴²

However, the notion of the adolescent, like the child, had been around a much longer time, writes psychologist Louise Kaplan.¹⁴³ And though Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Dr. Kaplan continues, did not exactly ‘invent’ the notion of the *modern* adolescent, he did address the distinctiveness of the human plight of these years. In the early years of the twentieth century, G. Stanley Hall also talked of a ‘second birth’ as Rousseau had done more than a hundred years before, concluding that the adolescent phase was “the time to enlarge the natural sentiments of pity, friendship, and generosity, the time to develop an understanding of human nature and the varieties of human character, the time to gain insight into the strengths and weakness of all men and to study the history of mankind.”¹⁴⁴ Both came to view adolescence as a ‘crucial turning point.’ Modern social historians, Kaplan concludes, credit the romantic notions of these two men with the ‘invention’ of the adolescent.

The two views of adolescents that Kaplan describes are familiar still: the adolescent portrayed as a barbarian, with adolescence a time of mindlessness and inelegance; or youthfulness as a time of higher moral relations, “tantamount to godliness.”¹⁴⁵ No matter

¹⁴¹ Owrain. *Born*, 140.

¹⁴² Owrain. *Born*, 145.

¹⁴³ Louise J. Kaplan. *Adolescence: The Farewell to Childhood* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 51.

¹⁴⁴ This is Kaplan paraphrasing Rousseau’s *Emile*’s educational abilities during the fourth, decisive stage between the ages of fifteen to twenty.

¹⁴⁵ Kaplan. *Adolescence*, 81.

the labels or descriptions, it is a time many adults would like to avoid. Kaplan chooses to note it as a time “of the passage from one realm of existence into another.”¹⁴⁶ one of revolution, not of annihilation but of revision and reconciliation. It is a time of going back and forth from childhood to experimenting with adult forms and then back again.

Unfortunately – unfortunate because it prevents further questioning – people construct their own version of adolescence according to the meanings they have constructed out of their own life histories. However, Kaplan asserts, an adolescent is not a machine that can be programmed into a self-contained consumer who uses the culture uniformly. When adolescents are presented with representations that are not of their making, they will often abstract their own meanings. Postwar Canada presented a particular reality for these Jewish children of Holocaust survivors and they would, through their invention, accommodation and sometimes their resistance, find their own meanings in this world.

From an historical point of view, the postwar years were marked by an increased ability to spend money. Free of any memories of the depression and the war, this postwar generation of boomers, huge in its sheer numbers, felt freer than their parents and grandparents had ever felt. Much of the documentation talks of the influence the youth culture had on the growth and direction of music, but their impact also “changed the whole face of the American popular media.”¹⁴⁷ This can be similarly stated of many Canadian kids who were eagerly soaking up American pop culture and appropriating it as their own, even while the adults in their lives were practising their own restraint and reminding them of their future obligations and parental responsibilities.¹⁴⁸ Fashions, entertainment, social issues,

¹⁴⁶ Kaplan, *Adolescence*, 13.

¹⁴⁷ Gaile McGregor, “Domestic Blitz: A Revisionist History of the Fifties,” *American Studies* 34, 1 (Spring 1993): 5-33.

¹⁴⁸ Bothwell et al. 160-162, Owsen, 136-158. See also Parr, *Domestic Goods*.

much of it was geared towards them. One could be forgiven for thinking as if life revolved around them.

While much of the literature has recorded how children of survivors felt and reacted to their parents' past and their adjustment – or not – in Canada,¹⁴⁹ were there any other stories? Were they part of the social and cultural story? That is what I wanted to discover. How did the narratives of children of Holocaust survivors, their memories and recollections, play against the background of the historical, cultural and social forces of the fifties and early sixties? Are their memories and now the stories they live by reflective of, or perhaps in reaction against the representations they heard and saw in Canada in the postwar years? Are these stories part of all our stories? Some of the answers lie in analyzing how historical narratives “suffuse popular culture”¹⁵⁰ establishing in people's minds who belongs and who does not. This thesis looks at how the children of survivors reacted to and enacted the codes presented to them everyday. The thesis also looks at how their lives were tied in with their immigrant parents. Their stories are also inextricably tied to the immigrant story in Canada.

The Immigrant Experience

Individuals are distinguished by a wide range of subject positions and Canada is made up of a diverse array of ethnics, each group transforming itself at different times in history in relation to its members and to the overall mosaic composition of society.

Chronicling the history and evolution of these various groups has been a tradition in this country since the turn of the century when the influx of immigrants made a tremendous

¹⁴⁹ For the Canadian context, refer to Paula J. Draper and Richard Menkis, eds., *New Perspectives on Canada, the Holocaust and Survivors*, (Special issue of *Canadian Jewish Studies* vols. 4-5 [1996-1997] (N.p.: Association for Canadian Jewish Studies, 2000); Sigal and Weinfeld, “Research on Survivors and their Families.” American, Israeli and other international titles number in the hundreds and are therefore too numerous to list here.

¹⁵⁰ Timothy Stanley, “The Struggle for History: Historical Narratives and Anti-Racist Pedagogy,” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 19, (1988), 47.

impact on the social landscape of the country and was the subject of numerous Master's and Doctoral theses.

Prewar social reformers "had on the whole felt sure that a good dose of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism would make Canadian citizens out of immigrants."¹⁵¹ Much of this sort of rhetoric continued to dominate the postwar years as, once again, many thousands of immigrants arrived on Canadian shores. Conservatism, red baiting and the Cold War dominated the psyche of the nation. The last thing many ethnics wanted was to call attention to themselves.¹⁵² Yet, in the face of the still-evident anti-immigrant mood, there was, in the fifties, some renewed interest in ethno-religious groups. Within the Jewish sphere, several reports on Jewish communities outside the large urban centres of Toronto and Montreal, such as Chatham, Welland, Hamilton and Niagara Falls, were released by the Canadian Jewish Congress and B'nai B'rith. Except for a few which studied the effects of immigrants on smaller Jewish communities, most tended to lean towards the history of the community from its beginnings and these treatments read more like celebratory accounts of that group.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Mariana Valverde, "Building Anti-Delinquent Communities: Morality, Gender, and Generation in the City," in *A Diversity of Women: Ontario, 1945-1980*, ed. Joy Parr, 19-45 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 20.

¹⁵² Both group and individual treatments recount anti-ethnic histories and the difficulties encountered if one did not "belong". Three that reveal the extent of antisemitism are: Irving M. Abella and Harold M. Troper's *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1982); Lita-Rose Betcherman, *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf: Fascist Movements in Canada in the Thirties* (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1975); Alan, Davies, ed. *Antisemitism in Canada: History and Interpretation* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992).

¹⁵³ Percy Abrams, "A Study of the Jewish Immigrants in Hamilton and their Relationship with the Jewish Community Centre" (M.S.W. thesis, University of Toronto, 1955); Eli Gottesman, *Canadian Jewish Reference Book and Directory* (Montreal: Jewish Institute of Higher Research, 1963); Louis A. Kurman, "The Hamilton Jewish Community," *Wentworth Bygones* 8 (1969): 8-12. Dennis Hume Wrong, "Ontario's Jews in the Larger Community," in *A People and Its Faith: Essays on Jews and Reform Judaism in a Changing World*, ed. Albert Rose (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959); Robert Shosteck, *Small-Town Jewry Tell Their Story: A Survey of B'nai B'rith Membership in Small Communities in the United States and Canada* (Washington: B'nai B'rith vocational Service Bureau, 1953).

By the early sixties, more Jews, along with greater numbers of other ethnic members, were attending university and graduate schools where they began to look inward, searching for answers related to their own life experiences. As a result, there was an increase and a variety of publications within various disciplines.¹⁵⁴ The ethnic-related material continued to be either academic, purely statistical or self-praising.¹⁵⁵ Research, with exceptions such as John Porter's *The Vertical Mosaic*,¹⁵⁶ generally did not address the deeper ethnic issues within the context of Canadian history, that is, not until the sixties when women's voices and ethnic groups came from behind the shadows and began to emerge as distinct voices.¹⁵⁷ With the lens repositioned, three previously ignored fields in particular – ethnicity, childhood and identity – became the centre of historical research, taken up, not surprisingly, by writers from *within* these ranks, insiders who had themselves often experienced the very events about which they were writing.

Within the field of ethnic history, both historians and sociologists have traditionally concentrated primarily on the history of immigration and settlement and the historical development of that particular ethnic culture in Canada. These accounts have tended to present a unified portrait of the minority group, glossing over the more controversial areas

¹⁵⁴ Canada, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, *Research on Immigrant Adjustment and Ethnic Groups: A Bibliography of Unpublished Theses, 1920-1953*, Ottawa: 1955.

¹⁵⁵ Hoerder, "Ethnic Studies in Canada;" Buchignani, "Canadian Ethnic Research;" Palmer, "Canadian Immigration."

¹⁵⁶ John A. Porter, *The Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965).

¹⁵⁷ Joan Sangster, "Telling our Stories," 304. Historical treatments written in the last two decades – often influenced by gender studies – reveal the negative attitude of Canadians towards newcomers: Frager, *Sweatshop Strife*; Franca Iacovetta, ed. with Paula Draper and Robert Ventresca, *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s-1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); Varpu Lindstrom, *Defiant Sisters: A Social History of Finnish Immigrant Women in Canada* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1988).

such as intra-group fighting, nativism and the role of women and children in that culture.¹⁵⁸

To the benefit of the field, in the late sixties, there began, and continues to be, greater interest in the areas of racism and ethnic discrimination inspired by both materialist and linguistic perspectives. This increased activity is reflected in the proliferation of publications which includes both books and articles in refereed journals.

Franca Iacovetta is one historian who successfully integrates oral history with the more traditional historical sources and writes from a vantage point that treats immigrants not with pity, but with equal doses of respect and honesty for what and how they achieved their successes. *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto*¹⁵⁹ is Iacovetta's attempt to go beyond the one-story-fits-all history. As well, the book allows her subjects an opportunity to use their own words to describe and interpret events in which they participated. One major theme of the book is nativism and the relationship between the Italians and their hosts. In a chapter entitled "Ethnic Intruders and Hardworking Exotics," Iacovetta evokes the emotions of having to be silent in the face of discrimination and racism. One man, a construction worker riding the streetcar after work, recalls the disapproving stares at his dirty work clothes and muddy boots, hands cracked and calloused:

In a strange country with a different language. We were the working people. Even riding the streetcar was not that simple. They would humiliate you with remarks and insults - you know, 'dirty wop' [or] 'go back to Italy'.¹⁶⁰

He remained silent in the face of this indignity. Did survivor parents endure the same treatment and did it impact on the children? Did the children themselves experience acts of

¹⁵⁸ One example from this historical series is N.F. Dreisziger's *Struggle and Hope: The Hungarian Canadian Experience* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992). For a further analysis of this topic, refer to Buchignani, "Canadian Ethnic Research," Hoerder, "Ethnic Studies in Canada," Palmer, "Canadian Immigration and Ethnic History," Perin, "Clio as an Ethnic," as well as to the more recent article by Bettina Bradbury, "Feminist Historians."

¹⁵⁹ Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992).

¹⁶⁰ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, 107.

antisemitism? While their parents sought refuge in their own cultural organizations or with others like themselves, how did the children find release? What strategies did they devise to survive? These were the questions asked of the research but within the Canadian Jewish context. It will be shown that yes, there has been a considerable increase of information but there remains room for more work, especially in the area of children of survivors, knowledge directly related to this thesis.

Jewish History

The Jews, a prominent ethnic group in Canada, have made up one of the oldest communities in the country, dating back to 1768.¹⁶¹ Yet, despite their long history in Canada, before the 1960s they received surprisingly “little attention from historians.”¹⁶² Books quoting statistics and the relevant demographics tended to predominate with little other activity, save regional reports or celebratory accounts. One reason perhaps, Gerald Tulchinsky offers, is that ethnic literature concerning Jews and their history and development in Canada does not always parallel the concerns that occupy other groups. The communities share similarities as well as differences. In the seventies, in keeping with the increasing acceptance of ethnicity, several publications attempted to chronicle the Jewish communities within the larger Canadian context.¹⁶³ These accounts tended to deal with the early years of the community, of immigrant families and their children and the social, cultural and physical conditions of the time. Stories were generally set in the larger urban centres. In 1981, reflecting the climate of greater ethnic awareness, a collection of essays entitled *The Canadian Jewish Mosaic*,¹⁶⁴ attempted to fill what the editors felt was “a lack of material accessible to the general Canadian Jewish public about the nature of its community and life within in.”¹⁶⁵ The third section of the book represents a redress of the past that did

¹⁶¹ Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of The Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Lester Pub., 1992).

¹⁶² Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, xiii.

¹⁶³ Robert F. Harney and Harold Troper, *Immigrants: A Portrait of the Urban Experience, 1890-1930* (Toronto: Van Nostrand Reinhold Ltd., 1975); Erna Paris, *The Jews: An Account of Their Experience in Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1980); Speisman, *The Jews of Toronto*. Robert J. Brym, William Shaffir and Morton Weinfeld, eds., *The Jews in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1993). See also *Jews and Judaism in Canada: A Bibliography of Works Published Since 1965*, Volumes VII-VIII (Toronto: Centre for Jewish Studies, York University/Association for Canadian Jewish Studies/Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs: 1999-2000).

¹⁶⁴ Morton Weinfeld, William Shaffir, and Irwin Cotler, eds, *The Canadian Jewish Mosaic* (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 1981).

¹⁶⁵ Weinfeld et al. *The Canadian Jewish Mosaic*, 1.

not include subgroups such as singles, single parent families, gays – those usually “excluded from the sources of power or the prevailing middle-class.”¹⁶⁶ Efforts to include more of the marginal groups would continue in the next decades. A special bibliographic issue of the *Canadian Jewish Studies* journal includes over 1600 titles encompassing numerous categories that deal directly or indirectly with the Canadian Jewish community, on the national and local level.¹⁶⁷ A full review of the titles is beyond the scope of this review. Only those titles relevant to this discussion are included in this review.

*Branching Out: The Transformation of the Canadian Jewish Community*¹⁶⁸ is an ambitious, well-documented historical account of Jews living and working in Canadian society, starting where the author’s first title, *Taking Root*¹⁶⁹ left off in 1921 and continues to the present day. As with Iacovetta’s community, Tulchinsky shifts our view of the immigrant. No longer the passive victims of previous accounts, these players are active agents in carving out a position for themselves in their new country. Granted, social and economic conditions were often stacked against them but Tulchinsky repositions the lens of inquiry, problematizing the more complex questions of transformation and negotiation, both between the Jews and their hosts and amongst the Jews themselves. The chapter entitled “Postwar Adjustments, 1945-60” is especially relevant to this study because many of the social concerns that affected the Jewish community following the war mirror many of the same concerns of the broader society. Issues such as returning soldiers, moving into the suburbs and modernity, the influx of immigrants, multiculturalism, religious life, politics and postwar relief were also Jewish concerns after the war. Included as well is a discussion

¹⁶⁶ Weinfeld et al. *The Canadian Jewish Mosaic*, 2.

¹⁶⁷ See *Jews and Judaism in Canada* for titles under the different regions and provinces in Canada.

¹⁶⁸ Gerald Tulchinsky, *Branching Out: The Transformation of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1998).

¹⁶⁹ Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*.

of specifically Jewish concerns that affected the social, political and economic character of the community: the realm of the Jewish woman, antisemitism, Jewish demographics and organizational changes and the effects on Canadian Jews as an entity.¹⁷⁰ Of special interest is Tulchinsky's account of the arrival of Holocaust survivors. Their adjustment and the community's reaction were not without complications and, in certain cases, pain. Suddenly, and with little preparation, Canadian Jewish communities were dealing with a group of immigrants with widely divergent cultural and economic backgrounds, with varying levels of education and not always speaking the same language. Many of them, however, did have one thing in common: they were survivors of the Holocaust. In time that would also prove to be more than one story. Personalities, high emotions, even anger arose between the older and newer segments. The Canadian Jewish community was caught off guard.

To begin with, despite the wide diversity of the survivors, they were still labelled 'DPs' by those in the Jewish community who were either "unwilling or unable to listen to the experiences of the newcomers."¹⁷¹ The use of the pejorative acronym offers a clue to the survivors' transition into North American life. Tulchinsky describes how the survivors felt alienated from the more settled North American Jews. To be fair, though, studies conducted in those early years by social workers and community personnel reveal problems stemming out of misunderstandings on both sides. Future inquiry would also bear this out. But whatever the reasons, their testimonies were absent from the ethnic press and at Canadian Jewish Congress meetings. These past hurts and slights have not been forgotten. Indeed, their stories would not be heard for nearly another two decades. With their past lives

¹⁷⁰ Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, xvii.

¹⁷¹ Franklin Bialystok, *Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2000), 67. See also Joseph Kage, "Able and Willing to Work: Jewish Immigration and Occupational Patterns in Canada," in *The Canadian Jewish Mosaic*, eds. Morton Weinfeld, William Kage and Irwin Cotler, 27-48 (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 1981). The derogatory term DP stand for 'displaced person'. Its usage appears in many of the historical accounts.

destroyed, many actively sought to forget the past and only wanted to look to the future.¹⁷²

Within their own families, survivor behaviour differed greatly: some kept silent, opening up only years later when their own children were grown up and usually when there were grandchildren. In contrast, others were determined to never let their children forget what had happened, a phenomenon that would be dealt with in the early psychological studies of the late sixties.¹⁷³

In conveying how survivors fared, Tulchinsky incorporates a wide variety of evidence: private papers in the Jewish National Archives in Montreal, Master's and Doctoral dissertations, social histories – including both Canadian and American titles – reports written for various communities in the postwar years and both government and Jewish statistical surveys.¹⁷⁴ These provide the Jewish historical backdrop to highlight the oral histories of how *individuals* pursued their integration into Canadian society.

Writing from an American point of view, historian Susan Glenn has chosen to write about a similar group in her book, *Daughters of the Shtetl*.¹⁷⁵ Applying a modern framework to the literature of young immigrants, she utilizes two fairly new conceptual tools – insight drawn from both the literature of immigrant history and the literature of women's history – to explore the multiple meanings young immigrant women made of their work and organization experiences. She cites examples such as how their interests in social causes did not interfere with their love of fashion or wanting to find a husband.

¹⁷² See also Paula J. Draper, "Canadian Holocaust Survivors: From Liberation to Rebirth," in *New Perspectives on Canada, the Holocaust and Survivors*, 39–62. (Special issue of *Canadian Jewish Studies* vols. 4–5 [1996–1997], N.p.: Association for Canadian Jewish Studies, 2000), 50.

¹⁷³ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 87.

¹⁷⁴ In *Taking Root*, Tulchinsky devotes substantial space to Canadian Jewish communities' ties to the United States.

¹⁷⁵ Susan A. Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1990).

combinations of interests that many historians have ignored. Like Tulchinsky and Iacovetta, she is neither overly ideological nor uni-focussed. Adopting often-contradictory narratives for one's personal script is one of the themes operating throughout this thesis.

These histories of the immigrant community contribute to the historical framework that structures this thesis. It also invites inquiries into how a specific group of individuals, in this case, children, fared in these environments and the historical forces operating on them. How did they operate in their childhood worlds, making it their own on their way to adulthood?

Anti-Racism

The last area of knowledge that needs to be addressed is anti-racism. This discussion does not seek, nor is it able, to exhaust anti-racism and 'race'¹⁷⁶ in all of its dimensions or in its expansive range of analysis. Nevertheless, despite the often overwhelming breadth of the subject, it is essential to include this field of inquiry within the framework of this thesis. The issues within this context extends to education and racism in children's lives.¹⁷⁷ As Barry Troyna and Richard Hatcher's survey and research reveal, how children conceive racism, and how – or if – they interpret their world through a racial lens is never

¹⁷⁶ Whether the word 'race' should be used at all is a debate that cannot be included in this forum. Perhaps my usage of the single quotes reflects my own unexamined racial notions, to be dealt with, perhaps, at another time. For this thesis, the term, in all its complexities and pains, will be in single quotes.

¹⁷⁷ See also Ibrahim M. Alladin, *Racism in Canadian Schools* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Canada, 1996); George J. Sefa Dei, *Anti-racism Education: Theory and Practice* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1996); Cameron McCarthy and Warren Crichlow, eds., *Race, Identity, and Representation in Education* (New York and London, 1993); Ali Rattansi, "Changing the Subject? Racism, Culture and Education", in *'Race', Culture and Difference*, ed. James Donald and Ali Rattansi, 11-48 (London: Sage, 1992); David Theo Goldberg, "Introduction: Multicultural Conditions," in *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Theo Goldberg, 1-41 (Oxford, U.K., and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994).

straightforward and always highly contentious.¹⁷⁸

Racism is a slippery instrument, difficult to slot into one stable and defining category. Still, a definition must be attempted because it is another vital element in ‘the struggle for history’ and essential in understanding its workings within an educational setting.¹⁷⁹ First, it is not simply a relic from the past and so a definition must account for its historical and social specificity. Racism takes on a specific meaning in different circumstances. Secondly, anti-racism analysis should be able to encompass the diverse set of intersecting variables such as class, gender and ethnicity, to name only some of the possibilities. Goldberg argues that racism is best understood as exclusionary relations of power rather than understood simply as hateful expressions.¹⁸⁰ Drawing from the extensive body of literature, particularly Goldberg’s *Racist Culture* and from debates and discussions, for this study I propose a definition of anti-racism that encompasses five key elements.¹⁸¹ First, there are multiple racisms. Second, racisms involve racializations. Racialization refers to “any process or situation wherein the idea of ‘race’ is introduced to define and give meaning to some particular population, its characteristics and actions.”¹⁸² Third, while racializations are not necessarily racist, racisms do essentialize. Fourth, racisms involve the organization of exclusions on the basis of racializations. Last, these exclusions can lead to non-trivial consequences.

¹⁷⁸ Richard Hatcher and Barry Troyna, “Racialization and Children,” and Fazal Rizvi, “Children and the Grammar of Popular Racism,” in *Race, Identity, and Representation in Education*, eds. Cameron McCarthy and Warren Crichlow, 109-125, 126-139 (London and New York: Routledge, 1993). Refer also to the other essays in this volume.

¹⁷⁹ See Stanley, “The Struggle for History.”

¹⁸⁰ David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Oxford, England and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1993).

¹⁸¹ My thanks go to Professor Timothy J. Stanley, whose knowledge – and I might add, his great forbearance – guided and inspired my own work in this area.

¹⁸² Robert Miles, “Racialization,” in *Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations*, 2nd ed., ed. E. Ellis Cashmore, 246-247 (London: Routledge, 1988), 246.

Robert Miles's definition of racialization assumes that we all live racialized lives and as social beings. "we are each implicated in an interconnected series of hierarchical systems, of race, class, and gender among others. These systems are read onto our bodies and we in turn interpret and are interpreted through our understandings and misunderstandings of them."¹⁸³ Racism affects us all and how we react depends on where we are positioned. Therefore, averting "the critical gaze from the racial object to the racial subject . . . from the serving to the served,"¹⁸⁴ as well as identifying racializations that occur, the nature of the consequences may be judged by those racialized groups negatively affected.¹⁸⁵ By accepting these conditions – the language and oppressions, its multifaceted, complex and shifting nature – a critical analysis extends beyond an investigation that is focussed solely on 'colour difference' to include other acts of racism such as 'antisemitism'.¹⁸⁶

Jews have been, and continue to be one of many groups that are included with others, those who are defined as "oppressed, marginal or subordinate women, the working class, ethnic and other minorities . . ." ¹⁸⁷ Discussions are of "such passion and single-mindedness . . . [that] it has had the effect of reproducing the sense of oddness, differentness.

¹⁸³ Rebecca Aanerud, "Fictions of Whiteness: Speaking the Names of Whiteness in U.S. Literature," in *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, ed. Ruth Frankenberg, 35-59 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 36.

¹⁸⁴ Tony Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 80.

¹⁸⁵ Kenneth Edward Montgomery, "The Imagined Community: Representations of Whiteness in Flashback Canada," (M.A. diss., University of Ottawa, 1999).

¹⁸⁶ Note: I have followed Franklin Bialystok's choice to spell the term 'antisemitism', the choice of many who are in the field: Bialystok writes: "...rather than conventional spellings....there is no phenomenon known as 'semitism.' 'Semitic' refers specifically to a group of languages, one of which is Hebrew. Antisemitism, however, is a phenomenon, referring to hatred against Jews and persecutions against Jews because of perceived religious, political, social, biological, and ideological differences." (cf. 253).

¹⁸⁷ Richard Dyer, "White," *Screen: The Last Special Issue on Race?* 29, 4 (1998), 44.

exceptionality of the groups, the feeling that they are departures from the norm."¹⁸⁸ In the meantime, this norm "carries on as if it is the natural, inevitable, ordinary way of being human."¹⁸⁹ The "norm" referred to in Richard Dyer's argument is the racialized category of "whiteness".

The Construction and Representation of Whiteness

"Whiteness" as "race", as privilege and as social construction is a topic usually discussed within the space of Black issues and concerns within much of the work originating in the United States. For the purposes of this thesis, whiteness is a socially and historically constructed category of identification that can be conferred by others or oneself. Furthermore, whiteness, "cannot be understood as a singular entity, existing prior to or apart from other categories of identities. Its formation depends on the changing relations of gender, class, sexuality and nationality . . . its construction and interpretation are informed by historical moment, region, political climate, and racial identity."¹⁹⁰ In the past decade, it has expanded considerably and has entered critical debate and scholarship.¹⁹¹ This includes the question of the "whiteness" of Jews specifically, and their complex position in the racial continuum. Though it has drawn the attention of a growing number of writers and scholars, it has, however, been around for hundreds of years and has influenced discussion throughout

¹⁸⁸ Dyer, "White," 44. See also Alan Davies, ed., *Antisemitism in Canada: History and Interpretation* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1992).

¹⁸⁹ Dyer, 44.

¹⁹⁰ Aanerud, "Fictions of Whiteness," 37.

¹⁹¹ Michelle Fine, "Witnessing Whiteness," in *Off White: Readings on Race, Power and Society*, ed. Michelle Fine, Lois Weis, Linda C. Powell and L. Mun Wong, 57-65 (New York and London: Routledge, 1997). Preface, vii; Morrison, *Playing*.

the twentieth century.¹⁹² Consider, for example, the following excerpt from *The Jew a Negro. Being a Study of the Jewish Ancestry From an Impartial Standpoint* by the Rev. Arthur T. Abernethy, A.M., Ph.D., published in 1910 by the Dixie Publishing Company of Moravian Falls, North Carolina. Abernethy – preacher, professor, and rustic journalist – sought to demonstrate through “ethology” and “scriptural proofs” how “the Jew of to-day, as well as his ancestors in other times, is the kinsman and descendent of the Negro.”¹⁹³

It is true that great numbers of Jews who entered America and who became citizens were considered white. But they were just one of many groups, beginning with the Irish, who found themselves being redefined after their arrival.¹⁹⁴ Popular accounts routinely made reference to the “‘racial face’ of the Jews [and] the Oriental ancestry in both Negro and Jew.”¹⁹⁵ These notions, backed by a long European tradition of pseudo-scientific racial science, depicted Jews as black, their ‘blackness’, writes Sander Gilman, “a mark of racial inferiority, but also an indicator of the diseased nature of the Jew.”¹⁹⁶ For Matthew Jacobson, the question is not whether the Jew is white or how white he is but rather, the question is how Jews have been both white *and* Other. The discussion involves not how races are understood but how they are seen: race becomes one of *perception* with the

¹⁹² See Maurice Berger, *White Lies: Race and the Myths of Whiteness* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1999); Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Sander Gilman, “Are Jews White? Or, The History of the Nose Job,” in *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*, eds. Les Back and John Solomos, 229-237 (London and New York: Routledge, 2000); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MASS: Harvard University Press, 1998); Matthew F. Jacobson, “Looking Jewish, Seeing Jews,” in *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*, eds. Les Back and John Solomos, 238-252 (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

¹⁹³ Arthur Talmage Abernethy, *The Jew a Negro: Being a Study of the Jewish Ancestry From an Impartial Standpoint* (Moravian Falls, NC: Dixie Publishing, 1910), 11. This title is available at the National Library of Canada.

¹⁹⁴ Jacobson, “Looking Jewish,” 241.

¹⁹⁵ Jacobson, “Looking Jewish,” 238.

¹⁹⁶ Gilman, “Are Jews White?”, 231.

differences in the physiognomy of individuals and groups “keyed to particular social and historical circumstances.”¹⁹⁷ The way people looked at Jews and often by extension, the way Jews looked at themselves, made many think they were not of the same race, or the same kind of ‘white’ as an Anglo-Saxon person.¹⁹⁸ Over the next century, many American Jews have come to be defined – as they have also defined themselves – as part of the nation’s ‘white’ majority. The shift is complex and slippery, partly the result of a variety of social, economic and political forces. However, the idea of Jews as “mud people” lives on today in right-wing ideology.¹⁹⁹

Karen Brodtkin also explores, in her research, the various economic forces in America – particularly the changes in the American garment industry with the arrival of Jewish workers – that contributed to the changing racial classification of Jews.²⁰⁰ At the turn of the century, she writes, her grandparents were sort-of white but by the fifties she and her brother had become completely white. During that time, American federal economic policies and an end to restricted housing made it possible for Jews to assimilate into the white mainstream.

It must be stated as well, that racial Jewishness has been both embraced and vilified by Jews themselves. For Maurice Berger, the uncertainty of ‘Jewishness as whiteness’ was a personal battle throughout his childhood in a Lower East Side housing project.²⁰¹ His father, a left-leaning Ashkenazi Jew, identified with the plight of African-Americans and idolized Martin Luther King Jr.; his mother, a dark-skinned Sephardi woman, was openly

¹⁹⁷ Jacobson, “Looking Jewish,” 239.

¹⁹⁸ Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks*, 103.

¹⁹⁹ Jacobson, “Looking Jewish,” 240.

²⁰⁰ Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks*.

²⁰¹ Berger, *White Lies*.

racist and would, much to his father's displeasure, describe the neighboring *schvartzes*²⁰² as inherently inferior to white people. "She was trying to protect me from every ounce of dark blood that she thought was in my body."²⁰³ Mr. Berger writes, recalling how his mother would force him to straighten his thick, curly hair with pomades and how she herself would never leave the house without lightening her own face several shades with foundation makeup and powder.

In mid-nineteenth century Canada, writes Gerald Tulchinsky, rhetoric directed at Jews resorted to language that also denigrated the 'mongrel' nature of the Jew.²⁰⁴ And although Jews suffered less than other ethnic groups, their ranking somewhat higher than other immigrants groups, again depending on social and historical circumstances, the exclusions and harassment continued. Widely respected writer and new Canadian resident, Goldwyn Smith's virulent and public antisemitic views appeared regularly in the most prestigious newspapers and journals in the English-speaking world and influenced at least one young student at the University of Toronto, Mackenzie King.²⁰⁵ While public rhetoric was aimed at many of the immigrants groups who invaded "a then-resolutely Anglo-Protestant Toronto."²⁰⁶ Smith's writing was distinct in its targeting the Jews consistently and throughout his life. His writings were also influenced by European tractates which were sent to him, supplying him with a steady supply of information that fueled his argument that Jews were not, nor would they ever be, productive members of the established Canadian Protestant society. Their position as something other than white, Anglo-Saxon, removed

²⁰² The word *schvartz* in Yiddish means black; '*schvartzes*' is a term referring to Blacks.

²⁰³ Berger, *White Lies*, 1.

²⁰⁴ Gerald Tulchinsky, "Goldwyn Smith: Victorian Canadian Antisemite," in *Antisemitism in Canada*, ed. Alan Davies, 67-91 (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992).

²⁰⁵ Tulchinsky, "Goldwyn Smith," 68.

²⁰⁶ Bradbury, "Feminist Historians," 368.

them from the superior realm of genteel British society.²⁰⁷ The treatment and acceptance of Jews in Canada parallels what Brodtkin describes had happened in the United States but few have labelled it within the terms of ‘white and other’.

Drawing from Toni Morrison’s overview of whiteness in literature, we learn that readers have *always* been positioned as white, that is until recently.²⁰⁸ While the representation of whiteness has long been present, bell hooks argues that black authors see whiteness clearly and as terrorizing.²⁰⁹ Rebecca Aanerud would add that “one’s ability to see whiteness is equally influenced by his or her relationship to white dominant society as a whole.”²¹⁰ Whiteness really works, writes Brodtkin, as identification from the outside and which carries with it some very valuable rewards. Certainly, the images on television and on the movie screens in the 50s did contrive a white, fictive, imagined community against which difference was constructed. Those in the white dominant group take their entitlements for granted;²¹¹ others cannot help but measure themselves in relation to what they see every day.

In her essay, “Whiteness and Americanness,” Ruth Frankenberg identifies four areas of academic analysis, two of which – whiteness as performance and racism in movements for social change – help researchers reveal the *unnamed* (my italics), exposing how whiteness masquerades as universal and “how white dominance is rationalized, legitimized,

²⁰⁷ Stephen Speisman, “Antisemitism in Ontario: The Twentieth Century,” in *Antisemitism in Canada*, ed. Alan Davies, 113-133 (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992), 120.

²⁰⁸ Morrison, *Playing*, xii.

²⁰⁹ bell hooks, “Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination,” in *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, ed. Ruth Frankenberg, 165-179 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).

²¹⁰ Aanerud, 37.

²¹¹ Berger, *White Lies*, 164.

and made ostensibly normal and natural."²¹² Frankenberg adds that "white people's conscious racialization of others does not necessarily lead to a conscious racialization of the white self."²¹³ This leads back to the issue of the 'invisibility' of whiteness in relation to – and in contrast to – the marking of others. The suburban landscape of the fifties was mostly middle-class, comfortable and reassuring.²¹⁴ It presented a homogenized world . . .

. . . a world in which the principles of fair play prevailed: judges were sober: lawyers were intelligent and honest: police were calm, understanding, brave, and, above all, incorruptible: everyone had a right to freedom of speech: everyone was entitled to the best possible education: the able, hard-working person would, with a bit of luck, do well financially: everyone would be kind to children and animals: and society will come to the aide of an individual in a personal crisis . . .²¹⁵

. . . and the world was white. There were no Jews living in this 'imagined' community, at least none that were identified as such by others or themselves.

Adapting the existing literature to the representations the participants in this study experienced in the fifties, and the meanings they made from these images, can reveal how the racial category of Jewishness – racial categories being arbitrary, imprecise and malleable – can construct the Jew who is both white and other: the Jew as off-white, the Jew-as-different, the Jew who is not the norm. Understanding how whiteness is constructed is "a crucial part of challenging its domination."²¹⁶ Research, both theoretical and pragmatic, has implications for the Jewish community. Indeed, conditions have greatly improved for Jews. But even if "institutional discrimination against Jews has all but disappeared . . . the bad

²¹² Ruth Frankenberg, "Introduction: Local Whitenesses, Localizing Whiteness," in *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, ed. Ruth Frankenberg, 1-33 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 3. Refer, as well, to Rebecca Aanerud's discussion which also identifies whiteness as performance rather than essence.

²¹³ Frankenberg, "Introduction," 6.

²¹⁴ Himmelstein, *Television Myth and the American Mind* (New York: Praeger, 1984), 88.

²¹⁵ Himmelstein, *Television Myth*, 88-89.

²¹⁶ Aanerud, "Fictions of Whiteness," 38.

news is that much of the prejudice still remains."²¹⁷ The increase in activities in the last decade has resulted in cemetery desecrations, verbal harassment and greater air play for white-supremacist organizations.²¹⁸ History, as well, has shown that life for Jews has been an up and down existence. Examining their lived histories and the exclusionary representations they faced – and still do – is one step closer to placing their history alongside the larger ‘Canadian narrative’.

How children recognize their differences and their similarities and how they engage with those around them while dealing with the exclusions of growing up in a white-dominated society, provides a more comprehensive understanding of the process of racialization as it relates to popular culture. Theirs is a lived culture of contradictions, “a setting for the struggle over what and whose cultural forms count, and where dominant ideologies and practices are reproduced.”²¹⁹ As Jacqueline Bobo’s female spectators react in their reading of the film *The Color Purple*, childhood experiences can reveal how they have defined themselves, sometimes in resistance to what has been ascribed to them and at other times reconstituting themselves as subjects within a culture that does not recognize them and does not, for the most part, reflect their lives.²²⁰ What stories do they, as adults, live by?

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²¹⁷ Irving Abella and Franklin Bialystok, “Canada and the Holocaust,” in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. David S. Wyman, 749–781 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1996), 762.

²¹⁸ Abella and Bialystok. See also Karen R. Monk, “Holocaust and Hope: Holocaust Education in the Context of Anti-Racist Education in Canada,” in *The Holocaust’s Ghost: Writings of Art, Politics, Law and Education*, ed. Decoste, F.C. and Bernard Schwartz, 465–482 (Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta Press, 2000). Antisemitic incidents are recorded and monitored by several national Jewish organizations such as the B’nai Brith Anti-Defamation League and the Canadian Jewish Congress. It is also watched on the local level. One of the greatest challenges is the increased activity in Holocaust denial with books often showing up on university library shelves. For this refer to Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: The Free Press, 1993).

²¹⁹ Leslie Gotfrit, “Dancing Back in the Jazz Age: Discourses of Danger and Possibilities of Pleasure,” M.A. thesis, (University of Toronto, 1992), 3.

²²⁰ Jacqueline Bobo, “The Color Purple: Black Women as Cultural Readers,” in *Female Spectators: Looking at Film and Television*, ed. Deidre E. Pribram, 90–109. (London and New York: Verso, 1988), 93.

In his article, "The Struggle for History," Timothy Stanley defines history in two ways. In the first, most basic sense, "history is the sum total of previous human activities and experiences, that which shapes the present and defines its possibilities."²²¹ But also, there is history as 'histories', referring "to the narratives that people construct in order to make meaning of the past."²²² As has been shown, the histories of postwar Canada and the Jewish communities, including the historical narratives of children, while making strides in the right direction, have not entirely met the requirements of the two definitions of history in their fullest sense. For those on the outside looking in, historical narratives, through their exclusions, have created the very conditions that breed and perpetuate popular racisms in this country. The consequences affect us all. Challenging these racisms can begin by understanding that Canadian history is not one story. Canadian history is made up of many stories, lived in diverse and often complicated ways. Their stories are not meant to replace the other histories but they must be placed within a context.

Jewish children of Holocaust survivors were acted on and they, in turn, acted back. They were able to appropriate the stories around them to write the scripts they live by today. Beginning here, by recording their memories, through their own historicization, they can retrieve their story from the larger Canadian history and their personal remembrances of how they made meanings from the popular culture around them. Their stories proved to be interesting and informative. They are worthy of examination and can add to the existing body of knowledge.

²²¹ Stanley, "The Struggle," 41.

²²² Stanley, "The Struggle," 41.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In his study of young Chinese adults in the United Kingdom, David Parker calls for more listening to people: not just writing down stories but seeing how “to relate them to broader historical movements and social relations.”¹ In analyzing the cultural identities formed by his contemporaries, the author talks of breaking out of the traditional reductive categories prevalent in too many of the treatments of ethnic groups whereby authors dismiss questions of culture and its influences on people’s lives. In no way does Parker dismiss traditional historical and social patterns such as migration or exclusions, to name only two streams of historical inquiry. Instead, he is calling for the alternative approaches that cultural studies offer and which would take its place alongside the existing work in different communities. Cultural studies offers a wider frame of reference to explore cultural processes.² As with Parker’s narratives about young Chinese, this thesis attempts to bring forward those adult stories of childhood that articulate and are articulated by conflicting and contradictory discourses, revealing how adults remembering, struggle to find their own language and voice.

There are, however, arguments against the use of memory. Critics counter that people’s memories are too subjective or that individuals cannot be objective about themselves. In his discussion of the remembrance of traumatic history, Roger Simon writes how this “curious practice . . . [is] viewed not just with critical skepticism, but with

¹ David Parker, *Through Different Eyes: The Cultural Identities of Young Chinese People in Britain* (Brookfield, VT: Avebury, 1995), 19.

² Parker, *Through Different Eyes*, 15.

dismissive suspicion.”³ I, myself, have been in situations where talk of the memories of the Holocaust or a discussion of its effects on the second generation has made people very uneasy. The anxiety and sometimes the anger – arising from both inside and outside the groups being discussed – has made situations awkward. Additionally, the use of oral history and the theoretical underpinnings of memory present particular problems of methodology. But, its inclusion in this study is invaluable. It is necessary, therefore, to confront the criticism and to present the case *for* using oral testimony in this history.

I have broken down the discussion to encompass what I perceive to be two aspects of remembrances: memory as theory, as a means of analyzing the narratives; and memory as evidence, as part of the methodology, which is, in the end, the only means of capturing the ‘winds of childhood’.⁴

Memory as Theory

First, how was I to unravel and systematize memories? My interest in storytelling and my background in drama and literature – which was also the original impetus for cultural studies – focussed on the dynamic processes occurring during the interviews, including my own personal memories that became inextricably tied to those I heard. There are distinct features in memory and the *practice* of memory. Rooted in the present, memories direct each one of us as we constitute ourselves in part through our ‘fictions’ and as we try to make sense of our existence. Our memories relate “to the past, not by truth but

³ Roger I. Simon et al. “Introduction. Between Hope and Despair: The Pedagogical Encounter of Historical Remembrance.” in *Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Remembrance of Historical Trauma*, ed. Roger I. Simon, Sharon Rosenberg and Claudia Eppert, 1-8 (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 1.

⁴ Sutherland, *Growing Up: Childhood In English Canada from the Great War to the Age of Television* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

by desire."⁵ Ideas drawn from a diverse group of writers who work with language and memory and its analysis influenced the complex process of interpreting people's memories.

Initially, I turned to Peter Brooks who, in his literary criticism, looks at narrative and storytelling as a system of understanding the world. He also looks at what shapes and ultimately directs a story by applying the relevant ideas of psychoanalysis, a discipline that requires one to engage with the dynamics of memory and the history of desire. I am not an expert in psychoanalysis but, to borrow from Brooks himself, it was "a way to think about some of the problems that interested me, without my ever having become fully conversant with all the labyrinthine ways of [the theory]."⁶ Desire, which shapes our collective narratives, when interpreted through the tools of psychoanalysis, is for Brooks, a means of reaching beyond the texts of the traditional literary canon to include others who have been studied only peripherally, at best.⁷ By "supplementing the necessary but limited terminology of narratology with the rich, and perhaps more suggestive, language of psychoanalysis,"⁸ Brooks illustrates how narrative is not static but is rather a dynamic psychic process. There was movement and tension in how children of survivors incorporated the narratives and the rhetoric of desire to negotiate their realities, their stories becoming a way of ordering the meanings they constructed in their often changing and fragmented lives.

⁵ Cathryn McConaghy, "Awkward Memories," paper submitted to *Gender, Place and Culture*, n.d., 5.

⁶ Peter Brooks, *Psychoanalysis and Storytelling* (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1994), 128.

⁷ Brooks, *Psychoanalysis*, vi.

⁸ John S. Rickard, "Introduction," in *Psychoanalysis and Storytelling*, 1-9 (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994), 2.

One model for reading narratives that Brooks has adapted is the reconstructions of life-stories that are passed from teller to listener. It is here where further understanding takes place. Inherent in this always in-motion process is the act of repetition, a process that Brooks compares to the movements in a detective novel, the going back and forth, the working through the jumble of clues and, it is to be hoped, arriving at a recognition of how the present came about. However, there are holes in the teller's story: "links are missing, chronologies are twisted, the objects of desire are misnamed."⁹ But through concepts such as recollection, repetition or reenactment, the way we replay our memories in order not to lose them can tell more than what the words say, why it is told and what it wants to do.¹⁰ It is up to the listener/interviewer to listen. By privileging the narrative, the listener gains knowledge of the intent and the forces of desire that still operate in the present. The interviewer's task is to connect the traces of the past and re/construct them in the present.

The 'memory-work' of Frigga Haug's project goes one step further by bridging theory and experience in a *usable* discursive framework. Haug addresses the question of how individuals through their narratives, self-construct a mode of behaviour for themselves in this world. In choosing the writing of Frigga Haug whose workshops deal with women's 'memory-work', I acquired another language and vocabulary that could bring me closer towards uncovering people's memories of the past, remembering now in the present. Her group's project allowed for a deeper understanding of the processes of meaning-making since the earlier recollected time of their lives. As with Brooks, Haug highlights the uniqueness and importance of the autobiographical, describing this process as a means of

⁹ Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 227.

¹⁰ Brooks, *Reading*, 111, 236.

entry into the present.¹¹ Through the experiences of her project with a group of women, autobiography contains all the social judgments and prejudices, the everyday opinions that “we carry around in our heads and which serve . . . as models for our interpretation of the world today.”¹² And significantly for the interpretative process, autobiography – implying for the teller a sense of hope and success – becomes a means of shoring up the ruptures in their own construction of themselves – texturing the how and the why that has not been sufficiently addressed elsewhere.

Two theoretical assumptions underline Haug’s memory project and are, as well, useful in my own work: first, “the social relations into which individuals are born are always prepatterned in given ways;”¹³ second, individuals are not passive, they are perpetually searching “for ways of living within their limitations and thus of escaping the dangers of deviance or breakdown.”¹⁴ Stepping back through memories, it may at first seem as if people live according to a plan but in actuality, what appears to be continuities in the narratives “are manufactured retrospectively in the mind.”¹⁵ Haug offers a means of sifting through the layers of language where meanings are imbedded and often hidden from first sight. Though language is never neutral or objective, often obscuring that which we want to keep buried, it can be, as well, the source of insight and knowledge. To this end, Haug’s group searches for clues in the language that often cover knots of emotion or pain.

One method of analysis seeks out the absences, the silences and the breaks, paying attention to what is *not* being said. A second method, recognizing the need individuals have for harmony, traces the contradictions in the text. At first, these may appear as slight

¹¹ Frigga Haug, ed., *Female Sexualization*, trans. Erica Carter (London: Verso, 1987), 47.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 48.

hairline cracks; nevertheless, underneath there may be conflict or confusion. Lastly, there is the clichéd formulations through which meanings are verbalized. After looking for and gathering the language clues, Haug's group attempted to recover what they called 'linkages', "attitudes towards other people and towards the world, which have some connection with the [project]."¹⁶

However, the three methods outlined above are not meant to serve as the only means of analysis. Haug encourages the use of our imagination to discover diverse methods of interpretation to meet the demands of our diverse lives. Encouraged thus to delve deeper, I began to notice other patterns of language taking shape in the interviews I conducted. One strategy of the participants was the ability to compartmentalize. They were able to separate their lives, then 'glide' in and out of the various social spheres with an ease and an insouciance that was at first, deceptive. Denial and humour were two other practices that predominated at certain points in the interviews. Haug's methodology and Brooks's concepts of recollection, repetition and desire, in conjunction with my own analytical findings, were useful tools, revealing ever more insights into the wide range of how individuals moved between the representations of themselves and the stories they constructed out of these representations.

Something else, though, was at work. Brooks and Haug had provided me with the initial means of interpreting the narratives but the participants I was interviewing are children of survivors; they are the *second-generation* which has not only its own memories to carry around but those of their parents as well. Each child of Holocaust survivors is aware that many aging survivors are themselves beginning to forget, or they are dying. And so, there is a very real danger that the story may die as well. This goes beyond remembering names of grandparents and aunts and uncles. Unfortunately and too often, the memory is the

¹⁶ Haug, *Female*, 76

children. They are it! Very often, there is no one else. Many COS are named after those who perished. Whether the message comes through films or museums or special exhibits, the message is out there: keep their stories alive, for them and for those coming after. The second-generation inherits the responsibility – some would call it a burden – to maintain their parents' stories.

This and other related issues are included in *Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Remembrance of Historical Trauma*. Acknowledging the complexity of remembering, the editors focus on storytelling and analyzing, offering possible ways of working-through trauma but within a pedagogical context. Working with and through memory, the communication of meanings takes place but memories are also situated in their connection to the past. Questions such as 'What can be learned from the past?', 'What is the social value of remembering?' and 'How can our memories lead to learning?' must be further considered within the pedagogical context.

There is, in this collection of essays, the recognition that memory work often evokes a wide range of responses – not always positive – and that individuals who remember and those who listen, need help in working through what can be extremely sensitive. However, as the introduction states, the standpoint of each writer in the collection is that "remembrance/pedagogies are political, pragmatic, and performative attempts to prompt and engage people in the development of particular forms of historical consciousness."¹⁷ Rethinking the relations between history, trauma and teaching greatly influences the assumptions behind teaching about the Holocaust and genocide. Therefore, by moving beyond the notion of simply 'learning the lessons of the past', *wherever* the learning takes place, the conceptualization of remembrance as a pedagogical means "is implicated in the

¹⁷ Simon et al, "Introduction," 2.

formation and regulation of meanings, feelings, perceptions, identifications, and the imaginative projection of human limits and possibilities."¹⁸ This new direction looks at how members revisit and communicate past events and the "disturbances and disruptions inherent in comprehending these events."¹⁹

Two predominant remembrance/pedagogies are considered in this thesis because of their particular relevance to this study: remembrance constituted as *strategic practice* and remembrance enacted as a *difficult return*. The first, *strategic practice*, refers to social memories which are produced through "sets of symbolization" – in this thesis they would refer to texts and images – and which are "efforts to mobilize attachments and knowledge that serve specific social and political interests within particular spatiotemporal frameworks."²⁰ Evoking the past is a means of mitigating our present and, it is to be hoped, our future aspirations. In the second instance, remembrance as *difficult return*, brings forth "specific people and events of the past in order to honor their names and to hold a place for their absent presence in one's contemporary life."²¹ Remembrance as a difficult return is, the editors add, not a choice. It is a responsibility to ask questions and to learn about, not living *in* the past, but about how we might live *in relation with* the past. Acknowledging the loss and the trauma associated with the past "becomes a series of propositions of how to live with what cannot be redeemed, what must remain a psychic and social wound that bleeds."²² While there is the risk of collapsing differences, they are outweighed by the need for "a

¹⁸ Simon et al. "Introduction," 2.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

²² *Ibid.*, 5.

learning that resides in a relationality that respects differences while honoring continuity."²³

These notions resonate with many of the experiences and memories that were articulated through the interviews.

In her essay, "Never to Forget: Pedagogical Memory and Second-Generation Witness," Rachel Baum continues the discussion of the difficulties associated with remembering by the 'second-generation' who must be witnesses to the story. Baum uses 'second-generation' as not only a familial term but as a pedagogical one as well. Each generation of listener/witness must add her layer to the history. However, transmitting the story as it was and as the teller lived it is unattainable: "What the Holocaust destroyed was not only a way of life but an emotional universe."²⁴ Impossible to absorb, the child of survivors takes herself out of the story and replaces it with one of her own. When remembering is too painful, when the emotions threaten to engulf and consume, the child may comfort herself with 'narratives of redemption' that seem disjointed from the Holocaust events themselves.

Memory as Evidence

The personal politics of the 1960s with the emergence of the civil rights and feminist movements, along with the ready availability of cheap tape recorders saw the development of a 'new' social history that gave voice to groups that had been generally pushed to the margins of society. However, treating memory as evidence brings with it various problems, usually framed around the issue of credibility and acceptability in an historical account.

²³ Simon et al. "Introduction," 5.

²⁴ Rachel N. Baum, "Never to Forget: Pedagogical Memory and Second-Generation Witness," in *Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Remembrance of Historical Trauma*, ed. Roger I. Simon, Sharon Rosenberg and Claudia Eppert, 91-115 (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 93.

Therefore, when ‘prospecting for truth’,²⁵ one must consider not only the value of oral history but also deal with the problems that arise from the process. Limited and biased as this might be, if we want to present the remembered experiences of children, this is the starting point for the research.²⁶

According to proponents of oral history such as British historian R. C. Whiting, “the value of oral history is now hardly contested.”²⁷ Yet, despite this sweeping pronouncement, the process is not without its detractors. Always fragile, often inaccurate, critics point to the subjective and partisan qualities inherent in the process.²⁸ Barbara Tuchman, pointing out the difference between history gathering and history making, criticizes oral history for a lack of selectivity and self-discipline but at the same time, validates the practice.²⁹ Sociologist Peter Li, in promoting the use of oral history, points out the two methodological issues that continue to haunt the process of collecting personal testimonies: the question of the reliability and validity of people’s memories, and the framework needed for organizing and interpreting the oral histories.³⁰ These two interrelated but contentious issues are what I attempted to address in my own encounter with employing oral history. Additionally, the

²⁵ Alexander Stille, “Prospecting for Truth Amid the Distortions of Oral History,” *The New York Times*, March 10, 2001; [Database on-line]; <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/10/arts/10HIST.html>.

²⁶ See Barbara Allen, “Story in Oral History: Clues to Historical Consciousness,” *Journal of American History* 79, no. 2 (September 1992): 606–611; Susan Engel, *Context is Everything: The Nature of Memory* (New York: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1999); Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam, “Collective Memory – What Is It?” *Memory and History* 8, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1996): 30–50; Alice Hoffman, “Reliability and Validity in Oral History,” in *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, eds. David K. Dunaway and Willa K. Baum (Walnut Creek, MO: Altamira Press/Sage Publications, Inc., 1996), 88; Peter S. Li, “The Use of Oral History in Studying Elderly Chinese-Canadians,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies* XVII, no. 1 (1985): 67–77.

²⁷ R. C. Whiting, review of *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *English Historical Review* (April 1999) [database on-line]; findarticles.com.

²⁸ Hoffman, “Reliability and Validity,” 88.

²⁹ Barbara Tuchman, “Distinguishing the Significant from the Insignificant,” in *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, eds., David K. Dunaway and Willa K. Baum, 94–98 (Walnut Creek, MO: Altamira Press/Sage Publications, Inc., 1996), 78.

³⁰ Peter S. Li, “The Use of Oral History in Studying Elderly Chinese-Canadian,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies* XVII, 1 (1985): 67–77.

issue of memory goes beyond what is 'true' or 'false' and takes on its own unique personality. Memory serves several purposes and 'truth' is not always at the top of the list.

First, from a purely physical and practical point of view, memory allows us to learn from our experience. As we grow up, good and bad things happen; we store the information and retrieve it when needed. The neurological aspects of learning and memory have been extensively researched and qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed. There is, however, another aspect that practitioners from a wide variety of fields ranging from the social sciences to the so-called 'pure' sciences note and that is that we depend on our memories to help us imagine and make sense of the present. In *Life Lived Like a Story*, the Yukon women's stories are more than data for Julie Cruikshank's anthropological research. Talking, remembering and interpreting *their* reality, opens "a window on the ways the past is culturally constituted and discussed in different contexts."³¹ helping those outside their group understand their lives. In my thesis, asking adults to remember their experiences and the meanings they made from their childhood, is to discover *their* truths of what happened.

For individuals and social groups, memory can also function as a kind of 'social glue' whereby remembering actual names and dates becomes secondary to the impressions and feelings we hold about people and events in our lives. Cruikshank cautions us not to get bogged down in facts. In her own ethnographic work, she notes that seeking validation can obscure the often-complex messages within people's stories and what binds them. Historian Portelli Alessandro's work with workers in pre-war Italy also involves listening to the language of daily life and seeks to find there the narrative structures within the stories that people tell to keep their history alive.³² His concern with language informs his discussion of

³¹ Julie Cruikshank, in collaboration with Angel Sidney, Kitty Smith, and Annie Ned, *Life Lived Like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Elders* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 347.

³² Alessandro Portelli, "The Peculiarities of Oral History," *History Workshop* 12 (Autumn 1981): 96-107.

popular memory and class relations even if the facts sometimes fall by the wayside. Collectively, what we *think* happens forms the heart of human experience with imagination often overriding the authenticity of the facts. What is required therefore, is a broadening of our acceptance of people's realities, allowing, as Li writes, that "oral history is ideal for sorting out the folk version of events as an additional source for reconstructing social reality."³³ However, the testimonies of the interviewees is a reconstruction of *their* social reality. The memories that came through the interviews are an enrichment of history, adding an extra layer of understanding.

In explaining the change of focus from the written to the oral, and as this relates to striving to discover the 'absolute truth', Ronald Grele writes that rather than having to meet the same standards as documentary history, oral historians have been relying more on what has been referred to as the 'linguistic turn'.³⁴ History becomes more than a description of reality. It is about creating "knowledge about the past in a social context"³⁵ through narrative, language and reflexivity; in other words, through an interest in subjectivity and how desires and ideologies "formulate our histories as we construct them in the interview."³⁶

And still, notes Cynthia Comacchio, "historians have difficulty reconciling memory."³⁷ Considered too subjective to be admissible as 'scientific' evidence, memory becomes problematic in its inclusion as a source. How to deal, then, with the personal, often

³³ Li, "The Use of Oral History," 75.

³⁴ Ronald J. Grele, "Directions for Oral History in the United States," in *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, eds., David K. Dunaway and Willa K. Baum, 62-84 (Walnut Creek, MO: Altamira Press/Sage Publications, Inc., 1996), 78.

³⁵ Grele, "Directions for Oral History in the United States," 78.

³⁶ David Parker, *Through Different Eyes: The Cultural Identities of Young Chinese People in Britain* (Brookfield, VT: Avebury, 1995), 79.

³⁷ Cynthia Comacchio, Review of *Growing Up: Childhood in English Canada from the Great War to the Age of Television*, by Neil Sutherland, *The Canadian Historical Review* 79 (September 1998), 578.

faulty nature of memory has become a concern with a growing number of researchers.³⁸ Portelli emphasizes that oral history is not so much about *events* as much as it is about *meaning* and that oral sources “tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did.”³⁹ Luisa Passerini observed the same phenomenon in her interviews with Italian workers who experienced the Fascist period from 1922-1943.⁴⁰ For Passerini, more than worrying about dates and facts, it was the silences, the discrepancies, inconsistencies and the irrelevancies that concerned her. Throughout the interviews, what was *not* being said, was an integral aspect underneath the memories. This aspect of peoples’ retellings goes beyond just remembering what and when.

Each individual’s version of his or her truth and the memories behind the truth helps us identify the common threads running through people’s private lives. Their concerns become our concerns. Each narrative “facilitates a new kind of history – a history not of the captains, kings, and presidents but of . . . immigrants, and the like.”⁴¹ augmenting and contextualizing the layers of the history. Each individual memory adds to the collective narrative. Our “collective storying of past lives,”⁴² involves viewing the product as an epic poem that utilizes identical themes and archetypes and from which we can draw to make sense of history and life. In this view, oral testimony can serve as one of many other diverse forms of historical material that must also meet the standards of evaluation and interpretation. Sometimes the ‘facts’ and ‘truths’ will not always coincide with the personal

³⁸ Stille, “Prospecting for Truth,” 2.

³⁹ Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), 50.

⁴⁰ Luisa Passerini, “Introduction,” in *International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories: Memory and Totalitarianism*, vol. I, ed. Luisa Passerini, 1-19 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁴¹ Parker, *Through Different Eyes*, 72.

⁴² Comacchio, Review, 579.

testimonies of individuals. Whether their multiple memories support the statistical ‘reality’ of other sources, is not the first concern, though they may reveal some commonalities in their remembrances of their childhood.

“History is what we do with memory”⁴³ and there are several oral histories that have successfully been able to mix the oral and the written texts to produce retellings that are both balanced and appealing. One author who has effectively combined the dual role of researcher and participant is Franca Iacovetta. As the daughter of immigrant parents and as a social historian, Iacovetta has skillfully and successfully combined diverse elements into the writing of her book, *Such Hardworking People*. She has included the more ‘subjective’ oral histories. The interrelationship between class, ethnicity and gender as part of the overall immigrant experience is detailed in two chapters “From Contadina to Woman Worker” and “Community Life.” Iacovetta unfolds for us the story of how immigrants adjusted through mutual accommodation and cooperation with family, neighbours and friends as well as with those outside their private worlds. Iacovetta’s community is filled with people who are neither always passive nor powerless.⁴⁴ Their voices are given full range of expression yet they never overpower the narratives. They remain, throughout, firmly rooted in more traditional historical sources which include Gallup Polls, Immigration Branch Files from the Archives of Ontario and Department of External Affairs records.⁴⁵

⁴³ Terry Sefton, “Oral History: Encountering the Other Through Video Testimony,” paper presented at The Canadian History of Education Association, London, Ontario, October 14, 2000.

⁴⁴ See Veronica Strong-Boag, “‘Their Side of the Story’: Women’s Voices from Ontario Suburbs, 1945-1960,” in *A Diversity of Women: Ontario, 1945-1980*, ed. Joy Parr, 46-74 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 50. Strong-Boag writes: “The demands of class, race, sexual orientation, and gender, among other identities, have been and are charted by women who, while they have never had absolutely free choice, have never been entirely passive.”

⁴⁵ Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), 252-256.

Though her social subjects are Southern Italians, it is a useful frame of reference for this thesis.

A second example of how effectively the remembered stories of childhood can enrich history can be found in the article, “*Kale Meydelach*.”⁴⁶ Lynne Marks uses the oral testimony of nine Jewish women, daughters of Eastern European immigrants, who remember how they became Canadian girls in a Canadian school and how they took advantage of their positions, combining the old and the new, to reconstruct for themselves a hybridized identity. Through their memories, the author highlights how, despite the limitations and restrictions, parents and children “were not easily moulded into ideal British Canadian citizens.”⁴⁷ They were active agents in negotiating the divides, the contradictions in their lives at a specific historical juncture. Marks makes certain her interviews always remain grounded in contemporary social histories and statistical evidence, corroborating the oral testimony that might otherwise be suspect if left to stand on its own. The author, however, does not attempt to describe the *how* of these women’s lives and how the scripts of their childhood affected their lives.

This is further explored in “*Vata, derf I aufstehn?*: Childhood Experiences in Viennese Working-Class Families Around 1900.”⁴⁸ Reinhard Sieder’s article features the recollections of men and women born into working-class families around the turn of the century. By centering their recollections, Sieder provides his subjects with a forum and the opportunity to recount for us their childhood experiences, revealing the socialization

⁴⁶ Lynne Marks, “*Kale Meydelach* or *Shulamith* Girls: Cultural Change and Continuity Among Jewish Parents and Daughters – a Case Study of Toronto’s Harbord Collegiate Institute in the 1920s,” in *Gender and Education in Ontario: An Historical Reader*, ed. Ruby Heap and Alison Prentice, 295-305 (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 1991).

⁴⁷ Marks, “*Kale Meydelach*,” 303.

⁴⁸ Reinhard Sieder, “*Vata, derf I aufstehn?*: Childhood Experiences in Viennese Working-Class Families Around 1900,” *Continuity and Change* 1, no. 1 (1986), 54.

processes that may underlie the images described and the recounted stories. Sieder's case histories evoke further questions that apply to my participants: What was the relationship between individuals and the material culture around them? What resistance was there, if any, to the material images and representations in the culture around them?

There remains, however, an issue that I had to address in this thesis: my personal associations, both with the research and the objects of this research. My personal interest in oral history is what drew me to this study in the first place. Storytelling was initially my primary motivation and is at the core of my professional life. The Hebrew word *zachor* – remembrance and remembering – is a basic tenet of Judaism, an obligation in its demand to obey. The divine imperative is repeated over and over in the Bible.⁴⁹ My own personal questioning and inquiry grew out of growing up in Ontario in the fifties in a small city and in an even smaller Jewish community, and dealing now, as an adult, with those early experiences.

Most of the participants I interviewed lived in the same community as I did. One was a good friend during our adolescence: several of our younger brothers played with each other; and we all knew each other, as did our parents. Many of us lived in the same neighbourhood or very close by during our first years in Canada. It would have been easy to insert myself into the interview process, threatening, detractors would suggest, my ability to be both analytical and professional. My theoretical approach demanded some safeguards. Therefore, I chose to look at more than their words, researching the historical context of their childhoods in the secondary literature, an area that has expanded considerably in the last decade or so. This methodological choice in no way meant replacing one viewpoint with another because choosing only one perspective "is to ignore the intricate and tense

⁴⁹ Abraham Evan-Shoshon, *A New Concordance of the Bible* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1985), s.v.: *z.k.h.r.*

relationship between them."⁵⁰ I would hold up the testimonies against what others wrote about that time not to reveal *a* truth but to establish the social context for the interviews. I had to find the balance between how people were both the products of broader forces in their lives and how they had the capacity to invent themselves.

It would be impossible to say I was completely neutral and objective. Gone, however, is the "older vision of the abstract and disinterested interviewer and the unaffected source."⁵¹ Each individual's oral testimony contained its own subjective form of organization of that person's experiences and thoughts. In turn, and collectively, the candor of the interviewees and their insights heightened my understanding of the meanings they made as they were growing up in the fifties. It became increasingly evident as each interview unfolded, that something unique was going on. Cynthia Comacchio describes the teller and the listener as being "imaginatively engaged in the performance."⁵² Yes, it was performance as well as negotiation but it also happened at a specific time and place in history. Going back and forth in our stories together, as the participants and I added layer upon layer of recollections, my role as the narrator was implicated "not only in communicating experience but also in constructing a shared consciousness of that experience."⁵³ It was a collective history. As well, it was no longer merely process but it also became commentary on that process. Pulling together the work of several international oral historians whose publications have influenced much of the work in this area, Ronald Grele perfectly captures the essence of much of my own understanding of personal testimony as a kind of literary mode, a narrative:

⁵⁰ James West Davidson and Mark Hamilton Lytle, *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1992), 169.

⁵¹ Grele, "Directions for Oral History," 78.

⁵² Comacchio, "Review," 579.

⁵³ Allen, "Story In Oral History," 606.

In the interview, we return time and again back to experience. While we watch people create their histories we see them struggle within and against codes, literary or social, just as we must do. We see the people we talk to dealing with these same contradictions between what they know and how they know it, and we realize that we are united in that struggle.⁵⁴

Theorists and practitioners in the field of oral history call for a shift in what we see or look for through the lens of historical inquiry. It is a view that accepts narratives as integral to experience and that they are a means of making experience known to others.

This leads the discussion to the idea of context that, as Susan Engel declares in the title of her book, is everything. Most of those people I interviewed seemed outwardly happy to be talking about their and our childhoods. Interestingly, even with the two I met for the first time, within a few minutes it seemed as if we had grown up together despite the fact that we had grown up in different small cities. More than just remembering happened. We were building a community. As Engel points out, though much has been researched and written about the different levels of memory and what and how people remember one level over another, what has received less attention is what happened to me – what she calls “a social transaction between people.”⁵⁵ This ties in with one of her main ideas, that remembering “depends as much on motivation and social context as it does on any neural network.”⁵⁶ Together, my participants and I created – perhaps we re-created – and formed our past through narrative. Much like how many of the survivors’ recollections of the war and the Holocaust shaped their lives – as Tom Segev describes in *The Seventh Million*⁵⁷ – so too did our personal stories shape our growing up and ultimately influence who we became. What my interviewees and I shared and negotiated has consequences because once

⁵⁴ Grele, “Directions for Oral History,” 79.

⁵⁵ Engel, *Context*, 19.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Tom Segev, translated by Haim Watsman, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993).

we shared a memory. it was changed forever.⁵⁸ Our powerful and very real collective memory is the site where “much larger, more conceptual histories are built.”⁵⁹ It evolved from the private to the public. In our coming together after so many years, we were part of the continuity carried from the past to the present. We all shared and still do share in the struggle because it is not “lived only in one’s mind as a fleeting and infrequent visitor.”⁶⁰ The social context of the interview allowed each person’s telling to become part of a collective happening. My responsibility as listener and ultimately as interpreter was to choose those components of their testimony which either supported or departed from the secondary literature, recomposing each narrative, “to reorder its events, to foreground its dominant themes, to understand the force of desire that speaks in and through it.”⁶¹

In answer to Bryan Palmer who expresses his concerns that reifying language is detrimental to the various aspects of material history,⁶² there is, in this study, the opportunity to reveal the possible meanings and motivations of several individuals as they related to the historical forces that made up the political and social landscape of postwar Canadian society. Rather than downplaying the material and structural forces such as class, or “displacing essential structures and formations to the historical sidelines,”⁶³ the narratives constructed through my interviews are always grounded in the historical context of the 1950s, showing that one cannot separate the conditions of the production of truth from the truth itself – if one can ever say there is an absolute truth.

⁵⁸ Engel, *Context*, 22.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶¹ Brooks, *Psychoanalysis*, 62.

⁶² Bryan D. Palmer, *Descent Into Discourse: The Reification of Language and the Writing of Social History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 5.

⁶³ Palmer, *Descent*, 5.

Recollections can be a complex piece of evidence and when treated as such, make up an essential tool in the historical process.⁶⁴ In their chapter entitled, "The View from the Bottom Rail," Davidson and Lytle discuss the tricky process of retrieving the 'bottom rail' history of freed slaves and how imperative it is that their narratives be allowed to stand as any other primary source materials, "in terms of the context in which they originated."⁶⁵ Issues such as the age of the subject – then and now – the region the participants came from, the interviewer herself – must always be taken into consideration. It is, therefore, up to the researcher to allow memory to happen, to work with it, interpret it and set it in its rightful place, as an additional source of evidence. No matter the approach or the historical sources used, memory is always there influencing the end result. The broadcast time of *The Ed Sullivan Show*, whether it was at 8:00 or 9:00 on Sundays is an historical artifact. While government policies and immigration issues affected every citizen, those on the bottom rail continued about their everyday lives and routines, living out their own history individually. Their stories and the meanings they make about their lives articulate with a past.

In summary, memory is never created in a vacuum. The stories of individuals cannot be accepted at face value. There are complexities such as desire that are at work, influencing the narrative told, often retold and reconstructed. How these adult children of survivors negotiated and made meanings of their childhood experiences from the culture around them encoded multiple meanings. It was up to me, as the researcher, to unravel and position these memories within the social and historical context. Certainly, there are problems and there are shortcomings in the process but in the end, it is the *only* way of retrieving their past and the quality of their lives.

⁶⁴ William Moss, "Oral History: An Appreciation," in *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, eds., David K. Dunaway and Willa K. Baum, 108-125 (Walnut Creek, MO: Altamira Press/Sage Publications, Inc., 1996).

⁶⁵ Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact*, 157.

Procedure

Getting people to agree to participate was both easy and difficult. Originally, I wanted to interview first-born children of survivors who had been raised in small cities or towns. First-born also meant born abroad and this would be a constant variable in the group. But when it came to reality and availability, I included one woman who was born here and was a second child. One major reason for this was that the group I wanted to interview is small to begin with and I could not say 'no' if someone was willing to sit down and take the required time to give an interview. My initial reason for wanting children from a small community was intuitive. I had been raised in a small city where the Jewish population was much smaller than those in the larger urban centres. Growing up, I was very aware of the difference between my life and that of family friends who lived in Toronto. There they tended to live in Jewish 'ghettos', they went to school with other Jews and had little contact with non-Jews on a personal and social level. In the process of conducting the interviews for this thesis, I spoke to several children of survivors who were raised in Montreal and Toronto, and it was true. They generally only knew other Jews when they were younger. They said that the first time they had a non-Jewish friend was in university. Therefore, I decided I would restrict the study to the smaller Jewish communities in smaller cities.

I placed ads in the *Canadian Jewish News* and in my local *Ottawa Jewish Bulletin* but with little success.⁶⁶ I also tried the Internet. The messages that were posted were basically the same: 'We don't want to talk about it any more,' or, 'It's time to move on and get on with our lives.' At my request, historian Paula Draper, who works with children of aging survivors and who meets once a month with this group at the Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care in Toronto, placed an ad in the group's newsletter. She also mentioned my

⁶⁶ See Appendix I.

research and my call for participants at several meetings. Two people got in touch with me but when I returned their calls, I felt there had been a change of heart. There was an uneasiness and reluctance on their part. I did not press my case any further. This had happened in the course of my previous oral history project so I was not surprised.⁶⁷ People would often have second thoughts, even if they had initiated the call.

My father suggested I call people I had known growing up. Quite a few were still living in the community. Also, one of my childhood contemporaries was living here in Ottawa and she in turn connected me with another COS. This was the general pattern: one talked to another and so on. In this network, as loose as it was and as informal as it could be, there were still significant points of similarities binding the group. Thus, their commonalities combined with the economic and time considerations determined the “purposeful” method of this snowball sampling.⁶⁸ Commonly used in studies that study an issue, it takes advantage of beginning with those subjects who have the most information. In turn, they can lead the researcher to others in the same position. This group of children of survivors from small communities is a relatively small group to begin with and so the snowball technique was the most efficient method I had. The smallness of the group was also a factor when I decided to include the interviews of two people who were from different communities from seven of the nine, and one who was not a first-born, which is what I had called for in the ads I placed. However, they all grew up in small Jewish communities that were very much alike in their structure and organization: a Jewish community centre, a synagogue (sometimes they were one and the same), Hebrew school, the boys had Bar

⁶⁷ Bruria Lindenberg, “Parental Perceptions of the Role of Hebrew Day Schools in the formation of Jewish Identity,” Interim Report submitted to the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education, January 9, 1996.

⁶⁸ For “snowball sampling”: Fridah W. Mugo, “Sampling In Research,” March 3, 2002, <http://www.trochim.human.cornell.edu>; W. Lawrence Neuman, *Social Research Methods* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997), 205, 207-208, 223-225.

Mitzvahs – all part of a Jewish life for those living within a Jewish community. I found they could have all been from the same city and community.

Originally, I interviewed 15 people. Six grew up in Toronto and nine in a small city. As discussed above, I chose to focus on the nine from the three smaller Jewish communities. In a small city, survivors and their children knew each other, even if they were not close friends. It was a community where even if survivors who chose to ‘hide’, were still known to the survivor community.⁶⁹

For this study, the final sample included four women and five men, born between 1947 and 1952 and raised in a small, Ontario city.⁷⁰ Seven of the group grew up in ‘South-central town’ and are childhood contemporaries of mine; the eighth participant first settled with her family in Montreal then moved to ‘Northern-town’; the ninth was born in Canada and grew up in ‘South-western town’.

One of the women in this group, Suzanna,⁷¹ has been a good friend of mine for over thirty years but as children we only knew each other by name and through the survivor network. She is two years older and when you are a child, two years can be an entirely separate social group, practically another world. Also, her family had moved up the

⁶⁹ Over the years, some came back into the community but some never did.

⁷⁰ I chose pseudonyms for the three towns and for the participants and will continue to refer to them as such. The following are the populations recorded in the 1951 census taking: ‘Northern-town’ had 184 Jews out of a total population of 42,410; ‘South-central town’ had 3,158 Jews in a total population of 214, 093; ‘South-western town’ had 2,330 Jews in a total population of 120,049. In 1961, ‘Northern-town’ had 222 Jews in a total population of 80, 121; ‘South-central town’ 3,318 Jews in 273,991; and ‘South-western town’ had 1,653 Jews in a city of 114,367. Statistics were drawn from the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Department of Trade and Commerce, *Census: Population Characteristics* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1953 and 1961) and Stuart E. Rosenberg, *The Jewish Community in Canada. Volume 1: A History* (Toronto and Montreal: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1970).

⁷¹ Suzanna, interview by author, tape recording, Toronto, 24 December 2000. Note: In adherence to the consent form and the provisions of the interview process as approved by the University of Ottawa Ethics committee, I will be using pseudonyms. After their introduction and description, they will appear in the text without further comment or quotes of any kind around the name. See Reference Chart below.

economic scale earlier than mine had. Another woman, Ilana,⁷² I knew from my childhood. She has been living here in Ottawa for years but I only learned this by chance. My husband had been reading about her in an article in the *Ottawa Citizen*. The article included a brief biographical sketch and mentioned she was a child of survivors and from my town. He showed it to me and of course I recognized the name immediately. I called her and she agreed to do the interview. During the course of our talk, she suggested I call her friend, Paulina,⁷³ also a child of survivors who had been raised in 'South-western' town. I asked her if she would call Paulina on my behalf, to introduce me and my project. The ninth participant Eva⁷⁴ was a woman I knew by name only and who lives in the Ottawa Jewish community. She also came to me by chance. A mutual friend of ours who knew about my thesis, mentioned that Eva was a child of survivors and had grown up in 'Northern-town'. She wasn't sure if she would agree.

When I contacted everybody in the study, both the ones I had known in my youth and the new names, they were surprised but welcoming. My contemporaries and I had not seen each other since the late sixties. Almost immediately, however, all the participants agreed they would be more than happy to meet.⁷⁵ I was always aware of the time and emotional obligation I was asking them to commit to by agreeing to the interview.

I used an open-ended interview format but had prepared specific questions.⁷⁶ The main categories – Demographics, TV, Movies, School, and the Holocaust – gave the interviews structure and kept the interview on track. It was, however, flexible enough to move in other directions if necessary. The questions were chosen to elicit their memories of

⁷² Ilana, interview by author, tape recording, Ottawa, 27 November 2000.

⁷³ Paulina, interview by author, tape recording, Ottawa, 28 November 2000.

⁷⁴ Eva, interview by author, tape recording, Ottawa, 9 December 2000.

⁷⁵ Some still ask my father how the study is going and send their words of encouragement.

⁷⁶ See Appendix 3.

childhood and how, telling the stories now as adults, they remember growing up in postwar Canada. The questions revolved around television which was a major vehicle of the popular culture. No one in this group did *not* have a TV, though Hana did not experience it until later. As well, there were questions around their social lives, their families and especially their friends. I emphasized the friendship part of their lives because children go to school which takes up most of their days. Also, friends play a significant role in children's lives. This was a large part of the discussions. I asked about the cultural images and the representations that were often in contradiction to the knowledge of themselves and their parents. I wanted to know how they entered and engaged with the cultural absences and silences to create their own subjective and social possibility. The answers were there, in their stories.

I began with questions about them, their family, what their parents did – their family history. From there I continued on to a discussion about TV and the movies. My interest in popular culture and my own early television addiction made me wonder if it held true with others. I began with the well-known television programmes – the family shows and the primetime variety programmes. Another activity I loved as a child and as an adolescent was going to the movies. On Saturday afternoons in the 1950s, it seemed as if everybody else was doing the same thing. I kept specific movie titles out of the questions, but instead kept the questions general, asking about the movies they enjoyed. The questions around their Jewishness and the fact that they were children of survivors came about because I wanted to compare these two realities of their lives with the culture they experienced growing up. Did it have any connection to their reality? Did it matter?

When I talked to the participants before the interview, many expressed that they were happy *not* to talk about the Holocaust per se. They wanted to talk about the happier, more positive aspects of growing up. Having said that, there was still the realization that

being children of survivors, having the knowledge and appreciating what their parents' histories meant, was crucial to my study.

Where possible, I tried to mail or fax the questionnaire to the participant ahead of time. This was in order to give each one a chance to think back and try to recall. At the interview, Jake⁷⁷ said he had been out to dinner with friends the night before and had told them about the upcoming interview with me. He said they had all had a good time travelling down memory lane, recalling Ed Sullivan and "The Beav," or remembering how they had first met and dated. Some of the participants talked with some of the other interviewees although I had not told anyone the specifics in keeping with the confidentiality of each person's identity.

Most of the interviews were done in one session, approximately 1½- to 2-hours long. We each signed and dated two consent forms, one for each of us. The interviews were taped and the interviewees had the choice of location. Five chose to do it in their homes except for Anna⁷⁸ who wanted to see my parents and to catch up, and Sy⁷⁹ who suggested that since he was in the neighbourhood, he could come over earlier and get it done at my parents' house. I met Ilana at her office here in Ottawa. We talked for hours before the actual interview, catching up on both our and everybody else's lives. The others did not take as long, but we still did our share of catch-up. We all seemed to lose energy near the end of the hour and a half and so the interviews ended of their own accord. All participants said to call if I had more questions.

⁷⁷ Jake, interview by author, tape recording, 'South-central' town, 3 December 2000.

⁷⁸ Anna, interview by author, tape recording, 'South-central' town, 4 December 2000.

⁷⁹ Sy, interview by author, tape recording, 'South-central' town, 4 December 2000.

Sy and Barry⁸⁰ stuck to the script answering only the minimum required; the rest seemed comfortable with the process and were extremely forthcoming, talking about their childhood years, how they felt and how they coped. Their recollections began with the earliest years they could remember and continued into the first couple of years of high school. That became the 'postwar' period of this thesis. The memories were not always linear or in logical sequence. The stories and recollections came out easily, the words sometimes stumbling over each other. Some surprised themselves. Eva, for example, warned me before we met that she had a *terrible* memory but the stories and the details came through nonetheless. Near the end of the interview she said that the questions helped her remember things she thought she had forgotten. Many talked about their childhood experiences positively while others did not have such rosy memories. The details are discussed in later chapters. There were, admittedly, areas that could have touched a nerve but again, this aspect is discussed further along. We discussed the possibility of this over the phone beforehand and at the beginning of each interview. They all dismissed my worries.

I sent each one a transcript of the interview in a self-addressed, stamped envelope in case there were any changes they wished to make. They were told they could edit the transcript in any way. They were informed of this several times – when I called, at the end of the interview, it was written in the consent form and on the enclosed transcript I mailed to each one. Only Rob⁸¹ sent his transcript copy back and his only edit was the correct spelling of the Hungarian town where he was born. Most said they had had a good time with the interview, remembering events and memories they had not thought about for a long time.

⁸⁰ Barry, interview by author, tape recording, 'South-central' town, 4 December 2000.

⁸¹ Rob, interview with author, tape recording, 'South-central' town, 3 December 2000.

In going through the transcripts and listening to the tapes, I had to decide what I would use in the thesis. At first, I found certain patterns that were common to the group such as their television habits and their movie going rituals. There was as well their obvious facility, being of and in several worlds simultaneously. These and their other shared themes are discussed. However, something happened during the analysis and writing stages. When I revisited the tapes and the transcripts I noticed that each participant had, out of the experiences of childhood, fashioned a story that did not always conform with the research collected from the secondary literature. But 'truth', as discussed, was not what it was all about.

Participants

Eight of the nine were born in Europe and arrived as early as 1947, the latest being 1956. Paulina was the only second child and the only one born here in Canada. Where they were born had much to do with what happened to their parents after the Allies liberated the concentration camps. Ilana was born in Rome, Italy in 1948 and came to Canada in the fall of 1948. Both Anna and Suzanna were born in Poland in 1946, but Anna did not get to Canada until she was fourteen. She and her family could not get the proper papers and therefore went to Israel before coming to Canada. Jake was born in 1947 in Germany; Sy in 1946 in Austria. Both came over when they were babies. Rob was born in Tzigan, Hungary, moved to Budapest when he was three and lived there until the age of ten. Barry, also born in Hungary in 1946, came to 'South-central town' in 1948. Eva was born in Prague, Czechoslovakia, lived in Montreal for about two and a half years and then moved to 'Northern-town'. She was there from about five to about 15 or 16. She and her family moved back to Montreal when she was 17. Paulina was the only one not born in Europe. She was born in 'South-western town'.

Except for Paulina who has a sister two years older, the participants are the first-born in their families. Four of the group – Eva, Suzanna, Anna and Rob – are only children. The rest have siblings. Ilana and Sy's parents are deceased: Suzanna's and Anna's fathers and Rob's and Eva's mothers are living. Jake, Barry and Paulina have both their parents. Suzanna, Eva and Paulina moved to other cities: Jake, Rob, Barry, Anna and Sy live in the town in which they grew up. Anna and Sy are first cousins. All of them have been married except for Suzanna. Ilana is divorced and the rest are still married with children. Ilana and Paulina's children are in their teens and are still at home, but most of the group's children are grown up, either going to university or married. Two of the participants, Anna and Barry, are now grandparents.

I chose to study this particular group for several reasons. I am the daughter of Holocaust survivors and there has never been a time in my life when I have been *unaware* of this fact. One writer calls us the 'Second Generation' because everything earlier exists only in memory. Most of us have no pictures, no silver candlesticks or embroidered table linens: "Our inheritance is loss and memory."⁸² Writers from a variety of fields, much of it American, have documented how sons and daughters of survivors seem to share many of the same experiences, a fact that helps explain why many in the field are from within.⁸³ I wanted to know more. Our histories have been excluded and this, for me was a negation. History's silence has isolated too many, pushing them out to the sides. And why study the

⁸² Lori Hope Lefkowitz, "Inherited Holocaust Memory and the Ethnics of Ventriloquism," *The Kenyan Review* XIX, no. 1 (Winter 1997), 34.

⁸³ One of the more well-known books is Helen Epstein's *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors* (New York: Bantam, 1980). A large number of titles referred to in this context have been authored by children of survivors.

margins? Because “to be in the margins is to be part of the whole but outside the main body.”⁸⁴ And because too often, the consequences – racism – affects everyone.

Strong-Boag and Fellman discuss the merits of using ‘non-traditional’ sources of evidence. However, agreeing that conventional sources of information are rarely fully sufficient or satisfactory, they still caution practitioners not to “abandon traditional historical sources, which, when reconsidered, are also invaluable.”⁸⁵ In addition, how a person understood what happened is not, as discussed, completely revealed in oral testimony. As part of the methodology, the secondary literature established the historical context of the fifties and through which I interpreted my interviews.

Immigrants, having found themselves in a strange and sometimes hostile environment, formed and shaped their reality by means of the texts and narratives around them, struggling over prevailing cultural forms, at times resisting the dominant ideologies and practices around them. Out of the silences, they would appropriate the language and discourses, the signs and the codes to write their own personal scripts. Histories of the Jewish community and the larger Canadian society reveal the public, official discourses emanating out of both communities. The social forces of the fifties such as the idealization of domesticity and normalcy described in historical accounts contextualize the personal narratives. Sometimes they validate the narratives but not always. They are, however, the stories of historical players who were and still are active participants in Canadian life.

As with most things, we start at the beginning. After that, the route is never direct. As Brooks reminds us continually, the process of the narrative is ‘kinetic’. The very dynamics of memory and hope and desire often precludes logic and “transports us across

⁸⁴ bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Boston: South End Press, 1984), Preface.

⁸⁵ Strong-Boag and Fellman, “Introduction,” 6-7.

another boundary."⁸⁶ The oral testimonies of these individuals are neither linear nor straightforward, the narratives often reflecting the struggles of making sense of their world and experiences. I have, as well, avoided 'cleaning up' or over-editing the text. Since it is impossible to actually *hear* the voices of the participants I interviewed, I have inserted three dashes [---] to stand in for pauses or incomplete sentences. My attempts to transcribe what was happening aurally, beneath the words, was my way of compensating for not being able to play back their tones and inflections. It is hoped that the meanings will still reach out and speak to the reader.

Narratives in this thesis, to paraphrase Peter Brooks, become urgent attempts to cope with the unbearable losses and horrors of our parents' existence. They foreground "the desire . . . to find a workable 'truth,'"⁸⁷ one that will finally allow the teller to move forward because it is not just about what the narrative is and what it wants to say, but it is about what it wants to do. And what these stories say and do reflects how they consumed and experienced the normalizing discourses of the popular culture of the fifties and early sixties, when these participants were growing up. Their testimonies often resisted exposure and so, I decided to place their Holocaust-related responses at the end, to stand as a reflection of the interview process itself. The thesis was a journey of discovery where bravados soon turned inside out to reveal some deeper meanings below the surface.

⁸⁶ Haug, *Female* 38.

⁸⁷ Brooks, *Reading*, 7.

Reference Chart: Description of Participants

Pseud.	Date of Birth	City/Country of Birth	Age at Arrival in Canada	Canadian City of Residence	# of Child. in the Family	Order of Birth	Mother's Occupation	Father's Occupation
Ilana	Feb. 24 th , 1948	Rome, Italy	6 mos.	'South-central town'	3	1 st born	Assisted husband in fur store	Owned a fur store
Paulina	Nov., 1952	'South-western town' Canada	Born in Canada	'South-western town'	2	2 nd born	Worked at a market. part-time	Doors & windows mftg.
Jake	April 28 th , 1947	Germany	1 year	'South-central town'	3	1 st born	Home-maker/ recep't for husband's scrap metal business	Scrap dealer/ peddler
Rob	1946	Tzigan, Hungary	11 years	'South-central town'	1	Only child	Factory worker	Peddler
Sy	Nov. 16 th , 1946	Austria	2 years	'South-central town'	2	1 st born	Home-maker	Taxi driver/baker
Anna	March 28 th , 1946	Vowverj, Poland	13 years	'South-central town'	1	Only child	Home-maker	Baker
Barry	1946	Hungary	2 ½ years	'South-central town'	2	1 st born	Home-maker	Real estate
Eva	1946	Prague, Czechoslovakia	2 years	'Northern town'	1	Only child	Worked at various odd jobs	Fabric buyer for a retail store
Suzanna	Jan. 8 th , 1946	Cracow, Poland	3 years	'South-central town'	1	Only child	Home-maker	Notions & buttons importer

CHAPTER 4

MEMORIES OF GROWING UP IN POSTWAR CANADA

Postwar Canada: Chasing the Domestic Ideal

In the years following WW II. and continuing into the 1960s, the Canadian economy began an upward climb towards prosperity.¹ For many young couples, the new middle-class dream of owning a newly constructed home in the suburbs became a reality and by 1960, a million Canadians had made the exodus from the cities.² In the words of the well-known and oft-cited study *Crestwood Heights: A Study of the Culture of Suburban Life*, published in 1956, to be “in a position to buy privacy and sunlight, in spacious homes and gardens [was] a dream of a material heaven in the here and now.”³ High marriage rates, low divorce rates, and increased fertility rates contradicted the trends that had been in place since the nineteenth century.⁴ Canada now turned its attention to family and children although this movement had already begun to manifest itself in various guises in the early years of the war. Popular American songs – sometimes written by Canadians – conjured up feelings of yearning for the boys overseas and for the folks back home. Hollywood movies, seen in Canada, were about images reminding its citizens why the sacrifices were necessary and for whom, reinforcing that it was the least they could do for their country and for their fighting troops who would be returning home. Home – it stood for all that was good and safe.

¹ Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble with Norma: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Robert Bothwell et al, *Canada Since 1945: Power, Politics, and Provincialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989); Paul Rutherford, *When Television Was Young: Prime Time Canada 1952-1967* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); John G. Stackhouse, Jr., “The Protestant Experience in Canada Since 1945,” in *The Canadian Protestant Experience, 1760-1990*, ed. George A. Rawlyk, 198-239 (Burlington, ON: Welch Publishing company Inc., 1990).

² Doug Owram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 55.

³ John R. Seeley et al, *Crestwood Heights: A Study of the Culture of Suburban Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1956), 6.

⁴ Owram, *Born*, 136.

With the declaration of peace, the notion of home was refitted to suit the times. Canadians devoted their lives to the future, to rebuilding what they had missed for so many years. At the same time, "some key values were undergoing rapid change."⁵ Many Canadians, still affected by a decade of the Depression followed by World War II, "were not always trusting of what the future might bring."⁶ In the midst of celebrating the fall of fascism and victory, there was worry about the fragile peace, about the cold war and about the prosperity of the country. Canadians were also anxious about the state of the family.

The standards and expectations of the times were extraordinarily high, emanating, according to Mona Gleason, from popular psychological discourses that shaped and defined what the 'normal' Canadian family was supposed to be. Efforts, directed by government institutions such as the National Committee for Mental Hygiene (Canada), sought to promote 'positive mental health' through various studies and on-going efforts in different communities. It was an age obsessed with psychology and it affected many Canadians because it held out the promise of answers.⁷ The reasoning was simple enough: if the order and discipline of science could produce new technologies and machines then the social sciences could be utilized to comprehend and manipulate humanity. There were new rules. Communal norms, including ethnic traditions and family practices, were judged according to 'scientific' standards. Parents were strongly discouraged from depending on past "patterns of behavior approved by traditional Judæo-Christian norms."⁸

⁵ Mariana Valverde, "Building Anti-Delinquent Communities: Morality, Gender, and Generation in the City," in *A Diversity of Women: Ontario, 1945-1980*, ed. Joy Parr, 19-45 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 20.

⁶ Adams, *The Trouble*, 168. See also Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods: The Material, the Moral, and the Economic in the Postwar Years* (Toronto, London and New York: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

⁷ Mona Gleason, "Psychology and the Construction of the 'Normal' Family in Postwar Canada, 1945-1960," *The Canadian Historical Review* 78, 3 (September 1997), 443; Owsram, 141; Seeley et al., 13.

⁸ Seeley et al., 167.

One new cultural phenomenon in the fifties was suburbanization. The move from the inner cities to designated, residential communities had a profound impact on society. The so-called new family spawned numerous studies written by 'experts' such as those involved with the 'Crestwood Heights' report. A pseudonym for the Toronto community of Forest Hill, the study probed the inner workings of a postwar community. Crestwood Heights was an upper middle-class neighborhood, which was beginning to absorb outsiders such as Jews. It was where successful, powerful husbands went off to work each day while their equally accomplished wives attended to the needs of their children and the community. However, not everything was perfect in this seeming paradise. Interviews with both parents and children reveal the fears and ambivalence they felt about the various issues in their lives. Historian Erna Paris, who grew up in Toronto's gilded ghetto of Forest Hill, remembers those times:

Our lives in the forties and fifties were insular and 'unreal.' We knew almost nothing beyond the village, the downtown department stores where we'd sometimes wander on Saturday afternoons and charge clothes to our father's accounts, and the bits of northern Ontario where we summered . . .⁹

Paris's comfortable 50s lifestyle in her established Jewish community is not dissimilar from those described by the participants in this study. But not everyone enjoyed this kind of affluence and level of comfort. Many were excluded.

Popular psychological trends now elevated experts to new heights of power and influence, convincing parents that they had the potential to permanently damage their child: that is, if they did not follow the advice. Researchers on the Crestwood Heights study were struck by the way mothers rejected their own experience in favour of some scientific formula. Was it any wonder when voices from many different segments of society offered

⁹ Erna Paris, "Growing Up a Jewish Princess in Forest Hill," in *The Spice Box: An Anthology of Jewish Canadian Writing*, eds. Gerri Sinclair and Morris Wolfe, 243-250 (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1981), 246-247.

their opinions. Princess Elizabeth, visiting Canada in 1949, writes Mariana Valverde, joined the collective chorus, entreating all Canadians to get married and have children.¹⁰ She was not alone in her public message to the Canadian people. Anyone who could, expressed their concerns over the future, what with the declining level of morality, particularly the “deviant” morality among urban young people.¹¹

Environment, not heredity, was the key. The criteria were there for all to see and hear. Fathers and mothers were expected to fulfill their parental duties “although most discussion of parental behavior seems to refer to mothers.”¹² The list of requirements was long and unforgiving. The “ideal” mother had to be emotionally secure, protective but not too much so, loving but not so much that she suffocated her children, not overly dominant but not too lenient, she must not nag nor boss the child – the list was often confusing and contradictory and clearly impossible for any one ordinary human being.¹³

But the pressure to raise perfect children was only one piece of the social landscape. Social historian Gaile McGregor contends that the social scene was “undoubtedly one of conformity.”¹⁴ Not entirely so, according to Mariana Valverde. The perception of an overwhelming postwar consensus era stems from a desire to remember those years as happy memories. Pleasant as it might be, Valverde writes, it prevents delving any deeper into the social issues that affected the real lives of real people. Whether there was or was not a general consensus, there was, however, a “surprisingly high level of anxiety about basic

¹⁰ Valverde, “Building,” 20.

¹¹ Valverde, “Building,” 20.

¹² Seeley et al., *Crestwood Heights*, 166.

¹³ The idea of women and their responsibilities in raising perfect children is a common theme in the literature. The Crestwood study reinforces what social historians have written about the period.

¹⁴ Gaile McGregor, “Domestic Blitz: A Revisionist History of the Fifties,” *American Studies* 34, 1 (Spring 1993), 7.

social values [that] pervaded the supposedly naïve and innocent postwar period."¹⁵ Many Canadians remembered the desperate years of the Depression and the uncertainty during the six years of war they had just lived through. Soldiers needed to get back to work and women were now expected to give up their wartime positions to devote their lives to child-rearing and housewifely duties. Wartime fears of women working at men's jobs and raising children alone had already taken root in people's consciousness.¹⁶

After the war, there was considerable pressure directed against those women who wished to continue working.¹⁷ The war had disrupted society enough and it was now time to get back to the 'traditional' values of home and family. Marriage and children became a social duty with the middle-class family designated as its foundation. With the added anxiety of the nuclear age, the themes of security and stability were also conscripted into the campaign for a return to the domestic ideal, the family. This white, middle-class family required certain patterns of behaviour: dad was the sole wage earner and mom was a housewife, cheerfully baking cookies and waiting for her brood to come home at the end of the day or after attending PTA meetings. As Strong-Boag notes, "suburban housewives at home in ever larger houses epitomized the promise that prosperity would guarantee both individual happiness and the final triumph over communism."¹⁸ The country and its burgeoning economy depended on families filled with smiling children, responsible fathers, and devoted mothers.¹⁹ Healthy families meant a healthy society.

¹⁵ Valverde, "Building," 19.

¹⁶ Valverde, "Building," 20.

¹⁷ Peter Lewis, *The Fifties* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1978), 44.

¹⁸ Strong-Boag, "Home Dreams: Women and the Suburban Experience in Canada, 1945-1960," *Canadian Historical Review* 62, 4 (December 1991), 474.

¹⁹ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

Appropriating the rhetoric of the ‘experts’, journalists and politicians took up the cause of normalizing the ideal – the white, middle-class life. Many joined in. Ministers preached from their pulpits, commentators spoke on radio and television, popular fiction writers wrote for the magazines. Indeed, it seemed as if every opportunity was appropriated in order to spread the message. To challenge these notions left one open to criticism and to charges of deviance or social failure.²⁰ Imagine the consequences, Canadians were told, if the traditional values of home and family were not restored. People did welcome the prospects of peace and prosperity and were afraid of upsetting the equilibrium; thus the drive and the perceived need to be ‘normal’.²¹ Even if a woman attempted to do it on her own, what was out there for her but unequal opportunities, low wages, no support structures for working moms and poor public transportation, and even if the family had a car, the husband used it during the day.²² As a result, women stayed home in huge numbers and men went to work. For those men and women who were not so inclined to conform, it was difficult. After all, if normality were the ‘natural’ thing, the standard by which you were measured and categorized, then it was difficult if one challenged the status quo. Although Canadians did not actually buy the new consumer products until the sixties, “this idea was pervasive.”²³

Discourses of normalcy in Canada were articulated through various practices and institutions. Toronto-based organizations and national media outlets served to define a ‘national’ perspective that rarely accounted for other voices or other opinions. According to both Owram and Adams, one powerful source was the CBC, the voice and representative of

²⁰ Owram, *Born*, 61; Arlene Skolnick, *Embattled Paradise: The American Family in an Age of Uncertainty* (New York: BasicBooks/HarperCollins, 1991), xix.

²¹ This is an oft-cited and discussed theme in the literature of postwar Canada – and the United States.

²² Strong-Boag, “Home Dreams,” 480.

²³ Owram, 22.

‘English Canada’. Its messages of a white, Anglo-Saxon Canada rarely acknowledged the possibility of any class, ethnic or economic differences. CBC programming, broadcasting out of Toronto, was a prime example of this kind of sanitization. Prime time slots were dominated by American imports and domestic programmes were peopled with white, Anglo-Saxon images and representations that “homogeniz[ed] the social fabric, erasing differences among individuals.”²⁴ The government census, for example, had no place on the form to write in one’s religion.²⁵ And if anyone did wish to opt out publicly, there were few options. Ministries of Education further reinforced the push to fit in with school programmes and textbooks that reflected the message that Canada was – or at least should be – a white, Anglo-Saxon society.²⁶ In every province except British Columbia, there was religious instruction in the public school system – though even BC required the Lord’s Prayer and approved scriptural reading. “Indeed, in Ontario a 1950s royal commission specifically called for a retention of Christian values in school courses. This was instituted, and a half-hour per week was set aside for religious instruction.”²⁷ Ilana remembers learning about Christianity: “We had a minister who came into the classroom. I was excused from that. I was allowed to go into the hall. I think sometimes I stayed and sometimes I went out. We had to do a project. I remember being there for this project. So

²⁴ Adams, *The Trouble*, 169.

²⁵ Owrarn, *Born*, 104.

²⁶ Allan Luke, *Literacy, Textbooks, and Ideology: Postwar Literacy Instruction and the Mythology of Dick and Jane* (London and New York: Falmer Press, 1988); Carmen Luke, Suzanne de Castell and Allan Luke, “Beyond Criticism: The Authority of the School Textbook,” *Curriculum Inquiry* 13 (1983): 111-128; David Pratt, “The Social Role of School Textbooks in Canada,” in *Socialization and Values in Canadian Society*, vol. 1, ed. Elia Zureik and Robert M. Pike, 100-126 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1975); David Pratt, “Bias in Textbooks: Progress and Problems,” in *Multiculturalism in Canada: Social and Educational Perspectives*, ed. Ronald J. Samuda, John W. Berry and Michel Laferriere, 154-166 (Toronto: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1984); George S. Tomkins, *A Common Countenance: Stability and Change in the Canadian Curriculum* (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1986); Elia Zureik and Robert M. Pike, ed., *Socialization and Values in Canadian Society*, vol. 1 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1975).

²⁷ Owrarn, *Born*, 132.

what they said was I could do the Old Testament, not the New Testament. But I said the Lord's Prayer every day."²⁸ Christianity was the only public way of being, whatever views one held.

Outside of school, organized forms of leisure were also conscripted into the religious cause. In a chapter devoted to the leisure activities of the baby boomers growing up in postwar Canada, Owram relates how church groups such as the Canadian Girls in Training and the Junior Auxiliary, or the still-popular Scouts and Guides, transmitted parental beliefs, values and goals that were influenced by the dominant discourses of nation, Empire and family.²⁹ A growing body of literature relates the efforts expended on newcomers throughout the twentieth century that tried to teach them how to be good Canadians – cultural shorthand for Anglo-Saxon.³⁰ Government organizations like social and health agencies attempted to reshape their immigrant clients' lives by compelling them "to adopt or mimic Canadian customs."³¹ If the parents could not always comply, their children were often more amenable when they became members of these youth organizations.

Another feature of postwar domestic life implicated women who were, as Elaine May describes her American player, "enveloped by an ideology of 'containment' that bound them to the suburban household for the rest of their adult lives."³² Although Canadian

²⁸ Interview with Ilana, 7.

²⁹ Owram, *Born*, 99-104. See also Nancy M. Sheehan, "Philosophy, Pedagogy, and Practice: The IODE and the Schools in Canada, 1900-1945," *Historical Studies in Education* 2, no. 2 (Fall 1990): 307-321. John M. MacKenzie describes a different context but his description of the 'Englishness' of the colonies struck a familiar chord in *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion 1880-1960* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1984).

³⁰ Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 127.

³¹ Franca Iacovetta, "Making 'New Canadians': Social Workers, Women, and the Reshaping of Immigrant Families," in *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History*, eds. Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde, 261-303 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 296.

³² May, *Homeward*, 14-15.

historians such as Joy Parr and Veronica Strong-Boag have shown that there were some women who found outlets for their energy, the new housing developments were still not the most liberating of places. Children went to school, played and socialized with other children very much like themselves. With the adults, it was the same. Data on the residents of the new suburbs show there were rarely old people in the new subdivisions built for young couples and their families.³³ For that matter, generally, neither were there men during the day. “New communities often revealed a distinct class and ethnic character, one that was sometimes legally imposed. . . . Even after covenants had lost some of their power, homogeneity often survived, a testament to more informal support.”³⁴ One woman in Strong-Boag’s article, “Their Side” expresses her displeasure with the fact that there were “No poor people. No rich. No bachelors, or spinsters, or sharing singles. Not even grandmothers and grandfathers’.”³⁵ In a world still defined by social class – often intersected with ‘race’, gender and age – others outside your group were remote and suspect.

Joy Parr’s arguments do not hold the idea of a national consumer consensus. Parr’s female consumers did not rush headlong into buying as did their American counterparts. Their choices, restrained certainly by supply, were, nevertheless, influenced by factors other than the newness and attractiveness of the products. Their decisions regarding their material world was “not linear and quantitative . . . [but] qualitative, ethical, political, and cultural.”³⁶ In *Domestic Goods*, we learn about the habits, behaviours and everyday choices

³³ Owrarn, *Born*, 79-83.

³⁴ Strong-Boag, “Home Dreams,” 486.

³⁵ Veronica Strong-Boag, “Their Side of the Story”: Women’s Voices from Ontario Suburbs, 1945-1960,” in *A Diversity of Women: Ontario, 1945-1980*, ed. Joy Parr, 46-74 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 59.

³⁶ Parr, *Domestic Goods*, 11.

of the women interviewed. As Parr points out, historians know more about Mr. Eaton than they do about his customers and in her book she begins to fill in the details in this field.

The Jewish community was not immune to the forces occurring around them and so for this thesis, questions of agency and resistance, always intersected by factors of class or ethnicity, have been adapted for the discussion. For example, how did the Jewish children – speaking as the adults I interviewed – ‘talk back’? What did they do when faced with few choices? What strategies did they deploy? It is their responses that offer the view from the bottom rail during Canada’s postwar years.

The Jewish Community in Postwar Canada

Like all of postwar Canada, Jewish communal life in the 1950s was also in a state of transition. As happened at the turn of the twentieth century when the first great wave of Jewish immigrants arrived, “Ontario’s culture was shaped by the Anglo-Celtic values and political traditions of the charter group.”³⁷ Ties to England were still evident, and for me, after my preliminary research, it seemed more so in the smaller towns where fewer numbers of newcomers seemed to have less of an impact as they might have had in the larger urban centres. Jewish children in cities such as Toronto and Montreal were often with other Jewish children. Their friends were Jewish, their lives revolved around others like them in their immediate, self-imposed ‘ghettos’.

³⁷ Gerald Tulchinsky, “The Jewish Experience in Ontario to 1960,” in *Patterns of the Past: Interpreting Ontario’s History*, ed. Roger Hall, William Westfall and Laurel Sefton MacDowell, 301-327 (Toronto & Oxford: Dundurn Press, 1988), 323.

In the established, larger urban Jewish communities, Yiddish, the language of the *Yiddishe Gass*³⁸ was heard less and less. By the forties, prominent hate-mongers were either silenced or they had disbanded.³⁹ The climate, Tulchinsky writes, was certainly “minor compared with the antisemitism current in Canada in the 1930s.”⁴⁰ It was easier for Jews, as well as other minorities. After 1944, with the passing of an Anti-Discrimination Act, legislation made it an offence to publish material or post signs reflecting on any ‘race’ or creed.⁴¹ With increased opportunities in such areas as universities, professional programmes and housing, more Jews were taking advantage of the improved social climate.

Maybe the second and third generation looked, felt and sounded more Canadian but in his account of the relationship between survivors and the Jewish community, Franklin Bialystok reminds us that antisemitism was “still very much alive.”⁴² It was not uncommon for public figures to openly spew poisonous remarks and for real estate covenants and restrictions to be “honoured in the breach as well as in the observance.”⁴³ In their searing exposé of immigration policies in Canada during World War II, Irving Abella and Harold Troper tell of a postwar society that was antisemitic. This prevailed despite the revelations of the horrors in Europe. Even if someone had never read the newspaper accounts, there were still the newsreels of emaciated corpses lined up like cord wood or being bulldozed into mass graves. It was obvious to Canadian Jews that the European Jewish survivors

³⁸ Trans. = Jewish street.

³⁹ Arnold Ages, “Antisemitism: The Uneasy Calm,” in *The Canadian Jewish Mosaic*, ed. Morton Weinfeld, William Shaffir and Irwin Cotler, 383-395 (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 1981), 389.

⁴⁰ Gerald Tulchinsky, *Branching Out: The Transformation of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1998), 269.

⁴¹ Joseph Schull, *Ontario Since 1867* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), 326.

⁴² Franklin Bialystok, *Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000), 75.

⁴³ Gerald Tulchinsky, “The Jewish Experience in Ontario to 1960,” 323.

needed immediate help. Yet despite the fewer “No Jews Wanted” signs and the fewer overt acts of racism, polls in 1946 revealed that many Canadians marked Jews, second only to the Japanese, as the least desirable immigrants.⁴⁴ “Canadians preferred almost anyone – including Germans – to Jews.”⁴⁵ Abella and Bialystok pose the question why more than 250,000 Jewish refugees were still “languishing in displaced persons camps”⁴⁶ three years after Liberation. This and related questions have become the focus of historical and sociological discussion.⁴⁷ Not until 1948 was the Dominion finally willing to open its doors.⁴⁸ In time, immigration policies would ease up enough to let in Jewish survivors, part of the tens of thousands of European Displaced Persons.

Were Canadians and their government suddenly sympathetic to the survivors? Hardly, write Abella and Bialystok. Their essay, one in a collection entitled *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*,⁴⁹ cites a radio address given by Canada’s ambassador to France, The Honourable General Georges Vanier, May 2, 1945, who “spoke at length about the horrors of Buchenwald without once mentioning the Jewish victims.”⁵⁰ Memoranda and appeals on both the Jewish and non-Jewish fronts made little impact until other mitigating

⁴⁴ Irving Abella and Frank Bialystok, “Canada and the Holocaust,” in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. David S. Wyman, 749-781 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1996), 758; Paula J. Draper, “Canadian Holocaust Survivors: From Liberation to Rebirth,” in *New Perspectives on Canada, the Holocaust and Survivors*, 39-62 (Special issue of *Canadian Jewish Studies* vols. 4-5 [1996-1997] n.p.: Association for Canadian Jewish Studies, 2000), 45; Schull, *Ontario*, 327.

⁴⁵ Abella and Bialystok, “Canada and the Holocaust,” 758.

⁴⁶ Abella and Bialystok, 760. Most of the figures quoted here are taken primarily from Abella and Bialystok, Abella and Troper, Kage and Tulchinsky.

⁴⁷ For an account of Canada’s immigration policies toward Jews and the efforts of Jewish leaders to affect change in those policies, see Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many*.

⁴⁸ Joseph Kage, “Able and Willing to Work: Jewish Immigration and Occupational Patterns in Canada,” in *The Canadian Jewish Mosaic*, eds. Morton Weinfeld, William Shaffir and Irwin Cotler, 27-48 (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 1981), 42.

⁴⁹ David S. Wyman, ed., *The World Reacts to the Holocaust* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1996).

⁵⁰ Abella and Bialystok, “Canada and the Holocaust,” 761.

factors came into play. A master politician who could gauge the mood of Canadians. Prime Minister Mackenzie King had appointed C.D. Howe to implement Canada's postwar reconstruction and this included finding the bodies to fuel the economic machine.⁵¹ Labour teams travelled to Europe to collect the 'right' kind of person who could be eligible for Canadian citizenship. They sought out politically 'congenial' individuals, code for non-communists. Initially, selection depended on skills. By 1950, those allowed entry included furriers, milliners, dressmakers and domestics.⁵² That is how Ilana's father got in. His family "had owned a leather-tanning factory. In order to get into Canada, he had to have a profession that was needed, and furriers were needed. . . . He persuaded them that he was a furrier, and he knew stuff about tanning. So he basically came to Toronto and worked for someone who trained him in the fur business and then he moved to 'South-central town' and started his own business."⁵³ And so, "between April 1947 and March 1950, the country granted admission to 98,057 DPs"⁵⁴ with Jews third to Poles and Ukrainians. Although exact figures are lacking, it is estimated that "from 1945 and 1956, between 30,000 and 35,000 survivors and their descendants immigrated to and remained in Canada, constituting 13 to 15 per cent of Canadian Jews."⁵⁵ Jews, generally 1.5 percent of the total population, numbered 204,836 in 1951.⁵⁶ Between 1945 and 1956, another 4,000 children were born to survivors. Tulchinsky echoes what others have found in regards to the impact the newcomers had on the Jewish community. The influx of immigrants meant "an important

⁵¹ Abella and Bialystok, "Canada and the Holocaust," 761; Ages, "Antisemitism," 389-390.

⁵² Abella and Bialystock, 761; Draper, 46; Kage, 42-43.

⁵³ Interview with Ilana, 1.

⁵⁴ Kage, "Able and Willing," 43.

⁵⁵ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*. See also Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 320.

⁵⁶ Abella and Bialystok, 759.

new infusion of population that contributed enormously to the cultural life of the community."⁵⁷ The community which had begun to move away from its Eastern European Jewish culture and traditions, was reinvigorated by these new immigrants who knew Yiddish and who "had participated in the various Jewish ideological and political debates of the Old World."⁵⁸ It was an opportunity for the community to reconnect to the past. The coming together was, nonetheless, fraught with tensions. Some have not forgotten. At the same time, many of the survivors were also ready to begin a new life and wanted to share in the Canadian postwar dream.

Growing up, the adults that were interviewed for this study recalled memories of childhood and growing that were very much a part of the Jewish community as well as the larger Canadian community. As children, they experienced the same strains as those of the adults. It is not uncommon when the 'old' and the 'new' come together. They experienced the tensions, the fears and the misunderstandings, along with the humour and the good nature that one often needs when trying to get along in this world, especially in a world that was not always familiar. But there was more. Their narratives reveal what it was.

⁵⁷ Tulchinsky, "The Jewish Experience," 320.

⁵⁸ William Shaffir and Morton Weinfeld, "Canada and the Jews: An Introduction," in *The Canadian Jewish Mosaic*, eds. M. Weinfeld, W. Shaffir and I. Cotler, 7-20 (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 1981), 14.

Memories of Growing Up

The Early Years

At first, various cultural differences could make life for the children uncomfortable. Language was not a great liability for long despite the fact that English was often not their first language. Jake said that when he and his brother started school, he “almost failed.”⁵⁹ The school officials thought he was just a shy and quiet kid but in fact, Yiddish had been the dominant language in the home. He added, “I just didn’t understand what the hell they were saying.”⁶⁰ Eventually, though, he and everybody else picked up the language almost immediately, as kids usually do. Rob immigrated later but he too learned it quickly, speaking “fairly fluently in a matter of weeks, a matter of months.”⁶¹ For Anna it was harder. As a teenager, moving to a new country was quite devastating. Adolescence is a time of emergence, of exploring and trying on. Not knowing the language or the cultural customs of your new environment meant being held back, still feeling like a child. It meant being left out of many activities she would have wanted desperately to join. She knew what the rest of her contemporaries were doing and she was jealous.

The first-born in an immigrant family was usually the first one to learn English.⁶² Learning the language before your parents meant assuming certain responsibilities that Canadian-born parents and their children did not have to deal with. Ilana recalls what many, as children, had to do: “I can remember when it was early on in Grades 1 and 2 whenever we had parent-teacher interviews, I had to be there. Whenever I was sick, I had to write the

⁵⁹ Interview with Jake, 4.

⁶⁰ Interview with Jake, 4.

⁶¹ Interview with Rob, 10.

⁶² See Milly Charon, “Introduction,” in *Worlds Apart: New Immigrant Voices*, ed. Milly Charon, 1-6 (Dunvegan, ON: Cormorant Books, 1989).

note and my parents would sign it. Because their English wasn't that good back then."⁶³

Rob recognized how his parents must have felt to be in this position:

I think at a very early age I realized how difficult it must have been for them because I acted on their behalf --- within a matter of a few weeks, even. I was able to understand a little bit. So much so in fact, in a little while, I was their translator. So, wherever they had to go where they needed someone to communicate with they took me along. And I felt like an adult when you think about it. I was almost their equal. If there was some serious issues to discuss where they had to understand, I was their translator.⁶⁴

Suzanna had a different experience entirely. Her father learned English so well that he was able to correct her essays. Ilana's father also made the extra effort, refusing to speak anything but English in the home.

For most, though, being unfamiliar with the nuances of language is funny, in retrospect. Barry recalled "some things that --- some of the things that are hard to learn or sort of --- that are unnatural that you don't get from your parents if they're immigrants."⁶⁵ His hesitancy reflects how difficult it could be when there were gaps in understanding when missing pieces distorted the picture. Often, parents were unable to help out; children were on their own. Barry followed with an example: "Like the one thing I remember vividly," he continued, "is I could never figure out why trucks had the word 'p-hone' on them. Which is 'phone'. P-hone with a number. What the hell's p-hone?"⁶⁶ We both laughed over this recollection. This sense of dislocation is echoed in a recently published memoir fittingly entitled, *Displaced Person*.⁶⁷ The feeling of displacement and isolation expresses itself from the very beginning. The author, Joseph Berger writes:

⁶³ Interview with Ilana, 15.

⁶⁴ Interview with Rob, 10.

⁶⁵ Interview with Barry, 9.

⁶⁶ Interview with Barry, 9.

⁶⁷ Joseph Berger, *Displaced Persons: Growing Up American After the Holocaust* (New York: Scribner, 2001).

Although I may not have been able to articulate it, I already felt these alien streets would be a trial, filled with unfamiliar faces and unfamiliar tongues. How could I make a friend when I didn't even speak English? How could I understand a teacher or classmate? And how could I rely on my perplexed, frightened parents to help me cope?⁶⁸

Over the years, the sharp edges of pain may have been dulled but the shadows of the memories still linger. The discomfort of not always knowing what was going on was very real to this group.

Another cultural difference that could disconnect an individual was something seemingly so insignificant and yet, for some growing up, it could mean one more wall between them and the rest of the world. It was their names. Girls out there all seemed to have an adorable name such as Susie or Tammy. As if the feeling of separation was not enough to bear, some of the participants had different or foreign-sounding names, unknown and totally incomprehensible to most Canadians, many of whom never even took the time to learn. Immigration officers routinely changed names on arrival papers: officials in government bureaucracies did not make it easy when immigrants pronounced their names. Officials would make them repeat the names, their voices progressively getting louder and more agitated: and then teachers expected their students to have a 'Canadian' name just like everyone else. Paulina remembers: "I didn't have a name like Mary, or Linda. I had a name that no one else had."⁶⁹ This was rich material for comedic anecdotes passed from one immigrant to the other. They were funny and Jews laughed along when Jewish comedians told jokes about immigrants and the name troubles they got into – usually because of language and cultural mis-cues. It still hurt, though. No one had ever heard these strange names before. Jews out there, it could be on television or in the movies, mainly had neutral

⁶⁸ Joseph Berger, Preface.

⁶⁹ Interview with Paulina, 9.

and/or Anglo names. Jews in the public eye rarely kept their original family names.⁷⁰ For some, there seemed to be no choice but to change or forever be branded. The custom continues today.⁷¹

Being new was bound up with an assortment of struggles and adjustments. Parents were busy trying to make a living while many of the children just wanted to be like everybody else around them. Parents worked hard to survive in this new world and their children were very conscious of this fact. Paulina knew how hard it was: "I swam --- and I had music lessons which I wasn't very good at --- I had skating lessons. My mother sacrificed a lot to do all this for us because she didn't have any money and she was an incredible money manager and she worked and she used her money to accomplish all of that."⁷² She knows she was not particularly good at any of the extra-curricular activities she was involved in but at the same time, she was acutely aware of the sacrifices her mother was making so she could enjoy some of the same advantages that other Canadian children had.

Being clueless – or perhaps there was no choice – and not having the money might have distinguished a person but in Ilana's case, the outcome was, in retrospect, ironic. It began when Ilana's furrier father had extra fur so he made her a coat made out of the scraps. She smiled when she told the story: "There I was in Grade 2 going to school in a Mouton coat. It was very embarrassing. I used to hang out at the edge of the playground and go in at the end so that kids wouldn't see me. Everyone thought I was rich, which we weren't. We

⁷⁰ The list of famous Jews who have changed their names is well known to many Jews. For me, the most ironic is Ralph Lauren, neé Lipshitz. Ralph Lauren, both popular and financially successful in his field of fashion and many related endeavours, has set the style, the trends, even the tastes of what is defined as the horsy, country club look in America today – not unlike the earlier movie moguls who had contributed to the construction of the "American" dream.

⁷¹ See Dan Brown, "That's a funny name...Entertainers have a long history of taking monikers that fit their style, are easy to remember and pronounce – and won't scare the audience," *The National Post*, Thursday, July 12, 2001, B1.

⁷² Interview with Paulina, 5.

were extremely poor at the time. As we moved further east we actually moved up a scale — but back when I was in Grade 2, uh uh.”⁷³ Funny perhaps but only with distance and time does the embarrassment recede, somewhat. Being sensitive is universal and perhaps immigrants feel the embarrassment more but Ilana’s feelings of self-consciousness resonates with the age-old charge that Jews ‘control’ the banks, they are rich, or that they want to take over the world. These excuses have cost Jews dearly and tragically.⁷⁴ As will be later demonstrated in this thesis, many Jews did everything in their power not to give people more ammunition that would fuel a potential antisemitic reaction. God forbid a Jew should talk about money. But if a Jew were active in the labour movement, he was instantly branded a communist. But a child should not have to worry about such matters. Some, like Ilana and Paulina, felt it deeply, remembering the differences clearly, to today. Some like Barry remember the humorous parts, while others such as Sy and Jake just shake it off, choosing not to make anything of those early cultural misperceptions and the consequences.

Then there was image, which played a crucial role in the daily lives of teenagers. There was a ‘look’ out there that said one belonged. It was the look my interviewees saw on everybody else and many just could not carry it off, for various reasons. Sometimes it had nothing to do with their experiences but it somehow still seemed tied in with how they were feeling. Adolescents might have their teenage look, often mysterious or frightening to adults, but it is the look of their peers. It is a farewell to the past and a leaving go of the way parents dressed them. Rob thought it was also because he was “a redhead and whatever — many incidences, actually.”⁷⁵ He could not “remember the specifics of what happened.”⁷⁶

⁷³ Interview with Ilana, 7.

⁷⁴ The list of titles written by both Jews and non-Jews and the breadth of the field prevents a full account here. However, a good start is the texts of Cecil Roth and Lucy S. Dawidowicz.

⁷⁵ Interview with Rob, 7.

For Paulina, it was being “always the tallest person in [her] grade school.”⁷⁷ I asked her if looking like Audrey Hepburn helped because many girls would have killed to have that kind of a figure. “It didn’t help,” she said, “in your day-to-day life. Somehow it didn’t translate.”⁷⁸ The last thing an adolescent wants is to stand out. Looking ‘distinctive’ is fine for others but most adolescents just want to be like everyone else.

It was a matter of fitting in and these children were very sensitive to the fact that they did not, for many real and imagined reasons. Suzanna explained how she felt and remembered exactly when and why. Her father had started taking English lessons as soon as he arrived in Canada. His tutors, two retired British schoolmistresses, were the founders of an exclusive girl’s school – *the oh-so-posh girls private school* in ‘South-central town’. The misses Felicity and Charity arranged for Suzanna to have a scholarship for Grade 1. Immediately, though, she knew this was not the place for her. At the end of the year, the time came to decide whether she would continue. There was the tuition to consider and all the extra expenses that went along with going exclusive – uniforms, books, shoes. It was more money than they could afford at that time and private school was definitely a luxury. For that reason, and because of those horrid Oxford shoes she had to wear, she left.⁷⁹ The following year saw Suzanna enrolled in the downtown public school in her district. There, the environment definitely felt more familiar. “It was,” she said, “packed with European kids. Not just Jews, everybody. Yugoslavs, Italians, everybody who came off the boat after the War . . . and I really fit in much more there than I did otherwise — I remember the difference between fitting in at [the private school] and fitting in at [the downtown]

⁷⁶ Interview with Rob. 7.

⁷⁷ Interview with Paulina. 9.

⁷⁸ Interview with Paulina. 10.

⁷⁹ Interview with Suzanna. 5.

school.⁸⁰ This had to do with more than just wanting to fit in. This was about a comfort level Suzanna felt with other immigrants who were also in the same boat, other children who instinctively knew what everyone else was going through. It avoided some of the awkwardness and tended to dissolve some of the differences.

It was hard for everybody's parents and the children felt the pressure. All of these parents were determined that their children be educated and that they aspire to a higher level. They wanted their children to succeed. Knowing what they had gone through, who would want otherwise, as Barry said at the end of the interview session. But did parents explicitly tell this to their children? No, they did not. Well, not exactly in those words. They did, however, express it in more subtle ways. Jake's father purposely did not expand his scrap metal business because he did not want his sons following his footsteps. His parents expected him to go to university, as everybody else's parents did in this particular group. Looking back, he stops short of saying he regrets his father's decision. It could have meant having his own business, or perhaps being able to reach higher than what he has now. He is not unhappy with his life – he has great kids, a loving wife, his parents are alive to see this – but there was that ever-so-slight allusion to what could-have-been.

The early years, in many respects, were hard. Remembrances of some of the difficulties of the early years or recalling how parents themselves were new to everything, was in such contrast to those people they watched on TV and who lived effortless lives. Those people could speak to teachers and store clerks and government officials and know exactly what was going on. With only a few words of discussion, difficult situations would be resolved. But most of the survivor parents could not help their children; often, neither could their own Jewish community.

⁸⁰ Interview with Suzanna, 6.

Your Own Jewish Community: A Different Kind of Jew

Unfortunately, one's own Jewish community could be an unfriendly environment. Being an immigrant was hard enough but being Jewish and trying to fit into an already established group further distinguished a person from, it seemed, everybody else. As with every wave of immigration to a new country, newcomers tended to gravitate towards the older districts. Houses were cheaper, it was where other newcomers lived, and if you could not afford a house – as was the case for most in the beginning – then you could rent or share with another family. By the mid fifties, however, many established Jews, along with thousands of other Canadians, joined the exodus out of the inner-city neighbourhoods. They were moving out and up. Part of “an upwardly mobile professional and business class . . . its members distanced themselves from the working-class origins of previous generations, both psychologically and geographically.”⁸¹ Therefore, where one lived was another marker that labelled a person. While those with more money relocated, the newcomers were often left behind, further isolating them from the rest of the community. Starting out first in Montreal, Jake recollects being the ‘DP’ and how every other DP was in the same boat: “I went to the Protestant school system, which was a non-Catholic System The interesting thing was that it was so Jewish that on the Jewish holidays, they actually had to close the school, there was virtually nobody in the school in the neighbourhood we lived in, which was the old Mordecai Richler neighbourhood. That generation had moved on and all of us DP kids had moved in.”⁸² He and his parents then moved to the much smaller ‘South-central town’. They, like everyone in their position, rented: “We were tenants of my parents’ closest friends.”⁸³ He reminded me that he lived right around the corner from my

⁸¹ Abella and Bialystok, “Canada and the Holocaust,” 766.

⁸² Interview with Jake, 3.

⁸³ Interview with Jake, 2.

family. When parents could finally afford to buy a house, they would, in the first few years, often rent out a room or rooms to make some extra money. Paulina's parents bought "a duplex so they rented out the second floor — [they] lived on the first floor."⁸⁴ It was another sacrifice because parents wanted to save money. When so many Jews were buying brand new homes – it seemed like *everyone* was doing it – it reflected their higher status. Having boarders, well, that just made the disparity that much more obvious.⁸⁵

Whether it was in 'South-central' town or 'South-western town' or even Toronto, there was a district where *they* lived and the district where *you* lived, and that was with other immigrants. David Sibley, in writing about Gypsy communities in Britain, describes how particular places – not only cultural characteristics – become "landscapes of exclusion."⁸⁶ These communities express who does and does not belong and who is "beyond the boundary of 'society'."⁸⁷ It is an idea that could be applied, Sibley writes, to other groups, racialized or not. Paulina describes how it was: "'South-western town' — had Jewish areas. We didn't live in it. My parents couldn't afford that. They used to live on — the wrong side of the tracks and eventually they bought a house — It was semi on the wrong side of town. We moved up one level, but we certainly did not move up to where everybody else lived."⁸⁸ Where everybody else lived is where people belonged; where you lived was outside the line. It was beyond the boundaries and therefore unlike those people inside.

⁸⁴ Interview with Paulina, 2.

⁸⁵ Stephen Speisman writes about how, at the turn of the century, immigrants first began by renting, then sometimes renting out, to save as much money as they could. See his chapter entitled, "Residential Patterns in the New Community 1880-1914" in *The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), 81-95.

⁸⁶ David Sibley, "Outsider in Society and Space," in *Inventing Places: Studies in Cultural Geography*, eds., Kay Anderson and Fay Gale, 107-122 (Melbourne: Wiley Halsted Press, 1992), 107.

⁸⁷ Sibley, "Outsider," 107.

⁸⁸ Interview with Paulina, 2.

Eventually, most did start moving 'up'. Often, though, it was still out of sync with everybody else. That is how timing could be another related factor that positioned one on the outside looking in. That is what happened to Ilana:

I went to another school for a few months because they didn't have any room at the Grade 7 and 8 school ... All the Jewish kids in the neighbourhood went [there.] --- When we moved in June --- there was all of a sudden... five or six other Jewish kids in the neighbourhood. That was my circle. The problem was that they had been there a long time and they all belonged to either [the Reform or the Conservative synagogue] and we didn't go to synagogue --- So we were okay one-on-one but when they got together, I was always left out.⁸⁹

If one had not been born into that community and if parents had not grown up in North America, it meant another social barrier. And because Ilana's father refused to go to synagogue, it cut her off further from having more Jewish friends. Barry reluctantly admits there was a disparity: "Sure. I mean there was a difference between Jewish people third generation Canadians and I wasn't, you know."⁹⁰ The perception of 'us' and 'them', being a *greener* versus being an established Jew, was felt by most of those who were interviewed. The memories were, and still are, clear. Sy elaborates: "Yeah, it was there. Absolutely. We had more resentment from the Jews than from the non-Jews in some cases --- Cause I got invited to a lot of non-Jewish parties from kids at school --- No, you never got invited. Yeah. That was --- That was the feeling --- Yeah, there was always a group of kids that thought they were better than the other kids, or they didn't want to associate with you, or they were snobs, yeah."⁹¹ Sy's remembrance of not being invited by the Jewish kids is, I feel noteworthy for its clarity. Usually reluctant or else pleading forgetfulness, Sy was uncharacteristically forthcoming in this instance. The admission more than hinted at the regret and sadness of being shut out.

⁸⁹ Interview with Ilana, 12.

⁹⁰ Interview with Barry, 12.

⁹¹ Interview with Sy, 15.

Rob. like Sy and most of the others, vocalized the same sentiments. For Rob, who had gotten into fights simply because he was ‘different’, the fights were the least of his problems: “Actually, my worst time, to be honest with you, wasn’t in those days, physically. It was with the Jewish kids. When I was growing up and went [where many of the Jewish kids went], and they ridiculed me for the fact that I was not one of them.”⁹² He listened to his friends who “would constantly talk about going on ski trips, and doing all those things and [he] was really a guy on the outside looking in.”⁹³ I asked him if he wanted to do what they were doing. He answered, “Oh, absolutely. Sure. Sure.”⁹⁴ But when I asked him if he wanted to move into that life, he seemed to backtrack: “I don’t know if I wanted to move into it. I certainly would have liked to have that lifestyle and that opportunity. I hung around some of the kids that did that. But I always felt that I was less privileged and I was less financially in a position that I would ever be able to do that.”⁹⁵ Jake also said, “It wasn’t as open and inviting as [he] wanted it to be.”⁹⁶ Jake rhymed off the reasons:

There was a cultural distinction – all sorts of distinctions. I felt more self-conscious . . . with other Jews than with non-Jews. I felt the sort of class difference. I felt they had. We didn’t have. We drove an old Studebaker. They drove nice modern Chevys. That kind of thing. Yeah. They went to the fancy camps, we went to two overnight camps because my mother worked as a cook. I found we were not so much invited as one would have liked. First of all, there’s an economic difference for many of our group who first came here. Most of us didn’t have money so there was always a monetary distinction.⁹⁷

⁹² Interview with Rob. 6.

⁹³ Interview with Rob. 8.

⁹⁴ Interview with Rob. 9.

⁹⁵ Interview with Rob. 9.

⁹⁶ Interview with Jake. 16.

⁹⁷ Interview with Jake. 16.

Sy offers his own take on the same situation: "They always seemed to have more money. I knew as a kid, you know, I had a feeling, you know, that they always had nicer stuff than you had, or that I had. It was one of the feelings I had."⁹⁸ Barry, always straightforward and refusing to indulge in any sort of self reflection, gave considerable thought to these matters and offered his reasons. But listen to how he first "thinks" he might have been uncomfortable but then trails off at the end before finishing his thoughts: "I think if you moved into a neighbourhood where everybody --- went to summer camp and had this and had that and you didn't was probably more uncomfortable at some point than I was --- If someone is affluent and someone's not affluent, I mean, you feel, if you think about it ---."⁹⁹ Ever present within some of the stories was the memory that some of the survivors' families had been, before the war, an active part of the upper class, enjoying the privileges and lifestyle of their elevated economic status. Parents had been educated and had attended university, they spoke several languages, families had owned factories and companies that did business overseas. Their ranks boasted doctors, lawyers, bankers and world-renowned musicians. Now, in Canada, things had changed dramatically, especially in the first years. Jake continued: "'South-central' town has many wonderful aspects to it Judaically, but it was different as a person of the Jewish community. 'South-central' town was very much ingrown...that may be so, for many communities. . . . They had large families, they had money, they had all sorts of things. I'm not sure they were things that we aspire to, but I think we knew we were different."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Interview with Sy, 14.

⁹⁹ Interview with Barry, 12.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Jake, 16.

Sy. Rob and Jake's memories meander in the same way, pointing to an ambivalence reflected in their backtracking: knowing you did not have, wanting it – sort-of – not really wanting it anyway, but knowing you were different. These are powerful forces of desire that push their way through the narrative. And no one narrative was the 'truth'. Their stories were part of an endless text, "always under revision, always in transition."¹⁰¹

In the personal remembrances, one can hear a recurring refrain of wanting, sometimes needing to fit in, to feel comfortable in surroundings that did not always look or feel familiar, striving to be 'normal'. As well, their survivor parents wanted to begin a new life and were willing to help their children share in the Canadian postwar dream of every 'normal' family. But what was the ideal, what did a 'normal' family look like? Where *did* Canadians get their image of these ideals? How did people arrive at the notion of what it meant to be normal, to belong?

One of the most pervasive means of communicating the message of normalcy and belonging was through the medium of television. Movies, it will be shown, were also inextricably tied in to the discourses, but it was television – American television – more than anything else that made its greatest impact on how people measured themselves and the world they lived in. The images were in such contrast to their own worlds. They are a convenient means of comparison to hold up against the remembrances of the participants.

¹⁰¹ Harold Schweizer, "Introduction," in *Psychoanalysis and Storytelling*, Peter Brooks., 9–19 (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1994), 15.

CHAPTER 5

TELEVISION AND ITS NORMALIZING MESSAGES

Normalcy and Belonging

There is no doubt, writes Joy Parr, that American messages and glitzy products in the 1950s “took on profound international cultural significance.”¹ However, she adds, not everyone responded in the same way. Canadians’ disposable income, which doubled between 1947 and 1960, was not “disposed of” in quite the same way as with the Americans.² Canada and Canadians were in the process of adjusting and regrouping. Soldiers were returning and people wanted to get back to “normal”. But Canada shared a very long border with the United States. That and the proximity of American cities, allowed popular culture to flow through loud and clear. One readily accessible venue was TV. When asked, most of the interviewees remembered television as being part of their lives: some more than others but it was definitely a presence. The newness of TV, its attractive array of dreams and fantasy and its simple digestibility, made it the ultimate means of expression of postwar popular culture. As children, these participants knew what was out there.

Television and Popular Culture

In the years following the war, various institutional and organizational structures were responsible for promulgating the popular dominant discourses of the day but one medium in particular irreversibly affected the North American concept of “family”. It was the 1950s and that meant television. This new medium, topping the wish list of postwar

¹ Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods: The Material, the Moral, and the Economic in the Postwar Years* (Toronto, London and New York: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 11.

² Parr, *Domestic Goods*, 22.

goodies and enticements, now “put ‘modern life’ within the reach of large segments of the Canadian population.”³ Traditionally dispensed through newspapers and magazines, and through radio and films, the notion of what was and was not ‘normal’ became even more invasive with the advent of the television. Television infiltrated many people’s lives. It invaded their lives and their homes: in some cases it took over; and in all cases, it transformed cultural life and the world of entertainment almost immediately after its introduction. Individuals would come to use it as a lens through which they viewed themselves and others. It had – and still has – the power to organize people’s lives – from the products they use to the very ideas and opinions they express. The way people read and use the text of television is wide-ranging and complex. Analyzing the consequences of media representations of inclusion and exclusion – of images that silenced certain voices while allowing others to dominate – cannot be simply or unproblematically categorized. It must always be kept in mind that the effects of TV is difficult to predict in advance. Each one who watches TV will engage in an individual and unique way. But no matter how it is used, more than any other twentieth century technology, its presence and usage has shaped the world in diverse and sometimes unpredictable ways.

One reason for its power was that TV, more than any other form of communication, engaged people, diverting them from the everyday. It could reach millions instantaneously with an impact that is hard to ignore. Soon after its introduction into North American homes, it became a middle-class medium that reflected middle-class values in a conservative age. It was ‘a super marketplace’ which validated acquisition and exhibition. Though the most popular programming originated in the United States, television presented before Canadians a life, as the Crestwood study noted, where “the possession of goods conferred

³ Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble With Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 168.

prestige upon its holders."⁴ In contrast to the reality of consumption in Canada, the world of television held out visions of the house in the suburbs, the car, gadgets, jewellery, clothes, furniture, newly acquired prosperity and its accompanying perks. It soon became a measuring stick, albeit a few years later in Canada. Its images and messages would come to represent for many what it meant to belong and significantly, what it meant to be different. Certainly, people did continue to read the newspapers and listen to the radio: parliament still met and passed laws. But when television came into practically every household in Canada in a relatively short time, a social shift occurred. In the marketplace, television "helped promote concepts of newness and consumption already ensconced within American prewar culture."⁵ Within the area of culture, as Nina Leibman has argued for the U.S., "the introduction of television significantly transformed American cultural life . . . an impact felt most strongly from the mid-1950's through the early 1960's:"⁶ similarly here in Canada because "by 1960, prime time viewing had become the single most common cultural experience of Canadians."⁷

⁴ John R. Seeley et al. *Crestwood Heights: A Study of the Culture of Suburban Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1956), 7.

⁵ Norman L. Kleeblatt, "Passing into Multiculturalism," in *Too Jewish? Challenging Traditional Identities*, ed. Norman L. Kleeblatt, 3-38 (The Jewish Museum, New York and New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 19.

⁶ Nina C. Leibman, *Living Room Lectures: The Fifties Family in Film & Television* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1995), 1.

⁷ Paul Rutherford, *When Television Was Young: Prime Time Canada 1952-1967* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 8.

The Arrival of Television

The fall of 1952 marked the beginning of the Canadian television industry. Many baby boomers, the first generation born into the new mass communication, recall the arrival of television in their homes, an event vividly remembered and often cherished.⁸ The participants in this study are no different. A few stated it was an important aspect of their lives but whether stated directly or not, seven of them, with the exception of Barry and Suzanna, remember even the smallest details surrounding its arrival and placement in their homes. "It was the early '50s," Ilana recalls. "There was a store that sold TVs that was in the same block that my father's store was. I used to stand outside with my nose to the window and watch the silent thing. My father said that he felt so guilty that we would stand out there and watch it all the time that he actually went out and bought one. I don't think he could afford it, but he bought it. I can remember that it was delivered to the apartment and I was watching cartoons."⁹ Sy remembers the exact year. "Yeah, 1956. Yeah, that stands out. I do remember. It was an Admiral. With the bunny ears. In the living room."¹⁰ In Jake's house, the set was in his parents' bedroom that "also became a living room."¹¹ When his family moved, the TV also moved to the living room where it always stayed. Rob remembers his parents "buying a Fleetwood TV that had a shutter that you could close."¹² They got it at one of the better-known furniture shops in town. Incredibly, his mother still has that first TV.

⁸ Doug Owsram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 90; Rutherford, *When Television Was Young*, 9.

⁹ Interview with Ilana, 10.

¹⁰ Interview with Sy, 9.

¹¹ Interview with Jake, 12.

¹² Interview with Rob, 14.

Looking back, TV's rate of growth was nothing less than a phenomenon. Although newspapers and magazines were still widely read and radio was still extremely popular, they were quickly losing their edge in the marketplace. For example, when CBC-TV took to the airwaves in 1952 with outlets in Toronto and Montreal, TV sales boomed. Owram and Rutherford describe consumers as more than willing to forget wartime shortages, eager to start spending their accumulated spending.¹³ Parr, on the other hand, states that this did not quite happen as fast with items such as washing machine and stoves. Such was not the case with televisions. So high was 'television fever' that as early as 1955, a majority of Canadian households already owned a television set. By 1960, TV was reaching more than 90 per cent of the population. And by 1961, 80 per cent had at least one television set and another 5 per cent had at least two.¹⁴ Within a short span of time, both middle- and low-income families were watching American shows such as *I Love Lucy* (1951-57) and Jackie Gleason's *Cavalcade of Stars* (1950-52).

Television was such a new experience and most of the participants in the study gleefully joined in the fun. From their reactions, they generally loved it – some more than others. They remembered how they watched it in a certain place, at a certain time. Anna, who lived with her parents in her aunt's house. (Anna and Sy's mothers were sisters), can vividly picture the television in the living room, everybody taking part in the rituals they followed. First, they waited for her uncle to put the set on, then everybody gathered at a specific time for each favourite show. Paulina watched whatever was on, "all those bible movies: *Samson and Delilah* and all that because they were all Jewish, right? Cause they were all stories I had learned in Hebrew school. Right? Moses."¹⁵ Rob was the same.

¹³ Owram, *Born*, 90; Rutherford, *When Television Was Young*, 10-11.

¹⁴ Owram, *Born*, 88; Rutherford, *When Television*, 47.

¹⁵ Interview with Paulina, 8.

completely indiscriminate when it came to watching. When I asked if he was a ‘television kid’ he answered, ‘very much so. ... “I pretty well watched anything and everything. I wasn’t that fussy. I watched from the *Three Stooges* to old classic movies. Which I still enjoy to this day. Just about anything that was the culture of the fifties to *I Love Lucy* to *Perry Como*. you name it.”¹⁶

Not to be left behind, Canada’s very own CBC-TV developed its own shows, often imitations of the American programmes to lure in Canadian viewers.¹⁷ Canadians could watch *The Big Revue* (Fall ’52 to Summer ’54) or Alex Barris in *Barris Beat* (Summer ’56 to Summer ’58), which tried the informal style of hosting, talk, and comedy developed by Steve Allen in the States. *Showtime* (Fall ’53 to Summer ’59) was much more successful featuring music, song and dance and comedy, followed by *Parade* (Summer ’59 to Summer ’64). *Music Hall* with its debut in the fall of ’55 hoped to compete against *The Ed Sullivan Show* on Sunday night.¹⁸ When I asked about their TV favourites, no one mentioned the Canadian programmes. Instead, all of them remembered the American shows.

There was no question that it was “a medium never before experienced on this earth.”¹⁹ and it altered people in ways that both critics and proponents do not agree on or understand. Twentieth century technology has transformed the world of free time as drastically as did the technology of the Industrial Revolution, and media commentators and social historians agree that TV was “by far the most powerful force in reshaping the

¹⁶ Interview with Rob, 14.

¹⁷ Robert Bothwell et al. *Canada Since 1945: Power, Politics, and Provincialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 160.

¹⁸ Rutherford, *When Television Was Young*, 194.

¹⁹ Michael Novak, “Television Shapes the Soul,” in *Television: The Critical View*, 3d ed., ed. Horace Newcomb, 335-350 (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 335.

temporal structure of everyday life."²⁰ Certain customs and habits came to attach themselves to this new activity. Many boomers remember specific events and happenings and what show they were on. Rob "saw the Beatles when they were first on the Ed Sullivan Show. . . . It was as if the world came to a stop when you saw Ed Sullivan."²¹ "Yes," Paulina said, "the whole family would watch that on Sundays. Until the Beatles came on and my dad had a heart attack [*laughing*]. We would watch that."²²

Most of them thought they watched too much and often expressed some guilt over it. Jake, who said he wasn't affected by the shows, still remembers doing it "probably too often."²³ The restrictions varied. Ilana said, "We couldn't watch TV after 7:30 because then we had to do homework."²⁴ Her parents made them go to bed and read. Paulina, on the other hand, doesn't remember it being that strict except when it came to going to sleep: "No. I don't remember actually even my parents supervising it that much other than at night. I remember I was always mad because I had to go to bed and I would want to watch programmes at night . . . and I was pissed off. But other than that, no."²⁵

For Doug Owram, only the automobile outranked TV's impact. Farrel Corcoran would extend the argument further, arguing that the shift in temporal landscapes was as radical as the shift of spatial landscapes caused by the automobile. No matter what superlatives are invoked, there is no question that TV was more than *just* technology. Radio

²⁰ Farrel Corcoran, "Television as Ideological Apparatus: The Power and the Pleasure," in *Television: The Critical View*, 4th ed., ed. Horace Newcomb, 533-552 (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 637-538. This is one volume of an excellently written series on the various aspects of TV from its earliest days to the present.

²¹ Interview with Rob, 15.

²² Interview with Paulina, 7.

²³ Interview with Jake, 12.

²⁴ Interview with Ilana, 10.

²⁵ Interview with Paulina, 9.

had been popular in its heyday but “television became pervasive much faster,”²⁶ enveloping its audience and implicating it into its world of images and sound. In time, TV came to shape social relations, this despite the dire predictions pronounced by the ‘champions of culture’, that is, culture with a capital ‘C’. New family traditions came about around watching television. In Paulina’s household, one of the family customs revolved around the Ben Casey medical show. She also remembers the scene, similar to what Paul Rutherford describes in his book, of how they “would all sit down and watch Peyton Place together [laughing] like a family ritual.”²⁷ Rituals, especially Sunday nights and *Ed Sullivan*, were collective memories, shared by many.²⁸ Ilana, like many in the group, watched those programmes now considered the ‘classics’ of the golden days of television: “We always watched the *Ed Sullivan Show*. I remember watching Jack Benny. I know we watched all the kids’ shows . . . *Leave it to Beaver*, just everything.”²⁹ Anna lived in her cousin Sy’s house where television was almost a religious-like routine. The same descriptives keep reappearing: “Television was a ritual thing. During the week, I can’t remember the shows. They were mostly westerns because that’s what my uncle liked. Then Sunday night it was of course . . . *Ed Sullivan*, *General Electric* and *Bonanza*. And that’s what I remember. Watched that religiously.”³⁰

²⁶ Owsram, *Born*, 87.

²⁷ Interview with Anna, 9.

²⁸ Neil Sutherland, *Growing Up: Childhood in English Canada from the Great War to the Age of Television* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 174.

²⁹ Interview with Anna, 10.

³⁰ Interview with Anna, 11.

Social historian Paul Rutherford maintains that the awe-inspiring powers of television affected the private and personal lives of Canadians, supplanting other forms of media.³¹ Everything about it was new and it was there before your very eyes. It became a social activity you could do with your family, and it was cheap. TV became something Ilana and her father shared together. She remembers “a kind of talk show after [*Percy Saltzman*] and we always watched that and that’s how my father got me into being a political junkie because we used to talk about politics and what was on TV and that’s how we learned about the world by watching the news and watching the shows.”³² Jake also emphasized the being together part of it, how he and his dad would watch “whatever would be on.”³³ especially the music they loved so much. Rob watched the football games with his dad. Television introduced Rob and Jake to the outside world. It was Rob’s “window to the world.”³⁴ Both mentioned how they considered TV a cultural lesson as it was for many. There was the language, the cultural cues, the codes for dressing and talking and any other social signifier one would need. If you had immigrated later, as Rob did, TV was an easy way to learn quickly and in the privacy of your home. For Jake, it was the wide range of entertainment fare offered up to him in his living room: “*Ed Sullivan* was probably the best cultural lesson I’ve ever had in my life because of the diversity of cultural or artistic expression I used to see in that show - - - It was like having a Broadway or popular music, or theatre, or whatever . . . I used to remember being so impressed by the things I saw.”³⁵ I reminded him of acts such as Topo Gigo which I thought funny but which he could not

³¹ Rutherford, *When Television Was Young*, 6.

³² Interview with Ilana, 10.

³³ Interview with Jake, 13.

³⁴ Interview with Rob, 15.

³⁵ Interview with Jake, 13.

stand. There was the guy who kept plates spinning on top of what looked like very long and very wobbly broomsticks; there were so-called musicians who played their lips, or their hands; one entertainer, Signor Wencas, talked to his hand, the thumb and the index finger painted as a face. He also had a "talking head" in a box. It was bizarre.

In the fifties, reactions to the technology caused long discussions usually accompanied by analysis and concern.³⁶ Not long after its appearance, television became the subject of heated debates over its perceived threat to American society.³⁷ In Canada, similar sentiments could be heard by high culture *mavens* led by Hilda Neatby and the Massey Royal Commission.³⁸ Headlines in the print media tended to favour words such as "bias" and "control" and conjured up frightful scenes of zombie-like children glued to the sets or entire families staring at the box unable to relate to each other; not like the good old days before television when people supposedly interacted with each other.³⁹ For some, however, watching television was a positive social activity, able to bring family members together for longer periods of time. Of course, these hours tended to be in a darkened room where people often sat watching in numbed silence. This was especially true in the early days when TV was still new and people would just sit and stare at the test pattern on the screen. Some, especially parents, acquired an antipathy towards TV, afraid of the wrong kind of values kids were picking up. For them, "television clearly hadn't realized the aims

³⁶ Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 52-55. See also Owsam, *Born*, 89 and Sutherland, *When Television Was Young*, 174.

³⁷ Paul M Hirsch, "The Role of Television and Popular Culture in Contemporary Society," in *Television: The Critical View*, 3d ed., ed. Horace Newcomb, 280-310 (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 293-298; Robert S. Lichter, Linda S. Lichter and Stanley Rothman, *Watching America* (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1991), 3. For Canada, see Owsam, 89 and Sutherland, *When Television Was Young*, 174.

³⁸ Hilda Neatby, *So Little For the Mind* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin), 1953.

³⁹ Owsam, *Born*, 89.

of the highbrows: it had been captured not by the fans of Culture but by Hollywood and commerce, the merchants of vulgarity."⁴⁰ Nevertheless, people kept watching. International Surveys Ltd. reported that in February 1953 the television was on in homes an average of 4.3 hours a day.⁴¹ Another report, in *Canadian Broadcaster & Telescreen*, dated 18 March 1953, showed the sets-in-use for the evening hours in TV households was double that in radio households. What had been common in the days of radio was now more so. And when asked to choose between TV and radio and newspaper, more people chose TV.⁴² Individuals were engaging with this cultural product to create their unique subjective and social possibilities. In 1960, there were as many television sets as there were radios in 1950. By then, designated radio listening had decreased significantly with radio more and more being relegated to the kitchen where it was used as 'background' listening. For better or for worse, television was the new seductive cultural idiom in people and society's life.

TV's Regulation of Time

One of TV's notable features is its organization of time in its various manifestations. TV diverted people's attention and regulated their lives. It delineated and marked off their days into ordered units, in sync with their leisure and work hours. As a result, people's free time became "industrialized . . . homogenized, even excitement . . . routinized."⁴³ Ilana laid out her weekday evening's schedule for me: "Every night we had this tradition that every night after dinner . . . we always had dinner at 6:00. After we had dinner, which probably

⁴⁰ Rutherford, *When Television Was Young*, 466.

⁴¹ Rutherford, *When Television Was Young*, 445.

⁴² Rutherford, *When Television Was Young*, 446. The results were most pronounced with those younger and those less educated.

⁴³ Todd Gitlin, "Prime Time Ideology: The Hegemonic Process in Television Entertainment," in *Television: The Critical View*, 4th edition, ed. Horace Newcomb, 507-532 (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 513.

lasted for half an hour we would watch the news and then we would watch . . . a CBC talk show . . . it was on after the news and Percy Saltzman who used to throw the chalk. He was the weatherman."⁴⁴

Traditional pastimes were being challenged by the newness and the seductiveness of television. Paulina told me how every Saturday she was torn, "whether [she] should go out and play with the neighbourhood kids or stay in and watch."⁴⁵ Both children and adults succumbed, keeping step with the rhythms that television dictated.⁴⁶ It was not hard because "media time and school time, with their equivalent units and curves of action, mirror[ed] the time of clocked labor and reinforce[d] the seeming naturalness of clock time."⁴⁷ The repetition of the format was an integral part of the daily routine. Many would run home after school to catch *The Mickey Mouse Club*, which premiered in 1955 and which aired in the prime time slot for children after school and before dinner. So while mothers prepared dinner, TV acted as a baby-sitter, keeping the kids occupied and out of the way. Ilana and her brothers were no different: "Monday to Friday we would probably watch, from the time we got home from school from 4:00 to 4:30 until dinner and then we would watch again probably two to four hours a day."⁴⁸

Children running home to watch was especially true in the early years when even the commercials and their products were still a novelty. Tuesday fare offered *Science All Around Us* and *Sky King* (1951-1966). On Friday kids would watch *Howdy Doody* (1949-1960), *Mighty Mouse* and *Leave It to Beaver* (1957-1963). For Paulina's father, Saturday

⁴⁴ Interview with Ilana, 10.

⁴⁵ Interview with Paulina.

⁴⁶ One common theme in the literature was the tremendous draw early TV had and the hold it exerted over its watchers.

⁴⁷ Gitlin, "Prime Time Ideology," 513.

⁴⁸ Interview with Ilana, 11.

was *the* day for television. She remembered how her “dad would watch wrestling on Saturday afternoons. And Saturday night was *Hockey Night in Canada*.⁴⁹ Then there was Sunday night.⁵⁰ Early evening was a big favourite for both children and adults. Leading the line-up was *Walt Disney*, the longest running show in the history of television, followed by *The Ed Sullivan Show*, a hodge-podge of novelty acts – from the oddball to the mundane, from the ridiculous to the sublime – which kept audiences enthralled for the entire hour.⁵¹ Even Jake, who insisted he was not really a watcher or a big TV fan like many of his friends, nevertheless remembers some moments as clearly as if they happened today:

I remember one of the most moving experiences I ever had. . . . he was an opera singer, sort of like a cantor . . . Jan, Jan Pearce . . . He sang the thing where he was the clown from . . . *Pagliacci*. And it still brings tears to my eyes. . . . It sticks in my mind as one of those moments. — I loved jugglers. One thing I didn’t like was Topo Gigo. I hated Topo Gigo. I liked something with a little more bite to it. He was just too sweet, he was too funny. It didn’t ring true to me. . . . I remember the plates. I remember the acrobats. Magicians . . .⁵²

These testimonies, the exact details and the animation of the memories illustrate the impact of television and how each person entered the space of television, retrieving what he or she needed at that time: sociality, cultural lessons, escape, it was all there. Their memories came through easily and clearly.

One major influence was how TV ordered people’s day-to-day routines by becoming a *part* of their life. In the early days, watching TV was a special event and even when the novelty wore off, the set often stayed on. Family members wandered in and out, or they talked while it was on. Stand-up comics on *The Tonight Show*, hosted by Steve Allen and later by Jack Parr, told jokes about couples making love in front of the set while the late

⁴⁹ Interview with Paulina, 7.

⁵⁰ I have since lost the exact reference but I remember reading one cultural critic who wrote that Ed Sullivan was the closest thing to organized religion in his house.

⁵¹ There was something for everyone: Jews, Blacks, old, and young. Even Tonto made a quick appearance, talking in that Hollywood-American, ‘me-happy-to-be-here’ Indian dialect.

⁵² Interview with Jake, 14.

night show was on. Some individuals did their chores while still keeping tuned to the set, while others kept it on for the company. The results of a survey published in *The Financial Post*, January 1963, included a graph which plotted the 'toilet flow' of a typical day in metropolitan Toronto. Peaks and valleys corresponding to the hours of prime time viewing and commercial breaks, offered "further incidental proof of just how extensively the habit of viewing had penetrated into the routines of Canadian life."⁵³ It seemed as if television viewing was directing the bathroom habits of the citizens of Toronto. Children roughhoused, played games, fought, ate and got dressed in front of the TV. Others tried to sneak in their television watching when they should have been doing their schoolwork. Rob, instead of studying, would find all sorts of ways to get at the TV: "I remember when I was going to school and I wasn't doing as well as I should have, my father literally put a lock on the shutter part of it so that I couldn't open the TV. Of course, I found a way of doing it anyways. I was a real TV junkie."⁵⁴ Ilana might have been doing well at school but she also tried to sneak in extra hours: "The TV was on in the late afternoon and evening," she recalls. "We loved TV and we tried to get my father to let us watch TV during our homework. We could do that on Thursday night because they worked late Thursday and Friday. On Thursday we could do that because we were home alone, but they would come home and have dinner with us. . . . So while they were gone out of the house we could watch TV."⁵⁵ Clearly, TV was as important to Ilana and her brothers as it was for many others.

Memorable moments on TV became landmarks in people's lives. Rutherford recounts the incredible impressions certain shows made on him or how disappointed he was when everyone else had seen Elvis the night before on *Ed Sullivan*. It was *the* talk of the

⁵³ Rutherford, *When Television Was Young*, 444.

⁵⁴ Interview with Rob, 14.

⁵⁵ Interview with Ilana, 10.

playground that Monday morning. A few of the interviewees remember the Beatles just as clearly as Rutherford remembers Elvis. In his book, Doug Owrn describes how kids grew up with shows such as *Gunsmoke* (1955-73) and *Bonanza* (1959-73) or how they saw the outside world through *Howdy Doody* (1947-1960). This rang particularly true for some immigrant kids who first saw and heard English through the lens of a TV camera. It was often their first classroom and their first teacher. For Ilana, it was her initiation into the North American social club. She still has her diaries from Grade 7 and 8 and shares those memories today with her own children who laugh at them when they read them over. Ilana recites, from memory, what she wrote: "Every day I would say Dear --- and I would name the person who was the one that I like the most on *American Bandstand*."⁵⁶ She has taken what was, for her, a time of longing and puppy love, a time when one started "bidding farewell" and pulling away and has transformed it into a charmingly funny anecdote. For that time, everyday, Ilana could be just like those fabulous teenagers on TV. She and her friends could follow their moves, their talk, their dress. It came of the desire to be part of a group.

Paulina's sister was two years older so she would get to watch stuff she normally would not have watched at that age and for the most part, she and the others watched the programmes broadcast out of New York and Hollywood. These American images would continue to dominate the airwaves as they had in other areas of popular culture.

Television's arrival and its strong presence in their childhoods was an integral part of these individuals' growing up. It was a shared experience you had with your family. Often, the daily and weekly rituals not only delineated their leisure activities, in some cases, it could be a way of connecting with a parent or a sibling. It was, despite the valiant attempts by the CBC, American.

⁵⁶ Interview with Ilana, 11.

American Dominance & Influence

Today I am Americanized – Canadianized, if you want to call it . . .⁵⁷

In 1907, in a Ph.D. thesis entitled *The Emancipation of Canada*, later entitled, ironically – perhaps prophetically – *The Americanization of Canada*, American Samuel E. Moffett wrote: “The English speaking Canadians have been welded into one people. . . . [they] protest that they will never become Americans – they are already Americans without knowing it.”⁵⁸ This was true in many respects. Yes, Bernard Ostry writes, “there is undeniably a powerful strand in Canadian culture that is and always has been American.”⁵⁹ Victorian and turn-of-the-century English Canada had looked to Britain for its cultural ‘identity’ in the arts, in publishing, in education, in many fields. But it was only a matter of time before the power of the old and new mass communications would infiltrate Canadian society, in mostly ‘American’ ways with the result that by the 1920s, “Canadians became wedded to the idea that a continuous supply of American entertainment and sports was their birthright.”⁶⁰

Print, for example, was a typical case in point. American magazines and British and American books traditionally dominated the publishing industry.⁶¹ Certainly the British influence remained strong but the 49th parallel proved to be extremely permeable with cultural interchanges inevitable. Radio followed the same route, though not immediately

⁵⁷ Interview with Sy, 13.

⁵⁸ Cited in Paul Rutherford, “Made in America: The Problem of Mass Culture in Canada,” in *The Beaver Bites Back?: American Popular Culture in Canada*, ed. David H. Flaherty and Frank E. Manning (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 264-265.

⁵⁹ Bernard Ostry, “American Culture in a Changing World,” in *The Beaver Bites Back?: American Popular Culture in Canada*, ed. David H. Flaherty and Frank E. Manning, 33-41 (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 33.

⁶⁰ Rutherford, “Made in America,” 265.

⁶¹ Bothwell et al. *Canada Since 1945*, 97.

because of the dispersed population across Canada. But by the end of the 1920s, "it was estimated that 80 per cent of the programs Canadians listened to . . . were American."⁶² By 1929, three of the most important radio stations became American affiliates. In retrospect, the extremely popular *Amos 'n' Andy* (1951-1953) on CKGW, via NBC, proved to be a foreshadowing of a virtual "American takeover of the airwaves."⁶³

Canadians, from the beginning, also became hooked on Hollywood movies. In the twenties, there was no Canadian film industry of commercial note and European films, if they were shown at all, languished in small art houses. Suzanna fondly recalls going to see British films with her father which were generally about the aristocracy: "Oh, it was wonderful. All those English comedies. I loved them! Well, first of all, it was a more sophisticated level of comedy than . . . the Martin and Lewis kind of thing. We really thought that they were the epitome of aristocracy and straight shooting and you know value loving, et cetera --- Yes, that was the level to aspire to."⁶⁴ This was unlike the more popular, the more accessible American films that tended to lean towards storylines about everyman or woman, or at least make the audiences believe that.

Vying for people's attention was imperative. And so, to further ensure a captive audience, Americans controlled not only the production and content but also the distribution and the theatre outlets.⁶⁵ Snubbed by the 'elite' and not taken seriously for many years, films delivered what many Canadians, along with many of their American neighbours wanted to believe: good-will messages of endless acquisition and happiness, fantasies of

⁶² Rutherford, "Made in America," 266.

⁶³ Rutherford, "Made in America," 266.

⁶⁴ Interview with Suzanna, 21.

⁶⁵ J.M. Bumsted, "Canada and American Culture in the 1950s," in *Interpreting Canada's Past*, ed. J.M. Bumsted, 398-411 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986), 402; Rutherford, *When Television Was Young*, 12.

sex and violence and dreams-coming-true. Whether in the form of westerns or romances or comedies, Hollywood held out "a celebration of hedonism."⁶⁶ a leaving-go of Canada's own Victorian past. Canadians were ready to move into the 20th century with Hollywood as their guide. Ostry notes that by the 1930s, along with American literature and American jazz, American films were beginning to be taken as a serious art form. How could one avoid it when "writers of the calibre of Franz Kafka, Federico Garcia Lorca, and Blaise Cendrars were already celebrating American culture."⁶⁷ Rutherford would include in this cultural grab bag other subcultures such as southern country music, black ragtime, proletarian rough sports and youth culture, all combining "to fashion a new, ersatz brew that appealed to everyman and everywoman, and most especially to the middle classes."⁶⁸

By World War II and with America's participation in the war, what Canadians had first only seen in the movies was now readily available. Coke, Hershey bars and other 'exotic' fare became commonplace. Canadians educated in the U.S. brought ideas back.⁶⁹ And "along with the soft drinks, they had ingested the simple-minded ideology of *Time* and *Reader's Digest*, relentless messages that everything was for the best of all possible capitalist worlds."⁷⁰ The seduction continued unabated into the postwar years with the arrival of television when "American culture, that is, U.S. commercial popular culture, found ever wider acceptance."⁷¹

⁶⁶ Rutherford, "Made in America," 268.

⁶⁷ Ostry, "American Culture," 34.

⁶⁸ Rutherford, "Made in America," 267.

⁶⁹ Owsam, *Born*, 37.

⁷⁰ Ostry, . "American Culture," 34.

⁷¹ Ostry, 34.

On radio and television, American music and programming ruled the airwaves. Neither the Massey Commission nor the formation of the Canada Council could prevent America “from gaining a veritable stranglehold within Canada.”⁷² For this very reason, as he notes in his introduction to his book, Paul Rutherford chose to concentrate on all television viewed in Canada, rather than just about Canadian-produced television. Viewers “watched an enormous amount of imported programming.”⁷³ Just as radio before it, Canada could not sustain a wholly Canadian scheduling programme. On the CBC-TV line-up, taken from a sampling of one week in 1956, only one-third of the entertainment broadcasts were Canadian. Imports dominated the peak viewing hours.⁷⁴ The made-in-Canada variety shows – *Showtime* (Sunday, 9:30-10:00), *Pick the Stars* (Tuesday, 9:00-9:30), *On State* (Wednesday, 9:30-10:00), and *Holiday Ranch* (Saturday, 7:30-8:00) – appeared before or after the imported fare. As much as eighty percent of total Toronto viewing was of American programming.⁷⁵ From day one, “southern Canadians equipped with a simple rooftop antenna, and sometimes less, have been eavesdropping on American broadcasts.”⁷⁶ Canadian media executives knew it was the only way to please the audience and to earn the necessary monies.⁷⁷ Within a short time, American programming would take over prime time. In fact, 80 per cent of the total Toronto viewing was dominated by American

⁷² Bumsted, “Canada and American Culture,” 399.

⁷³ Rutherford, *When Television Was Young*, 6.

⁷⁴ Rutherford, *When Television Was Young*, 80: “...1955 boasted such variety favourites as *Ed Sullivan* (Sunday), *Sid Caesar* (Monday), *Milton Berle* (Tuesday), and *Jackie Gleason* (Saturday), all running from 8:00 to 9:00.”

⁷⁵ Cities close to the US border were much more familiar with American programmes because it was easier to receive the American television signals.

⁷⁶ Frank E. Manning, “Reversible Resistance: Canadian Popular Culture and the American Other,” in *The Beaver Bites Back?: American Popular Culture in Canada*, ed. David H. Flaherty and Frank E. Manning, 3-28 (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 9.

⁷⁷ Rutherford, *When Television Was Young*, 12-13, 80. Institutions of popular culture such as film, television and radio, even hockey—continued to be dominated by the United States. See also Bumsted.

programming,⁷⁸ a figure reminiscent of radio's earlier figures. Soon, the numbers would hold true for most of the country.

Canadian Children Watching American TV

Canadian children were subject to the influences and enticements of American TV. CBC, working around the restraints on its scheduling, reserved a chunk of time for children in the after-school-to-6:00 pm time slot for the American 'beast' which could not be held back. "The culture of bubble gum and baseball and Hollywood, was everywhere."⁷⁹ The money, the technology and the power combined with our cultural and linguistic similarities made the influence more pervasive. So ubiquitous was the American influence that by the early sixties, despite the 'enlightened' elite's threat that Canada was going straight to hell in their low-culture hand basket, Canadian kids, listening to the socially conscious Bob Dylan, "grew up believing that racial integration...[and]...the Viet Nam war were the burning Canadian social issues of the day."⁸⁰

J.M. Bumsted's article in which he examines Canada's cultural relations with the United States in the 1950s, declares his thesis clearly and simply, that Canada failed "dismally" in preventing the American invasion of Canadian popular culture. One reason he cites is the easier relationship that developed between Canada and the United States. Canadian kids, unlike their parents, readily acknowledged America as the moral and military leader in the Western world. As early as the sixties, intellectuals looked back and lamented

⁷⁸ Bothwell et al, *Canada Since 1945*, 160; Bumsted, "Canada and American Culture," 398-411; Rutherford, *When Television Was Young*, 451-493.

⁷⁹ Rutherford, *When Television Was Young*, 41.

⁸⁰ Bumsted, "Canada and American Culture," 408.

the ‘Americanization’ of Canada and still, few young people objected.⁸¹ In fact, adds Mary Louise Adams, despite people’s loyalty to the idea of ‘nation’, “many Canadians thought the interests of the nation were best served by falling into line behind the United States.”⁸² Britain, which had always been the bulwark against other cultural invaders, was now in the descent. More pervasive and much more attractive influences were capturing the attention of Canadians. Well, why not? America was “magical and ingenious and fun.”⁸³ In a collection of essays examining the impact of American culture on Canada – humourously entitled, *The Beaver Bites Back?* – the contributors express similar sentiments. Bernard Ostry writes: “U.S. influence is more pervasive here because we are already in some sense American. The United States does not need to teach us its values: there is always a Canadian ready to do it for them.”⁸⁴ Owsram, who builds his historical argument around references to American pop cultural symbols and products, would agree. The young seem to adopt newer and brighter ideas faster and more willingly and American pop culture has been and always was there for them with a ready supply of icons, stars and the consumer philosophy to prop it all up. TV excelled in this. This is where TV hooked its viewers.

⁸¹ Bothwell, et al. *Canada Since 1945*, 400.

⁸² Adams, *The Trouble*, 6.

⁸³ Melinda McCracken, *Memories are Made of This* (Toronto, 1975), 60; quoted in Bumsted, 401.

⁸⁴ Ostry, “American Culture,” 36.

Spending Habits

Television has always played the role of huckster. By thrusting “an unending stream of commodities.”⁸⁵ and tapping into their desires, viewers are coaxed into believing that they *must* have the latest and the newest. It is a tantalizing “pastiche of psychic landscapes”⁸⁶ that depicts a secure, feel-good world. Television’s powerful language, comprised of images, words, gestures, clothing, settings, music, and sounds, “has become one of our society’s principal repositories of ideology.”⁸⁷ Dominant ideology becomes normative because “it succeeds in persuading us that the way things are now is the way they should remain; and that the way things are is a product of the dominant class.”⁸⁸ TV can become “a means of controlling any sort of marginal or questionable behavior.”⁸⁹ On the one hand, people do recognize how TV manipulates the truth and yet, one survey cited in Rutherford’s book found that two out of three people thought TV brought reality to life, influencing “thought and life-style.”⁹⁰ And what people saw portrayed in both commercials and programming were fun-loving families with two devoted, caring parents. The characters themselves were often watching television.⁹¹ There were toys and cars and homes and an

⁸⁵ Leibman, *Living Room Lectures*, 7.

⁸⁶ Hal Himmelstein, *Television Myth and the American Mind* (New York: Praeger, 1984), xi.

⁸⁷ Himmelstein, *Television Myth*, 3.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸⁹ Leibman, *Living Room Lectures*, 92.

⁹⁰ The survey cited in Rutherford, *When Television Was Young*, 466 referred to “...people’s attitudes towards travel, sex, love marriage, family, political enthusiasm, clothes styles, student movements, personal habits, and profanity...”

⁹¹ Families in the early days of television were usually a mom, a dad, and two or three perky kids. This was the dominant trend until the early 1960s when the family configurations began to vary and TV’s programmes reflected some of these social changes, albeit within the set family ‘types’. No longer was the Mom-Dad-Children family the norm. Shows like *My Three Sons* had a widowed dad, his three sons and a crotchety but lovable uncle/grandfatherly type living with them and helping them out – different but the same.

endless array of products that defined the characters' identity and status.⁹² Rob and Jake saw the white picket fence and the middle-class suburban life portrayed on TV. What the sponsors saw – and hoped – was a huge group made up of middle-class families who were willing and would soon be able to buy into the dream of everlasting happiness that could only be acquired if they bought into the postwar dream, joining others in the consumption game of acquiring ever more and more goodies.

Historians writing about the postwar years generally agree that the years between 1945 and 1960 saw a near continuous period of prosperity.⁹³ There was high employment and hopes for a brighter future. Those families who could afford to purchase the suburban house and family car, often had disposable income and therefore money left over for play and leisure. Social historian Joy Parr argues that Canadians were more conservative and more subdued in their buying simply because “many domestic goods were not available in Canada for a long while after the war ended.”⁹⁴ Still, in the quarter-century after the Second World War, Canadians “experienced a dramatically increased standard of living.”⁹⁵

No one was immune to the ‘populuxe’ syndrome, a term that describes how, for the first time, mass production could put ‘high style’ within the reach of more people. No longer restricted to the upper class, TV told its audience that average people could now share the dream. It was one of possessions and consumer goods. They could be just like the rich people.⁹⁶ But populuxe was also an attitude, “referring to a moment when America

⁹² Grant Noble, *Children in Front of the Small Screen* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1975).

⁹³ Additional sources: Veronica Strong-Boag, “Home Dreams: Women and the Suburban Experience in Canada, 1945–1960,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 29, 4 (December 1991), 476; John G. Stackhouse, Jr., “The Protestant Experience in Canada Since 1945,” in *The Canadian Protestant Experience Since 1760–1990*, ed. G.A. Rawlyk, 198–239 (Burlington, ON: Welch Publishing, 1990), 198–200.

⁹⁴ Parr, *Domestic Goods*, 64.

⁹⁵ Stackhouse, Jr., “The Protestant Experience,” 200.

⁹⁶ Hine, *Populuxe*.

found a way of turning out fantasy on an assembly line."⁹⁷ Every aspect of the economy was geared to feeding the dream-machine assembly line. Manufacturers who had switched from wartime production back to consumer production were eager to sell. Advertisers, in turn, deliberately sought to reach into people's unconscious depths, making them believe what they wanted them to believe.⁹⁸ Whether they were successful or not has been the topic of a constant stream of books and debate. The fact is that TV was about creating desire through illusion and fantasy. Right in their living rooms, people could behold all the goods – and the good life – packaged so attractively and seductively.

Commercials were regular features and a vital ingredient of the TV format. Writing about the economic power of TV, Todd Gitlin writes: "There can be no question but that commercials have a good deal to do with shaping and maintaining markets."⁹⁹ Everyday, less-than-perfect viewer families watched good-looking, well-adjusted TV families sharing happy moments together. The desire machine suggested that happiness and contentment were only a purchase away. Voices sang, "*See the USA in your Che-vro-let.*"¹⁰⁰ Not to be out-distanced, Canadians, too, bought in to the dream of security, status, and freedom.¹⁰¹ Between 1945 and 1952, car registrations in Canada doubled, then doubled again by 1961.¹⁰² Even the commercials were adaptations but with appeals to Canadian popular nationalism and filled with the enticement to ride "*the broad highway in your Chev-ro-let.*"

⁹⁷ Hine, *Populuxe*, 5.

⁹⁸ Lewis, *The Fifties*, 17-18.

⁹⁹ Gitlin, "Prime Time Ideology," 513.

¹⁰⁰ The jingles became so familiar that they come to mind even today.

¹⁰¹ Owrain, *Born*, 71.

¹⁰² Owrain, *Born*, 71; Strong-Boag, "Home Dreams," 474.

But there were, as well, according to Todd Gitlin, “*indirect* consequences on the contours of consciousness overall.”¹⁰³ One outcome was the shaping of viewers, from the very young and up, into thinking of themselves as a *market*. Citizens became consumers and social problems such as poverty and racism, to name only two, were treated equally along with toilet bowl cleaners and skin cream. The second outcome in the process was how commercials conditioned viewers to the constant interruptions. Time and attention was colonized by the power of the set and each one, in essence, consented “to its domination of the public space.”¹⁰⁴

Television was in the business of selling. In the rush for their dollars, and for the first time, children and adolescents became the center of attention. It was a ready-made market, ready to be tapped into and many were willing to go along – if they could afford it. Mothers, for one, made up one of the first large buying groups. A significant number of them were at home and consequently they were a captive audience. They actively took part in the “mass cravings” phenomenon.¹⁰⁵ It started with buying the same baby food and the same orange juice for their precious children, then the same crib followed by the same stroller. Afterwards, as income became more disposable, there arose the perceived need for more items. No longer content to treat their children as miniature adults, essentials soon gave way to extras: children’s clothing, children’s toys and children’s games. The list continued expanding because spending like everybody else and ostensibly being like everybody else meant you were normal and “normality was a crucial marker of postwar

¹⁰³ Gitlin, “Prime Time Ideology,” 513.

¹⁰⁴ Gitlin, “Prime Time Ideology,” 513.

¹⁰⁵ Owsam devotes an entire section to this new consumer trend: 93-99.

social belonging.¹⁰⁶ Susanna, abysmally unathletic and always living inside her head, still wonders about that time in her childhood when she absolutely wanted, more than anything else, a bike:

I wanted to learn how to ride a bike. And that apartment was high up the hill. My mother must have had nightmares that I was going to run right out into the traffic coming off the mountain. So I never learned to ride a bike and she wanted out of that old milieu in case I ever took it into my head to ride a bike down the hill. Now, I was - I'm not athletic and a most uncoordinated kid....Why she thought I would do this *mishigas* [craziness], I have no idea.

BLC: Do you remember wanting to ride a bike?

Oh yeah. Everybody had a bike. . . . and I wanted a bike, too. Of course, I wanted the bike without really understanding that you could have an accident off a bike. My mother used to have nightmares that I would come down that hill and run right into the traffic.

BLC: But you wanted a bike just like everybody else.

Yeah. I mean, I never wanted dolls. I never wanted toys. Books were plenty for me. So, why I fixated on the bike, I have no idea.

Whether she could ride it or not, she had to have that bike. Suzanna, like many others her age, were becoming and would continue to become active players in the marketplace. The messages were coming through.

Children, in no time, moved into the role of consumers, part of the income shift to the young, a significant economic phenomenon of the decade.¹⁰⁷ Unlike their parents and their grandparents, they were given more money to spend and spend they did. But in addition to the money and the leisure, they represented huge numbers – 34 per cent, a significant component of the economy.¹⁰⁸ The more children were convinced they had to spend, the more the sponsors schemed to get it away from them and their parents. This amounted to

¹⁰⁶ Adams, 166. This theme recurs in the American social histories of the fifties. See also Gaile McGregor, "Domestic Blitz: A Revisionist History of the Fifties," *American Studies* 4, 1 (Spring 1993): 5-33.

¹⁰⁷ *The Fifties*, with an introduction by John Chancellor (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 5.

¹⁰⁸ Peter S. Li, *The Making of Post-War Canada* (Toronto, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 140.

billions spent on entertainment, clothes and ‘things’. Certainly there had been earlier fads and fashions for the young but “in a way that radio never could, television gave a generation a common perspective on the world and their place in it.”¹⁰⁹ It seemed everything – books, food, breakfast cereal, magazines – was geared to the youth market. Sponsors who had the last word on programming, would ‘convince’ network people to go along, and with advertisers working on their behalf, all were ready to pitch children the big sell.¹¹⁰ Advertising and products were now aimed specifically at children, a market that translated into the billions. It was a perfect match: children and commercial TV.

Children watched the same shows and the same commercials, often one and the same as in the case with the entertainment giant, Disney. Long before the spending hysteria of Cabbage Patch Dolls and Tickle-Me-Elmos, parents, in their frenzy to buy a Davy Crockett hat for their precious child, stampeded and knocked each other over in the rush to get there first.¹¹¹ The oft-reproduced photograph of this scene conjures up those early days when the power of television revealed itself in this mass hysteria. Forget that Davy Crockett was an American hero. Forget that Walt Disney, his father an Irish-Canadian, played fast and loose with the history. Canadian children did not care. All they saw was someone strong, handsome and courageous. It was awfully appealing. There were other products as well and they were often connected with the characters in a story. And for everyone’s convenience, it was on the store shelf by the time kids had coaxed their moms into buying it for them. Boys saw other boys having great fun playing with their *Hopalong Cassidy* holster sets, *Roy Rogers* cowboy hats and *Zorro* paraphernalia. Girls, as well, could join in with their own exclusive trends. For them there were the cutout paper dolls depicting famous Hollywood

¹⁰⁹ Owrain, *Born*, 93.

¹¹⁰ Leibman, *Living Room Lectures*, 214.

¹¹¹ *The Fifties*, n.p.

stars. Barbie made her debut in 1959. Many can remember the image of children of *all* ages twirling brightly coloured plastic *Hula Hoops* around every conceivable part of their bodies. Children had to have and many parents complied.

Almost immediately, another group was entering the marketplace with a vengeance, changing “the whole face of the American popular media,”¹¹² influencing the adults as well. It was no less so in Canada where, by the mid-1950s, the wartime babies were entering adolescence. “Between 1951 and 1961, the ten-to-nineteen age group in Canada increased by more than a million people.”¹¹³ In 1954, the proportion of fourteen-to-seventeen-year-old students rose above 50 per cent for the first time in Canadian history. Within six years, two-thirds were still students. High school suddenly represented a separate youth culture with a market force not felt before.

The notion of the ‘teenager’ was, Rutherford and Owram write, for the most part, a creation of popular culture with TV specifically inventing and shaping this new social category.¹¹⁴ American television teen idols Annette Funicello of *Mickey Mouse Club* fame and Ricky Nelson, the youngest and for many young girls, the cutest rock-singing son of *Ozzie and Harriet*, became major heartthrobs. Ads created expressly for the teenage market hawked teen-related merchandise such as soft drinks, clothes and pimple cream. In fact, practically anything could be transformed into a teenage symbol. The need to ‘fit in’, combined with having to keep up, inevitably translated into spending. The dominant discourses of normalcy played beautifully into the adolescent time of “deconstruction,

¹¹² McGregor, “Domestic Blitz,” 21.

¹¹³ Owram, *Born*, 145.

¹¹⁴ Owram, *Born*, 145-155; Rutherford, *When Television Was Young*, 477.

construction [and] reconstruction."¹¹⁵ a time of emotional upheaval that would be most vulnerable to the messages.

In the fifties, teenagers and fashions went together. And society felt its impact. Role models and cult figures were pervasive. Peer pressure and the need to look cool was paramount. But not everyone was included. Owram writes: "Those too poor, too awkward, or physically or ethnically different often had a tough time of it, for the teenage world, like the adult world, demanded conformity."¹¹⁶ The *Crestwood Heights* study observed how the pressure to follow one's peer group, as well as needing to emulate media stars and trends, contributed "largely to the adequate playing of the sex roles."¹¹⁷ Dress and general appearance contributed to their position within their peer group. Children and teenagers preferred following the celebrities and stars rather than that of their parents or teachers. Adolescence is a time when the individual draws away from the family and the authority of the parents. TV was a built-in, self-perpetuating system that contrived to feed into this time of separation. Contrary to the fears of zombie-like teenagers glued to the set, teenagers began to produce their own sense and style of who they were, of course based on a Hollywood idol. There was the James Dean look straight out of *Rebel Without a Cause*. Or, there was the wholesome, perky looks of Rock Hudson and Doris Day. Some teenagers combined both, experimenting with their personas, trying on costumes to fit their changing needs along with their TV models, thus influencing styles and trends. Whether one wore preppie or sported black leather, it did not matter. What mattered was the "look".

¹¹⁵ Louis J. Kaplan, *Adolescence: The Farewell to Childhood* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 14.

¹¹⁶ Owram, 147.

¹¹⁷ Seeley et al, 104.

One requirement was wearing the right ‘uniform’. for the girls especially. “The appropriate badges of membership in the peer group were displayed in thousands of variations across the country, depending on what was considered cool at any given moment and by any given group.”¹¹⁸ Eva asked me if I remember what a ‘shift’ was. Of course I did. We reminisced about certain essential pieces a girl needed for her wardrobe. She recounted how one time she absolutely had to have a shift.¹¹⁹ It was in style and she wanted it: “It was yellow. It was \$11.00.”¹²⁰ She wanted it so much that she thinks she probably saved up her own money to buy it.

If by chance you weren’t ‘hep’ – as the Beat jargon of the fifties intoned – to what the look was, there were television programmes and commercials or teen magazines such as *Seventeen*, often featuring those very same TV and film stars, to guide you along: generally, girls were blonde, leggy and thin; boys were preppie or James Dean ‘cool’. It was not what these children of survivors were and not what many looked like or would *ever* look like. Ilana recalled: “I wanted to look the way the kids on TV looked and the way the kids around me looked.”¹²¹ Suzanna recalled how crucial it was to ‘look the part’ and what went into ‘the look’. It was definitely the sweater sets. She recalled all those tiny precious girls who looked like pink spun sugar and whose mothers seemed to have the money to indulge their every whim. They had sweater sets in every colour. Suzanna repeated her now-famous tale of one girl in the Jewish community – of course, not a child of survivors – who had a closet many girls only dreamed of having: all her shoes, in every single colour, were

¹¹⁸ Ogram, *Born*, 147.

¹¹⁹ For those male readers who don’t know and for my committee members who are too young to remember, a shift was a straight, fitted, sleeveless dress. Of course, it is more but I won’t bore you with terms such as a fitted bodice or princess seams. Suffice it to say, Jackie Kennedy took it to greater heights during her short reign over ‘Camelot’.

¹²⁰ Interview with Eva, 25.

¹²¹ Interview with Ilana, 23.

lined up in a row, each pair matching an outfit hanging above. It seemed as if these girls never wore the same thing twice. That was the ultimate luxury! Suzanna then asked me if I remembered “those girls that were so good looking . . . They had all those jeweled shoes and the twin sets — And they laughed. Giddily. Like little crystals. They laughed like crystal.”¹²² Their mothers would drive to Buffalo to buy them those jeweled Capezio shoes that were so ‘in’ at the time. Few of the immigrant mothers drove. Most don’t even today. Guys also had to look a certain way. Rob recalls: “I had the dual distinction of being a DP or an immigrant and a Jew. And dressing funny, but I probably didn’t have the proper clothes and whatever.”¹²³

Then if one did get the money, one had to act responsibly, not fritter it away on silly luxuries such as flimsy shoes – even if they were jeweled and in style! This meant choosing either functional as Ilana’s mother did – “I always wanted a pair of penny loafers — I remember having to wear saddle shoes and Oxfords. My mother always went with what was utilitarian.”¹²⁴ – or saving the money as Eva’s mother did:

I think at that time we used to get \$7 I think. The baby bonus was \$7. I think I remember that figure because one of my friends got the \$7 and she was able to buy herself...I don’t know if you remember those at the time they were the mohair sweaters were really in vogue. And she was able to buy herself one of those every month and she used to have them lined up in her cupboard. Different colours. I never had that because my mother took the \$7 and she put it away.¹²⁵

Every month, that bonus was a rite of passage because one took it straight to the bank.

Today, though, Eva does have something to show for all those times they went without the luxuries. Eva has the piano that her mother bought with the savings and it sits in her living

¹²² Interview with Suzanna, 15-16.

¹²³ Interview with Rob, 5.

¹²⁴ Interview with Ilana, 24.

¹²⁵ Interview with Eva, 24.

room, a proud testament, she says, of her mother's resolve. As for Ilana, I asked her if she ever did buy a pair of penny loafers for herself. Her answer was interesting: "I never in my life owned a pair of penny loafers. Ever. Ever!"¹²⁶ The memory of wanting, of having the luxury of just buying for the pleasure of having, lingers still.

Television and the Family

In the historical literature on postwar Canada, writers consistently point to one social aspect that marks the period in a special way: its intense focus on domesticity and the call for a return to the 'traditional' family. American historian Ella Taylor agrees. Families on TV could be "a charming excursion into modernity, but resting on the unshakeable stability of tradition."¹²⁷ Mary Louise Adams points to various practices and institutions that reinforced the theme of the Canadian family. Magazines such as *Maclean's* or *Chatelaine* and organizations such as the YWCA, centred in Toronto, articulated the dominant discourses that would, for many, come to define the norm.

In her study of the American middle-class family, Arlene Skolnick argues it is the mainstream middle-class family that "has defined the norms of family life in America."¹²⁸ Skolnick is not "unaware of the dissimilarities and distinctiveness of American families by 'race', class, region, religion, and gender preference."¹²⁹ Still, for her, as with Owrarn and May, it was the white, middle-class family and its attendant lifestyle that was the norm. The theme of what was and was not 'normal' as well runs through Mary Louise Adams's

¹²⁶ Interview with Ilana, 24.

¹²⁷ Ella Taylor, *Prime-Time Families: Television Culture in Postwar America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 27.

¹²⁸ Arlene Skolnick, *Embattled Paradise: The American Family in an Age of Uncertainty* (New York: BasicBooks/HarperCollins, 1991), xix.

¹²⁹ Skolnick, *Embattled Paradise*, xix.

discussion of the production of sexual discourses in postwar Canada. Adams writes: "The difference between definitions of normal and abnormal sexuality operated as a profound space of social marginalization and exclusion."¹³⁰ Normality, in its various manifestations, was "a powerful organizer of everyday life."¹³¹ It permeated life in the 1940s and 1950s and those who strayed or did not measure up were considered "unfortunate deviations."¹³² Out there was the idealized 'every family' which "became the standard against which the unique needs and circumstances of those outside the ideal, such as immigrant, working-class, non-nuclear, or female-headed families, were measured and judged."¹³³ When Canada grudgingly allowed in Eastern Europeans, they "were expected to conform quickly to Canadian society."¹³⁴ Failure to "adopt . . . and mimic" the ideal, writes Mona Gleason, labelled the immigrant parent handicapped and therefore "inadequate, or by extension abnormal."¹³⁵

But what exactly was this ideal? On TV, first, it was a mom at home, dressed in a stylish, but not over-the-top shirt-waist dress, a crisp, little apron and high heels. Dad, of course, was away during the day, making money. He was the financial supporter, the solid and dependable head of his family. It was he who carried the full responsibility for his family's comfort and security. Franca Iacovetta, herself a child of a working mother, describes how agency workers in the community attempted to indoctrinate their ethnic

¹³⁰ Adams, *The Trouble*, 3.

¹³¹ Adams, *The Trouble*, 3.

¹³² Skolnick, *Embattled Paradise*, xix.

¹³³ Gleason, "Psychology and the Construction of the 'Normal' Family in Postwar Canada, 1945-1960," *The Canadian Historical Review* 78, 3 (September 1997), 444.

¹³⁴ Gleason, *Normalizing The Ideal: Psychology, Schooling, and the Family in Postwar Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 92.

¹³⁵ Gleason, "Psychology," 474. For an expanded treatment, refer to Gleason's book, *Normalizing the Ideal*.

clients into adopting Canadian ways. Staying home and raising children was considered an essential commitment women had to make to meet the requirements of good parenting.¹³⁶

But it was not only ethnic mothers who worked outside the home. Looking at statistics and oral testimony, historian Veronica Strong-Boag writes that “what the experts and media largely ignored after World War II was a massive increase in the labour-force participation rate of married women.”¹³⁷ In 1941, working women represented 4.5% of the labour force; in 1951, it nearly tripled to 11.2% and by 1961, the number doubled. In the same years, the number of wives working was, respectively, 12.7%, 30.0% and 49.8% of all women in paid employment. These figures generally hold true for the mothers of the interviewees. Some, like Jake’s mother, worked for only a short time at the beginning when they first arrived in ‘South-central’ town. He remembered that “she would work for a few summers as a cook at summer camps to allow [Jake and his brother] to be able to go to camp, so otherwise they couldn’t afford to send [them] to camps.”¹³⁸ In actuality, she never really did stop working because she continued being the at-home secretary for her husband’s scrap business. Ilana’s mother helped her dad throughout their years in the store and Rob’s mother worked right up until the sixties. Paulina’s mother worked part-time to help out: “There was . . . a Saturday market that used to be on Wednesdays and Saturdays and she worked at the meat counter.”¹³⁹ Paulina had, at another point in the interview, related that her mother had no clue about shopping or anything like that, but emphasized how she only now appreciates how hard her mother had to work to earn extra money. She might not have

¹³⁶ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*.

¹³⁷ Strong-Boag, “Home Dreams”, 479.

¹³⁸ Interview with Jake, 2.

¹³⁹ Interview with Paulina, 5.

been at home like the other moms or known how to dress but she wanted to pay for the extras for her girls so they would be like everyone else.

There were, here and there, progressive voices in the fifties who did call for a more democratic family.¹⁴⁰ But despite the complexity and reality of people's lives, popular discourses of normalcy "worked to level important differences between and across individuals, ethnic groups, and classes."¹⁴¹ As a result, "the imperative to be normal limited possibility in people's lives,"¹⁴² or at least seemed to. For example, many institutional structures were devised in such a way as to automatically exclude anyone who did not belong. "Suburbia's households were . . . connected by schools and churches,"¹⁴³ a situation not always suited to a Jewish way of life. Until the late fifties, there were few synagogues and Jewish organizations in the newer housing developments. Immigrant mothers often did not drive. When Sy's parents bought their first home, they made sure it was close to the JCC, the Jewish Community Centre. It was where he spent a lot of his spare time when he was growing up.¹⁴⁴ Quite a few in this group lived close by.

TV especially played a significant contributory role in defining what was and was not normal, for "nowhere was the moral code of television clearer than in its promulgation of the postwar myth of the family."¹⁴⁵ "Comedies of reassurance", as Hal Himmelstein refers to the popular sitcom genre, reinforced the popular, middle-class discourse of the day

¹⁴⁰ Marian Valverde, "Building Anti-Delinquent Communities: Morality, Gender, and Generation in the City," in *A Diversity of Women: Ontario, 1945-1980*, ed. Joy Parr, 19-45 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 22.

¹⁴¹ Gleason, "Psychology," 444.

¹⁴² Adams, *The Trouble*, 3.

¹⁴³ Strong-Boag, "Home Dreams," 495.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Sy, 13-14.

¹⁴⁵ Himmelstein, *Television Myth*, 88.

that came into living rooms via Toronto, New York and Hollywood.¹⁴⁶ By the late 1950s, more than 60 per cent of the domestic and family comedies on the air were white, middle-class and suburban.¹⁴⁷ Even today's nostalgic re-runs of the postwar years such as the 80s TV programme *Happy Days* (still showing in re-runs), conjure up images of sweet-natured teenagers and their ever-so-understanding supportive families living in a gentler time, in a society "of exceptional moral, social, and political conformity."¹⁴⁸ Could this be a case of collective amnesia, wonders Gaile McGregor, because on closer examination, what distinguishes the fifties "is not its seamlessness but its paradoxes."¹⁴⁹ Consumerism, the rush to the suburbs, the drive to succeed in the workplace, combined with Cold War paranoia, justified or unjustified, "triggered the fear that differentness of any stripe . . . was symptomatic of disaffection, even disease."¹⁵⁰

By no means were they simpler times. As memories of depression and war began to recede, new anxieties replaced the old.¹⁵¹ People felt it their duty to uphold the values for which the country had fought so hard. Nuclear families would be the base, the foundation for security for the growing economy and for democracy. Heterosexual behaviour, reflected in the number of Canadians marrying and starting families beginning in the late 1940s, "was

¹⁴⁶ Rutherford, "Made in America," 336. To quote Paul Rutherford, 'popular' refers to "the things of the mind held in common by ordinary people. It may be used to mean various artistic forms that people consume (sensational literature or rock music, say), sometimes abbreviated to 'PopCult,' placing it primarily in the field of entertainment. Or it may mean the attitudes, values, myths, rituals, and arts prevalent in ordinary life."

¹⁴⁷ Leibman, *Living Room Lectures*, 7. See the discussion on 'Whiteness' below.

¹⁴⁸ Valverde, "Building," 19.

¹⁴⁹ McGregor, "Domestic Blitz," 7.

¹⁵⁰ McGregor, "Domestic Blitz," 7.

¹⁵¹ Numerous historians refer to the postwar period as a time of both prosperity *and* anxiety. Canadian references include: Owsram; Stackhouse, Jr.; Strong-Boag. For American references see also David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Villard Press, 1993); Ronald Oakley, *God's Country: America in the Fifties* (New York: Dembner Books, 1986).

read as a marker of national stability,¹⁵² that would anchor both the individual and society. Bridal magazines told their readers how men and women should be; as did ministers in their church sermons and newspapers and magazines. Discourses of normalcy and domesticity were everywhere. Radio programmes featured experts who warned parents – read here mothers – that the future of their children was in their hands. Only through the democratic ideals of co-operation could couples work and play together to raise well-adjusted children. This meant that good wives and mothers stayed at home, finding satisfaction and personal fulfillment in their domestic duties while their wage-earning husbands left every morning for work, returning at night to a contented, smiling family.¹⁵³ It followed that television, dictated by revenue and demographics, should mimic the normalizing discourses that targeted the largest consuming group, the middle-class family. And as children growing up in the parochial atmosphere of the 50s, many watched how life was on TV. Everyday and in every way, images of the perfect family – white, Anglo-Saxon and middle-class – permeated their lives. These representations were articulated and reinforced through television shows and commercials, the movies, magazines, their teachers at school – it seemed to be coming from everywhere. To behave outside the boundaries of defined normalcy, branded you different, not belonging.

The theme was consistent: the message was crystal-clear. American shows such as *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* (1952-64) and *Leave It to Beaver* (1957-1968) were beamed into Canadian homes and their messages reinforced by the popular and academic ‘experts’ of the day who made it quite clear how normal families behaved.¹⁵⁴ But as far as the children of survivors were concerned, their lives did not resemble what they saw every

¹⁵² Adams, *The Trouble*, 166-168.

¹⁵³ Strong-Boag, “Home Dreams,” 479.

¹⁵⁴ For a thorough discussion of plots and motifs, refer to Leibman, *Living Room Lectures*.

night in their living rooms. Rob said, “I did want to have your house with the picket fence in those days, or the suburban life that you saw on TV like in *Father Knows Best* or any of those sitcoms that you saw. Obviously, the surroundings were quite different from my surroundings. It was in such contrast, wasn't it?”¹⁵⁵ Jake, though not as taken as some of the others with the sitcoms, conceded that the shows were key influences in the lives of his generation. He mentioned how he had talked about our upcoming interview with some friends the night before and the questions I was going to ask. Everybody in the group became animated, remembering some of the shows they had watched as kids. Jake admitted that “*Leave it to Beaver*, of course, for our generation was a major show.”¹⁵⁶ It was as if you belonged to a club if you watched the same show. You could share, talk about it – you belonged.

Interestingly, despite the *male* experts' emphasis on the crucial role the mother played, it was the television dad – all knowing, strong-but-sensitive – who played the more active role. Mom, ever gentle and supportive, wiping away a tear, hovered in the background and welcomed her children when they came home after school. Mom, always dressed to perfection, never a broom or rag in her hand, had milk and freshly-baked cookies waiting. Mom and the kids would sit down and they would have a long chat about the day. If there was a problem, it was left up to the dad to solve it; after which, mom would call everyone in for dinner. For Paulina, whose family life was difficult, “it was not my existence at all, so it was a total fantasy. Total!”¹⁵⁷ Television offered her a retreat to a place where mothers and fathers got along. Parents did not fight, and if they did, it was over some little silliness like who forgot to take out the garbage.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Rob, 15.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Jake, 13.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Paulina, 9.

These strictly delineated portrayals of men and women, with patriarchy at its core, “made it an important agent in defining the personal identities and the proper conduct of girls and boys, notably at the teenage level.”¹⁵⁸ Of course, it really defined their fantasies and desires. And for many viewers, the dream of a perfect family clearly had to be the Andersons on *Father Knows Best* (1954-62). Jim Anderson was the dad every child and adolescent wanted. Understanding and kind, yet loving and firm, you knew in your heart of hearts that if ‘Mr. Anderson’ were your father, you would always be safe.¹⁵⁹ Again, Paulina emphasized how what was on the screen was not what was happening in her own family. Her parents “didn’t get along so it was not a very happy household.”¹⁶⁰ She thought “every child would want to have a family, where the father was home [and] they got along.”¹⁶¹ She was not the only one. In her book on the relationship between the fifties family and television, Nina Leibman reprints excerpts of fan mail that reveal the extent of the intimate relationship the viewers had with the TV characters.¹⁶² Poignant letters from teenagers wishing they had a father like Jim Anderson are heartbreaking. They reveal the extent of personal family tragedy and how deep was the desire for that elusive normalcy. It was *the* ideal: the traditional family – not poor, nor conspicuously rich, “Protestant but not ostentatiously so, middle of the road, middle class, and tolerant.”¹⁶³ This was the gold standard held up every night on television.

¹⁵⁸ Rutherford, *When Television Was Young*, 481.

¹⁵⁹ ‘Mr. Anderson’, played by Robert Young, went on to play the same kind of loving, caring character in “Marcus Welby, M.D.”

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Paulina, 9.

¹⁶¹ Interview with Paulina, 9.

¹⁶² Leibman, *Living Room Lectures*, 88.

¹⁶³ Owrn. *Born*, 91.

No one in the sitcoms was Jewish or a Holocaust survivor. I asked all the participants about their Jewishness and their Holocaust connection. Their answers surprised me at first, then I reminded myself that I was dealing with adults creating “patterns of connectedness.”¹⁶⁴ persuading themselves that “here lies the only explanatory narrative, the only one that will make sense of things.”¹⁶⁵ It is a narrative that exerts tremendous force in people’s lives. They were echoing the messages in the media.

Those were the discourses in the media. Television, in particular, figured prominently in many people’s lives. Many of the participants in this thesis watched television – a lot. In retrospect, they say, more often, than they should have. Their quick responses, the sweet and funny memories came flying through. It was a part of their lives – the images and the messages were there. To them, the picture of the white picket fence and the suburban life, along with the glitzy consumer products, was the norm, the ideal. This was despite the reality that most Canadians around them were also not part of these popular representations, and despite the fact that Canadian consumption did not really take off until the sixties. That there is a gap between their memories of desire and the reality does not matter. The messages the images conveyed were part of the measuring stick of who was normal and who belonged. So how did they, who in many ways could not live up to these images around them, still make meanings of their lives? How did they operate between their own representations of being Jewish and being children of survivors and the representations in the popular culture? How did the normalizing discourses of their childhood produce the stories they live by today?

¹⁶⁴ Peter Brooks, *Psychoanalysis and Storytelling* (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1994), 59.

¹⁶⁵ Brooks, *Psychoanalysis*, 59.

We Weren't Different

"...man is a fiction-making animal, one defined by fantasies and fictions."¹⁶⁶

In time, each one made his and her way in a variety of formal and informal settings. As children, they all did what children do: hung out with other children; joined youth groups; played sports; took piano and swimming lessons; did all sorts of 'normal' activities that other Canadian children did after school or over the weekends. While there was a range within the group I interviewed, activities often divided along gender lines. The 'guy thing' was to be out there, active, playing. They generally said the same thing. Sy recalled being "outside playing. . . . always out doing. . . . always doing something."¹⁶⁷ Barry also played on the street, "the usual things."¹⁶⁸ "A lot of things that most Canadians did."¹⁶⁹ added Rob. The guys remembered what I remember my brother and *their* younger brothers did and it usually meant being out on the street, organizing a game of pick-up hockey. Jake added that they "always had to have someone spotting the cars, of course."¹⁷⁰ It was and still is a Canadian childhood ritual shared by every boy who joined in. Jake asked if I remembered one particular game, a memory he has shared with his own children and which has become part of their family mythology: "I tell my kids about the game of chicken we used to play. I don't know if you remember that or not. We used to play chicken in the alleys. We would get bikes and line up at different parts. I remember that. That was a guy

¹⁶⁶ Brooks, *Psychoanalysis*, 108.

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Sy, 10.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Barry, 4.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Rob, 11.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Jake, 12.

thing. We would ride towards each other and of course, whoever went before the crash was the chicken --- ⁻¹⁷¹

He and the others were all part of a community of children doing what comes naturally to children – playing. Their backgrounds and their names might have made up a mini United Nations but all they cared about was being out there on the street, just your average Canadian kid. Jake made sure to point out, as several of the others did, that *everybody* on the street joined in. Jew *and* non-Jew: “We’d play football in the street, or hockey in front of Sy’s house or on the street. All the guys would play and often when we played, it wasn’t strictly a Jewish experience, it was the kids in the neighbourhood.”¹⁷²

Girls also got together but usually at each other’s homes. They would listen to music and sing to the records – those fiddly 78s which needed the plastic discs in the centre to play on the record player. Or, they watched *American Bandstand* and danced with each other along with the couples on TV. Up north, Eva enjoyed much of the same pop culture of the day. For her it was singing along with the Everly Brothers or Paul Anka. To this day, she remembers “all those songs, cold.”¹⁷³ Activities for girls tended to be more formal and organized, even when money was tight. There was swimming and skating, piano or singing lessons, not what the boys in this group generally did.

Movies were also, for many, a part of growing up in the fifties. Teenagers across North America exerted a tremendous influence and according to Thomas Doherty, they reinvigorated the movie industry.¹⁷⁴ One reason had to do with the nature of being a teenager, that new social being who now had more power, more money and more leisure

¹⁷¹ Interview with Jake, 11.

¹⁷² Interview with Jake, 19.

¹⁷³ Interview with Eva, 16.

¹⁷⁴ Thomas Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988).

time than any previous generation of that age group. Several factors came together at the same time and in this case they were related to the introduction of television. As increasing numbers of families stayed home to watch their new toy – the television – ticket sales at the movies slumped to all-time lows. Also, teenagers needed to get away from their parents. Owram writes that when parents and their younger children were home glued to the TV set, teenagers found they could escape to a place of their own – the movies.¹⁷⁵ This filtered down eventually to pre-teens who, if they had the money, would literally take over movie houses every Saturday afternoon. These immigrant children, for the most part, were no different. When I asked about going to the movies the response was nearly unanimous. Movie houses were where most of these boys and girls were together – although with this group, it was not *together-together*, as in dating. As pre-teens, the kids saw each other in line, waiting outside the movie theatre. Everyone was just too scared to do more than look and giggle when a member of the opposite sex walked by – sometimes two or three times. It was a routine. Ilana thinks she “just went because it was Saturday afternoon. They always had a matinee on.”¹⁷⁶ For her, the details are as clear as if she were doing it today. I asked her about these experiences. She easily recalled the details as if they had just happened the day before. She began by saying she had gone . . .

Often. Once I was old enough, and old enough is not what it is today. Once I was eight, I was taking my younger brothers to the movies. We used to take the bus ... it was so safe. We had no worry at all in “South-central” town. I was always downtown on Saturdays taking the boys to movies by then I was babysitting We got popcorn for five or ten cents. We would stand in line. All of our friends would be there. It would be a big social time. I remember seeing *The Fly*. I took the boys to see a scary movie. It was fun. That’s what we did.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Owram, *Born*, 151. For a more comprehensive discussion of teenagers and movies see Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics*.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Ilana, 9.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Ilana, 9.

Rob went “a lot more than [he] should have.”¹⁷⁸ His schoolwork suffered for it. It was harder for Paulina who didn’t go that often:

Well, because when my parents were working, someone would have to take us. It was only when we got old enough to go on our own, and even then we had to have the 25 cents, first of all to do it. It just wasn’t something that we did that often Yeah. . . . The Vanity was the closest one. I actually used to walk there.¹⁷⁹

Eva did not “remember going to a lot of movies. [She didn’t know] if there was extra funding for that.”¹⁸⁰ Ilana liked “all the science fiction ones. It didn’t matter what it was.”¹⁸¹ Sy is vague on the names, but still had the memory of going: “I can’t remember anything I saw — Cowboy movies, I remember. That I remember. The cowboy movies. The newsreels I remember at the beginning — I just remember seeing them at the beginning of the show. It was fast, it was bang, bang, bang.”¹⁸² In contrast, Rob remembered going all the time and seeing every movie that came out:

I think sort of as a kid I liked heroic movies. I remember seeing things like *Hercules Unchained* and all kinds of things like that. We used to go to, as you know, to the Capital Theatre or. . . . the Tivoli. That’s right. I used to see these . . . *Samson and Delilah* and all those corny movies that you’d see today and say, “Oh my God, I watched this?” But as a kid, I suppose it was inspirational and you know, the good overcomes evil type of thing. . . . I didn’t even know that Samson was Jewish at the time.¹⁸³

For Anna, it was the rituals around going to the movies that mattered:

On Saturday afternoons we used to go to movies. We used to go earlier and we walked to all these places. Nobody ever drove us. . . . That’s what took the whole day. We would go for an afternoon movie. We didn’t come home until it was dark. . .

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Rob, 17.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Paulina, 9-10.

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Eva, 17.

¹⁸¹ Interview with Ilana, 9.

¹⁸² Interview with Sy, 13.

¹⁸³ Interview with Rob, 18-19.

. . . I was trying to think of the movies I went to see with you. . . . I remember going to movies with you and being more interested in what we saw.¹⁸⁴

She reminded me about one particular food-related activity (what else would it be) that I had completely forgotten about. “Don’t you remember,” she asked. “We used to go to the movies and there was the Marzipan Store. We used to go there and get the little strawberries and pears . . . the teeny, little fruit, that’s what we used to do before we went to the movies.”¹⁸⁵ Going to the movies was really all about being with your best friend, then meeting up with other friends, gossiping, catching up on everybody’s comings and goings – hanging out – being just like everybody else! There was, as well, another aspect to the all-day routine. The messages of the popular culture on the screen and from the television programmes they watched – often featuring the same stars – showed these adolescents what normal teenagers did. Some complied willingly, others at times happily and other times painfully. Anna *never* felt comfortable. Neither did Paulina who, even after winning the ‘Sweetheart’ title of her BBYO¹⁸⁶ chapter, felt she was just faking it.

Another teenage-related activity these and thousands of other Canadian kids shared was the love of rock and roll. Its overall impact on society, not just with the teenagers, is still considered extraordinary. And music’s major vehicle was television, particularly the show *American Bandstand*. It was where it was ‘happening’. Broadcast out of Philadelphia and hosted by Dick Clark, it made its national debut on ABC in 1957. Those TV teenagers, as Pauline and Ilana remember, were so cool. They watched the show, picking up the various clues and the codes: how to dress, what the latest dance was, what was in, what was out. It was all there, their own private finishing school. Ilana describes the ritual she and

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Anna, 9.

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Anna 8.

¹⁸⁶ BBYO = B’nai Brith Youth Organization

her girlfriends took part in practically every day after school: “We used to watch *American Bandstand* all the time. All the time. . . . We would get together after school and at different girls’ houses or just me even watching it and dancing in my bare feet.”¹⁸⁷ And so they dressed as many of the others dressed did: for the boys, duck pants, penny loafers (or the later Safari boots) and the Oxford shirt with the requisite loop at the back; for the girls, the flippy ponytail, cinch-waisted dresses with crinolines and the round ‘virgin’ pin. Those teenagers on *Bandstand* had the look, the moves, everything! The discourses organized around *Bandstand* referred not to language alone but rather to the combinations of signs and signifying practices against which teenagers could formulate their identities. It offered these girls what Stuart Hall describes as an arena for self-expression, where they could be a part of “a theatre of popular desires, a theatre of fantasies.”¹⁸⁸ where they could choreograph their moves and try on their ‘costumes’. But, Hall writes, these discourses are, at the same time, limiting through their links to knowledge and desire. On shows like *American Bandstand*, there was a competing narrative at work, one that was never explicitly uttered. The meanings, not necessarily of their making, mediated reality for some and framed their experiences in a particular way. Their stories related that they were different, they weren’t like the kids on TV. And yes, their childhoods were filled with playing road hockey with friends, joining in a pick-up game, or getting together with girlfriends to learn the newest dances coming out of Philadelphia. Their worlds were at once both similar and so different from the images around them. Their words speak of the need to fit in surroundings that did not always look or feel familiar – hard considering what the media messages were sending out, especially those around being Jewish.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Ilana, 9-10.

¹⁸⁸ Stuart Hall, “Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies,” in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paul A. Treichler, 277-294 (New York: Routledge, 1992), 293.

CHAPTER 6

MEDIA MESSAGES AND BEING JEWISH

Jewishness: An Absent Presence

Beginning from the day I watched my first television show at our next-door neighbour's house, I was hooked. I suspected others felt much the same way as I did towards what was to me, the most wondrous escape and dream machine ever invented, especially in the first years. For this reason I first chose to focus on the media. Therefore, a major portion of each interview was devoted to television and film. Also, much of the secondary literature spoke of how young people, like the participants in this study, watched TV and how many went to the movies, some every week, along with thousands of other children and teenagers across North America. Talk about television and the movies elicited some happy memories. The responses came easily. As previously mentioned, a few became enthusiastic when they recalled favourite programmes, or rituals with family and friends surrounding the act of watching television. But when I asked the participants specifics, about Jews and Jewishness, or representations of the Holocaust 'out there' – at school, in the media – they did not really remember, if at all. The discourses of normalcy, of who belonged and significantly for this thesis, who do not always pushed through and not always in the words. Their responses and their engagement with TV, especially their non-remembrances, illustrate how images and messages have the power to push aside most alternatives. At the same time, their stories told of doing the normal things children and adolescents do. An overview of the relevant representations of Jewishness and the Holocaust – mostly American – helps to background their testimonies and their engagements.

'Race' & Ethnic Composition in the Media

Diversity with its lived identities and realities was and still is a rarity in the American medium. Alan Smith writes that in Canada, though there had been "a longstanding conviction that subgroup identity was genuine and had to be accommodated,"¹ the reality was more complex. Smith, in his comparison of 'race' on American and Canadian television, states that while there were both resemblances and differences, portrayals of minorities were still restricted and limited in both countries.² despite *some* changes in how minority Americans were depicted in the postwar years. Ethnically, television in the 1950s was still very much "a white, Anglo-Saxon medium."³ Annette Funicello was as ethnic as it got.⁴ Ilana thought that "she was and she wasn't."⁵ Her response illustrates how depictions and their usage are never straightforward.

If minorities were portrayed at all, there still lingered the old stereotypes. Or, characters were portrayed as being 'just like everybody else'. Rochester, Jack Benny's wisecracking houseboy seemed to combine both old and new representations. He could be sassy to 'Mr. Benny' and seemingly empowered, a tradition dating back to the beginnings of theatre. But he was still 'the help'. Smith contends that it is problematic trying to analyze racial depictions in the media because "observers in those communities were not, to be sure, always troubled by what they saw on the screen."⁶ Rochester might have been a comic foil

¹ Allan Smith, "Seeing Things: Race, Image, and National Identity in Canadian and American Movies and Television," in *American Review of Canadian Studies* 26, 3 (Autumn 1996), 374.

² Smith, "Seeing Things," 382.

³ Doug Owsram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 90; Smith, 368.

⁴ See also Gitlin, *Inside Prime Time* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).

⁵ Interview with Ilana, 10.

⁶ Smith, "Seeing Things," 379-380.

but he could also be an object of respect. In fact, some Canadian and American minorities saw their depictions “as a welcome acknowledgment of worth, place, and identity.”⁷ Again, we see the struggles in producing and reading culture. For Suzanna, if you saw a Jew on TV, you were aware of it, “it was always in the back of your consciousness.”⁸ It seems, from the interviews, that the group remembers watching “their own” with pride, like Ilana who watched everything that was Jewish: “We watched anything that had Jews in it, like *Sid Caesar*, *Ed Sullivan*, some of the comedians.”⁹ Many of those on TV were never openly identified as such. Some actors themselves have often defended the series they appeared in. The actor who played the character of Amos in *Amos ’n’ Andy* points out that “many episodes showed the Negro with professions and businesses like attorneys, store owners, and so on, which they never had in TV or movies before.”¹⁰

Being Jewish and growing up in the 1950s, was not as simple as nostalgic media reconstructions would have us believe. Children’s author Rhea Tregebov writes: “The invisibility of being Jewish was a product of looking out into the available cultural paradigms and seeing next to nothing that reflected my own experience.”¹¹ She clearly remembers the absence of Jewish representations out there. It is a feeling that is more than just being invisible because it reaches into one’s psyche. Whether the images were of the Andersons or the Stones, the messages, especially the more entertaining ones, were clear and straightforward, reflecting white, middle-class life and its attendant culture. These

⁷ Smith, “Seeing Things,” 380.

⁸ Interview with Suzanna, 25.

⁹ Interview with Ilana, 11.

¹⁰ Robert S. Lichter, Linda S. Lichter and Stanley Rothman, *Watching America* (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1991), 234.

¹¹ Rhea Tregebov, “Origins: Writing *The Big Storm*,” in *From Memory to Transformation: Jewish Women’s Voices*, ed. Sarah Silberstein Swartz and Margie Wolfe, 291-293 (Toronto: Second Story Press, 1998), 292.

children of survivors did not live the lives portrayed on the small or large screen. But the messages were there, surrounding them, every night, showing them what their family should be.

Historians writing about the fifties emphasize the tremendous role of popular culture in the postwar years. In the 1950s, that meant TV. Television defined much of the mass pop culture. Admitting he did not realize it as he was growing up, Paul Rutherford now maintains that the rise and emergence of television has been "the most potent source of mass culture in modern society."¹² Elaine May would agree. Using the data from television shows, Hollywood movies, mass circulation magazines and longitudinal surveys, with the general consensus, May illustrates how "white, middle-class values . . . shaped the dominant political and economic institutions . . . [and] affected all Americans."¹³ So too did it shape O'wram's generation of Canadian baby boomers, a formidable group in numbers and influence. If, as some critics believe, North Americans depend upon the images supplied by various media for their sense of how other human beings live, then the message these images conveyed was very clear: it was of exclusion and superiority, of programmes that selectively constructed social knowledge divorced from the broader realities of people's lives.¹⁴ For many children, as well as adults, television was a common experience where they could learn about the world, about how being white was better and about how being something 'Other' marked one as not belonging, as something less than acceptable.

¹² Paul Rutherford, *When Television Was Young: Prime Time Canada 1952-1967* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 4.

¹³ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 13.

¹⁴ See, for example, Farrel Corcoran, "Television as Ideological Apparatus: The Power and the Pleasure," in *Television: The Critical View*, 4th ed., ed. Horace Newcomb, 533-552 (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 535; Stuart Hall, "Culture, Media and the 'Ideological Effect,'" in *Mass Communication and Society*, ed. J. Curran, M. Gurevitch and J. Woollacott, 315-348 (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1977), 342; Hal Himmelstein, *Television Myth and the American Mind* (New York: Praeger, 1984), 88; Michael Novak, "Television Shapes the Soul," in *Television: The Critical View*, 3d ed., ed. Horace Newcomb, 335-350 (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 339-340.

Through the mass media – television especially because it was beamed into the private space of peoples’ living rooms everyday – children were introduced to the middle-class beliefs and mythologies of North America: Life is fair: white, Anglo-Saxon families are fun: every person is equal. Postwar media messages did not show poverty or pollution and there was no threat of nuclear annihilation. It never even rained in Television Land, a universe populated and ruled by families such as the Andersons and the Nelsons. In postwar Canada, major prime time programming out of Toronto rejected “cultural differences between viewers in different regions of the country, income and education categories, or with different backgrounds and interests.”¹⁵

‘Whiteness’ became the universal norm which described and defined the world.¹⁶ In this normative space, where white people “colonise the definition of normal”, whiteness, as Richard Dyer argues, comes to stand for “the natural, inevitable, ordinary way of being human.”¹⁷ And when whiteness colonizes the definition of normal, it ultimately “and subsequently achieves a complete rejection of the possibility of the plurality of people’s subject positions.”¹⁸ Everything else becomes a single homogenized category, a stereotype: the outcome, writes Rey Chow, of an ongoing process first begun in the Enlightenment. Subsequently, it has systematically splintered “the whole notion of ‘humanity’ into manageable units of information.”¹⁹ The culture of prime time television beamed into

¹⁵ Paul M. Hirsch “The Role of Television and Popular Culture in Contemporary Society,” in *Television: The Critical View*, 3d ed., ed. Horace Newcomb, 280-310 (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 290.

¹⁶ Frances Henry and Carol Tator, *Racist Discourse in Canada’s English Print Media* (Toronto: The Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2000).

¹⁷ Richard Dyer, “White” Screen: “The Last Special Issue on Race?” 29, 4 (Autumn 1988), 44.

¹⁸ T. Muraleedharan, “Rereading Gandhi,” in *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, ed. Ruth Frankenberg, 60-85 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 61.

¹⁹ Rey Chow, *Ethics After Idealism: Theory—Culture—Ethnicity—Reading* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998) 109.

living rooms across the land was and is “a serious dissolvant of the cultures of other Americans.”²⁰ Canadian television – I refer here to TV in Ontario – also left little room for most distinctions save the CBC model.

In the movies, ethnics have always figured in the storylines. They fall into set types within fixed categories. In other words, the mass media has treated these non-white, non-mainstream groups either by stereotyping them or by simply ignoring them.²¹ Issues relevant to people and their day-to-day concerns and experiences are rarely dealt with, their cultures and traditions often conflated into easy-to-digest tele-portions. Certainly, people might share the same story – inter as well as *intra* group – but there are “also critical points of deep and significant difference . . . [because] . . . history has intervened.”²² Stuart Hall’s account of contemporary black British cultural production demands an end to the “essential black subject”, calling for a recognition of the vast diversity and differentiation of the historical and cultural experiences of black subjects.²³ It is no less so with other groups.

In the media, Jewish portrayals become fictions. No longer just Jew or non-Jew, there were white, Anglo-Saxons – what the Jews in this study were not – and the Jews that were also what this group was not. At the same time, there were “safe” Jews, “admirable” Jews, “crypto” Jews – the stereotypes were endless and enduring, *and* though not “very” Jewish, then Jewish enough “and more than enough to insure the necessary recognition and

²⁰ Novak, “Television,” 348.

²¹ Clint C. Wilson II and Félix Gutiérrez, *Race, Multiculturalism, and The Media: From Mass to Class Communication*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage Publications, 1995), 42.

²² Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford, 222-237 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 225.

²³ Stuart Hall, “New Ethnicities,” in *Race, Culture and Difference*, ed. James Donald and Ali Rattansi, 252-259 (London: Sage, 1992), 252-259.

good will from a contemporary audience."²⁴ 'Jew' also became a negation, *not* something: not white, not Christian, not 100% Canadian. And nowhere were the racializations of Jews and Jewishness better served than through the format of television, beamed into millions of homes everyday and night and on the big screen which would, in its more entertaining films, recreate the American fantasy life, only bigger and better.

Jews and Jewishness on Television: The Practice of Silences

Television programming in the fifties, which served up a menu consisting mainly of culturally neutral or disguised Jews, seems to be worlds away from television's offerings today.²⁵ Watching TV today can feel, in the words of Albert Auster, as if "prime time American television programming is awash with Jewish characters and references to Jewish traditions and customs."²⁶ The breakthrough came, for media analyst Rhonda Lieberman, with the airing of Barbra Streisand's TV debut in 1965. Most Jews, however, did not take notice until 1978 when NBC aired the 4-part miniseries, *Holocaust*.²⁷ For the most part, the first decades of prime time television meant watching white, middle-class Anglo-Saxon characters. Jews – that is, openly Jewish Jews, Jews who *said* they were Jewish and who

²⁴ Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 257.

²⁵ There is a large body of literature on the topic of Jews/Jewishness and television. The books and articles are listed below.

²⁶ Albert Auster, "'Funny You Don't Look Jewish...': The Image of Jews on Contemporary American Television," *Television Quarterly* 26 (Summer 1993), 65. Many of these characterizations still revert to the familiar stereotypes.

²⁷ Rhonda Lieberman, "Glamorous Jewesses," *Artforum* 31 (January 1993): 6. Lieberman writes of that moment: "Embodying the formidable avatar of Jewess in her excessive, insatiable desire for goodies, she appears with her big nose in absolutely flawless outfits, delighting and disturbing all of us...": See also Nicola A. Lisus and Richard V. Ericson, "Misplacing Memory: The Effect of Television Format on Holocaust Remembrance," *British Journal of Sociology* 46, no. 1 (March 1995): 1-19; Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999); Alvin H. Rosenfeld, "Popularization and Memory: The Case of Anne Frank," in *Lessons and Legacies: The Meaning of the Holocaust in A Changing World*, ed. Peter Hayes, 243-278 (Evanston, ILL: Northwestern University Press, 1991); Jeffrey Shandler, *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

tackled Jewish issues and concerns – were non-existent.²⁸ In retrospect and given the times, one might be able to explain why there were very few people of colour in the media but given the large number of Jews in the business, explaining the general absence of Jewish characters becomes problematic.²⁹

This was not always so. ‘Ethnic’ comedies were regular features on prewar radio and despite the fact that audiences were treated every week to the same old negative stereotypes, these urban comedies were extremely successful.³⁰ With the coming of television, it was not long before these shows made the transition to the new electronic medium. Riding on the coattails of the wildly popular programme *Amos ‘n’ Andy* (1951-1953), *The Goldbergs* (1952-1955) moved from radio and eventually to NBC-TV in 1952 as a thrice-weekly series. Every show, viewers dropped in on Molly and her extended working-class family.³¹ A significant segment of the audience came from that background. Regrettably for the *genre*, the Goldbergs were the last of that era. It would be nearly two decades before that kind of programming would make a reappearance.

Writers such as Todd Gitlin and Maurice Berger have analyzed why television moved towards a neutral world inhabited by *indistinct* white, Anglo-Saxons. They describe how, under pressure from the sponsors and network executives, there was a growing trend to avoid any direct reference to Jewish ethnicity. Gitlin suggests that network executives and sponsors were convinced that “a large part of the audience preferr[ed] its Jews Gentile.”³²

²⁸ Tregobov, “Origins,” 292.

²⁹ Gitlin, *Inside Prime Time*, 180-185.

³⁰ Robert Jancu, “Jackie Mason’s World According to Hollywood,” *Judaism* 40, 2 (Winter 1991): 134-147; Smith, “Seeing Things.”

³¹ Harry Castleman and Walter J. Podrazik, *Watching TV: Four Decades of American Television* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1982), 43.

³² Gitlin, *Inside Prime Time*, 184. Note: CBS founder William S. Paley, a Jew, reportedly turned down the chance to invest in the hit Broadway musical *Fiddler on the Roof* because it was ‘too Jewish’.

As a result, many young Jewish writers felt forced to comply. Some like Paddy Chayevsky and Arthur Miller fought back by using transparent disguises.³³ One example Gitlin cites relates docudrama writer Ernest Kinoy's remembrance of Paddy Chayefsky's televised play *The Catered Affair* (1955), ostensibly about an Irish family:

In a pig's eye it's about an Irish family! . . . It was because a number of the Jewish writers would come in with material, and the networks would say, 'It's too Jewish. The rest of America won't understand.' They're always worried that some slob, somewhere around Chicago, isn't going to know what you're talking about."³⁴

Ethel Winant, another media player from that era, has similar memories:

I remember some guy from [a top advertising agency] telling me he wanted his shows to look like the covers of the *Saturday Evening Post* . . . and I said, 'You mean you don't want any Negroes or any Jews.' . . . And he said, 'Well, no, I mean, but I, you know, I want it to look like the covers of the *Saturday Evening Post* . . . ' You saw very few Jewish actors who looked like Jewish actors. I'd cast Jack Carson and they'd say, 'He seems ethnic.' There were all these wonderful euphemisms.³⁵

Another possible explanation for the absence of Jews can be found in the nature of TV, in its function as "a site for the great American drama of assimilation."³⁶ Still another possible answer can be found in the work of Riv-Ellen Prell and bell hooks, writing from two different cultural viewpoints but who describe how minorities too often 'internalize' negative perceptions which transform into feelings of self-hate.³⁷ Ultimately though,

³³ In response to the reissue of his play *Death of a Salesman*, Arthur Miller, after avoiding the question for years, finally admitted that yes, the play *was* about a Jewish family in the forties, but he couldn't risk having it rejected at the time, in light of the anxiety in the arts surrounding McCarthy's witchhunts.

³⁴ Cited in Gitlin, *Inside Prime Time*, 184. In his essay, Maurice Berger uses the expression "non-Jewish ethnic situations:" "The Mouse That Never Roars: Jewish Masculinity on American Television," in *Too Jewish? Challenging Traditional Identities*, ed. Norman L. Kleeblatt (The Jewish Museum, New York and New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 101.

³⁵ Gitlin, *Prime Time*, 184: Nearly two decades later, during the Watergate affair in 1973, it seemed as if nothing had changed. When Kinoy submitted his script about the Dreyfus case, an executive exclaimed, "My God, does it have to be that Jewish?" In other words, "in network and advertiser parlance, 'the market' is still personified as a hypothetical anti-Semitic Midwesterner ready to switch channels at the first sign of a Stein." (Gitlin, p. 101)

³⁶ Jancu, "Jackie Mason's World."

³⁷ bell hooks, "Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination," in *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, ed. Ruth Frankenberg, 165-179 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997),

networks retreat to number crunching and demographics. “compounded perhaps by self-protectiveness against any real or conceivable anti-Semitic charge that Jews are too powerful in the media.”³⁸

On variety and comedy shows, Jews played a greater role but still hid their Jewishness. Some changed their names, a practice still common today. It did not matter what cultural shorthand they employed to mask the truth. Jews still picked up the hidden Jewish references often delivered by comics straight out of the Catskills. Working as writers on now-classic variety shows such as *Your Show of Shows* and *The Milton Berle Show*, they routinely expressed their *yiddishkeit* through ‘Yiddishisms’. One such in-joke involved a samurai character in a parody of Japanese films. His name, *Ganza Mishpocha* referred to the famous ‘Ginza’ district in Tokyo but if you were in the know and if you twisted the words a bit, it became ‘*ganze mishpocha*’ which, in Yiddish, means ‘the whole family’. When I asked Rob if he noticed if anyone on TV was Jewish, he described having cultural antennae: “Oh yeah. Of course. More or less. It’s the one instinct we all have. We can almost sense when someone is. Even when they’re trying not to be. I can sense that they are.”³⁹ When I asked him who, specifically, he could not remember. Instead, he moved to how he himself was, and still is, able to hide: “There are a number of occasions where I’d be somewhere. Not ironically or interestingly, a lot of people didn’t think that I was.”⁴⁰ His recognition of *other* Jews – in essence, detecting when Jews are hiding – was also a self-recognition. Suzanna, Jake and Sy also made vague references to the numbers of Jewish

166: Riv-Ellen Prell, “Why Jewish Princesses Don’t Sweat: Desire and Consumption in Postwar American Jewish Culture,” in *Too Jewish? Challenging Traditional Identities*, ed., Norman L. Kleeblatt, 74-92 (The Jewish Museum, New York and New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 252.

³⁸ Gitlin, *Inside Prime Time*, 184.

³⁹ Interview with Rob, 15.

⁴⁰ Interview with Rob, 16.

comedians on television but it stopped there, with no further remembrances. More than forty years later, there is still discomfort, feelings that articulate with the whole area of anti-racism, where there is the fear of being exposed. Yes, there were Jews on television and yes, they knew they were hiding. They learned their lessons well.

In Canada, there was *Wayne and Shuster*, two Jewish comedians who regularly managed to add a Yiddish flavour to their material. They became a favourite with Ed Sullivan, appearing more times than any other act. Obviously, they appealed to a larger audience, not just Jews. Their routines could be clever and extremely erudite and at the same time, without saying they were, my interviewees knew and heard their Jewishness. There were Jews who felt pride in seeing their own and they laughed along with everyone else. In one classic skit, "Rinse the Blood From his Toga", still shown today whenever their shows are rebroadcast, Johnny Wayne and Frank Shuster spoof Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Julius, writhing in agony, takes forever to die. In the top corner of the TV screen, as if in a cartoon bubble, we see and hear his wife telling her friends, "If I told him once, I told him a hundred times, 'Julie, don't go!'" It was not a far stretch for the audience to pick up on the cultural depictions of the worried Jewish wife and mother.⁴¹ These expressions and mannerisms became a fixture of fifties comedy *shticks*, in essence *Jewish shtick*, born and bred in the Borscht Belt, on the lower East Side, in Kensington Market or in the University of Toronto Varsity Review. American entertainers such as Milton Berle and Sid Caesar and writers Mel Brooks, Carl Reiner, Woody Allen and Neil Simon would eventually become household names on both sides of the border. And even if they were never marked as Jewish, people still read them as such, the representations defining, for North Americans, the stereotype of the Jewish male and female. Jake was no different when he knew how

⁴¹ This *shtick* has become a cultural reference for those Jewish baby boomers and their parents weaned on fifties TV. When Frank Shuster died in January 2002, it was rebroadcast again, several times.

many were Jewish: “Jewish! Yeah, a large number. Oh yeah — Comics tended to be predominantly Jewish back then.”

How Jews responded to the portrayals and how the outside world gained knowledge of their world – real or imagined – can be traced through the dominant discourses communicated through the media. Television’s inclusions and equally as important, its exclusions, showed North Americans how Jewish men and women were: the images, in time, defining their worlds. Unfortunately, these representations were often contrived by Jews themselves, with less than happy memories or consequences.

Jewish Masculinity on American Television

De-erotized Jewish women and powerless Jewish men are not mere literary tropes. . . . They are stereotypes masquerading as men and women whose hyperreality, the result of their sheer redundancy in the culture, makes them important to investigate.⁴²

Minority groups know all too well how deeply stereotypes have been ingrained in North American popular culture, so much so that they have become a norm, taken for granted. In an essay on Jewish masculinity, Maurice Berger cites a story recounted by cultural theorist Homi Bhabha. Bhabha’s childhood years in India were entirely defined and categorized by a white hierarchy “that most often denied men of color the status of full manhood.”⁴³ And while Jewishness is not as visually obvious as skin colour, there are parallels to a number of negative Jewish-male stereotypes endure, the consequences more than mere racializations. Berger also cites a passage of African American literary critic Sterling A. Brown who, in 1933, identified seven categories of African Americans in literature: the contented slave, the wretched freeman, the comic Negro, the brute Negro, the

⁴² Prell, “Jewish Princesses,” 74.

⁴³ Cited in Berger, “The Mouse That Never Roars: Jewish Masculinity on American Television,” in *Too Jewish? Challenging Traditional Identities*, ed. Norman L. Kleeblatt, 93-107 (New York and New Brunswick, NJ: The Jewish Museum and Rutgers University Press, 1996), 93.

tragic mulatto, the local color Negro, and the exotic primitive. Over the years, they have been updated to suit the television format.⁴⁴ Similarly, nineteenth century cultural and scientific stereotypes of Jews have endured and have also been appropriated by the tele-media. Some classifications include: the exotic or vulgar ethnic, the subordinated or passive *schlemiel*, the validated Jew, the neurotic Jew, the inferred Jew, and the feminized Jew, all, Berger contends, "cynically designed to undermine or ameliorate Jewish manhood."⁴⁵ Berger emphasizes one, the 'feminized' Jew, a popular fiction first made popular in the last century, as representing "the absolute negation of Aryan health and purity."⁴⁶ Describing the persistent images carried over into TV, he observes that "Jewish men have seen their identities disguised, their mannerisms mocked, and their masculinity voiced as the quiet peeps of a mouse."⁴⁷ This practice, often contrived by Jewish men themselves, has developed out of a long-standing Jewish survival strategy, "reinforced by centuries of practice,"⁴⁸ whereby minority members try for *invisibility*, comparable to a black 'passing' as white. It is also a result of network executives who feared the wrath of disaffected non-Jewish men, a significant sector of the viewing audience who might perceive Jews as "rich and powerful competitors."⁴⁹ Riv-Ellen Prell describes Jewish

⁴⁴ For an analysis of Sterling A. Brown, "Negro Character Types as Seen by White Authors" (1933), see Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "The Face and Voice of Blackness," in *Modern Art and Society: An Anthology of Social and Multicultural Readings*, ed. Maurice Berger (New York: Harper-Collins, 1994), 51-52; cited in Berger, "The Mouse," 94.

⁴⁵ Berger, "The Mouse," 94.

⁴⁶ Berger, "The Mouse," 97-98. A century later, lawyer and activist Alan Dershowitz in his book, *Chutzpah* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1991) is still repeating this very theme of how the Jew has been portrayed as weak, physically inept, incapable of sports or hard labour; neither a "gentleman," nor, therefore, "a real man", *Chutzpah* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1991).

⁴⁷ Berger, "The Mouse," 93.

⁴⁸ Susan Kray, "Orientalization of an 'Almost White' Woman: the Interlocking Effects of 'Race', Class, Gender, and Ethnicity in American Mass Media," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 10 (1993), 352.

⁴⁹ Berger, "The Mouse," 96.

masculinity as a partial gender system, influenced by the intersections of race and class, “embedded with the middle class,”⁵⁰ but separate and uniquely different. Understood within this framework, Berger questions the believability of Jewish stars Lorne Greene and Michael Landon of *Bonanza* (1959-1973) in the role of *macho* cowboys. There was Jewish comedian Milton Berle dressed in drag, or Jack Benny who, with his “limp-wristed mannerisms, lisp and aristocratic bearing,”⁵¹ conjured up gay stereotypes of the 1950s and ‘60s. How could middle-class, Anglo-Saxon norms possibly be threatened? And if the status quo were maintained, the executives felt, then the Jews might be safe – for the time being. This tenuous positioning was never expressed outright by anyone in the group. For example, Rob, Jake and Sy sloughed off the questions. Jake said he had not really thought about it a great deal then, but has been thinking about it more now.⁵²

Culture critic Albert Auster contributes his own classification to the discussion: the ‘crypto’ Jew or the closet Jew who assimilates into the colorless environment around him, much like George Burns and Jack Benny who successfully submerged their Jewishness “within the context of their eccentric and essentially gentile ensembles.”⁵³ Christmas shopping was meant to prove they really were true, blue Americans. At no time did the

⁵⁰ Prell, “Jewish Princesses,” 81.

⁵¹ Berger, “The Mouse,” 99. Felix Unger on *The Odd Couple* (1970-1975) continued the tradition as did others after him. Berger personally does not view Berle’s cross-dressing as negative, rather that it was played ‘straight’.

⁵² Interview with Jake, 15.

⁵³ Albert Auster, “‘Funny You Don’t Look Jewish...’,” 66. Auster begins his article by describing a game his father used to play watching old movies on TV television: “He’d not only tell you who’s dead...but he’d also tell you which ones were (or are) Jews, sometimes recalling their ‘original’ names....My father’s not the only one to play the game. Jews (and, I’m sure, some non-Jews as well) have been pointing out the Jewishness of film, radio and television stars for decades, long before it was presented as ‘Jew/Not a Jew,’ a mock TV quiz show on *Saturday Night Live* in the 1980s.”

routines, or their names, make any reference to their Jewishness.⁵⁴ Simultaneously, Benny's demeanour could also articulate "nineteenth century medical and scientific theories that helped guarantee the racial and physical otherness of the Jew."⁵⁵ It did not matter how many Christian holidays he celebrated and he did not *have* to say he was Jewish. It would just be read as such.

In his conclusion, Maurice Berger holds out little hope for positive male Jewish role models. He mourns the memory of the actor Phillip Loeb who played Molly Goldberg's sweet hardworking husband. In real life, he was blacklisted during the McCarthy witchhunts and dismissed from the show. His eventual suicide, Berger writes, sent Americans "the subliminal, but no less powerful, message that difference was undesirable and that only fathers with the bluest eyes could really know best."⁵⁶ Perhaps, this was the same message the Jewish men received. Their 'indirect' avoidance of the topic – never once referring to this aspect – would seem to point to this.

⁵⁴ Jerry Seinfeld and his ensemble of urban characters also inhabited a no-man's land. The storyline of a recent, pre-holiday programme of *Sisters*, portrayed the Jewish father trying desperately to introduce *Chanukah* while his non-Jewish wife, who had promised not to 'push' Christmas, now wanted to expose her son to her childhood rituals. Her parents, also intermarried, had celebrated with all the trimmings. The father had originally been against it but was 'voted down'. In the end, some wonderful compromise was struck to everyone's satisfaction – on the show that is.

⁵⁵ Norman L. Kleeblatt, " 'Passing' into Multiculturalism," In *Too Jewish? Challenging Traditional Identities*, ed. Norman L. Kleeblatt, 3–38 (New York and New Brunswick, NJ: The Jewish Museum and Rutgers University Press, 1996), 8.

⁵⁶ Berger, "The Mouse," 105.

Jewish Femininity on American TV

Jewish women, admits Maurice Berger, have had it even worse than Jewish men. Susan Kray adds that they are not only vulnerable to the prejudice of being Jewish, they must endure “the addition of two even more prevalent, stigmatizing stereotypes: ‘Jewish mother’ and ‘Jewish princess.’”⁵⁷ On prime time TV, female Jewish portraiture has gone from the lovable – in the character of Molly Goldberg – to the practically invisible, to the controlling, hypercritical mother to today’s portraiture of the Jewish woman who admits she’s Jewish but has, like her male counterparts, intermarried successfully or leads a glamorous, single life in the big city. Her Jewish neuroses marks her indelibly. Critics have written about the period after sweet Molly Goldberg left television and before the debut of the whiny neurotic Jewish female characters on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *Rhoda*. Closer inspection reveals that Jewish women on postwar television were absent, conspicuously so.⁵⁸ In the course of the research for her book, *Fighting to Become Americans*, Riv-Ellen Prell came across a quote she found interesting: “Her exaggerated coiffure, with its imitation curls and soaped curves that stick out at the side of the head like fantastic gargoyles, is an offense to the eye. Her plated gold jewelry with paste stones reveals its cheapness by its very extravagance.”⁵⁹ No, she insists, it is not about Fran Drescher, the nanny on the 1990s sitcom. It was actually written a century ago, appearing in one of the many Jewish dailies. The caricature appeared not long after the first great wave of American Jewish immigration in the 1880s. She was the “ghetto girl.” Shallow and vain – to name only two in an endless list of unattractive attributes – she was conspicuous in her

⁵⁷ Kray, “Orientalization,” 351.

⁵⁸ In literature, Jewish women were beginning to make an appearance. One of the first was the publication and success of Herman Wouk’s *Marjorie Morningstar*, published in 1956.

⁵⁹ Laura Brahm, “From Ghetto Girls to American Princesses, A Scholar Examines a Century of Stereotypes of Jewish Women.” *Forward* (New York), 9 April, 1999, 10.

cheap taste in clothes. Ghetto Girls, for years, were the topic of concern in both the Yiddish and English-language media.⁶⁰ American Gentiles, panicked at the thought of Jewish ‘aliens’ entering their middle-class enclaves, were joined by Jewish men who leveled similar antisemitic accusations: a reaction, writes Prell, coming of “the experience of being middle class, of being highly acculturated but still feeling very different.”⁶¹ The new world exerted pressure on new immigrants. Women adopted an early twentieth century custom of marriage-as-a-ticket out while men felt compelled to work relentlessly in order to achieve social class and career success but they perceived it was never enough. Prell examines in several books and articles how these anxieties have been internalized then re-directed at Jewish women with gender stereotypes regularly appearing in newspapers, books and films.⁶²

Jewish feminist and historian Paula Hyman offers a different slant on the American dream.⁶³ She traces assimilation back to Eastern Europe where growing numbers of women were already earning a living. Some had moved into the secular world, often into higher education and radical politics. Men often resented their efforts to stem assimilation. After an “eerie silence”, Prell writes, postwar hope in America re-emerged. She quotes a psychiatrist writing at the time:

⁶⁰ Simultaneously, representations of the ‘Jewish mother’ and the ‘Jewish wife’ were “a dominant subject of Jewish humor for both Europeans and immigrant Americans.” Riv-Ellen Prell, “Why Jewish Princesses Don’t Sweat: Desire and Consumption in Postwar American Jewish Culture,” in *Too Jewish? Challenging Traditional Identities*, ed. Norman L. Kleeblatt (New York and New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 75.

⁶¹ Prell, “Jewish Princesses,” 75.

⁶² See to above reference.

⁶³ Paula E. Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representation of Women*, The Samuel and Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995).

We thought, all of us, men and women alike, to replenish ourselves in goods and spirit, to undo, by exercise of collective will, the psychic disruptions of the immediate past. We would achieve the serenity that had eluded the lives of our parents. The men would be secure in stable careers, the women in comfortable homes, and together they would raise perfect children. It was the zeitgeist, the spirit of the time.⁶⁴

And succeed they did, many of them.⁶⁵ Jewish men did well in business; their children were educated and directed into the professions; and Jewish women continued their involvement in their children and in their community's activities.⁶⁶ In Canada, writes Paula Draper, it was no different. Many women, who had always been an integral part of communal organizations and fundraising, chose to devote their volunteer hours to Jewish continuity in their communities.⁶⁷ Out of this environment was born the suffocating Jewish mother, ladling out her own special brand of cholesterol and guilt. No longer that sweet, grey-haired *Bubbie*,⁶⁸ this mother became the butt of endless Borscht Belt jokes, eventually making her infamous public appearance in *Portnoy's Complaint* and *How to Be a Jewish Mother*, the highest-grossing non-fiction book of 1965.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Joseph Adelson: quoted in Prell, "Why Jewish Princesses Don't Sweat," 82 and Elaine May, *Homeward Bound*, 58.

⁶⁵ Hyman, 12-13.

⁶⁶ Paula J. Draper, "The Role of Canadian Jewish Women in Historical Perspective," in *Canadian Jewish Women of Today: Who's Who in Canadian Jewry*, ed. Edmond Y. Lipsitz, 3-9 (Downsview, Ontario: J.E.S.L. Educational Products, 1989).

⁶⁷ Yael Gordon-Brym, "The Changing Role of Canadian Jewish Women," in *Canadian Jewish Women of Today: Who's Who in Canadian Jewry*, ed. Edmond Y. Lipsitz (Downsview, Ontario: J.E.S.L. Educational Products, 1989), 12-13; Paula J. Draper and Janice B. Karlinsky, "Abraham's Daughters: Women, Charity, and Power in the Canadian Jewish Community," in *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1940s-1960s*, ed. Franca Iacovetta, 186-201 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998). Stephen Speisman and Gerald Tulchinsky's books also include the invaluable work women accomplished in their communities.

⁶⁸ For a detailed account of the early Jewish-American films and Jewish 'types' see Lester D. Friedman, *Hollywood's Image of the Jew* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1982).

⁶⁹ Cited in Prell, "Princesses," 76.

Then there was the opposite side and not necessarily the daughter: the Jewish princess. Attending to the needs of no one else but herself, her body became “a surface to decorate, its adornment financed by the sweat of others.”⁷⁰ First came Herman Wouk’s literary character Marjorie Morningstar, a foreshadowing of future portraiture.⁷¹ Brenda Patemkin followed. A character from another Roth book, *Goodbye, Columbus*, she would soon come to represent *the* Jewish girl in popular culture, a fixture on prime time television. Books, though, were read by a relatively small group of people when compared to the numbers watching television. The Jewish princess was still largely absent from fifties prime time television: an exclusion that has not gone unnoticed by visual artist Beverly Naidus who appropriates the images she witnessed in the 50s and incorporates them into her art pieces. In her work, she reproduces the tele-images that “promoted blond and slender beauty, an ethnic ideal that was precisely the antithesis of Naidus’s own physiognomy.”⁷² During the interviews with the participants, Ilana recalled the beach-blanket movies with all those hunky boys and the gorgeous *shiksas* in their two-piece bathing suits, the kind of bikinis that she would never, in her life, ever dream of wearing. Who had that kind of figure? Ilana remembered: “I wanted to look the way the kids on TV looked and the way the kids around me looked — I wanted to dress like Sandra Dee and Annette.”⁷³ Pauline also wanted to look like the girls she saw on TV but no one could help her: “I only remember a couple of times being taken shopping to find things. My mother was not really

⁷⁰ Prell, “Princesses,” 76.

⁷¹ This was first a personal observation based on thousands of hours of my misspent youth in front of the television set then later supported by contemporary cultural theorists such as Rhonda Leiberman and Riv-Ellen Prell, or visual artist Beverly Naidus who confirm the existence of this stereotype.

⁷² Kleeblatt, “Passing,” 16.

⁷³ Interview with Ilana, 26.

very good at that because she - - - especially when I was going through adolescence, when I was tall and quite gangly, she was not very good."⁷⁴

Todd Gitlin describes in his book on prime time television a common practice amongst media personnel in journalism who appoint only those whom they feel to be representative of marginal groups.⁷⁵ Often, members of the minority group in question, themselves "collaborate with the process by suppressing alternative voices within the group."⁷⁶ This practice could as easily be applied to this discussion of Jewish female representation. Eliminating the Jewish woman solves the problem of being too conspicuous.⁷⁷ By policing each other, usually by the males in the group, Jewish producers and directors deny Jewish female characters a presence and at the same time avoid the possible accusation that Jews "control the media". As well, Prell argues, it is Jewish men's strategy of deflecting any perceptions that may arise out of their own feelings of inadequacy.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Interview with Paulina, 10.

⁷⁵ Gitlin, *Prime Time*.

⁷⁶ Kray, "Orientalization," 352.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ In response to a letter to the editor, reacting to a satirical piece that appeared in *Cosmopolitan* [a "serious Jewish leftist political magazine"] (July/August, 1991) and admonishing Prell to "Lighten up!" Prell wrote: If Jews are anxious about their place in the consumer society, they invent Jewish princesses on which to project their fear of themselves as controlled entirely by production and consumption. If Jewish men worry that they are unattractive or weak in the eyes of the larger culture, they construct Jewish women as aggressively unattractive and non-erotic. If Jews fear that they are unable to resist the overwhelming pulls of Americanization, whether in 1910 or 1970, they editorialize about the failures of Jewish women to maintain Jewish homes. And, of course, if they worry they cannot Americanize or acculturate fast enough, they portray Jewish women as backward, not hip, housebound and a drag on them...As long as Jewish men and women use each other as the terrain for rage, pain, or embarrassment, we will continue to inflict harm not only on one another, but on an American Jewish culture that desperately needs tending." *Tikkun* (September 1991).

In summary, from the early fifties to the early sixties, Jewish males inhabited prime time television. Certainly, the characterizations were stereotypes but they were present nevertheless. For women, it was not so. After Molly Goldberg, they remained invisible.⁷⁹ This was not the case at the movies where one could observe the first signs of what would become the prevalent media image. Two cinematic representations – the grasping, acquisitive princess and the pushy, demanding Jewish mother – made their first appearances in the fifties and would come to define Jewish womanhood. Significantly, the movies provided North American audiences with narratives about male and female Jews and Jewishness.

Jews and Jewishness in Film

Several Jewish cultural critics have repeated what has become a standard anecdote that quotes Philip Roth reflecting back on his evolution as a writer. After being, in turn, reviled and rejected by his own, he had become a cultural icon. Similarly, in Canada, Mordecai Richler, accused by Jews of being antisemitic in *Duddy Kravitz* was, in time, also rehabilitated from being a self-hating antisemitic bad boy to everyone's irascible but lovable curmudgeon. He had become one of the community's own. It is true. In the last three decades, Jews have appeared "even in those works where the material does not warrant [their] presence."⁸⁰ Rather than hide their Jewishness, revered pop cultural icons such as Woody Allen and Barbra Streisand have exploited it – in their looks, their mannerisms, even

⁷⁹ Susan Weiner, "TV's Jewess Problem," *Forward* (1993 January 22): 1, 10.

⁸⁰ Alan Spiegel, "The Vanishing Act: A Typology of the Jew in the Contemporary American Film," in *From Hester Street to Hollywood: The Jewish-American Stage and Screen*, ed., Cohen, Sarah Blacher (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1983), 257. Note: The discussion on film has been based on both the sizeable amount of published material and on my own familiarity with the movies. The movies themselves were chosen on the basis of their "Jewish" content, whether it was story, or character, or any other similar connection to Jews and Jewishness.

in their very public neuroses.⁸¹ Kirk Douglas has a Bar Mitzvah for his 80th birthday and it is featured on *Entertainment Tonight*. God also makes an appearance – not as some disembodied voice coming out of a burning bush but in the body of George Burns himself, sounding suspiciously like a cigar-chomping Catskill comedian. Then there is Jew-as-citizen-of-the-world: resident philosopher and perpetual navel-gazer contemplating mankind's place in the continuum of life.⁸² It really is quite extraordinary considering the first years of film when a 'Bernie Schwartz' metamorphosed into Tony Curtis: when, in those early Hollywood days, the last thing the Jewish movie moguls wanted to see or hear were Jews up there on the screen.⁸³ and when the American dream meant exchanging the *shtetl* for "a land of infinite possibilities, a country of the imagination, a cornucopia of thrills and desires."⁸⁴ Opportunities were no fewer in Canada where, even if perhaps the pace was slower, it was still a land where immigrants, who had escaped the pogroms of Europe, eagerly became new citizens of the *goldene medina*.⁸⁵

On surveying the Jew in contemporary American film, Alan Spiegel observes that the first and most extraordinary fact about Jews in the movies "is not their recent emergence, but rather their longstanding dominance."⁸⁶ quite extraordinary considering how so few have

⁸¹ Elizabeth Gold, "Headwraps and All, Rhoda Morgenstern is a Misfit Girl's Dream: A Lonely Teenager Discovers Mary Tyler Moore's Wise-Cracking, Insecure Sidekick and Derives Inspiration," *Forward*, 4 February, 2000, 18; Lieberman, 5-6; John J. O'Connor, "They're Funny, Lovable, Heroic—and Jewish," *The New York Times* (July 15, 1990).

⁸² Some examples are: *Brighton Beach Memoirs* (1987), *Enemies, A Love Story* (1989), *Quiz show* (1994), *Crossing Delancey* (1989), *Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1989), *Avalon* (1987), and *Mr. Saturday Night* (1992).

⁸³ Neal Gabler, *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood* (New York: Doubleday/Anchor, 1989).

⁸⁴ Simon Louvish, "Out of the Shadows," *Sight and Sound* 3, no. 6 (June 1993), 18.

⁸⁵ Yiddish for 'Golden Land'.

⁸⁶ Spiegel, 259. Note: The media discussion will focus on American film and television which was popular and watched by many Canadians.

acquired so much authority and influence in a field that affects so many. Yet, despite the control, it has not translated in the media as primarily Jewish-American products – that is, until quite recently.⁸⁷ Even with this, some would beg to differ.

Films about and by Jews have been, from the first days, “popular and plentiful.”⁸⁸ The *shtetl*-meets-Hester Street-meets-vaudeville was a *mish-mush* of familiar stock characters and regulars from years dating back to the Yiddish theatre. There were greedy landlords, merchants, rabbis, weeping mothers and gossipy aunts, prayer shawls, pushcarts, family squabbles, wayward sons and sweet young virginal daughters. This was the standard. It was, that is, until the 1927 release of *The Jazz Singer*.⁸⁹ Jolson’s appearance in the film, according to Alan Spiegel, “marked the close of the wide-ranging Hollywood gallery of major Jewish portraiture and genre study [and the beginning of] ethnic blurring.”⁹⁰

Several economic, social and cultural factors contributed to the shift around the time of *The Jazz Singer*. By the 1920s in the United States, Eastern European memories were fading. Jews felt more secure in their new environment. Their children, already ‘American’, found new diversion in Hollywood, a playful, agreeable world filled with “cowboys and swashbucklers, Ruritanian counts and Latin lovers, go-getters and flappers, tramps, hoydens and sweethearts.”⁹¹ In academia, sociologists insisted – and intellectuals agreed – that antisemitism would lessen only when Jews concealed their Jewishness.⁹²

⁸⁷ There are exceptions – sort of, but that is for another discussion, elsewhere. One very popular and successful film has been Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List* (1991).

⁸⁸ Spiegel, “The Vanishing Act,” 259. Note: I have included the name of the video distributor when that was applicable. Most can also be bought through amazon.com. Further information on cast and reviews is available at imdb.com. The most comprehensive listing is in John Walker, ed., *Halliwel’s Film Guide*, 8th ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishing, 1991).

⁸⁹ *The Jazz Singer*, dir. Alan Crosland, 88 min., Warner Brothers, 1927, avail. Warner Home Video.

⁹⁰ Spiegel, “The Vanishing Act,” 260.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 260.

⁹² Jancu, “Jackie Mason’s World,” 142.

Studios, though, were in the business of making money, creating a product that would appeal to the greatest number of people. The goal was “neither to conceal minorities or glorify majorities but ideally to dissolve both in an official studio ideology of democratic idealism of the ultimate homogeneity of all human beings.”⁹³ And if there was any doubt, Joseph Kennedy’s 1940 visit with the Hollywood moguls ‘advising’ them to stop making anti-Nazi films, further strengthened their resolve to maintain a neutral stance. This spilled over into who was chosen to play Jewish characters. Matthew Jacobson, in his book, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, cites Jack Warner’s casting instructions for the film, *Objective Burma* (1945):

I like the idea of having a Jewish officer—what’s his name, Jacobs—in *Burma*. See that you get a good clean-cut American type for Jacobs.⁹⁴

After the war, investigations by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) into Communist activities and the public airing of words such as “kikes” and “yids” at the hearings did not bode well, to say the least. Not even newsreel footage of the Nazi gas crematoria could move the Hollywood producers.⁹⁵ By 1945, films were ‘*judenrein*’.⁹⁶ And that is exactly what many in the Canadian government wanted for Canadian society. Abella and Troper’s book title, *None Is Too Many*, perfectly summarizes the government’s attitude towards opening the doors to Jews. On the list of ‘preferred’ applicants for immigration, Germans scored higher despite the disclosure of what had

⁹³ Spiegel, “The Vanishing Act,” 260. It has been assumed that the ‘melting pot’ notion is purely American. In Canada, while the rhetoric has leaned more towards helping so-called minority groups retain their ethnicity – hence the ‘mosaic’ idea – the reality has not always matched the ideal.

⁹⁴ Matthew F. Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MASS and London: Harvard University Press, 1995), 171.

⁹⁵ Jancu, “Jackie Mason’s World,” 143.

⁹⁶ Literal trans.: *juden* = Jews; *rein* = clean. Meaning is ‘free of Jews’.

happened and the documentation that was coming out of Europe.⁹⁷ Canadian Jews in the early years of the twentieth century had already experienced racist taunts and physical attacks. Jewish historians record incidents of bearded peddlers who were easy marks, or describe how parents, to protect their children from physical harm, would routinely “instruct their children to make themselves inconspicuous in order to avoid being assaulted.”⁹⁸ After the war, open acts of violence lessened considerably but restrictive covenants and antisemitic policies continued to exclude many Jews from the larger Gentile community.

Two seemingly unrelated circumstances – “two international events, a death and a birth”⁹⁹ – influenced a new direction in Hollywood in the early fifties: the revelations of the Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel a few years later. The results of the atrocities of what the Nazis had wrought on the Jews was visually chronicled in newsreels across North America. Almost simultaneously, “the hegemony of the big studio had begun to fall apart.”¹⁰⁰ and the popularity of television was about to skyrocket. Everyone was now watching television. A new marketing concept was needed to get people back into the movie houses. Hollywood regrouped and redirected its attention towards the ‘special-interest’ film, focussed on specific groups of people.

⁹⁷ Irving Abella and Franklin Bialystok, “Canada and the Holocaust,” in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. David S. Wyman, 749-781 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1996), 758.

⁹⁸ Stephen Speisman, “Antisemitism in Ontario: The Twentieth Century,” in *Antisemitism in Canada: History and Interpretation*, ed. Alan Davies (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992), 117. This happened in both small and large cities. It continues, with variations, today.

⁹⁹ Spiegel, “The Vanishing Act,” 261.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 264.

Jewish filmmakers, though, continued to shy away from featuring Jewish characters or Jewish topics.¹⁰¹ Ironically, the two films dealing with antisemitism, *Crossfire*¹⁰² and *Gentleman's Agreement*,¹⁰³ both released in 1947 were produced by non-Jews. The Jew as Innocent Victim – articulate and morally superior – had made his postwar debut.¹⁰⁴ *Gentleman's Agreement* also belonged to a larger genre of the fifties which portrayed the great American melting pot, the story that Hollywood has always embraced.¹⁰⁵ Yet, despite the promising start, there were no major innovations or renovations made to the image of the Jews in the American cinema.¹⁰⁶ Only a few dared to experiment and *never* was there a direct confrontation with the Holocaust itself.

One explanation for “ethnic blandness and thematic timidity”¹⁰⁷ could be that it was, after all, a reflection of how many North American Jews felt. Looking more like their Gentile neighbours than their immigrant parents and grandparents, Jews in the fifties were beginning to branch out into the larger society.¹⁰⁸ Jews moved out and up. A substantial number continued in business but increasing numbers began to attend universities. Those Jews who worked hard at becoming ‘respectable’, did not want to see themselves as different: not unlike the early movie moguls.

¹⁰¹ Jancu, “Jackie Mason’s World,” 143.

¹⁰² *Crossfire*, dir. Edward Dmytryk, 86 min., RKO Pictures, avail. Nostalgia Merchant., videocassette.

¹⁰³ *Gentleman's Agreement*, dir. Elia Kazan, 118 min., Twentieth Century Fox, 1947.

¹⁰⁴ Patricia Brett Erens, “No Closer to Eden,” *Sight and Sound* 6 (June 1993), 20.

¹⁰⁵ Erens, “No Closer,” 21.

¹⁰⁶ Lester Friedman, *Hollywood's Image of the Jew* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1982), 135.

¹⁰⁷ Friedman, *Hollywood's Image*, 135.

¹⁰⁸ The content and references in this section was taken from several sources. Canadian references include: Brym et al: Tulchinsky, “The Jewish Experience;” Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*; Weinfeld et al. American references include: Friedman; Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers: The Journey of the East European Jews to America and the Life they Found and Made* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976).

In other respects, it was exciting for Jews. In the fifties, American Jewish intellectual activity entered the popular psyche in various academic and popular journals. Native born Jewish novelists, critics, sociologists and philosophers rose to national prominence. Names such as Nathan Glazer and Irving Howe became mainstream. Also during the period of the fifties, another group of Jews, feeling different and sensitive about being outsiders, whether real or imagined, began to search inside themselves for a renewal of their Jewish principles in their heritage and religion, underlined by the still painful memories of the Holocaust and the euphoria over the birth of a new Israeli state. For them, these were years of Jewish renewal, of “new Jews [in] search for an accommodation between their new-found Judaism and more traditional aspects of American life.”¹⁰⁹ But their issues were never dealt with in the movies. Instead, the Nominal Jew was re-born: “a minor character even more abstract and anonymous than the idealized hero, who bore a Jewish name, and sometimes even looked Jewish.”¹¹⁰ Nor did anyone in the movie ever refer to his religion. Many of the decade’s war films had one righteous Jewish character like Shapiro, played by William Bendix in *The Deep Sea*.¹¹¹ There he is, the only Jew and the only one to come to the defence of a Quaker naval officer, yet no attempt is made to delve deeper, to explore his Jewishness.

The issue of antisemitism would come up at various times but was not the central focus as it had been in *Gentleman’s Agreement* and *Crossfire*, a contradiction considering the promotion of America as a country of peace and brotherly love. In one typical scenario,

¹⁰⁹ Friedman, *Hollywood’s Image*, 142.

¹¹⁰ Spiegel, “The Vanishing Act,” 261. Most of them, as today, were played by non-Jews.

¹¹¹ *The Deep Six*, dir. Rudolphe Maté, 106 mins., Warner, 1958.

as in *The Young Lions*.¹¹² based on Irwin Shaw's popular bestseller. harmony and goodwill are restored when the quiet, sensitive Jewish draftee/hero, played by Montgomery Clift, proves his manliness in physical combat. Racist comments and taunting are also connected to the storyline in Raoul Walsh's *The Naked and the Dead*.¹¹³ based on Norman Mailer's novel which had been released the same year. For comic relief, there was the Jew in, of all places, the German prison camp of *Stalag 17* (1953).¹¹⁴ Whether it was the Victimized Jew or the Nominal Jew, both were equally nebulous – not too complicated, not too difficult, not too anything – “as if the presence of any of these qualities might actually constitute an argument *for* antisemitism.”¹¹⁵ As the second banana, this Jew had “to remain vague and recessive dramatically.”¹¹⁶ needing the friendship and support of the stronger, more masculine Gentile hero. The smart “Jew-lawyer” takes centre stage as Lt. Barney Greenwald in director Edward Dmytryk's *The Caine Mutiny*.¹¹⁷ His job is to defend the Gentile hero when no one else will. Herman Wouk's original novel focussed on gentlemanly antisemitism while the screen version downplayed this aspect, “thus rendering the ethnic identification of little importance and even less dramatic interest.”¹¹⁸

What these postwar Jewish characters have in common is their goodness and moral uprightness. This character speaks to the audience. He is the embodiment *of* the nation, its guardian and its conscience. It was, partly, a product of pressure exerted by Jewish lobby

¹¹² *The Young Lions*, dir. Edward Dmytryk, 167 min., 20th Century-Fox, 1958, avail. CBS/FOX Video.

¹¹³ *The Naked and the Dead*, prod. and dir. Raoul Walsh, 131 min., RKO Teleradio, 1958.

¹¹⁴ *Stalag 17*, dir. Billy Wilder, Paramount Pictures, 1953, avail. Paramount Home Video.

¹¹⁵ Spiegel, “The Vanishing Act,” 262.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *The Caine Mutiny*, dir. Edward Dmytryk, 125 min., Columbia, 1954.

¹¹⁸ Friedman, *Hollywood's Image*, 146.

groups working together under the banner of the Motion Picture Project, organized to ensure positive Jewish images.¹¹⁹

The fifties also experienced a resurgence of extravagant biblical epics, a response, some say, to Israel's statehood.¹²⁰ True, the Jew as Biblical Exotic might have been flashier and more virile, but he was "no more ethnically lucid"¹²¹ than his filmic cousins were. Bearded men in flowing designer caftans and buxom women displaying expansive areas of décolleté entertained movie audiences, not one character breaking into as much as a small sweat out there in the desert. Mix in a few sensational battles, some broad swords clanging and the requisite camels and tents and you had pure Hollywood spectacle, a perfect metaphor. With no explicit reference to Jews or Judaism, some Jews and non-Jews remained unaware of the background so that the ancient past was safely removed from the present, making the message palatable: Jews were just like everybody else and therefore safe. Yet, contends Patricia Erens, it continued the traditional theme of Jewish suffering, present "in every era of American movie history."¹²²

In contrast, *Compulsion*¹²³ retells one of the most famous murder trials in American history – the Leopold and Loeb case – but with new character names. As a novel and a play, author Meyer Levin had emphasized Judd Steiner's Jewish self-hatred as partial motivation for the seemingly senseless crime. Rather than supplying the audience with more

¹¹⁹ Erens, "No Closer to Eden," 20.

¹²⁰ These include: *David and Bathsheba* (1951); *The Ten Commandments* (1956); *Ben-Hur* (1959); *Solomon and Sheba* (1959); *The Story of Ruth* (1960); *Esther and the King* (1960).

¹²¹ Spiegel, "The Vanishing Act," 263.

¹²² Erens, "No Closer to Eden," 22.

¹²³ *Compulsion*, dir. Richard Fleischer, 103 min., Twentieth Century Fox, 1959.

ammunition to support the racial hatred of Jews. "Hollywood chose to ignore the entire issue"¹²⁴

Biographical films were another popular genre during a time of increasing prosperity and new waves of immigration. Several portray famous contemporary Jews and the much beloved rags-to-riches saga; the Jewish details glossed over. *The Eddie Cantor Story*¹²⁵ evades Cantor's early years in the New York ghetto and the Borscht Belt. Rocky Graziano's supportive *Jewish* wife is non-existent in his biopic *Somebody Up There Likes Me*¹²⁶ though it does include his Jewish manager Irving Cohen and the kindly, Jewish candy-store owner who helps Rocky go straight. *The Benny Goodman Story*¹²⁷ does at least deal with his Jewish upbringing on the Lower East Side and his mother's resistance when he introduces her to his new girlfriend – obviously not a member of the tribe. Never is the word Jew expressed. The characters skirt the cultural and religious issues such as, in this case, the traditional fear of Jewish parents – intermarriage. Eventually, though, mamma gives in, "wanting only that her Benny should be happy". No longer did parents sit *shiva*¹²⁸ for their lost children. Goodman's marriage was becoming familiar to increasing numbers of American Jews.

¹²⁴ Friedman, *Hollywood's Image*. 147.

¹²⁵ *The Eddie Cantor Story*, dir. Alfred E. Green, 116 min., Warner, 1953.

¹²⁶ *Somebody Up There Like Me*, dir. Robert Wise, 112 min., MGM, 1956.

¹²⁷ *The Benny Goodman Story*, dir. Valentine Davies, 117 min., Universal International, 1955.

¹²⁸ *Shiva*, from the root word 'shev', to sit, is the week of mourning after the burial. The immediate family stays at home, with friends and relatives coming over, helping with the food and the prayers. It lasts 7 days, without accounting for holidays and the Sabbath which may stop or delay the time.

However, there were still a few courageous attempts to deal with issues rather than personalities. In a 1956 film, *Three Brave Men*,¹²⁹ an American retelling of the Dreyfus Affair, the film's central figure, Bernie Goldsmith played by Ernest Borgnine, never expresses anger or disloyalty towards his country.¹³⁰ On the contrary, he feels like a failure. Yet, he has committed no crime. He is just another victim, caught in a system that has spun out of control because its citizens were not vigilant and had not heeded the warning signs. Another retelling of the Dreyfus Affair – *I Accuse*¹³¹ – with director/actor José Ferrer – stood in as a political allegory for the uneasy times. Using an historical event and a Jewish character as a cinematic device, Ferrer is able to explore and attack the scare mongering of McCarthy's senate hearings without jeopardizing his own position. Both films were obviously a message to Washington.

Jews in postwar films also began to play every conceivable part in every possible situation. There was a philosophical Jewish police reporter in *Detective Story*.¹³² Some familiar types – ones that endure even today – make their re-appearance but with a twist. There is a shopkeeper in *The Proud Rebel*¹³³ who settles in a new home in the old West: a Jewish Hollywood agent and a Jewish producer appear in *The Big Knife*.¹³⁴ Then, of course, what would a movie be without a Jewish doctor? They make a comeback starting around mid-decade. Out of the three – *Not As a Stranger*,¹³⁵ *Say One For Me*¹³⁶ and *The Last Angry*

¹²⁹ *Three Brave Men*, dir. Philip Dunne, 88 min., Twentieth Century Fox, 1956.

¹³⁰ Friedman, *Hollywood's Image*, 150.

¹³¹ *I Accuse*, dir. José Ferrer, 99 min., MGM, 1958.

¹³² *Detective Story*, dir. William Wyler, 103 min., Paramount, 1951.

¹³³ *The Proud Rebel*, dir. Michael Curtiz, 103 min., MGM, 1958.

¹³⁴ *The Big Knife*, dir. Robert Aldrich, 111 mins., United Artists/Aldrich and Associates, 1955.

¹³⁵ *Not As A Stranger*, dir. Stanley Kramer, 135 mins., United Artists, 1955.

*Man*¹³⁷ – only the latter features a more realistic, well-rounded Jewish character. Dr. Adelman “is argumentative and stubborn, alternately annoying and endearing . . . however, a man with decent instincts. . . . and pride in his personal worth.”¹³⁸ Still, moviegoers leave the theatre no wiser regarding his Jewishness. At least the possibility that Jews are more than uni-dimensional was somewhat of an improvement over the traditional stereotypes.

An analysis of film before and after the war, writes Lester Friedman, reveals that Jewish-American films traditionally did not provide Jewish women with roles with substance or complexity.¹³⁹ One famous Jewish role and a staple of popular Yiddish lore was the long-suffering Jewish mother, passed down from generation to generation. Born on the Yiddish stage, she would later thrive on radio, then television and the movies. She cried, she worried, she cooked, she cried some more, wiping away the tears with her apron which was always covered with flour as if she were in the middle of baking your favourite goodies, you ungrateful child, you. However, she protected her brood with the ferocity of a lioness. But she *re-acted*, never taking the active role in the film. That is, until *Molly*¹⁴⁰ which drew on the success of the radio and the television series. Created by Gertrude Berg, herself a prolific writer, a graduate of the playwright’s programme at Columbia University and a successful media mogul in her own right, Molly Goldberg was the quintessential *Yiddishe Mama*. Dark and plump, so comfortable you could fall asleep in her all-embracing arms, your *kepele*¹⁴¹ resting on her ample bosom. Molly was a matriarch definitely in charge of a

¹³⁶ *Say One For Me*, dir. Frank Tashlin, 117 min., Twentieth Century Fox/Bing Crosby & Frank Tashlin, 1959.

¹³⁷ *The Last Angry Man*, dir. Daniel Mann, 100 min., Columbia, 1959.

¹³⁸ Friedman, *Hollywood’s Image*, 153-154.

¹³⁹ Friedman, *Hollywood’s Image*, 162.

¹⁴⁰ *Molly*, aka. *The Goldbergs*, dir. Walter Hart, studio unknown, 1950.

¹⁴¹ Yiddish diminutive word for ‘head’.

family made up of personality types reaching back to Yiddish theatre and later the silent movies.¹⁴² She meddled and maneuvered, she cajoled and pleaded but eventually she got her way. But always, it was with kindness and love, not with the nastiness of later Jewish mother incarnations.

Whether the Goldbergs appeared on film or on television, they reflected timeworn portrayals of ethnics in the public media. Friedman, in his study of Hollywood and Jews, writes that the Goldbergs were, for American Jews, what Amos 'n' Andy were for American blacks: even-tempered, minority caricatures. Funny and quaint, like court jesters they “gambol for the delight of their masters, the dominant Gentile society in America.”¹⁴³ continuing the filmic tradition of avoiding any hint of conflict. Harmless? Perhaps, but dangerous, nevertheless, because, as Friedman contends, “it is hard to hate a people you laugh at, but it may be equally difficult to respect them or to address their grievances.”¹⁴⁴

With Molly opening the decade, another mother closed it. *Marjorie Morningstar*¹⁴⁵ portrays a young Jewish heroine's rite of passage from naïve college girl to sophisticated wife married to a solid, middle-class husband. In Herman Wouk's best-selling novel, Marjorie marries the young Jewish lawyer Milton Schwartz, not the rising playwright Wally as she did in the film. In the film version, however, Wouk, now acting as the screenwriter, probes more deeply into Marjorie's Jewishness through several Jewish-related scenes. Significantly, the heroine is Jewish – not Irish, not Italian – and very much the central focus of the film. The Jewishness is incidental and the storyline set in New York becomes the

¹⁴² Ironically, sweet Mrs. Kramer from across the airshaft was played by Betty Walker who was to become famous in the seventies for her role as Ida Morgenstern, constantly *kvetching* and *nudging* mother, first on *Mary Tyler Moore* (1970–1977) then on *Rhoda* (1974–1979) where she continued her reign of emotional destruction.

¹⁴³ Friedman, *Hollywood's Image*, 162.

¹⁴⁴ Friedman, *Hollywood's Image*, 164.

¹⁴⁵ *Marjorie Morningstar*, dir. Irving Rapper, 123 min., Warner United States Pictures, 1958.

equivalent of the sweet suburban dream gone sour. Critics consider Marjorie a foreshadowing of future characterizations that were not so benevolent in the hands of writers such as Philip Roth.

In the 1950s, the subject of Israel never appeared in the movies except for a low-budget film entitled *The Juggler*.¹⁴⁶ This changed in 1960 with the making of *Exodus*.¹⁴⁷ The film introduced North American filmgoers to a Jew unlike any Jew seen before. "Here at last was a Jew truly Kosher for Hollywood, a pioneer of the wild East."¹⁴⁸ Ari Ben-Canaan, 'Lion, son of Canaan', played by Paul Newman, was a blonde, blue-eyed Adonis. Walking proud and toting a gun, he could do it all – from rescuing spiritually and physically wounded Jewish youth just out of the concentration camps to making love to an equally lost gentile nurse. Although the film-going audience was already familiar with the Jewish character who was tough yet sensitive, the loner fighting to right the wrongs of his world, this time, Ari Ben-Canaan, like the American cowboy, was "anything but childlike and apologetic."¹⁴⁹ For that moment, he gave North American Jews a newfound pride.¹⁵⁰

As the sixties unfolded, the Israeli and Biblical Jew gave way to a grittier, more realistic portrayal. *The Pawnbroker*¹⁵¹ "became even more dramatically than *Exodus*, the immediate and emphatic precursor of a new era in Jewish portraiture."¹⁵² Rod Steiger's critically acclaimed performance as a bitter and *unlovable* Holocaust survivor entered new

¹⁴⁶ *The Juggler*, dir. Edward Dmytryk, 88 min., Columbia/Stanley Kramer, 1953.

¹⁴⁷ *Exodus*, prod. and dir. Otto Preminger, 220 mins., United Artists/Alpha, 1960.

¹⁴⁸ Louvish, "Out of the Shadows," 18.

¹⁴⁹ Spiegel, *Hollywood's Image*, 264.

¹⁵⁰ Louvish, 18. The memory of this film remains with me, as it does with many others of my generation and older. It's hard to describe to our children how this portrayal was so incredible considering how it was inconceivable up until then.

¹⁵¹ *The Pawnbroker*, dir. Sydney Lumet, 115 min., Allied Artists, 1965. avail. NTA Video.

¹⁵² Spiegel, *Hollywood's Image*, 264.

filmic territory. As the pawnbroker, the character risked coming too close to Shylock – still the victim, but definitely with an edge. In keeping with true Hollywood fashion the audience keeps hoping for that happy ending, that final redemption. It never comes.

Perhaps it never comes because that is one of the serious consequences of being an outsider, or trying to play both sides and being all things to all people, as we hear in the testimonies in this study. Films and television were the media reflections of the position of Jews in postwar society. The voices and everyday experiences of Jews remained, remained, for the most part, on the periphery, many of them looking in and some wanting to join the club.

Television and film sent out the message and the participants in this thesis received it: Being Jewish meant, if not entirely hidden, then neutral enough to blend into society, to be one of the crowd. And that is exactly what they remember doing as children. They learned their lessons well. No, they were not ashamed of being Jewish but then again, neither were they, like the Jewish characters in the media, able to be entirely comfortable with full disclosure. The desire to be ‘normal’, to belong comes through in their stories.

Living Within and Without

As Jews growing up in the fifties, these children, now speaking as adults, have described a life that was not, on the surface, too different from anybody else’s. Their memories tell of clubs and activities, of getting together with their friends and going to school. When they *did* express that they felt isolated and different, the experiences resonate with the everyday experience of most newcomers. Three of the men made this point quite clearly and emphatically. Here is what Rob had to say, before the interview questions actually began:

Well, what I have to say now it really isn't part of....it's just an opinion....in my day what set an immigrant apart, apart from the fact that they didn't speak English whatever have you, is economic. And so — if you aspire to be middle-class, and you aren't.... You and I know that — So it wasn't really that they were looking down on their noses for the reasons of being an immigrant but also because economically we couldn't keep up with the people. That's what I wanted to talk to you about — In a way we were ostracized, not ostracized, that's a bad word, but we felt on the outside looking in, and even in the Jewish community. It's just like some of the Russians that come here. They're almost like a non-entity, in some ways. Until they sort of started catching up with you, they are professional, they have a store, what have you, or they become more of the mainstream.¹⁵³

The difference, he said, and as Jake, Barry and Sy pointed out, *if there was one* (their emphasis), came about because of economics.

Yes, it did have to do with economics and yes, this caused, in some cases, hardship; in other cases, it was an uneasiness but which often went away with the years and with their accomplishments. The teenage remembrances also echo the teenage memories many still carry around in their heads. Some of those adolescent hurts have receded or gotten funnier with time, some still rankle, but whether one was an immigrant or not, male or female, rich, poor or in between, one could identify with much of what happened in adolescence.

It was more, though. It had to do with what, in the end, *did* set them apart from both the Jewish community and the larger Canadian society around them. It was more because it had to do with 'existing severally' in a world that did not acknowledge their multiple and often-opposing subjective positions. And because of their differences, multiple codes were being enacted during the process of the interview. Being Jewish and being a child of survivors did not exist as a possibility out there; each one of these narrators did not see her or himself out there. But they engaged, they mediated and ultimately they produced their own meanings. The narratives revealed how.

¹⁵³ Interview with Rob, 1.

In the 1950s, Doug Owram writes, "Canada was still avowedly a Christian nation."¹⁵⁴ It was assumed, often expected, that one "went to church". In Ontario, everything was closed on the Lord's day: no movies, no sports events, no alcohol, just one of the Christian principles supported by such public institutions as the CBC. Historian Robert Schull, in his history of Ontario, agrees. One would think, he writes, from reading, listening and watching the popular media in the 50s that Canadians were expected to fit in to an Anglo-Saxon "English frame".¹⁵⁵

The differentiations began at school where each one was, if not the only Jew in the entire school then the only Jew in his or her class. Except for one Jewish girl in kindergarten, "from Grade 1 to Grade 6 [Ilana] was the only Jewish kid in the class."¹⁵⁶ She cannot think of anybody else. Jake thinks that "with rare exception there may have been one"¹⁵⁷ in his school. It was the same with Eva. When she got to high school, she "was the only Jewish person in the high school of 1,300."¹⁵⁸ And so it was for the rest of them. No one expressed the thought that they wished they had been something other than Jewish. The fact is and was, their Jewishness distinguished them from the rest of the world. The world out there was not their world. In a special issue of *Canadian Woman Studies* entitled "Jewish Women in Canada,"¹⁵⁹ Fredelle Maynard's short story "Jewish Christmas" highlights this theme. Having to grow up Jewish in the small towns across the Canadian

¹⁵⁴ Owram, *Born*, 103.

¹⁵⁵ Joseph Schull, *Ontario Since 1867* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), 353.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Ilana, 6.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Jake, 6.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Eva, 9.

¹⁵⁹ Special edition: "Jewish Women in Canada," *Canadian Woman Studies*, 16, no. 4 (Fall 1996).

prairies made her feel like an outsider. Maynard's description of the years before the war is not far removed from the sentiments expressed in the interviews I conducted. She writes:

I had grown up in schoolrooms presided over by our gracious king, our lovely queen: I knew that Britannia ruled the waves. In the small towns of western Canada during the 1920s and 1930s Jewishness imposed, if not a burden, at least a considerable constraint. I felt excluded from the world of playmates, their Sunday schools and family celebrations, their lusty singing of 'Onward Christian Soldiers,' and the prayers to gentle Jesus meek and mild.¹⁶⁰

Growing up in the fifties, my interviewees were always Jewish in the non-Jewish world. As late as the sixties and seventies, this still held true.¹⁶¹ At school, several teachers showed some interest and tried to include the various nationalities in their classrooms and this was before multiculturalism. Ilana had a teacher who tried to include more of the students: "I remember in Grade 6 we were sort of teaching each other different things and --- I did some Israeli dancing. I danced *May'im*, and may have told them about some of the holidays. They knew I was Jewish. I'm sure they knew I was Jewish."¹⁶² Ilana emphasized how 'they knew she was Jewish'. It sounds as if 'being Jewish was not the problem'.

But being Jewish meant *doing* Jewish things, which separated one from the society at large. One of these activities was attending *Talmud Torah* – also called *cheder* – after-school Hebrew school.¹⁶³ For those who went all the way through, this usually lasted six years. For the girls it was until 12. For Suzanna, it was until her Bat Mitzvah: "Oh, yeah. I went to Talmud Torah. I had a Bat Mitzvah. I was in the second – no, the first Bat Mitzvah

¹⁶⁰ Fredelle Bruser Maynard, "Introduction to the New Edition of *Raisins and Almonds*," *Canadian Woman Studies* 16, 4 (Fall 1996), 17.

¹⁶¹ Sarah Silberstein and Margie Wolfe, eds., *From Memory to Transformation: Jewish Women's Voices* (Toronto: Second Story Press, 1998).

¹⁶² Interview with Ilana, 6.

¹⁶³ *Talmud* = learning; *cheder* = literally means 'room'; from the European concept of a rabbi and his group of children discussing, learning and arguing the tenets of Jewish law and Torah.

class at [the conservative synagogue].”¹⁶⁴ For the boys, it was up until the age of 13. Sy “went to Talmud Torah, after school Hebrew school — At the JCC — Right up to the Bar Mitzvah.”¹⁶⁵ Jake remembers that “for those of us who were Jewish, *cheder* took up two nights and Sundays as well — So, that was a fair amount of our spare time.”¹⁶⁶ Playing with non-Jewish friends or being involved in school activities or after-school sports was somewhat limited because of your Jewish obligations.

Another aspect of being Jewish for many of the Jewish children – especially in the first years of being in the country – meant eating kosher. During the teenage years, when some began to date, having this dietary restriction definitely put a crimp on one’s social life. Who was going to start explaining, in front of people one wanted to impress, that one could not eat a hamburger – like a normal person! Malcah Surfin, as funny as she makes it sound in her article, “Growing Up Jewish in Hanover, Ontario,” captures the essence of the dietary issues: “I ate non-kosher food. Parents did not ask!”¹⁶⁷ To eat or not to eat *treife*¹⁶⁸ was still only a small part of the double lives we lead. Though, if one were over at a non-Jewish friend’s house, it meant explaining to the friend or their parents that ham was not allowed and not with milk and no, all the meats were not kosher. Fish? Yes, that was okay except for certain kinds which were forbidden and then there was the lard used for frying and which was an ingredient in white bread – that wondrous food none of our mothers bought because it also tasted like wallpaper paste – and on and on it went.

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Suzanna, 10.

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Sy, 2.

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Jake, 8.

¹⁶⁷ Malcah Surfin, “Growing Up Jewish in Hanover, Ontario.” *Canadian Woman Studies* 16, no. 4 (Fall 1996), 20.

¹⁶⁸ Yiddish for ‘non-kosher’.

Friends played a significant role in the lives of these individuals, but if one were Jewish, it meant marking off the structure of one's life into separate segments with delineations, qualifiers and restrictions applying at different times and with different people. Most of the participants admitted that their parents expected them to have Jewish friends. Rarely expressed as directly as that, nevertheless, it was understood. When I asked Suzanna if she made friends with her non-Jewish friends at school, she said she probably did but added, "You know what's interesting about that is it would have been hard, let's say, to bring home a Yugoslav kid for lunch. Cause my mother and probably my dad . . . would have just said, 'We're not having that.'"¹⁶⁹ When I asked if her parents ever actually said it, she said, "Oh, no. But I felt they would. I felt that they would."¹⁷⁰ Many of the group said they 'just knew' how their parents felt. Jake's parents also never came out and told him and his brother who to play with – Jew or non-Jew. Many of his friends were not Jewish and they went to each others' homes. But still, there were boundaries. He told me, "No. No. They would never. The only lessons were marry Jewish. Be Jewish, remain Jewish. In terms of interaction, never, never were we told, you know, don't hang out with these kids or those kids, or don't go to these people's houses."¹⁷¹ Each one of them became a quick-change artist, moving between and through their various worlds. It became automatic.

Doug Owsram devotes a chapter in his book on leisure and organized activities and how they played a major role in the lives of the baby boomers. Ilana was no different in that respect. She belonged to several Christian organizations and clubs. This was, of course, in between going to Talmud Torah:

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Suzanna, 7.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Interview with Jake, 10.

. . . between Grades 1 and Grade 6 because . . . I can remember, with friends, going to their Christian Sunday school. It was the Church on Main Street . . . This was a Baptist thing. . . I also went with two of my very close friends. . . one was Catholic and the one was Protestant. And I went with the Protestant one to Girls in Training at the Presbyterian Church –GIT [CGIT]. I went to that. Not to Brownies because there wasn't Brownies around there, but I went to GIT for a couple of years with her. It was just more a thing that you did.¹⁷²

They all knew she was Jewish. She was ~very clear about that [and] was never embarrassed about that.^{~173}

Be Jewish: remain Jewish. Pretty hard for teenagers who wanted to get out there, to socialize and to date and 'God knows there were so few Jews around'. For the Jewish teens in this group, this was *the* forbidden fruit: inter-dating. There was just no question: One did not to do it! Though Anna was tempted:

I remember going – this was in high school – we were going from class to class and this one boy slipped me a Christmas Card with a little note. And he signed it 'Happy Christmas' and all of that, and signed Brian something-or-other. And then on the back of the card he says, 'Could we go to the movies someday?' you know — And I remember he worked at the supermarket across from Dr. Stein's office and I used to go there for my allergy shots. And he was working that day and I remember going across the street and I said, 'I don't know how to tell you this, but I'm Jewish and you're not and I'm not allowed to go out with you.' — You know, I knew I just couldn't. And you know I never did. I never ever. I thought that it was – even when I worked. When I worked it was okay if we all went out as a group but I never went out with anybody non-Jewish by myself.¹⁷⁴

Despite the edict of many Jewish parents, Eva rebelled and fell very much in love. She ~had a boyfriend when [she] was 13 years old — His father was superintendent of public schools — Non-Jewish and he was an altar boy in the United Church or one of the churches.^{~175} I asked if this was an issue with her parents. He *was*, after all, an altar boy!

¹⁷² Interview Ilana, 6.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Anna, 18-19.

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Eva, 15.

“Oh, big issue.”¹⁷⁶ she said. So much so that she paid dearly for her actions: “After Grade 10, I believe, my parents felt that I was out of control. . . . my grades were falling and so they consulted this psychiatrist friend who originally brought them to ‘Northern-town’, who now had a practice in Toronto. . . . He told them, ‘Send her to Toronto. Get her away from all that milieu. She can live with us. And at the ripe age of 15, I was sent away.’”¹⁷⁷ She spent the next year in Toronto, miserable.

Growing up in Hanover, Ontario, Malcah Sufrin’s parents sent the same message: “My dating non-Jewish boys was troubling to my mother no matter how often I assured her that I would not marry a Christian.”¹⁷⁸ This applied to both girls and boys, although boys were, as I recall, oftentimes excused simply because this was seen as part of a male rite of passage, sowing your wild oats and all that. Rob took advantage of this situation when he “sometimes . . . would meet girls at 12:00 at night after [he] signed off being a bus boy and had a great old time. It was terrific.”¹⁷⁹ If Rob could not go out with the Jewish girls because he was not ‘suitable’ then he shaped and recreated his own representation of himself.

Being Jewish was ‘no big deal’: being Jewish ‘meant being different, but really, it wasn’t an issue’. That was the general message I heard. Suzanna, who later attended school where there were more Jews, felt comfortable enough to invite her teachers to her Bat Mitzvah. Her only problem, she laughingly recounts, had nothing to do with her Jewishness. She said, “I had wonderful teachers. There were the most wonderful principal and vice principal and I invited them to the Bat Mitzvah and I was so embarrassed because I

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Eva, 15.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Eva, 15-16.

¹⁷⁸ Sufrin, “Growing Up Jewish,” 20.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Rob, 8.

couldn't sing. I just could not sing. I couldn't keep a note. . . . We had a great party afterwards. I have the picture some place."¹⁸⁰

In Toronto, where there was a critical mass, being Jewish was often an advantage. It was the same in a smaller town if there were more Jews in the student body. Suzanna described how it was at her high school: "[The high school] had a really outstanding crop --- Jewish kids --- So, I had no issues --- There was never any question. The only time I ever talked about it was when I said, 'I won't be in class, you know, it's a Jewish holiday.' 'Hmm, fine.'"¹⁸¹ It seems, sometimes, even if there were not a large body of Jews, it also was not an 'issue' as with Jake who had *no* Jewish schoolmates: "At Christmas time, it was kind of a common Judaic experience that we were never the major leading roles in the Christmas pageant - in any of the roles of wise men or something, but it wasn't a big deal."¹⁸² In fact, he can remember teachers always "being sensitive . . . not overly because it wasn't a major issue."¹⁸³ Again, we hear the dismissal of how it was when one was not part of school activities. Each recollection began with 'The only time', then there was another example.

Being Jewish and living amongst mostly non-Jews meant having two sets of friends, one Jewish and one none, each world separate. For Jake, it came about because of where he grew up: "Playing with the neighbourhood kids, or going to school with the non-Jewish kids was a very distinct part of my life. . . . A lot of the Judaic part of my life centered around the Jewish centre. That's where I met Jewish kids because I didn't otherwise meet

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Suzanna, 11.

¹⁸¹ Interview with Suzanna, 21.

¹⁸² Interview with Jake, 7.

¹⁸³ Interview with Jake, 7.

them.¹⁸⁴ Having the ability to ‘glide’ from one to the other was a strategy they all shared. Indeed, Eva could ‘switch from one to the other and there was absolutely no problem.’ It is, she says today, what made her unique. She is proud of this ability. But when it came time to choose who would be in her wedding party, it was different: ‘My Jewish friend was a bridesmaid at my wedding. That’s who I felt should represent my friends from my past.’¹⁸⁵

Embracing the Culture

If the difference between Jew and non-Jew was always there, it did not prevent most of them from embracing popular culture representations, even if sometimes they were not so Jewish. And parents did not stop them. Barry ‘was one of the three wise men. Good inter-denominational play, right?’¹⁸⁶ After winning a contest for selling the most candies, Eva went to a YMCA summer camp, a Christian-supported organization. For her, it did not mean losing her sense of who she was. Her summer experience of singing and the being out in the beautiful countryside still bring on pleasant memories:

I know all those great Christian songs now. So, when they come out saying ‘How do you know all those songs?’ Sang them all! Did I go to chapel? I loved it cause it was singing. It didn’t mean anything to me although I did not have to attend if I didn’t want to. . . . I had the choice of not going. But I wanted to go. First, it was a beautiful environment. The chapel was outside. The pews were made of birch bark - the trees. It was just really beautiful. I loved all that. It was the singing. It was very wholesome. It was also only female. It wasn’t mixed. . . . It was youth – ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’. I know all those things. I love them! It never lessened my Judaism at all. It was just part of whatever.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Jake, 8-9.

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Eva, 6.

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Barry, 3.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Eva, 10.

When I asked her if she felt threatened, she answered without hesitation, "Not at all."¹⁸⁸

Like Carolyn Steedman's young Punjabi girl who could lose herself in the song she created, so could Eva. "It was just part of whatever." She explained it this way:

I had a big problem when I was chairman of the Holocaust committee here. . . . I got into a huge argument one day with somebody. I said, "Being Jewish is a part of my life. It's not my whole life. The fact that I'm a second generation is also just a part, but I have a very full life beyond that. And I'm sorry if that doesn't meet your needs. I can't just be --- I don't feel that I'm constantly being persecuted. That's not me."¹⁸⁹

Desire organized each person's participation in these performances. Their remembrances recreate and restage the past in order to give it meaning in the present, for themselves and for others.

Several talked of how they loved reading. They devoured everything they could get their hands on. Suzanna and Ilana had even gotten special library cards because they were officially too young to take books out of the adult section. The librarians adored them. Suzanna absolutely loved the world she found in her reading. "So you'd think that I would take to an English boarding school," she said, "but you know, the difference between fiction and real life is a big lie . . . And I saw that right away." It still did not stop her from being "absolutely in love with the English way of life . . . you know, all those wonderful values that they espoused in those books, you know, fairness, and fair play and all the rest."¹⁹⁰

Despite knowing the difference between the world in these books and reality, "all fell by the wayside when it came to who was Jewish and who wasn't. [She] was still in love with those kinds of books."¹⁹¹ Ilana also loved reading and being transported to another world: "It was a fantasy world. It was not me. I guess Nancy Drew had it all, the sweater sets, and all that

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Eva, 11.

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Eva, 22.

¹⁹⁰ Interview with Suzanna, 6.

¹⁹¹ Interview with Suzanna, 6.

kind of stuff, and I had the clothes my mother made.¹⁹² As a child in war-torn Hungary and later in Canada, Rob found adventure. Paulina became the fairy princess whisked away by Prince Charming. Anna could travel to all those far-away places. Their reading was a site of renewal where identities were actively constructed for their endless possibilities of renewal and possible transformation. The dreams were endless.

Not exactly 'Juvenile Delinquents'

In the fifties, as popular images of suburban teenagers played in North American living rooms, juvenile delinquency, which had, through the years, been an adult concern, now re-appeared in the popular media and was, once again causing anxiety.¹⁹³ First popularized by psychologist G. Stanley Hall fifty years earlier, the adolescent years of *sturm un drang* "made it into popular literature and the movies."¹⁹⁴ This group, however, did not exactly walk on the wild side, even if there were a few little rebellions here and there.

It was the age of the teenager and with that came dating. It was perceived by some that if one did not have a boyfriend or a girlfriend one was not cool, or not in the right crowd. Life could be rough. Ilana laughs about it now but readily admits the pain: "I just wanted to be inside, but I knew I never could be"¹⁹⁵ High school, for Suzanna, was a complete reversal of anything she had known before. I reminded her that I did not get to her high school until Grade 11 by which time my family had begun to move 'up' – too late for many of the first-born. She explained it in the following way: "By then it was hard to make

¹⁹² Interview with Ilana, 9.

¹⁹³ Mariana Valverde, "Building Anti-Delinquent Communities: Morality, Gender, and Generation in the City," in *A Diversity of Women: Ontario, 1945-1980*, ed. Joy Parr, 19-45 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

¹⁹⁴ Owrham, *Born*, 139.

¹⁹⁵ Interview with Ilana, 10.

friends because you know, you weren't in the right place at the right time. High school you had to do a lot more --- you had to conform. Then, of course, boys entered the picture we were not of the age or the generation where everybody's saying, 'Well, I'm going to law school.' Right? It was all boys. . . . you had to conform."¹⁹⁶ Then I asked her if she was interested in boys. She surprised me with her answer: "Well, I would have been interested -- But, I really didn't attract any boys."¹⁹⁷ She read her books and everybody thought she was a 'brainiak' -- not exactly the optimal requirement for being popular with the opposite sex. Anna also wanted to date or even just go out with her friends but knew you would not be caught dead on a Saturday night without a date, that is unless your girlfriends were going to go with you, and maybe not even then! TV and the movies taught that lesson very well: "If you recall," she related, "if you didn't have a date, you literally did not go anywhere because you couldn't even go to a dance at the Jewish Community Centre if you didn't have a date. I mean, you phoned around and asked, 'Is everyone going to come with a date?' Then you knew you didn't want to come. God forbid, when 11:00 o'clock came along, when it was the last dance --- It was crappy when we were growing up."¹⁹⁸ It was just as hard for the guys if one were not part of the 'in' group. Rob tried "to date some of the girls who at the time were part of that and --- had mixed results with it."¹⁹⁹

Sounds like normal teenage fare. The representations had been borrowed from television and the movies and it was hard to avoid the messages. Told over and over again, they articulated the dominant ideologies of "the wider structures that produced them -- those

¹⁹⁶ Interview with Suzanna, 17-18.

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Suzanna, 18.

¹⁹⁸ Interview with Anna, 15.

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Rob, 13.

of the culture itself."²⁰⁰ Popular culture representations – Kay Anderson and Fay Gale call them ‘inventions’ – were and are taken-for-granted notions. These ideas, “far from being irresistible truths . . . are the cultural stuff out of which broad moral and material systems are made.”²⁰¹ Cultural representations – ‘maps of meaning’ – are acted upon, reproduced and hardened into seeming ‘fact’ and in turn, they marginalise or absolutely eliminate the practice and concept of alternative experiences. In the fifties, these Jewish children did not see or hear other options. Normalcy could be measured against the discourses and representations on television programmes such as *American Bandstand* which depicted the “the idealized, and more socially acceptable, Anglo-Saxon, middle-class . . . teenager.”²⁰² If there were ethnic differences, they had been ‘whitened’ to merge into the happy, carefree world of white teenagers. Ilana saw “either Italian-American [or] WASPs – typical preppie types. Everybody was separate from [her] world.”²⁰³ Ilana absolutely adored Annette Funicello and her friends who lived on the beach: “It was California, and there were these really wicked WASP girls and you emulated them with their flared skirts and their beautiful hunky boyfriends.”²⁰⁴ She did not see Jewish girls surfing. Jewish girls had to go to *Talmud Torah* and they could only date Jewish boys. Popular family sitcoms as well, perpetuated the ideal of who did and did not belong.

Working through the narratives of inclusion and exclusion – what a powerful illusion it was. What did these images mean when the world around them was not their world. That

²⁰⁰ Graeme Turner, *British Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (Cambridge, MA: Unwin Hyman, Inc., 1996), 93.

²⁰¹ Kay Anderson and Fay Gale, “Introduction,” in *Inventing Places: Studies in Cultural Geography*, ed. Kay Anderson and Fay Gale, 1-12 (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire/Wiley Halsted Press, 1992), 3.

²⁰² Mona Gleason, “Psychology and the Construction of the ‘Normal’ Family in Postwar Canada, 1945-60,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 78, 3 (September 1997), 444.

²⁰³ Interview with Ilana, 13.

²⁰⁴ Interview with Ilana, 9.

world they peered into was filled with people who looked as if they belonged. *They* lived an ideal life that in many ways was removed from their Jewish life. There were no popular Jewish representations that they could relate to, that they could recognize, that spoke of their world, their dreams, or spoke of their concerns and anxieties. Instead, they played the strictly delineated roles, they often attempted to perform according to what they perceived as the norm and in the fifties, the models for normalcy emanated from the media. Television and film showed and taught them what was expected. To operate outside these accepted boundaries marked one abnormal, a deviant, and these teenagers did not stray too far outside the boundaries. And so, they learned to live multiply, assuming a role for each situation and group they played with or joined, adapting to each friend, rising to every kind of occasion. Inside they might have felt something else but for the most part, they tried to blend in. This discussion lead to the next topic, antisemitism.

Antisemitism: Practices and Strategies

I asked each participant if he or she remembers instances of antisemitism. Did they experience it? Did they see it around them? From their answers, it seems not. Well, at least nothing, they insisted, that was too much or too unbearable. This question elicited, at first, denials, then the remembrance of 'one' incident but even then, it was accompanied with qualifiers and denials that it was really antisemitism. The answers the questions elicited for this discussion were especially glaring because of what they say about how these children felt then and how they remember those feelings.

Eva thought "there might have been --- 'Northern-town' was a tough town."²⁰⁵

Barry responded similarly: "I don't remember it. I have a fairly good memory. I mean, we lived in an immigrant neighbourhood. Everybody was a --- it wasn't a sort of a --- no I didn't feel that. I don't know what you get from your other interviews but I didn't ---"²⁰⁶ The hesitation and in some instances, the reluctance was common to most of the testimonies I heard.

Each one, nevertheless, had *one* particular incident that has stuck. Here is Eva's recollection:

I can't think of too much antisemitism and maybe I've forgotten it. Only one particular time I was with a bunch of kids playing behind someone's house on a hill and I was the only Jewish person amongst them. We were obviously making lots of noise and somebody who my parents knew who were from Europe, and who were actually friends but weren't Jewish, but they were from Europe, centered me out and said, 'You there! Making all that noise. You should be playing at the synagogue.' I ran home and burst into tears and my parents finished the relationship.²⁰⁷

Ilana's one memory that still sticks in her mind, took her by surprise:

The only time I personally experienced antisemitism, I didn't know what to do, what to say. I was in the car with my best friend who lived across the street from me, and her father was a Brit and he made some comment about kikes or something. And then he realized what he had said and he looked in the back to look at me and then he looked back and the whole car was silent.²⁰⁸

I asked Ilana if she understood his reference and also if her girlfriend knew what had happened. She said, "Oh, I knew what he was referring to. Sure I did. . . . I was in Grade 7 or 8. Maybe Grade 9. . . . Between 12 and 14. And I knew exactly what he was talking about, but I didn't know what to say. So I was just silent. . . . I don't think she knew. He

²⁰⁵ Interview with Eva, 13.

²⁰⁶ Interview with Barry, 12.

²⁰⁷ Interview with Eva, 9.

²⁰⁸ Interview with Ilana, 16.

knew and I knew."²⁰⁹ I asked her if she continued the friendship. She said yes she did, of course.

Jake thought his experience was more a case of bullying: "We were always Jewish. It was never a problem. We talked earlier about Christmas. It was not an issue and I went to a largely non-Jewish school. I was never singled out. There were always one or two idiots, bullyboys. . . . I can't ever remember being bullied over being Jewish, ever."²¹⁰ He is adamant about the reasons and went on to explain: "I understood when their parents spoke. When their parents spoke I understood the lives and world that my parents came from. They weren't always as kind to us as they would let on. They were kind to me, but then I would always hear this snide little comment that they didn't realize that I understood."²¹¹ He said he was able to separate their behaviour and comments from their children who were his friends:

I'm not so sure they were antisemitic. I always was able to understand that they came from a particular background where the reference didn't necessarily mean that they were antisemitic. It's like us blurting out 'Jesus Christ'. It doesn't mean that we are anti-Christian. It's sort of a phrase that you incorporate into your language. I think it was that kind of phrase that we picked up from time to time.²¹²

That 'particular background' was where the concentration camps were built, with the knowledge of the people. These neighbours had lived in that 'background' during those years. Some might have even attended a few of the camp 'events'.²¹³ We got into a long discussion over my calling the incidents 'antisemitic':

²⁰⁹ Interview with Ilana, 16.

²¹⁰ Interview with Jake, 18.

²¹¹ Interview with Jake, 19.

²¹² Interview with Jake, 10.

²¹³ In a unique moment of openness, my mother revealed how, in Auschwitz, when she was lined up for 'target practice', she was able to run and hide in the crowd which had gathered from the nearby town to watch the 'show'.

Where I take issue with you is you've taken the step to call it antisemitism and try to explain it in another perspective. I don't take this threatening — I don't want to make more of it than what it was. It was simply that kind of reference that wasn't antisemitic in nature at all. But it sort of spoke of where they came from — For example the word *'jid'*. Literally, it means Jew, but there's a tone to it. There's a context to it that sort of has a sort of unpleasant tonality to it. I would sometimes pick up on things like that. I mean it was nothing overt. I don't want to make more of those kinds of things. For the most part, we had very easy lives. You know, I'd have supper at their place at times . . . ²¹⁴

Jake chose not to make an issue of it because as far as he was concerned, it was not. He continued: "You asked a question and I gave you the reference, but they were always kind. My parents' neighbours. . . . they always got along famously with, always got along fine, neighbourly."²¹⁵ Kind, yes, but they still used the word *'jid'*. Yes, the word *'jid'* did mean 'Jew' in the literal sense but it had acquired horrible connotations, eventually with horrific consequences. Hatcher and Troyna point to the very same verbal strategies practised by children in their interactions at school. The writers are not saying that 'nonexpressive' racist name-calling is not racist but it is racist in two other senses. "First, it is a form of hurtful discrimination. . . . Second, it trades on a racist frame of reference and thus tends to reinforce its legitimacy within children's culture."²¹⁶

Anna, who lived in Poland until her teens remembered the danger associated with being Jewish. In Canada, her one incident occurred because of a Jewish holiday. September or October was always a tricky time for Jewish kids. It was awkward having to explain, telling the teacher you would be away, then having to catch up on the work. The recollection came out when I asked Anna if she could remember any of the teachers

²¹⁴ Interview with Jake, 10. *'Jid'* does literally mean 'Jew' but it has come to bear antisemitic overtones.

²¹⁵ Interview with Jake, 10.

²¹⁶ Richard Hatcher and Barry Troyna, "Racialization and Children," in *Race, Identity, and Representation in Education*, eds. Cameron McCarthy and Warren Crichlow, 109-125 (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 120.

mentioning or remarking on her Jewishness. At first, she said no, then recalled the following:

The only thing that I remember about anything about Jewish it was [in senior public school]. Susan Solberg was in my class. We always took off *Rosh Hashana*. I showed up for school on *Simchat Torah* and she didn't. And the teacher called me aside and he said to me. 'What kind of Jew are you? The other Jewish girl said there was a Jewish holiday. Why are you at school?' And I said, 'Well, this holiday isn't as important to me as the others.' He was very angry and he said, 'Well are you Jewish or aren't you? What kind of Jew are you?' . . . and I remember that. I just wanted to run out and you know. . . . So I went back into the classroom. I sat in the back row. I remember. I was choking on tears and that was before lunch, and after lunch I didn't come back [laughing]. . . . I couldn't come back and the next day I came with a note. I was Jewish again. That's the only thing I can remember.²¹⁷

Courage came later when she became "very vocal, when [she] started working at the hospital."²¹⁸ But before that, she always kept quiet, afraid to say anything.

For Sy, when I asked him about antisemitism, it reminded him of an incident involving not a Gentile teacher but a *Jewish* one who had sent him to the office for being inappropriately dressed when he came in for his Grade 13 departmental exam. The Jewish teacher took one look at Sy, saw his shorts – it was the hottest day of the year – and sent him to the principal's office. Sy and I were both thinking the same thing. Sy had embarrassed him. Sy had not behaved like a 'good' Jew, a remark heard from both inside and outside the community since the days when Eastern European Jews began immigrating to Canada. Each wave of arrivals had brought on much anxiety and worry. What would the Gentiles think if you started behaving like a --- well, like a Jew? Additionally, Jewish representations in the media reinforced this attitude and behaviour. Yes, you could be a Jew but it had to conform to the culturally neutral, assimilationist 'norm' portrayed in the movies and on TV.

²¹⁷ Interview with Anna, 17.

²¹⁸ Interview with Anna, 17.

Barry also could think of only ‘one’ time that being Jewish mattered but still, he insisted it was not a case of antisemitism. It is, in his retelling, funny and charming, but it reveals more. His two stories, I think, are worth repeating here: He began with: “I’ve — had very few antisemitic instances in my life. Almost none. I can’t even point to one. I’ve had some —” He continued with the following remembered story:

I’ll describe two things for you which I think are very humorous. I go to work for a place . . . which in those days was known as a place where Jewish lawyers didn’t get jobs — I arrived at [the firm] and the first student dinner is at the Toronto Club. Now, I mean I graduated law in Toronto. I graduated law in Boston. I arrive at [the firm]. I go to the first student dinner. I go to the Toronto Club where Jewish people do not go to the Toronto Club in those days. You go today, those days you didn’t step foot in the door. Anyway, I get invited to the Club. There’s 14 students that year. So we go to the Club with 14 partners and 14 students. Sitting across from me is the partner in charge of students and we have a cocktail and we sit down at this magnificent dining room table with cutlery and the china and the napkins and champagne. Sit down. There’s staff all over the place. I take my napkin and I look up and sitting right across from me . . . he is turning every colour of the rainbow. So I’m wondering, is it my tie, my suit. I’m looking around, why is . . . I must have done something wrong. So I figured that’s it. I started here, I’m out. I can’t do my first student dinner. It’s finished. I finished the appetizer. As soon as I finish the appetizer he stands up, quickly walks around the table. I’m like, watching him. I don’t know what the — I’m not sure what’s going on. He taps me on the shoulder and I get up, and I figured, that’s it. I’ve done something wrong and it’s over. He looks at me and he says, ‘Barry,’ he says, ‘I forgot you were coming for dinner.’ I said, ‘Okay.’ ‘If I have offended you or your family or I’ve done something or I’ve forced you to do something I am so sorry. I don’t know what to do.’ So I look at him and say, ‘What are you talking about?’ He says, ‘The appetizer.’ He says, ‘I forgot you were coming and I ordered this appetizer and you probably shouldn’t have eaten it, and I know you ate it and maybe we’ll go together and say some penance or something.’ So I looked at him and I said, ‘Larry, have you ever heard of lox?’ He says, ‘Yeah.’ I said, ‘That’s smoked salmon.’ He had no idea.

BLC: He thought it might be non-Kosher?

Well, to him it was lobster or something I wasn’t supposed to eat, but because I was there I was forced to eat it and something horrible was going to happen. So that was one sort of — ²¹⁹

When I heard Barry recounting this one, of several, other humorous incidents, we both laughed because it sounded familiar, dealing with other people’s perceptions and

²¹⁹ Interview with Barry, 11.

nervousness. There was, however, something about that story that made me uneasy. It shows that in the eyes of the world, you are always Jewish. I also think it had to do with the absence of any knowledge of the Jewish world. There were no stories that reflected the stories of these participants. And if there were, they were pale imitations. Many were – and still are – put on the defensive, playing a role as each awkward or potentially dangerous situation presents itself. Barry’s story reminded me how Jews have to explain, trying to put the other person at ease, convincing him it was nothing. Not racist but predicated on a system of privileges. Barry’s second episode revealed less about antisemitism than about being exposed. Again, he began with a qualifier:

It was not an antisemitic episode, it was sort of a sensitivity to the fact that I was Jewish. I’m going to a meeting at the parliament buildings with a student. I am a lawyer now. A couple of years a lawyer. Sitting beside me is a student. David Scott. . . He says, ‘Mr. Stein, can I ask you something?’ I said, ‘Sure David.’ And I’m looking at my paper because I’m going to this important meeting. He says, ‘Do you take days off for the Jewish holidays?’ and I said, ‘Yeah, I do.’ And I’m reading. He says, ‘Can I ask you something else?’ I’m not paying attention to him. I’m just looking at my file. I said, ‘Sure.’ He said, ‘Do you take one day or two days?’ So I look at him. I said, ‘David.’ I said, ‘Are you married to a Jewish girl?’ This is me talking to him. He says, ‘Yeah, I’m married to a Jewish girl, but I’m Jewish.’ David Scott! Now I’m at [this law firm], right. I look at him, and now I notice that he’s got sort of curly hair and you know —

BLC: He’s got the Semitic features?

Correct. So he’s from Montreal and blah blah. And I said, ‘How did you end up with a name like Scott?’ His grandfather or his great grandfather — I go back to the office. I walk into Larry Martin’s office. This is the partner in charge of students who is now my friend, right. So I says, ‘Larry, You really screwed up this year.’ He says, ‘What are you talking about?’ I said, ‘You’ve got two Jewish students.’ He says, ‘Well, you know Barry, we don’t have any rules like that.’ I said, ‘I know you don’t, David, but I’m telling you, you’ve got two Jewish students.’ He says, ‘Yeah, who’s the other Jewish student?’ I says, ‘David Scott.’ He says, ‘Get outta here.’ Throws me out of his office. It’s a big joke, right. Five minutes later, he comes to my office, he says, ‘How can a Jewish guy have a name like Scott?’ True story. I mean, there’s an awful lot of Jewish lawyers there now. But I mean, there was a time when — and obviously I made fun of it. Like to me I didn’t feel uncomfortable. I didn’t feel — never.²²⁰

²²⁰ Interview with Barry, 11-12.

His memories have become part of a “well-formed” narrative [that] appears to seek refuge from the irreparable realities of history.”²²¹ Brooks talks about “the realm of the ‘as if’ . . . a symbolic replay of the past. . . a possible fiction to take the place of history.”²²² Barry’s two experiences and his reaction and now the re-telling are, despite what he says, tied in with the very fact that he *was* Jewish. If he were Anglo-Saxon, the issues would *never* have come up. But they did. Barry’s partner did go out to find out that the new student was, indeed, Jewish – but it was not a problem. There were no rules restricting the number of Jews in the firm. Also, in Barry’s second incident, *he* had positioned himself as other than Jewish. Was he hiding? He would say no. Nevertheless, the tables had been turned. It was he who was now in the position of power – another one of the contradictory roles Jews have assumed in order to ‘get along’, to become part of the dominant society, to be accepted. It is part of their often opposing, dueling subjective formations. It is also the essence of racism because its ascribed categories are invisible, unknown and therefore potentially dangerous.

Rob’s experiences were quite different but his reactions are not too dissimilar. He, like Anna, clearly remembers the antisemitism he lived through as a child in Europe; in his case it was Hungary. It was also something he had to deal with in Canada: “Oh, absolutely. Sure. I think you find that everywhere --- either direct or indirectly or you could sense what someone was doing because of that.”²²³ When he was younger, it was more of a physical threat. He remembered one particular incident that occurred during Rosh Hashanah when he and his friend decided to take a break from religious services taking place inside the old musty synagogue our families attended. He reminisced about that ancient smelly *shul* and

²²¹ Peter Brooks, *Psychoanalysis and Storytelling* (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1994), 12.

²²² Brooks, *Psychoanalysis*, 67.

²²³ Interview with Rob, 16.

how the boys would slide on their knees along the filthy linoleum floor in the social hall, and how they would run in and out – but mostly out – while their parents stayed inside. He remembered the following incident:

One time – you were speaking of being called a dirty Jew – here we are Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, wearing our suits and whatnot. We walked down to the Bay, which was a big mistake. Two Jewish boys walking down. We were accosted by a bunch of kids, and for some reason – I was just small potatoes --- It wasn't major but nevertheless they roughed us up, and of course our suits --- So that was one adventure that I look back, yes.²²⁴

In a certain way, it was easier, Rob said, for him to blend in. He didn't *look* 'Jewish' and his name didn't mark him as such. His father had changed their very Jewish name before they came to Canada. He explained, "With a name like Gabor . . . I didn't look quote unquote Jewish. No, I didn't. So I could assimilate."²²⁵

Even though his Jewishness was not apparent, the antisemitism was – still is, as far as he is concerned. If he finds himself "in a situation where people would be talking about Jews and not realize that [he] was and sometimes making discouraging remarks or less than complimentary remarks," he would remove himself. It has happened "as recently as a few years ago."²²⁶ He is still inside/outside, experiencing the double consciousness of playing different roles, depending on where he is placed in a particular moment, conforming to the norm but still being excluded. It is always there, the threat of being found out, the antisemitism waiting to pounce. If acting out the role of being 'other than Jewish', then so be it. If constructing a fiction to live by is a way of dealing with potentially dangerous situations, and how it is explained to our children, then so be it. His father changed his name for that extra feeling of security. Barry wondered aloud if risking your life and your

²²⁴ Interview with Rob, 19.

²²⁵ Interview with Rob, 19.

²²⁶ Ibid.

family was worth it. History has taught Jews that they had to be, as Ilana observed, always watchful and on guard.

But what happens when that performance becomes the overriding script, when the weight of an identity pulls that person down so much that he cannot go forward? What are the consequences of moving between the self representations and the world's ascribed depictions? In many instances, the narratives spoke of how these adults remember shifting between their diverse social and subjective positions. They could and did negotiate the opposing forces of their lives. One of these subjective positions – being the child of survivors – had a significant impact on them but it was not always revealed in the most direct way.

Being Jewish was only one 'role' of many these participants played out. They were as well children of Holocaust survivors and they had always been aware of this fact, unlike the stories of parents who kept their past secret. Their parents' history and their knowledge of it was something we discussed in the interviews. The reactions ranged between 'Yes, heard about it all the time' to 'No, it wasn't an issue.' But within this spectrum, there was, again, something 'just there', beneath the words – responses that reflect and are in reaction to Holocaust awareness in North America. Tracing how the Holocaust went from being an event with not even a name to one that has become woven into the psyche of Western societies helps to explain where these adults started and where they are now.

How we got from there to here, from an unnamed and hushed event to the Holocaust as popular culture, involved three historical stages in the representation of the Holocaust. In the years following the war there was a deafening silence, followed by a period of veiled references to the Holocaust until the time when the Holocaust came to be the universal tale for *all* mankind, the moral paradigm for all the world's behaviour. American film and television reflects the process and the transitions.

CHAPTER 7

THE HOLOCAUST AND ITS LEGACIES

Representations of the Holocaust

In November 1944, the US army magazine *Yank* pulled a story that described the Nazi atrocities against Jews. The author of the article was advised “to get something with a less Semitic slant”¹ because of the latent antisemitism in the Army. Hollywood, sensitive to charges of “Jewish-sounding names” and Jewish warmongering, was receiving the same message from Washington. Even with the disclosure of Hitler’s Final Solution, the results of which were documented on film and through photographs, and even when it was no longer news, Gentiles *and* Jews still turned away from dealing with what had happened. There was hardly a mention of the event, let alone introspection and discussion. There were bits of scholarly work, the beginnings of survivor testimonies and small annual gatherings – commemorations often confined to the survivor community itself.² Talking about the horrors was discouraged.³ Some simply refused to talk.

In the late 1960s, a shift occurred. News reports out of Vietnam and Watts, in their attempts to compare the events to something familiar historically, began comparing events to the Nazi crimes. By 1978, NBC had invested millions of dollars in a mini-series entitled, simply, *Holocaust*. By the late 1980’s, students in Ontario were reading a revised *The Modern Age: Ideas in Western Civilization* which contained sixteen pages of selected

¹ Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999).

² Jeffrey Shandler, *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

³ Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Lester Pub., 1992), 268. The effects of the camps on their parents and the trauma suffered by some of the children of survivors are briefly discussed in the literature review.

readings from authors such as Anne Frank, Elie Wiesel and Yevgeny Yevtushenko.⁴ By 1993, Steven Spielberg's movie *Schindler's List* was no longer the exception. Gerta Klein, survivor, author and popular speaker, became a darling of the Hollywood paparazzi. Spielberg himself, when interviewed for the release of *Schindler's List*, expressed his own feelings of pain and loss for never knowing the family that was lost in the camps. Today, there is a Holocaust museum in many major cities: Toronto, Montreal, a museum and education centre on the mall in Washington, D.C. and one in the planning stages for Ottawa. The Holocaust had finally "entered into the popular imagination of the American [and Canadian] people to such a degree that it seems to have become almost a part of the [North] American experience."⁵

But actually, in terms of numbers, the Holocaust had affected few North Americans directly – Jew or Gentile. So why have North Americans become Holocaust-obsessed more than fifty years after liberation? The rehabilitation of the event from a barely acknowledged episode in history to a universal that is so encompassing, so adaptable that any individual or group can adopt the images to suit their needs, has become the subject of both popular and academic activities. The Holocaust has become part of a public discourse amongst Jews *and* non-Jews. TV and film, "given the important role that Jews play in American media and opinion-making elites,"⁶ would play a substantial role. Each would influence the presentation of the Holocaust in distinct ways. The discussion begins with film.

⁴ Irving Abella and Franklin Bialystok, "Canada and the Holocaust," in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. David S. Wyman, 749-781 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1996), 772.

⁵ Judith E. Donelson, *The Holocaust in American Film* (Philadelphia, New York and Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1987 (5747), 6.

⁶ Novick, *The Holocaust*, 12.

The Holocaust in Film

Films are a powerful tool that can tap into the collective psyche, reflecting the mood and tone of a people. Films can entertain and films can educate. Films can also “help shape popular attitudes and simultaneously reflect popular attitudes – social, political, and cultural.”⁷ Judith Doneson contends that “American films on the Holocaust have been the most influential in bringing the event to the attention of an international audience.”⁸ this, despite the fact that the Holocaust did not directly affect most people in the Americas.

Traditionally, films had never fully explained the Jew, choosing instead to subsume him – ‘her’ was usually missing – into the larger American society; that is, until North Americans watched in horror as newsreels of the liberation of the concentration camps revealed what many had denied or simply not known. Armed with this knowledge, “filmmakers took it on themselves to explain to Americans the danger of antisemitism.”⁹ but with shifts in the focus. The red-blooded *American Jew* of the postwar became the dominant image. Following the guidelines of the policy of the Office of War Information, filmmakers included Jews in stories with other minorities who were fighting side by side for the American cause. What came across was a new Jew, a Jew who was wise beyond his years, loyal to his men and to the American people, a man who could fight and die for his country. Too good to be true, perhaps, but he *was* American.

However, by Americanizing the Jew, “films also begin to Americanize, to democratize Jewish history.”¹⁰ The trend became a major postwar theme. Commentators on this topic point to three films, distributed and shown in movie houses across North America,

⁷ Doneson, *The Holocaust in American Film*, 6.

⁸ Doneson, 9.

⁹ Doneson, 49.

¹⁰ Doneson, 56.

The Diary of Anne Frank,¹¹ *Judgment at Nuremberg*¹² and *The Pawnbroker*,¹³ as prime examples of how Hollywood “universalized the Holocaust and turned it into a symbol for all of humanity and this century’s pain.”¹⁴ pushing Jewishness to the margins, its central meaning diminished. The fact that Jews, Eastern Europe’s entire Jewish population, were marked for annihilation did not, for the most part, seem to register with most filmmakers.

It began with the story of a young Jewish girl in hiding, writing a diary. It became a story of appropriation, the subject of numerous books, articles, debates and in one case, a legal battle that pitted writer Meyer Levin against Anne’s father, Otto Frank. It is also the history of how representations can be sanitized, refashioned and adapted to suit and historical time, place and people.¹⁵

In the twelve years from the publication of the diary and leading up to the making of the film, Anne, whose fate was sealed simply because she was Jewish, was, to borrow from Alvin H. Rosenfeld, dehistoricized “to project an image of [her] that softened somewhat the revulsion and horror that otherwise might have directed readers’ responses to the diary.”¹⁶ Most of the early responses tended to idealize her story. The original two writers of the

¹¹ *The Diary of Anne Frank*, dir., George Stevens, 170 mins., Twentieth Century Fox, 1959.

¹² *Judgment at Nuremberg*, prod. and dir. Sydney Lumet, 190 mins., 1961.

¹³ *The Pawnbroker*, dir. Sydney Lumet, 114 mins., Landau-Unger, 1965.

¹⁴ Albert Auster, “‘Funny You Don’t Look Jewish...’: The Image of Jews on Contemporary American Television,” *Television Quarterly* 26 (Summer 1993), 67. This kind of depiction was the norm until the NBC version of the Holocaust broadcast in 1978 in which the events were retold from the point of view of a Jewish and a German family. On a recent interview show, hosted by Pamela Wallin (aired August, 2001), panel members included historian Michael Marrus and one of the original lawyers who served as a counsel at the Nuremberg trials. On the topic of the most recent War Tribunal in The Hague, Michael Marrus emphasized the point that originally, when the Nuremberg trials convened, they were about ‘crimes against humanity’, not crimes against Jews.

¹⁵ When the cartoon feature film, *The Road to Eldorado*, was released, one critic, with an obvious awareness and sensitivity, wrote in his review: ‘A cartoon about those wild and wacky conquistadors teaching kids about the fun side of looting a continent’ – the silences of the histories and the destruction of several civilizations from which Latin America has yet to recover.

¹⁶ Alvin H. Rosenfeld, “Popularization and Memory: The Case of Anne Frank,” in *Lessons and Legacies: The Meaning of the Holocaust in A Changing World*, ed. Peter Hayes, 243–278 (Evanston, ILL.: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 250.

1955 stage play. Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, managed to recreate a new girl, one whose story reflected the universal experience of suffering, not the specifics of the Jewish experience. Anne became, on the one hand, a cheerful, optimistic adolescent, not so different from the girl next door to you and me, but who was also very special, whose concerns for others, indeed for all mankind, was a symbol of eternal hope and the incredible endurance of the human spirit. In an introductory essay to *The Works of Anne Frank*, published in the early fifties, the editors went so far as to 'suggest' that 'perhaps' Anne's bedtime prayer, which she wrote in the diary, might have been the one she said the night before the family was discovered and was taken away to Bergen-Belsen. The play became an international success and was followed by an equally successful film, also scripted by Goodrich and Hackett. There was a Pulitzer Prize, the critics' Circle Prize, and the Antoinette Perry Award. Few dared to criticize the play or the movie.

This was not history, writes Rosenfeld, and it was not about the Anne of the diary. If one looks beyond the popular representations of that time, Anne's own written words reveal she is very much aware of what was going on. She describes with clarity the scenes outside her window, she knows their friends have been taken away by the Gestapo and she writes about a 'Jewish camp' where Jews are probably being murdered. Rosenfeld describes these passages, which were removed from the stage and film fantasies, as being "remarkable for the maturity of its religious insight and also for what it reveals about Anne Frank's understanding of herself as an actor within the stream of Jewish history."¹⁷ The moviemakers felt, and it was confirmed with test audiences that Americans were unwilling to hear the grimmer details and the horror of her fate and neither, it seems, were people in countries around the world. Rosenfeld writes: "Given the power of American popular

¹⁷ Rosenfeld, "Popularization," 257.

culture in the postwar period and the influence it has exerted in countries around the world. the American version of Anne Frank quickly took hold elsewhere."¹⁸ In the hands of Hollywood screenwriters, Anne summed up for Americans what they wanted to hear:

We're not the only people that've had to suffer. There've always been people that've had to . . . sometimes one 'race' . . . Sometimes another . . . and yet . . .¹⁹

People in the audience wanted to feel 'that, but for the grace of God, might have been I.'

The insistence that *fate* chose the Franks is quite the reinvention, a story that transformed Anne into the symbol for *all* children who were lost in the camps, a recreation which glossed over rather than clarifying the reality of the Nazi excesses. Anne stepped in as the poster child to serve Americans and other citizens around the world. Ownership of Anne would be the centre of attention and argument in the decades to come.

Not everyone, however, took part in this cult-like adoration. There has been, in the last forty years, a struggle over the history of Anne Frank. Jewish criticism began to appear as early as the late 1950s and early 1960s. The harsher opinions expressed in the Jewish press "could not sanction the serious historical compromises that accompanied the popularization of the diary [and] . . . frequently turned on questions of representation."²⁰ Many individuals and groups became embroiled in the ensuing discussions which were often passionate and angry.²¹

¹⁸ Rosenfeld, "Popularization," 261.

¹⁹ The original read: "We're not the only Jews that've had to suffer. Right down through the ages there have been Jews and they've had to suffer."

²⁰ Rosenfeld, "Popularization," 272.

²¹ Deborah P. Britzman, "On the Second History of Anne Frank," *Children of the Shoah: Holocaust Literature and Education* (Special Edition of *Canadian Children's Literature* 95, 25:3 [Fall 1999]): 120-140. Britzman's article "considers some of the contentions over how the figure of Anne Frank has been crafted in order to understand the ways in which Anne Frank's hope for her readers transformed into readers' hopes for Anne Frank." (p. 121)

Before judging, however, the play and the film must be set within the context of the fifties. First of all, Jews in Hollywood had learned their history well. Feeling as if they were always under suspicion, Jewish organizations “worked on a variety of fronts to prevent, or at least limit, the association of Jews with Communism in the public mind.”²² The Jewish Film Advisory Committee lobbied to portray Jews in a sympathetic light. When the Jewish Film Committee director John Stone received the script for *Anne*, he wrote back that it was a wonderful vehicle for a message that would suit everyone, while also making it clear that promoting Jewishness was not his aim. In fact, he sounded downright embarrassed about the concentration camps.²³ The inclusion of the prayers recited in English, for example, were an obvious attempt to Americanize a ‘foreign’ religious rite, perhaps even to make it seem like Christmas.²⁴ Anne was always hopeful, waiting for that day when people could live in peace and in harmony. Her final words that declared her belief in the ultimate goodness of people were comforting to moviegoers. For the head of Twentieth-Century Fox, Doneson writes, it was a great vehicle for profit, not ideology. It served many useful purposes. Another example of adaptation was the concluding scene of the stage play, adapted accordingly to suit the country in which it was produced. On the stage of the Habimah Theatre in Tel-Aviv, Otto Frank’s final statement, “I don’t know. I don’t know.” was a ‘history away’ from what German audiences heard. “She puts me to shame.” Each audience, bringing with it its own historical experience, shaped the process. The arguments and the battle over the meaning of Anne, between that of a Jewish

²² Novick, *The Holocaust*, 94.

²³ Doneson, *The Holocaust in American Film*, 72.

²⁴ Some Jews and non-Jews have tried to package Channukah as a ‘Jewish Christmas’. The two holidays fall around the same time of year. Traditionally, Jewish children have received small tokens or chocolates to symbolize the pieces of coin the Jews used to fool the Romans into thinking they were only gambling, not studying the Torah which was forbidden. The ‘Festival of Lights’ has, over the years, become more and more Christmas-like in its North American setting. Some families even have a ‘Channukah bush’.

understanding of Anne Frank and that by others outside the community, were experiences apart. It is, in this case, about ideology. There are, within the Jewish community as well, as many differences of opinions and solutions. No doubt, the debates are not over.

Judgment at Nuremberg, appearing two years after *Diary*, opened the sixties, still bearing the universal message of the previous decade. Its denunciation of antisemitism was an obvious response to the Holocaust although the story was neither directly about the Holocaust nor did it feature a Jewish protagonist. Its broader theme of differentness dealt with principles rather than individuals and how racism and bigotry affect *all* mankind.²⁵ However, "on some level, it becomes essential to create the impression that the subject corresponds to American problems, concerns, or needs."²⁶ It pointed the finger at Germany but it also universalized the guilt. Filmgoers were still no wiser about the Holocaust or about Jews. Over footage of bulldozers piling Jewish corpses into mass graves, the narration never referred to Jews, nor did any Jews talk. When one of the characters, the secretary, was giving her evidence about her Jewish boss, he himself never had the opportunity to speak.²⁷

Looking for parallels between the Holocaust and what 'could' happen in America found a resonance in the sixties. Connected to the Civil Rights movement, the Voting Rights Act in 1965 was fervent ground for Holocaust lingo, a symbol for a troubled society. Director Sidney Lumet's film *The Pawnbroker* played on this very theme. Holocaust survivor Sol Nazerman is himself now found guilty of causing another human being's

²⁵ Lawrence L. Langer, "The Americanization of the Holocaust on Stage and Screen," in *From Hester Street to Hollywood: The Jewish-American Stage and Screen*, ed., Cohen, Sarah Blacher, 213-230 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1983), 224.

²⁶ Doneson, *The Holocaust in American Film*, 98.

²⁷ Doneson, *The Holocaust in American Film*, 104. Because of the manipulation of historical facts and characters, some of the real-life characters refused to participate. The filmmakers' justification was that they wanted to get the 'mood', the essence for dramatic reasons. A side note to the film: On May 24, 1960, Israel announced it had captured and kidnapped one of the more notorious Nazi perpetrators, Adolf Eichmann. The trial was held the following year. Timing could not have been better for the film.

suffering. His assistant – aptly named Jesus – sacrifices his life. But nothing could save the emotionally bereft Nazerman. Unable to overcome the damage, redemption never comes. It was a film verging precariously close to Shakespeare's *Shylock*. The weak, feminized Jew once again needed validation from a Gentile. In this case, it was through another's death.

The Holocaust on Television

Contrary to a common perception that the postwar years were conspicuously silent on the Holocaust, there were small pockets of public activity and what was to become the beginning of people's awareness. A number of dedicated and concerned members of the Jewish community had begun almost immediately to document survivor testimonies. Some efforts were made through documentaries and other kinds of television programming "to present this then-unnamed subject to the general American public."²⁸ It was a striking contrast to the more recent outpourings which have made the Holocaust a household word.

For media critic and ethnologist Jeffrey Shandler, television has been the most instrumental in situating the Holocaust within our collective psyche – and the most overlooked. Perhaps it is because some think television is not lofty enough for such a monumental subject.²⁹ According to Patricia Erens, the story has certainly been better served by television. And because early television was the most open for innovation and experimentation, it provided "more opportunities for a greater diversity of encounters with the Holocaust than any other forum."³⁰ For this, we need to tune in to television.³¹ It was

²⁸ Shandler, *While America Watches*. Shandler's book was extremely helpful with the television listings and analysis of those television shows that had a 'Holocaust connection' of any kind – from the popular, daytime and prime time shows to the more religious treatments broadcast on Sundays. Other titles which have helped in this area are referenced below.

²⁹ Ironically, television formats in museums and at many travelling exhibits are used to create a dramatic spectacle that shapes how visitors feel and to evoke their emotional sensibilities.

³⁰ Shandler, *While America Watches*, xv.

American television but Canadians have been receiving American television signals since 1952. Two of the more 'famous' American TV presentations of the fifties, *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *Judgment at Nuremberg*, often referred to as 'Holocaust' films, are two of the earliest endeavors but hardly the only ones. They are not really *about* the Holocaust and the seeds of future public awareness had already been planted as early as the thirties and continued into the forties and early fifties.³² As well, the details and the reality were known – even published – before the allied troops went in.

During the final weeks of the war in Europe, the world not only heard but saw the evidence of what we now call the Holocaust. It was Dwight D. Eisenhower's decision to send in the Signal Corps to act as eyewitnesses and to ensure its place in history.³³ While newspapers, magazines and public displays also bore witness, it was the commercially produced newsreels that were the first explicit images for most North Americans. They saw not only Jews but POWs, Christians, Gypsies and Poles – all were victims of Nazism. Holocaust stories broadcast on early television were not as explicit. Documentaries dealt with the subject in an oblique way, the atrocities always within the broader context of World War II. Again, the historical context and the times must be considered. Americans had just come out of one war in Europe and were still engaged in the Pacific. Political, social and economic changes followed. America assumed an activist role and television would become the venue for "a master narrative of the war."³⁴ Shandler describes several early documentaries which either make brief mention or use liberation footage. One, *Trial at*

³¹ Because Canadians have been receiving American television signals since 1952, their exposure to the subject matter must also be included in this discussion.

³² Some films were *The House of Rothschild*, dir. Alfred L. Werker, 1934; Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*, 1940; and *To Be or Not To Be*, dir. Ernst Lubitsch, 1942.

³³ Eisenhower wanted to prevent precisely what has transpired – the Holocaust deniers who have questioned the details and insist the camps were nothing more than *labour* camps.

³⁴ Shandler, *While America Watches*, 23.

Nuremberg, pre-dating the film, focuses on the personalities of the Nazi leaders. *Genocide Convention* (1949) does deal with Nazi crimes but as ‘the story of the greatest of all possible crimes.’ TV programmes also dealt with the DP issue, whether America should admit them, where they should go and the challenges facing the nation. But still, survivors and their eyewitness testimonies would be absent from the public forum for several decades.

In Canada, many in the established Jewish community expected the survivors to put the past behind them and get on with their lives. In his history of the Canadian Jewish community, Tulchinsky relates the story of one survivor whose aunt advised him not to dwell on the depressing stories. Nobody wanted to hear what he had gone through. His stories would scare people away. Another survivor remembers how, when she attended a Holocaust memorial service and started to cry, a Jewish woman standing beside her told her to stop.³⁵

On American television beamed into Canada, when survivors were featured in a story, it was mostly to focus on their postwar life. CBS’s *See It Now* interviewed two survivors living in Berlin in 1953. One of the first American telecasts of a survivor’s story reflects television’s powerful role in Holocaust awareness. On 27 May 1953, an episode of NBC’s *This Is Your Life* broadcast the life of Hanna Bloch Kohner, survivor and new American citizen. Hanna’s story, back dropped by newsreel footage, recounted her hardships and tragedies before she was saved by America, the land of freedom. No mention was made of how America’s restrictive immigration policy in the thirties had originally prevented her from entering the country so she could follow her husband, Walter. Hannah did not seem at all bothered by this. It was a red, white and blue, ‘stars-and-stripes’ fairy tale that reinforced for anyone watching how even an immigrant could come to America and

³⁵ Gerald Tulchinsky, *Branching Out: The Transformation of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1998), 266-268.

with the right spirit, hard work and determination make it, that is every *patriotic* immigrant, not like the Rosenbergs who had been executed less than a month later. *This Is Your Life*, *Hanna Bloch Kohner* ended with an appeal to the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) and an announcement that the sponsor Hazel Bishop No-Smear Lipstick had kicked off the campaign with a contribution.³⁶ Ralph Edwards produced six more 'survivor' episodes.³⁷ Another survivor made her debut on *Queen For a Day*, also vintage 1950s television. It worked on the following premise: five women, all 'victims' of life, would tell their stories to the audience at home and in the studio and "the woman with the biggest tear-jerker would win a mink coat and an automatic washing machine to help with her five orphaned children's laundry."³⁸ Or, as in the case of one Holocaust survivor, it was the wish to never have to see the tattooed numbers on her arm, a reminder every day of the horrors of the camps. The audience was in tears. The applause meter went off the register. There was no question who would win. Of course, she walked off in her new mink coat.

But none of these had as great an impact as television drama, "the first to tackle the subject."³⁹ The format included live prime time anthology series and ecumenical programmes aired on Sundays. Original plays were written by pioneering playwrights such as Paddy Chayefsky and Rod Serling with featured performances by John Cassavetes, Charles Laughton, Robert Redford and Maximilian Schell – quite an impressive list of actors. Now largely forgotten, these early efforts were the first attempts at exposing

³⁶ The United Jewish Appeal was, and is – sometimes under a different designation – the fundraising arm of Jewish communities in North America. For hundreds of years, most Jewish communities in the western world have had this kind of charitable organization.

³⁷ Listed in Shandler: "This Is Your Life, *Cantor Gregor Shelkin*" (17 February 1954); "This Is Your Life, *Cantor Bela Herskovit*:" (8 February 1956); "This Is Your Life, *Ilse Intrator Stanley*" (2 November 1955); "This Is Your Life, *Dr. Max Nussbaum*" (22 April 1959); "This Is Your Life, *Court Felix von Luckner*" (4 November 1959); "This Is Your Life, *Benny Hoffman*" (29 January 1961).

³⁸ Hal Himmelstein, *Television Myth and the American Mind* (New York: Praeger, 1984), 274.

³⁹ Shandler, *While America Watches*, 2.

audiences to stories such as the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, or Anne Frank's life and death in the concentration camps. For example, *Playhouse 90*, highly regarded for its ambitious dramatic anthologies, "aimed at more controversial subject matter than had been seen previously."⁴⁰ It premiered an average of one Holocaust-related drama for each of its five seasons.

Not coincidentally, as Jewish media critics observe, many of those involved were Jews who were experiencing many of the same social and economic opportunities as other North Americans. At the same time, they were different, straddling two cultures, reconciling their comfort and security with the truth of what is often referred to as the greatest horror in the history of mankind. Although North American Jews were not a homogeneous and unified group, postwar American television became a major venue for their artistic expression. Perhaps this explains why early dramas were not about the Holocaust per se but about issues such as Jewish identity, or Jewishness and its relationship to American culture. Paddy Chayefsky's *Holiday Song* (*Philco Television Playhouse*, NBC, 14 September 1952), positioned the Holocaust survivor on the sidelines, the script centering "on the questions of affirming religious faith in a postwar American Jewish community."⁴¹ It reflected what literary scholar Lawrence Langer has characterized as a distinctively, and problematically, American vision of the Holocaust. It is one which seeks "solace . . . redeeming truth [and] the hope that so many millions had not died in vain."⁴² all the while remaining deaf to the actual horrors. Ernest Kinoy's *Walk Down the Hill*,⁴³ is set in a Nazi-run camp, but it speaks more to contemporary American life than to the war years in Europe.

⁴⁰ Michael Kerbel, "The Golden Age of TV Drama," in *Television: The Critical View*, 3d ed., ed. Horace Newcomb, 47-63 (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 61.

⁴¹ Shandler, *While America Watches*, 47.

⁴² Langer, "The Americanization of the Holocaust," 214.

⁴³ *Walk Down the Hill*, *Studio One*, CBS, 18 March 1957.

One of the characters, POW Linton, agonizes over whether or not he should declare his Jewishness. Goldstein and Cohen have no choice but the name Linton does not identify anyone or any group, perhaps reflecting his own ambivalence. In the end, the expected and required redemptive chord is struck with a proud declaration that he is indeed Jewish.

Sunday mornings and afternoons on American television, referred to as the ‘Sunday ghetto’ of TV scheduling, offered another venue for Holocaust remembrance during the early postwar years.⁴⁴ One leading co-producer of Jewish broadcasts was the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), the rabbinical academy and intellectual center of the Conservative movement. Its first venture, *The Eternal Light*, was initially broadcast on radio beginning in 1944 then moved on to television. Here was a forum for Jews to communicate their issues through a medium that reached thousands. Original dramas, musical performances, interviews and panel discussions dealt with a wide range of subjects.⁴⁵ According to Peter Novick, because Jewish leaders were being pulled in two directions, they shared strong, anti-German sentiments with other Jews but simultaneously, “there was their special obligation to safeguard the reputation and position of Jews in American society.”⁴⁶ Ranging from classical to contemporary issues, the show reflected “the ideals of America’s postwar ecumenism.”⁴⁷ The universal Jew was as much for the non-Jews as it was for the Jews.

⁴⁴ This time slot, considered a wasteland in TV demographics, was the precursor to what today is called ‘Public Television’.

⁴⁵ Shandler, *While America Watches*, 62.

⁴⁶ Novick, *The Holocaust*, 91.

⁴⁷ Shandler, *While America Watches*, 62.

Bergen-Belsen is the setting of *The Final Ingredient*,⁴⁸ doubling as a public arena of debate where questions of faith, freedom and redemption offered “a distinctly ecumenical response to its subject.”⁴⁹ Author Reginald Rose used the debate format to express, in spiritual terms, the universality of the Holocaust story. Another dramatic presentation, produced through religious programming, featured one of the most famous and recognizable names – Anne Frank – who has come, as previously discussed, to represent the archetype of the Holocaust survivor. The first of many different shows aired 16 November 1952, a few months after the English translation was published. The ½-hour adaptation by Morton Wishengrad entitled *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* appeared as part of the NBC religious series *Frontiers of Faith*. This and subsequent adaptations told the story of a middle-class Jewish girl in hiding with her family from Nazi persecution. It is the story of a young adolescent, struggling with her first love: it’s about her relations with her mother; it’s a story about hope and goodwill and that dreams could really and truly come true. As always, the Jewishness is peripheral. Langer wonders “at the stubborn, almost perverse insistence in the play on an affirmative epigraph, almost a denial of Anne’s doom.”⁵⁰ The certain end, occurring simply because Anne was Jewish was considered to be too depressing. An upbeat, uplifting message is what the audiences wanted and what they got.⁵¹

Abby Mann’s docudrama *Judgment at Nuremberg*, aired live on *Playhouse 90* on 16 April 1959, and preceded the movie treatment by two years. It was the first major work of American television during prime time to examine the Holocaust through the format of a trial. By juxtaposing drama with actual concentration camp and liberation footage, the show

⁴⁸ *The Final Ingredient*. ABC, 19 April 1959.

⁴⁹ Shandler, *While America Watches*, 64.

⁵⁰ Langer, “The Americanization,” 215.

⁵¹ The writers of both the play and the movie did attempt to present a more realistic ending but the test audiences resisted the idea.

attempted to transform “the television program into an act of witnessing the Holocaust.”⁵² However, the focus relates the *many* crimes of Nazism rather than specifically addressing the Jews specifically. Jews were not the only ones to suffer at the hands of fascism. Obviously, the Jews were not unique in their suffering.

Another “unique” feature of *Judgment* “contains the most notorious example of censorship in TV history.”⁵³ The American Gas Association, obviously sensitive to the negative connotation of the word “gas”, prohibited its inclusion. Michael Kerbel describes the deleted scenes:

Over shots of the gas chambers, a narrator says, “They were made to think they were taking baths, the doors were locked . . . [abrupt deletion] . . . chambers.” In an angry speech at the end where the judge (Claude Rains) says “the extermination of millions of men, women and children . . .” We see his lips say “gas chambers” but no sound comes out. Surprisingly, they left in shots and descriptions of the camp’s ovens, which rendered grotesque a commercial (several minutes earlier) for gas: “faster, cleaner, and cooler than ever before. Today, more people than ever are cooking with gas.”⁵⁴

In 1961, an event occurred that would liberate the Holocaust from behind the veil of silence, from out of the far reaches of people’s awareness and into the spotlight. In the most spy-like fashion that even Hollywood would be proud of, Israeli Mosad agents captured Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann hiding since the war in South America. Television coverage spanning the spring and summer of that year “embraced news reportage, public affairs broadcasts, documentaries, and docudrama”⁵⁵ and was an event that marked, for many, the end of the “silence”. Yes, perhaps the “Holocaust” had been out there since the exposure of Hitler’s ultimate plan but its particularity, the fact that it was a specifically

⁵² Shandler, *While America Watches*, 70.

⁵³ Kerbel, “The Golden Age,” 61.

⁵⁴ Kerbel, “The Golden Age,” 61. In 1978, with the broadcast of *Holocaust*, the debate surrounding commercials and content was still a contentious issue. After an emotionally wrenching scene of Jews being led to the gas chambers, it segues into a cute, up-beat commercial for oven cleaner.

⁵⁵ Shandler, *While America Watches*, 81.

Jewish-related event, had been either hidden or at best, glossed over. And even if some considered the Eichmann trial a beginning, it would still take many more years for the Jewishness of the Holocaust to make its presence felt by the world at large.

But during the fifties, before the public awareness and before the world became conscious of the Holocaust, how were the children of Holocaust survivors adapting to this culture of silence and denial? How did they mediate the images? How did they negotiate the representations of the culture and the reality of their parents' lives. It seems as if most of the parents of these children were, in fact, practicing their own silences.

Being a Child of Survivors

When I asked my interviewees if being a child of survivors had any influence on their lives, in most cases, their responses were similar to their answers about being Jewish. Seven said yes, they knew about it but their parents did not make a big deal over it. Two heard about it constantly. But no one in this group had *not* known about it. In the main, the answers would seem to contradict the early psychological literature. Again, I had to position their stories within the social and historical context of the postwar years and the media images as well as keeping in mind that the testimonies were of adults remembering their childhood. Before they speak, it is crucial to the analysis that we hear their parents' stories, many of which had been gathered bit by bit. I do not imagine anyone fully grasping what had happened. I know of no child who does. And though many of the participants said it was 'just part of their lives' – a few *insisted* it was nothing more – the threads of their parents' lives before and during the war are forever woven into their lives.

Parental Stories

Each parent had a story. The details themselves might have varied from person to person but all of their stories spoke of loss and miracles, of unremitting suffering and eventual survival. Each one's experience became part of the family narrative. The story was always there, understood, sometimes repeated over and over again, sometimes revealed snippet by snippet. Paulina's mother was in Auschwitz, as was Tom's mother. Steve's mother was in a forced labour camp. For Sy's parents, it was the Majdanik concentration camp. A few of the fathers had escaped, were captured, then escaped again. Jake's dad "was on the run a bit. He was in the ghetto and he was running back and forth a bit and he left just before the uprising and then he was on the run for quite some time and then he was in a number of mostly work camps --- in fact [he] was at the camp a short while where they did the movie *Schindler's List* --- But he was just there briefly. Prussia. He left fairly soon after that."⁵⁶ Paulina's father's story was very similar: "My dad was in a series of labour camps because he kept escaping and they'd find him and take him back and then he was on the Russian front and a number of places."⁵⁷

Their stories are truly incredible, beyond anything imaginable. And every time you think you have heard an incredible tale of luck or courage or a combination of both, there is another one. Barry recalled, "My father was a Russian and German prisoner of war. He was in worse shape than [his] mother was actually. Where he went with eleven hundred young men, fifty survived."⁵⁸ Suzanna's parents "survived on their wits, especially [her] mother's

⁵⁶ Interview with Jake, 1.

⁵⁷ Interview with Paulina, 1.

⁵⁸ Interview with Barry, 2.

wits [and] ended up close to the Chinese border."⁵⁹ The carpet her mother knit during those years hangs in her home. Both of Eva's parents were in Thieresenstadt but apart.

[The camp] was split — But they did see each other, probably not legally, but they did. And there was quite a lot of contact because I have a lot of memorabilia from that time. Gifts that my father gave to my mother. So I have a lot of things that I can actually touch and see and feel. They're not just stories. My mother is a phenomenal woman. She's a real statistician. I don't know how she kept things and did things and hid things, but she did. I am one of the fortunate ones that has a lot from my past.⁶⁰

Every parent's inner strength, their will and resilience was something that each child recognized. Some parents had already had families before they were taken away and miraculously, some had survived but not always as the original family unit. Jake's "mother was married to someone else and she had a child that was lost. [His parents] met in the camps in Germany afterwards."⁶¹

Liberation from the concentration camps meant, for some parents, starting their new lives in *other* camps. In 1945, many survivors found themselves in Displaced Persons (DP) Camps and by the end of 1946, there were 250,000 in the British and American zones of Germany, Austria and Italy.⁶² Paula Draper, from her interviews with survivors, describes details that I myself had not known, or perhaps had forgotten. For example, immediately after the war, it was not uncommon for Jews to be housed with other non-Jewish "Displaced Persons", including Nazi collaborators. Incredibly, some of the camps were on the site of former concentration camps. Conditions could be deplorable. The endless waiting, the not knowing, the lining up to sign papers, checking the lists and the arrivals to see if *anyone* had survived: it all piled up until it exploded. There were strikes and public protests. "Agencies

⁵⁹ Interview with Suzanna, 1.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

⁶¹ Interview with Jake, 1.

⁶² Paula J. Draper, "Canadian Holocaust Survivors: From Liberation to Rebirth," in *New Perspectives on Canada, the Holocaust and Survivors*, 39-62 (Special issue of *Canadian Jewish Studies* vols. 4-5 [1996-1997], n.p.: Association for Canadian Jewish Studies, 2000), 41.

struggled to combat the black marketeering, idleness and apathy that pervaded the Camps.⁶³ but in time, there were reforms and Jewish-only camps. Still, “the DPs spent many demoralizing years waiting to find new homes, in Israel or anywhere else that would take them.”⁶⁴ Some chose to return to their country of birth only to see such sights as neighbours wearing their clothing.⁶⁵ This was enough to convince most of them that this was not the place for them, anymore. Some survivors lived on their own, dealing on the black market. They did whatever was required to keep them alive physically while also learning once again what it meant to be free. Part of this recovery was to find someone and get married. Explaining the hurriedness of it all, they would answer: “What romance? Who had time to look for love!” The name of the game was, once again, survival and that meant starting a new life and this they did in Europe. The list of countries reads like a European geography lesson.

After 1948, it became somewhat easier to enter Canada. Many came with one small baby or child. The stories they tell are often funny or charming. This is, of course, in retrospect and at a safe distance. After seeing a toilet for the first time, Suzanna refused to leave to get on the boat. Jake had a great time on the ship while everybody else was “puking their guts out.”⁶⁶ Rob’s early memories were not as innocent. He and his parents lived through the open acts of antisemitism, the bombings and the constant running for cover during the Hungarian Revolution. It was several years before the proper papers came through. Anna’s parents also returned to their country – in this case, Poland – where the

⁶³ Draper, “Canadian,” 44.

⁶⁴ Draper, “Canadian,” 42.

⁶⁵ A friend’s mother told me that when she returned to her hometown of Radom, it was dangerous, still, for Jews. A neighbour welcomed her like a long-lost friend and invited her in for tea. After the warm greeting, the neighbour invited her in for some tea, which she served in my friend’s mother’s tea service. Nothing was said. My friend’s mother knew that Poland was no longer a place where she could live.

⁶⁶ Interview with Jake, 1.

antisemitism was also out in the open and dangerous. She said she learned how to keep silent about herself, even about others.

In time, the refugees joined other family members or friends who had already settled in Canada. How they got where they did was a story lovingly remembered, as it was with the journey, now retold and passed down to the grandchildren, now part of the family mythology. Jake's father ended up in 'South-central town' "because someone suggested that [his] father and that person go into the scrap business. So he moved."⁶⁷ Others, such as Rob and Anna, took a roundabout journey before arriving in Canada and settling in. No matter how they got here, these parents were determined to 'make it'. Putting down roots meant adjusting to both the Canadian and the Jewish communities. It was not always easy and there would be some surprises.

Paula Draper writes that "Canada had never before encountered an immigrant group like these Jewish survivors of the Shoah."⁶⁸ They had all "persevered through years of fear, hiding, and hunger, and had survived loss of childhood, values, and hope:"⁶⁹ they had survived the Holocaust. Not to diminish the suffering of previous groups that had come to Canada, these refugees were not the Jewish immigrants of half a century before.⁷⁰ As well, there were differences within the group. Some had come from well-to-do families who were worldly at a time when not many – both Jew and non-Jew – were in that economic bracket and social position. Both of Suzanna's parents, she says, were worlds apart from many of the Jews who had already lived in Canada one or two generations. She remembers the distinctions clearly to this day:

⁶⁷ Interview with Jake, 2.

⁶⁸ Draper, "Canadian Holocaust Survivors," 46.

⁶⁹ Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 265.

⁷⁰ See Alan Davies, ed., *Antisemitism in Canada: History and Interpretation* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992); Stephen Speisman, *The Jews Of Toronto: A History to 1937* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979); and Tulchinsky's, *Branching Out*.

I have to tell you. The people in 'South-central town' — were very poor. Remember the story about Irv Levine? Irv Levine never had a full meal or had a pair of shoes until he joined the army. Well there *is* a difference, I think. I think my parents and other European parents — were far more sophisticated in the sense that they did things that many poor Jews here never in their life dreamed of doing. My parents met on a date in Zackopanna in Poland, which was a vacation spot that not too many Poles could afford. I think that they did things in a much more cosmopolitan way in Europe than a lot of the Jews who were here and who came out of Kensington. I mean, listen. Who came here? The Jews in the early twentieth century were the ones who were poor and had to work their way over. So, I think that made a big difference.⁷¹

Barry's and Eva's family were, as well, accomplished and assimilated years before the war. Barry's grandfather, one of many brothers and sisters, owned a bank. There were, he recounted, "three doctors, two lawyers — they lived a fairly modern life — mother's great uncle who was the world's premier violinist in the early 1920s. A world-renowned violinist from Hungary. He was a national monument."⁷² Eva's great-grandfather in Prague was also a banker and her mother's uncle was an obstetrician-gynecologist.⁷³ There were families that were educated and cosmopolitan, speaking several languages. Not exactly *Fiddler on the Roof*.⁷⁴

Within a year or two, the survivors began to come to Canada to start their new lives. However, not everyone in the community was as hospitable as might be expected. Franklin Bialystok, in describing the mixed reactions of the Jewish community attempts to explain the possible reasons why some were not as welcoming as many felt they should have been.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Interview with Suzanna, 13. For a fuller account of the Canadian Jewish communities at the turn of the century, refer to Irving Abella, *A Coat of Many Colours: Two Centuries of Jewish Life in Canada* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1990). Refer also to Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*.

⁷² Interview with Barry, 6-7.

⁷³ Interview with Eva, 2.

⁷⁴ A time-word anecdote relates how a son took his mother to see *Fiddler on the Roof*. Afterwards, he asked her if it was as she remembered back in her *shtetl*, in the old country. She answered yes, it was *something* like that but she didn't exactly remember the singing and the dancing.

⁷⁵ Franklin Bialystok, *Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000); 42-67.

He and other historians have pointed out that these immigrants were *not* the immigrants from the turn of the century. These were refugees miraculously saved from a living nightmare. Six million Jews had died and they were the few who had miraculously survived. Additionally, being called a *greener* by the *gayle*⁷⁶ was not only insulting but downright ignorant of the lives they had lead in Europe before the war. By the thirties, “most European Jews lived in urban, somewhat acculturated surroundings as citizens of modern nation-states and were fluent in the national language.”⁷⁷ They were very different from those earlier immigrants who came here starving, poor and illiterate. In an article on Holocaust survivors, their ‘liberation and rebirth’, Paula Draper illustrates the difference between the waves of immigration through her interviews with people such as Bernice Meller of Winnipeg, who still harbors the painful incident that reflected the ignorance out there. When she had been hired for a job, her employer, assuming she was illiterate told her to put a ‘cross’ for her signature: “Bernice began to cry ‘because I only spoke five languages and wrote and read, and he tells me that I don’t know how to sign my name.’”⁷⁸

The word itself – survivor – was a sticky issue in the community. Some survivors made it very clear who and what they were in Europe. Suzanna’s mother “didn’t like the term ‘survivor’.”⁷⁹ Ilana’s father was the same. He didn’t even consider himself a survivor. To him, it meant being a victim. There was, as well, a strong underlying feeling within the Jewish community that if these people had somehow endured the camps then they must have done something horrible to survive. Or, some thought that if they came with money – as

⁷⁶ *Greener* means a greenhorn; *Gayle* literally means ‘yellow’, ‘ripe’, someone who had been born in North America or at least enough years to be knowledgeable.

⁷⁷ Irving Abella and Franklin Bialystock, “Canada and the Holocaust,” in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. David S. Wyman, 749-781 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1996), 767.

⁷⁸ Draper, “Canadian Holocaust Survivors,” 55.

⁷⁹ Interview with Suzanna, 1.

some surely did – and if reports out of the DP camps were true, then they had obviously dealt on the Black market and had “arrived with ill-gotten wealth”⁸⁰ Numerous and various misunderstandings arose from all sides of the new arrivals and the more established members of the community. It was another reason for the survivors to seek the bond and friendship of *other* survivors.

Shared Family and Community

Immediately after the war, but only after years of tragic delays, Canada allowed 1000 orphans who had been waiting in various displaced persons camps.⁸¹ Other survivors came later. Their journeys and destinations varied. Some of the older parents such as Eva’s parents were both “married before the War and amazingly survived.”⁸² Ilana’s parents “married during the War in 1941.”⁸³ However, many younger survivors met and married other survivors they had met in the DP camps dotted across Europe. That is where most of the first children were born.

But no matter the routes they took before landing in Canada, they all shared the loss and now their isolation in a strange land. Sometimes, if they were lucky, there would be an aunt or an uncle or maybe a cousin here and there spread out around the world, but hardest of all to take was that there usually were no grandparents and few immediate relatives who had survived. They all shared this emptiness, the loss of people they had never known and after whom many were named. Most children lived with no photographs, no artifacts, absolutely nothing they could touch that would connect them with their parents’ way of life.

⁸⁰ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 58.

⁸¹ Abella and Troper, “Canada and the Holocaust,” 270-274.

⁸² Interview with Eva, 1.

⁸³ Interview with Ilana, 2.

Paulina made this point: “I had been severely affected — I had nothing — nothing from my parents — not an object.”⁸⁴ Having no physical connection to her lost family meant gaps in her life and a sense of disconnectedness.

To illustrate that there was no one defining experience, incredibly, Eva’s mother managed to hide certain objects mostly from during the years she and her husband were in the camp. Like Suzanna’s mother’s rug, she displays the items lovingly in her home. But Suzanna and Eva were exceptions. Candlesticks, tablecloths, a wine cup, a prayer shawl — traditionally passed down from one generation to the next — took on greater proportion when you saw that other families had these links, the connections to who they were. The objects in and of themselves were replaceable — and eventually they all began to collect their own family mementos — but having absolutely nothing and absolutely nobody was devastatingly lonely. In an interview with Elaine Kalman Naves, author of *The Journey to Vaja*, Naves refers to Helen Epstein’s image in *Children of the Holocaust*, of carrying around a black box in your head: doubly burdensome because of her awareness of it and “the unspokenness of it.”⁸⁵

Most of the survivors who immigrated to Canada had little or no family at all. If there were family in Canada, the years of separation had widened the gap. Relatives who had left Europe years before were long settled and they now had Canadian children and grandchildren. Paulina had one ‘black sheep’ uncle who had come to Canada years before. She felt “it was a strange existence” not growing up “with any cousins or any close relationships with family.”⁸⁶ In many cases, family members were meeting each other for

⁸⁴ Interview with Paulina, 6.

⁸⁵ Judith P. Robertson, and Nadene Keon, “‘The Question Child’ and Passing on Intergenerational Tales of Trauma: A Conversation with Elaine Kalman Naves.” *Children of the Shoah: Holocaust Literature and Education: Special Edition of Canadian Children’s Literature* 95, 25:3 [Fall 1999], 42.

⁸⁶ Interview with Paulina, 6.

the first time. The cultural differences were overwhelming and it could be terribly lonely. In larger Jewish centres like Toronto or Montreal, having survivors around offered, perhaps not a substitute, but at least a certain level of emotional comfort.⁸⁷ Survivors frequently lived and socialized in their own self-proclaimed ‘ghettos’.⁸⁸ One outlet that immigrants had traditionally enjoyed since more than half a century before was the *landsmanshaft* society, each one established according to town or region in Eastern Europe.⁸⁹ By mid-century, Jews, feeling more secure – quite Canadianized, in fact – no longer felt the need for the old supports. The arrival of the refugees saw these clubs reinvigorated and once again serving a vital need in the community. Here, the newcomers had the opportunity to get together, socialize, speak in their *mamme loshen* – their mother tongue of Yiddish – and know they were with others much like them. Their bonds reached beyond their mutual European hometowns. Only another survivor could know about being a survivor. No explanations were necessary, no excuses and no prying questions. Unfortunately, it was not as easy in the smaller Jewish centres where there were usually only a handful of survivors, if that. It was at this point in the interviews that I could hear the feelings of loss. Certain times of the year were especially hard and being alone was part of being new. Jake had forgotten about it but said, when I sent the questions, it had jogged some memories: “All right, how did this play out for us and I just kept thinking about all the holidays. We tended to have a very small table --- It was always very private. I am not even sure if during the holidays we did get together --- I’ve got pictures still --- we had our Seder upstairs and the Martins had theirs downstairs. There were the four of us. I never thought of that but that’s

⁸⁷ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*; Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*.

⁸⁸ In Toronto, many immigrants first lived in the Annex or Kensington then moved up north, to the new development called Bathurst Manor, in Downsview. In Montreal, they first settled in what Jake described as ‘Mordecai Richler’s district’, St. Urbain.

⁸⁹ Speisman, *The Jews of Toronto*; Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*.

right. That's what happened in those early years."⁹⁰ Because of the Holocaust, each family had been cut down to its smallest unit. A mother, a father and one or two children. That was it. They were the past, the present and the future. Kalman Naves also relates in her interview how "the Holocaust was always there. It was there like a guest at the dinner table."⁹¹ The holidays were "just a pale reflection of what was."⁹²

At some tables there were ghosts. Jake's mother who had lost a child in the Holocaust "won't talk about it to this day."⁹³ Anna also bore the weight of another family member. It came out when I asked her what it was like coming to Canada as a thirteen-year-old:

I looked different. I had long hair. I knew that my father would be very, very upset if I cut my hair. I don't know if in his mind's eye I looked like his sister. His sister had long hair and that was it. There was no question. I had to have long hair. I finally rebelled and cut my hair. My mother took me to a hairdresser. He didn't talk to her for three months.⁹⁴

Perhaps all immigrants share the loneliness and isolation of being new to a country, but with the survivors and their children, there was, again, that particular edge. It was the knowledge and burden of who they were and how they got there.

Eventually, even without the same social supports as those in the bigger cities, survivors in the smaller communities could still look to each other for friendship and the feeling of kinship. When I asked the participants about the people their parents associated with, the majority of them said they were survivors, mostly. This network was your new shared, extended family. Barry's family socialized with other Hungarians, his parents

⁹⁰ Interview with Jake, 5.

⁹¹ Robertson and Keon, "The Question Child," 42.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Interview with Jake, 8.

⁹⁴ Interview with Anna, 15.

opening up their home to the younger single men who landed in 'South-central town': "It was a fairly close-knit community. A number of — there was a whole group of younger men who arrived . . . who were orphaned by the Holocaust. Irving Steinberg lived with us for four years . . . that was headquarters for all these sort of orphan young men who used to come to our house. Met their wives or girlfriends when they came to the house."⁹⁵ With your new family, you could do what other families did, get together and spend fun times together. As Jake describes it, "on Sundays, well the families would go out to places together, the beach or whatever, the parks. That was the Judaic part of [their] lives."⁹⁶ Sy has his own special memories of a less complicated time:

We used to get in the back of Odofsky's truck and go and sit on the benches in the back of the truck and travel down the highway all the way to [the beach]. It was a big outing on Sunday afternoon. My mother used to — I can remember — she used to bake, or make chicken, roast potatoes and pack it in a blanket so it would be hot when we got there. They were good times . . . I thought they were great . . . Very simple. We sat down at the table, went out on the beach, went on the rides.⁹⁷

If friends were not other survivors — there were so few of them — they were still Jewish. Ilana's parents made an effort to reach out to the larger Jewish community, despite the early hardships. Determined to be part of the community, her mother turned occasions into opportunities. Ilana recalled: "As I was growing up, my father worked 18 hours a day, seven days a week. He worked all the time. [But] they still had a social life. My mother would have Hadassah meetings. Part of the way she got some of her china . . . because she would say, 'It's my turn to have the Hadassah meeting, I need to have nice china.' So she

⁹⁵ Interview with Barry, 5.

⁹⁶ Interview with Jake, 9.

⁹⁷ Interview with Sy, 5.

went out and bought a set, and bought some silver because she had to have it for her Hadassah meeting.⁹⁸

In 'Northern-town', Eva's parents knew the other two survivors in town – the Rabbi and his wife and maybe another couple – but they chose to surround themselves with the whole community and still do today:

My mother . . . being the woman that she is got very involved and she was very, very accepted. Their North American friends used to call them their continental friends and loved the fact that my parents knew about music and those kinds of things. They were my parents' friends then and now are even my friends. They've come to my children's weddings, bar mitzvahs. Very, very warm community that embraced us. And taught us a lot.⁹⁹

To this day, she and her mother are still friends with these people and their children, keeping in touch, attending each other's weddings and Bar Mitzvahs. These were the life-cycle rituals you shared with your new family and which have become the touchstone of everyone's psychic and social survival.

When families went over to each other's homes, no one had to arrange for a babysitter. The family travelled and arrived as a pack. It was a given. Everyone in the group understood implicitly who they were and where they came from. Most in this group did not discuss it. The children just knew. They would play together and the parents gathered in their own group – the women usually in one spot, the men in the other. Jake, who lived around the corner from me and some of the others said I was like a cousin to him and Sy was like a brother. His closest friends were the friends of his parents. Whether friends were other survivors or Jews from the established community, these children experienced a *sense* of family even in the absence of a biological one. That is what the

⁹⁸ Interview with Ilana, 18. Founded in 1917 by Henrietta Szold, Hadassah-WIZO is an association of Canadian women dedicated to the support of social welfare and educational programs in Israel, and to the enrichment of Jewish life in the Diaspora. For a history of this and other Jewish organizations, refer to Paula Draper.

⁹⁹ Interview with Eva, 5.

survivors did for each other and with others, building a shared community where they could begin to feel at home, where they could build a life for themselves and their children.

Talk of the Holocaust

In the late sixties and seventies, in response to a growing ethnic awareness and a greater willingness to discuss and record personal histories, numerous psychological studies were released which addressed the ‘after-effects’ of survivors of the Holocaust and their children, and the traumas associated with their relationships.¹⁰⁰ There was, at least on my part and some of my friends, an ambivalence to what we referred to as ‘psychological’ talk. Everything suddenly seemed to centre around parents who had suffered so deeply that they could not stop talking about the camps to their families and children. In the years to follow, there were art exhibits, theatre performances, public confessionals, parents not speaking to their children because they either wrote about their families or made it public in some other way. Other stories described survivors who still longed for the lives they had lost and who had never quite adjusted to their new lives in North America. At other times, it appeared as if some children played the ‘Holocaust card’, and that their problems had actually had nothing to do with the Holocaust. Eva is uncomfortable because ‘it’s become extremely, extremely popular.’¹⁰¹ Others, still, reacted against all this attention. After all, they were not the survivors. They had not lived through that nightmare: their parents had.

In every major city, there was at least one psychologist who ‘specialized’ in children of survivors. He – usually a he – made his living counselling individuals and their families. Support groups sprang up to meet the sudden demand. Children of survivors had become

¹⁰⁰ For a general overview and summary of the literature, see John J. Sigal and Morton Weinfeld, *Trauma and Rebirth: Intergenerational Effects of the Holocaust* (New York and London: Praeger, 1989).

¹⁰¹ Interview with Eva, 22.

trendy.¹⁰² At the other end of the spectrum, some parents had buried their past entirely and converted to Christianity. When their children found out, as many inevitably did and usually it happened by accident, there were tremendous repercussions for everyone involved. Psychological studies often described broken, fragile people with children who suffered because of it. In contrast to this, growing up then and thinking about it today, one aspect of my own childhood that has struck me was how little my parents talked of the details of the Holocaust. I thought they were the exception. In her interview with Judith Robertson, Elaine Kalman Naves describes her attempts to comprehend the ‘psychological dynamics’ of children and grandchildren hearing about familial horror. Naves also talks of the two extremes referred to in the literature: knowing too much and not knowing at all. A few children I knew had parents who hoarded food or who were so frightened that they imagined there were Nazis out there, waiting to attack. My interviewees’ parents were not prone to such extreme behaviour. Not once did my parents say that I was causing them grief and hadn’t they suffered enough, as I knew some parents had. If anything did come up, it was always about their lives *before* the war and with the passing of the years, we heard more and more stories about our grandparents and our aunts and uncles and the mischief they got into as children. These anecdotes were often amusing or silly, anything but serious. Eva also heard the funnier anecdotes:

Well, I mean I heard all the stuff you know. And those stories we still repeat today. There’s a Czech expression that they used to yell, ‘There’s no ketchup today!’ Like, who would eat ketchup then, right? So we will still use that expression today, my mother and I or my father. So yes, during four years that one has to — there have to be fun times, even in the worst hell.¹⁰³

¹⁰² See Sigal and Weinfeld, *Trauma and Rebirth*. Also Natasha Burchardt, “Transgenerational Transmission in the Families of Holocaust Survivors in England,” in *International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories*, vol. II, *Between Generations: Family Models, Myths and Memories*, eds., Daniel Bertaux and Paul Thompson, 121-137 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

¹⁰³ Interview with Eva, 23.

My initial surprise at the interviews was finding out that most of the kids I knew growing up had similar experiences. I would add here that we had never discussed this when we were kids. When I asked Jake how he knew about the Holocaust, he summed up what the group generally said: "It just evolved that way. I'd never sat down to think about it a great deal."¹⁰⁴ He did not have the specifics of when and where. He just "knew about it osmotically."¹⁰⁵ Paulina said, "It was in my bones. It was in my sub-conscious, my consciousness. I don't know how I knew. I just knew. Always knew."¹⁰⁶ Some vaguely remember the adults reminiscing about the old country or about something that had happened in the camps but mostly, they did not hear about the Holocaust. That would only come out later, and not with them.

Those parents who never hid the knowledge of being in the concentration camps also rarely dwelled on it. It varied within families but stayed within that range of reactions. It was understood in certain instances that that you did not go there. Knowing about it but not being able to talk freely and openly or to ask the thousands of questions you had was a lot to ask of children.

Of the group I interviewed, two of the participants described the Holocaust in a context different from the rest. Rob felt he got too much information:

I hardly ever had to discuss it with them because there were plenty of stories with the small Hungarian community. They seemed to be talking about it quite often — The one thing about my parents in particular. I think they had a preoccupation with talking about wartime. So when you ask me, "Did they talk about it?" Well, it was the topic of conversation virtually all the time. When they got together with other Hungarians who immigrated around the same time, or with friends of theirs, it was constantly the topic of conversation."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Jake, 4.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Jake, 5.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Paulina, 12.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Rob, 10.

When I asked Anna if she heard about the Holocaust as she was growing up: “Yes. Constantly. Constantly!” she recalled. Then she wondered aloud about how her cousin had answered: “Now if you interviewed Sy, I would be surprised. I would want to know what he knew because it is my impression that his parents didn’t talk about it at all. . . . My mother did. They hung onto the Holocaust almost like a security blanket.”¹⁰⁸ She was right. Her cousin Sy’s family, in whose house they lived for a time, “didn’t discuss it at all.”¹⁰⁹ or only on certain occasions, and not because it was purposely kept secret. If you asked, parents would answer but no more than the answer and with no accompanying details. Ilana’s family did not celebrate *Shabbos* on Friday nights but at *Pesach* or the High Holidays, she remembered. “If we could get a little bit of *schnapps* into our dad, we could loosen him up.”¹¹⁰ The knowledge of the past did not consume Eva either. Her parents spoke about their lives in Europe and in the camps but it was, as in my house, more about the funny stuff and never about the horror stories. Barry who had “escaped Hungary with them . . . knew what the conversations were about but not so much focusing on... horrors and . . . difficult times.”¹¹¹ Except for Rob and Anna who did hear stories, it was not part of their lives, contrary to what much of the literature had claimed.

Jake, in trying to explain how the Holocaust was really not a big deal, told me the following story: “In the first part of my legal career, I had a partner whose father had been a prisoner of war, a Canadian. We compared notes and he had very similar experiences that I did in that his father who endured hardship, but nothing like what our parents did, also

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Anna, 10.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Sy, 6.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Ilana, 18-19.

¹¹¹ Interview with Barry, 5.

didn't talk about the experiences."¹¹² At first I did not pay particular attention to this passage but when I went back to it, one phrase came off the page: 'but nothing like what our parents did'. He insists that he and his partner 'had very similar experiences', that his partner's father had also endured hardship but right in the middle, seemingly nothing more than an aside, he interjects with 'but nothing like what our parents did'. Openly, he would insist that it was just the same as anybody else who had had a traumatic experience. But at the same time, there was the admission that *nothing* was as bad – 'but let's not talk about it. It's over, it's time to move forward.' Barry also threw in an aside when he described how his father went through experiences worse than what his mother had experienced in Auschwitz. Each one seemed to exhibit this kind of matter-of-fact attitude, spoken more as a throw-away comment and with no elaboration. But these happenings *were* bad; they were the worst. There are no words that adequately describe the breadth and scope of the tragedy. Could it be that the children were unable to deal with their parents' experiences. Perhaps, the facts were too much to digest, too overwhelming. Pushing back and distancing oneself was a strategic tactic of survival – for everyone in the family.

Talk of the Holocaust Out There

I asked the group if the Holocaust played a role in their lives, separate from the personal connection of their parents. For Ilana, it did not come until she was "a teenager and got involved in Young Judea and part of Young Judea was not only learning about Israel and Zionists, and what went on, etcetera, but also teaching to younger kids."¹¹³ Sy and Paulina remembered as well that it did not come up until they were 12 or 13. But they could not remember exactly; Sy thought it might have been at *Talmud Torah*.

¹¹² Interview with Jake, 7.

¹¹³ Interview with Ilana, 19. Note: Young Judea is a Zionist youth organization.

I asked if they had ever discussed this with other survivor kids or other Jewish kids and whether others were aware of what their parents had gone through. Yes, others knew but again, it was not a major issue. Rob said that when people found out about his mother, they would ask questions. There was not the forum then that there was later. It was, as Sy says, "just in passing, nothing big."¹¹⁴ The Holocaust was just not a topic of conversation outside their circle of family and friends. It was the same for Suzanna. She also led the double and triple life. She had non-Jewish friends she walked to and from school, she had Jewish girlfriends at school and on the weekends she had an Orthodox Jewish girlfriend she spent the Sabbath with. Within her family, there was the knowledge and the stories of the Holocaust. Outside was a different matter. As far as she knew, no one else cared or thought about it. However, one day – she thinks it was grade 10 or 11 – she was caught off guard:

I'll tell you what I remember --- A lot of Jewish kids took German because they figured they knew three words in Yiddish so it would help them learn German. Larry Levine, who was the shit disturber of all time was in my class learning German and he was the ringleader for the Jewish kids and there was like at least 50 to 60 percent Jewish kids actually causing the teacher to have a nervous breakdown. And I think this was my very first conscious, you know, consciousness about the Holocaust in the sort of general Jewish life. The teacher finally broke down. She was a woman, and she said, 'You know, German is the language of people who produce Beethoven and Goethe and all the great writers and all the great musicians so what is it that you have against it?' and Larry Levine was the one to stand up and say, 'And how about the concentration camps. They were great people when it came to the concentration camps.' He said that. She was very taken aback. Now, obviously, she knew all about it but she didn't know how to answer him, and I don't really know what the answer would be. But I remember thinking, Larry is not a child of survivors, like I am. And the well of anger, even then, I recognized – I actually stepped outside myself and recognized the anger in the Jewish kids who were not Holocaust survivors. And to put us all on the same side! They were angrier than I was. And that's why we had all acted out in this sort of general – you know, from unconscious motives, I think, until Larry put it into words....And I realized that you know, you think that people were so indifferent. Even Jews were indifferent because they didn't, we didn't know, we couldn't do anything, we were powerless, we weren't the people we are now. But that was elicited and that was before anything. Before *Schindler's List*, before Holocaust. All of that. That was in their heads, even then. And they decided to act it out in German class.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Interview with Sy, 19.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Suzanna, 17-18.

At that moment, she realized for the first time that she was not alone, that others had been thinking about it, too. In retrospect, she knows that there was really nothing one could do. One just did not talk about it. It was as if talking about it might make it worse for the Jews. After all, that is what the messages in the media conveyed.

From the more personal questions about the Holocaust, I moved to a discussion of the representations of the Holocaust in the culture around them: on TV, in the movies, at school, anywhere. My questions ranged from the general to the specific, and the answers were about the same: ‘No, they did not remember the Holocaust as something they remembered out there.’ Less than half remember some sort of talk about the Holocaust at school. Ilana remembers it coming up in Grade 10 history when they studied ‘European history and the War and stuff like that.’¹¹⁶ Ilana is probably referring to *The Modern Age*, printed in 1963 when the group was in high school, its author ‘an outstanding professor of education who trained a generation of teachers, made only the slightest reference to the Holocaust.’¹¹⁷ Anna only remembered the *absence* of talk about the Holocaust. She also remembers how she reacted at the time:

Grade 10 or Grade 11 . . . we were taking World War II in history. Okay, and Hitler and everything. The Jewish aspect, I don’t know if it was on purpose or what. Do you remember any teachers . . . it was totally as though it didn’t exist — And at that point, too, I mean especially me. Today somebody would have stood up and said ‘Hang on, there was more to this.’ But at that time, I mean I knew what was going on. But I didn’t feel free enough to put up my hand and say ‘Hey, something else was going on in Poland in 1939.’¹¹⁸

At the same time, she remembers being frightened, sitting there in class. She went on to describe her feelings at the time: ‘I knew and I felt the strangeness of it washing over me. And in a way I was kind of glad because I was scared that if that subject was introduced and

¹¹⁶ Interview with Ilana, 16.

¹¹⁷ Abella and Bialystok, ‘Canada and the Holocaust,’ 771-773.

¹¹⁸ Interview with Anna, 17-18.

I was the only Jew, you know — ¹¹⁹ Anna could not finish the sentence because she could not imagine then what she would have done. When she tried to talk to her father about what was going on or rather, what was *not* going on in class, he gave her the only advice he felt comfortable giving:

I used to come home to discuss it with my dad and say, ‘Look how they’re not even mentioning it at all as though it never happened because it’s Jewish.’ And he says, ‘Well if you’re smart, you’ll keep quiet. Don’t you be the one to bring it up.’ ... You see I guess it depended on the . . . on the individual teacher. I don’t remember at all. And I remember saying to myself, ‘Where’s the Holocaust here?’ I remember how clean it was, that there wasn’t anything mentioned then. I mean, we’re talking what? Early 60s. You wouldn’t have mentioned that. Who felt secure even to let anybody know you were Jewish?¹²⁰

Exactly. Who did feel secure enough to openly and freely proclaim our Jewishness? Who we were and what our parents had gone through was never a secret but in the fifties and sixties, this was not readily discussed. The word Holocaust had not yet been adopted into the vernacular, let alone mentioned. When it did come up in the films or on television, it was as Anna remembered – clean. So sanitized for public consumption it would have been difficult to recognize what it really was. Like being Jewish, it was always there, either hidden under a blanket of silence or euphemistically disguised.

No, they did not remember seeing or hearing about the Nuremburg trials in the media. Oh, perhaps there was a vague recollection of the movie but not much more than that. Paulina remembered the name.¹²¹ Most remembered, at best, some sketchy details of the Eichmann trial. Some admitted they were not sure if they were mixing up the events then with later coverage of the details and related events. They remembered Eichmann in the glass booth but again said they could not really be sure if that was the image on

¹¹⁹ Interview with Anna, 18.

¹²⁰ Interview with Anna, 18.

¹²¹ Interview with Paulina, 11.

television they watched during the trial or in *Life* magazine or years later in some TV movie. Ilana had an “image of him almost skeletal. Not that he looked evil or anything, but he just seemed skeletal and shrunken sitting there in that booth.”¹²² Paulina’s memory was just as sketchy but elicited feelings of revulsion:

I remember him being in *Life* magazine and thinking, ‘Ugh. I don’t want to know about this. This is yuck.’ I knew that this was something that deeply affected my family and I don’t remember my parents talking about it. I mean, they didn’t really talk about anything. So it was never like there was dinner table conversation in our household. So it’s too bad. Yeah. I don’t have vivid memories, I just have sort of underhand memory --- Him sitting in the [glass] block.¹²³

Sy veered away from the subject as the following exchange reveals:

BLC: Sy, do you remember the Eichmann trial on TV?

Sy: Um, yeah. I remember them. I was in Grade 10 at the time - - - Yeah, Grade 10 or 11.

BLC: So you do remember?

Sy: Yeah, Yeah. I do.

BLC: Did it make some sort of impact on you?

Sy: Yeah. I can remember everything. We had a classroom on the west block at that time.

BLC: Where did you watch it?

Sy: At home. At home.

BLC: Was the trial discussed at school at all?

Sy: I can’t remember.¹²⁴

¹²² Interview with Ilana, 19.

¹²³ Interview with Paulina, 11.

¹²⁴ Interview with Sy, 11-12.

However, Sy did remember where he was and what was happening at the time. He mentioned the exact classroom at school but talked about watching it at home. He ‘can remember everything’ then he ‘can’t remember’. His answers are mono-syllabic and abrupt. He repeats the words ‘Yeah’ and ‘remember’ several times but still is unable to elaborate.

Jake sets the event within a broader context but also seems to contradict himself:

Frankly, the only time I can remember it ever being an issue would be as I said when we would be sitting at home watching documentaries and certainly when Eichmann was arrested, it became an issue — Well, we didn’t follow it that closely. I just remember seeing him in, of course, that glassed-in box in Israel and I remember the story about his being taken out — you know, claimed by Israeli agents, but I must say I didn’t pay a great deal of attention to it.¹²⁵

For Jake, the only time the Holocaust was ‘an issue’ was during the documentaries they watched on TV or ‘certainly’ when Eichmann was arrested. He repeats that ‘it became an issue’ then immediately follows with the words that he ‘didn’t follow it that closely’. He remembers the glass box, he remembers how Israeli agents had ‘taken’ Eichmann out of the country but ‘didn’t pay a great deal of attention to it’. Their ambivalence was obvious. Here was one of the highest ranking criminals of Hitler’s Third Reich and no one can remember too many details. They had distanced themselves from what had happened and were in the process of creating other stories in their lives. These stories were to become the stories they live by today. However, the moments of hesitation in Eva’s words speak of a struggle to gain control over the knowledge. It is as if she is trying to brush it away, like a stray hair over an eye: “Obviously the Holocaust must have had some — It did have an impact. I just don’t like to . . . I don’t think and breathe it every day.”¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Interview with Jake, 7.

¹²⁶ Interview with Eva, 22.

These conversations again underscore the inner conflicts, the pushing away of what could have been too traumatic to deal with as well as revealing some of the tensions inherent in the production of the stories themselves. The contradictions and the hesitations illustrate how the story is *still* being constructed. They seem to be sifting through the details, trying to choose what will be included in the story. Could this be part of the survival technique they developed? This thesis can only deal with the testimony now, and that testimony speaks of hurt but also of resilience and of being active constructors of their lives.

Children's Lives

In fact, knowing their parents were Holocaust survivors took its toll, but not always in apparent ways. Being a good son or daughter of survivors was something everyone shared in this group. I never asked anyone if he or she were well behaved or did well at school. The information came out in countless and indirect ways during the course of the interviews. Eva emphasized several times how she was more adult than other children and how proud her parents felt. She said, "I never went wild. I wasn't one of these teenagers who fainted in front of the Beatles and whoever and pulled out my hair."¹²⁷ She adds, "I think I was much too mature for that."¹²⁸ Several told of how important it was to succeed. They accepted their parents as they were and tried not to question it any further than that, knowing it might hurt them.

The Holocaust, the camps, the stories of utter devastation, it was always there, a presence that was felt, one that became part of everyday. Bits of information would come out and sometimes one would ask a little question – the name of a person or a city, nothing major or too probing – and if parents were in the mood, more details could be added to the

¹²⁷ Interview with Eva, 19.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

expanding story. Yes, they knew very well what their parents had suffered. Added to this was the fact they were now alone, struggling to make it in Canada and this meant sacrifices on everybody's part. All were respectful – respectful of their memories and their private thoughts – and there was an understanding. Jake explained it in this way: "I was never very demanding of my parents in any event. I didn't want to, frankly go there because I knew, for my mother more than my father, it was a very difficult thing. Losing families is bad enough, but losing a child is as devastating as it can be."¹²⁹ Was it because he thought they had gone through enough? Or was he, like some of the others, afraid of what they would dredge up if they were reminded. Or, perhaps it was for many complex reasons. Jake recalled, "There would be documentaries and my parents, my mother in particular would stiffen when she would see documentaries on Hitler. It was like a black cloud would come over. They wouldn't become angry, but you knew – you could sense that there was a chill wind that was there."¹³⁰

Ilana thought there was another consequence of being a child of survivors. The fear of the unknown, Ilana said, made us 'hyper-vigilant'. She explained what she meant:

One of the things I learned about survivor children is that we are hyper-vigilant. Did you know that? — I am always aware of the connections of people — I can go three connections away from Clinton. Two away from the President of Poland through my cousin. It's always being aware of who you are and where you are. One of the things I never do is I'm never without food around. I always have some kind of food around — It is something I consciously recognize that I do now. I do it less and less now, because I know I don't *have* to do it.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Interview with Jake, 8.

¹³⁰ Interview with Jake, 5.

¹³¹ Interview with Ilana, 23.

It was interesting that when my interview with Barry ended and as we were walking to the door, he started to open up a bit more. I can only relate what I remember because by then, I had shut off the tape.¹³² He thought that if you had Holocaust parents, it would be just impolite to be rude or inconsiderate. How could you be? It is something he is aware of. He just cannot understand anybody who would not be kind to parents who had gone through something like that. Not that they talked about it, but you knew what they had gone through and you had to make up for their loss. You had to be a model child for them and if you were disrespectful or you were rude or impolite, you felt bad about it. Barry ended with, "And there's good and bad to that."

Out of the good and the bad, came *other* stories, stories that would begin to fill the gaps in their lives and perhaps begin to chase the ghosts away. The stories they tell today give some insight into how they have achieved this process.

Narratives of Redemption

Instead of dwelling on their old stories, new stories began to develop. Canada was a new beginning and a new life for these immigrant families. With the passing of years, a feeling of greater security and now as well, a greater degree of 'permission' to talk about their pasts, survivors began to open up, but not to their children. Barry thinks the first time he heard his parents "talking about it in any public way,"¹³³ was to their grandchildren: "They started asking the questions. Not spontaneously, not instantaneously but at the right moment, you ask the right question with the right people around and they would start talking."¹³⁴ When Jake and his brother got married, his parents would talk to their wives

¹³² When I got in the car, I immediately wrote down what he said.

¹³³ Interview with Barry, 6.

¹³⁴ Interview with Barry, 6.

and *their* parents. It just evolved that way with most of the group. Their losses had been immense, their grief immeasurable but these parents were determined to achieve a semblance of order and normalcy, no matter what. Their children would have a normal life just like everybody else in Canada. These adults were, as children, crossed by intersecting discourses of sexuality and gender, race, class and ethnicity. Every day they were bombarded with the codes and representations of how they should feel, how they should act. Their lived culture was a site for contradictions where each cultural form was negotiated, opposed and used. The knowledge of the Holocaust was one very powerful form with which they struggled. It was, as their narratives seemed to hint at, too much to bear and so, in time, they created their own stories. Leslie Gotfrit posits that “we struggle against being tied to identities of self that subject us to domination and exploitation.”¹³⁵ As a result, they resisted with their ‘narratives of redemption’, reconstructed stories of life and renewal which replaced their parents’ narratives which had threatened to destroy them. It was how the world had first dealt with Anne Frank. It was a practice that evolved over the years.

Without any interference or intervention, I would like to end with the legacy these adult children of Holocaust have inherited, the stories of strength and courage – and healing – which they relate now, to themselves and their children. It is *their* stories of survival.

¹³⁵ Leslie Gotfrit, “Women Dancing Back: Disruption and the Politics of Pleasure,” *Journal of Education* 170, no. 3 (1988), 128.

Eva learned the lesson of confidence and knowing that what is inside is more important than what you are on the outside:

I would think that from the Jewish community. . . . I think they respected my parents for what they had gone through and what they were starting to accomplish and because they were cultured and always represented themselves well. I've always learnt that from my mother. You don't have to be wearing Polo to look good. And I try to tell my children. 'It's not what you wear, it's how you wear it.' So she always looked well and was able to do — to make due with whatever she had. I was brought up and my night table was an orange crate. And we were in Toronto the other day, and a very old friend of ours, my mother's too sick. 'I'll always remember Lina,' she says, 'and her orange crates and how she sewed those little curtains,' you know, and that's what it was. . . . in my mother's ways, you just do it and that's it. . . . Get on with it. And I guess I did. In my own way. Sometimes suffering for it in later life. Perhaps not being as understanding as other people. I always felt, I don't know how you feel, but as much as I am very North American and I have North American friends and I don't distinguish them now whether they are second generation Holocaust survivors or whatever, I always knew that I am different from my American friends whose parents never went through that. Sometimes I think they feel intimidated by that. . . . And I feel different because I think, okay, maybe the Holocaust had something to do with it. Yes, my mother doesn't throw out bread now, but she probably never threw out bread when she was a child before the Holocaust. It wasn't the European way. You know, manners and being grown up and being responsible and knowing how to use a knife and fork — When I think now that I have now in my possession a little note that my grandmother gave to my mother when she was pulling out on a train, saying, 'I have a good seat. Don't worry about me, and I'll see you again.' This was written in Czech and that's the last she ever heard of her mother and doesn't know what happened. I think about it today and say, 'Where's the finality? How could people go on?' You know, so — and yet they were such — all of them were such strong people and made these lives for themselves. I don't know whether I could have done that. But as a child I don't know whether that impacted on me. The only way I could say that it impacted on me, I was very strongly Jewish and would have always stuck up for myself and did.¹³⁶

How could one not be moved by the heart-breaking poignancy of those last words Eva's grandmother spoke. They were words of hope and optimism in an attempt to shield her child.

Most of the parents were not what would be considered 'cool'. These parents spoke with accents and most did not go out to restaurants or south to Florida to visit grandparents. Gidget and her family went to Hawaii. They packed a picnic basket wrapped in a blanket

¹³⁶ Interview with Eva, 7, 22.

and went to the nearest park. Today, Ilana knows she was impatient with her mother and that she did not fully appreciate what her mother had done for her. She did later on and now shares the story – and her precious memento – with her own daughter:

I can remember we had big arguments around Grade 6. My mother made me this beautiful Henwell corduroy peach-coloured dress with polka-dots on it. It was beautiful but it was homemade and I didn't want to wear it. And she refused to make me anything for me after that. So then we bought clothes. She was a great seamstress. They were homemade. I don't remember having a lot of clothes, but she taught me how to buy clothes. She taught me value for money and how much to spend and to look at seams, and all that kind of stuff. And later on when I was in university she started making things. She got into crocheting. She crocheted things for me then and I appreciated them at that point. One of the tops she made me my daughter wears now. And she loves it now because her *Bubbie* made it for her. Of course, she only knows her from her pictures, but she knows that she made it.¹³⁷

These memories and the stories attached to them are what matter now.

Rob says it is hard teaching his children what his father taught him:

My kids could never really appreciate what they have here. I suppose it's always been my compass because knowing that you came from that, having what I have today, it's pretty comfortable. I can appreciate it. . . . To do better. Which is what my father would have wanted for me.¹³⁸

He told me of a recent family gathering and how he and his mother began to reminisce. He was happy that his father lived to see his success as a businessman and as a father with a wonderful family:

I think you know we had an occasion the other day. It was my daughter's birthday and we had my mother here. We had the family here. We don't get together that often anymore because Judith is in London, Simon is in Toronto. My youngest son, of course, is here. We came together and we would talk about old times. We had a great time. When I asked my mother, 'Did you have a good time when you came over?' and she said she had a wonderful time, but the part that was sad is my father would have wanted to see this. He passed away two years ago . . .¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Interview with Ilana, 9.

¹³⁸ Interview with Rob, 19.

¹³⁹ Interview with Rob, 19-20.

Like the rest of the group, Rob had constructed for himself the story of his life and family.

Whether it is true or not does not matter. It does not take away from what is truly important in his life and what he remembers today:

We had our differences because he didn't assimilate very well so we didn't have a lot in common. But looking back on it, he certainly wanted me to succeed. There was no question. He took more of an interest in me when I was older. More so than when I was younger. I think the reason for that was that he was too busy trying to make a living. Yeah. So I think my father lived through me. His only son. His only child, really. To him, in his own way, he did everything so that I had a future here.¹⁴⁰

When Jake was near the end of his interview he concluded with these remarks: "I am grateful to my parents for not having made the Holocaust more in our lives than I think it ought to have been."¹⁴¹

In the end, all learned, like Barry, what really mattered:

Yeah. I appreciated that my father worked hard. He didn't — He wasn't a modern father. He was an old-fashioned father. You know. He provided and my mother looked after the house. You saw him — not do as I say, but do as I do. He was a role model of working hard. Wasn't all-bad.¹⁴²

No, indeed, it was not all bad.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Rob, 4, 19.

¹⁴¹ Interview with Jake, 7.

¹⁴² Interview with Barry, 13.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

When I began to talk about doing this study, one historian asked me how this was going to be different from other immigrant groups. Feeling defensive, I answered that it was going to incorporate the oral histories of children of *Holocaust* survivors. The word Holocaust seemed to silence him, as if he were afraid to contradict me. After all, how can one impugn *anything* to do with the Holocaust. I used it like a talisman, to ward off anyone who might question me just as Eva said she knew how others were intimidated. But this was unfair. This explanation was too glib. It was not simply a matter of ‘the Holocaust’. Subsequent questioning and research revealed how complex the issues are and remain to be difficult for many, including myself.

My role in this research was affected on several levels: I was a researcher, a recorder and I am a child of survivors. At times, it was difficult to remove myself: impossible to do it entirely. I could easily type in ‘our’ for ‘their’ because their memories are mine. After all, it was my own engagement with popular culture that began the process. Suzanna had remarked how we have all of us become each other’s memories. Sy also mentioned how I could have written his interview. We shared much and there is a link between all of us – even those I did not know – and yet, there were also different realities shaping our experiences.

Early in this journey, I was describing my research to a group of Jewish historians and added, “But it’s not really about the Holocaust!” They laughed. “Okay,” I quipped back. “it *is* about the Holocaust.” I still think I was right – and wrong. It was not just about the Holocaust our parents went through during the war. One aspect was, however, about how these now adults signified and engaged the memories of their parents’ Holocaust. That is where my background worked for me. During the interviews, I made a conscious effort to

distance myself. I later took my interviewees' narratives and placed them in the context of the secondary literature of postwar Canada. But because the sense of engagement and the making of memory is a co-creation, I called on myself, that scared, little immigrant kid, to help me sift through the words. My reinsertion became part of the new meanings we made together. I knew what they were talking about. I recognized the denials and the bravado; I sympathized with those who had heard the stories every day and had to relive their parents' loss. My trip of discovery in this thesis reflected every step we have all taken to get where we are today.

Yes, the adults I interviewed were, as children, immigrants and yes, they shared many of the same fears and struggles that other immigrants experience in a new country. Canada was a strange culture that was slow to accept difference and was too often unwilling or perhaps unable to reflect other people's histories. Key parts of their stories indeed, do parallel postwar history when many Canadians were adjusting to the new peace and looking forward to a better future. Yes, like everyone else, but different, to use Morton Weinfeld's most recent book of that title.¹ As diverse, and as similar as the survivors had been in Europe, so too were their children. The children's experiences were varied and complex, contrary to some popular assumptions of the stereotype DP and the earlier literature on trauma.² While their lives constantly drew on the wider historical developments around them, there were, as well, social and cultural influences shaping and transforming their lives. For these reasons, it was necessary to hear their voices and how their narratives developed within this context.

¹ Morton Weinfeld, *Like Everyone Else...But Different: The Paradoxical Success of Canadian Jews* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2001).

² A few years ago, at a party, I was standing next to another 'survivor kid' who also was listening, as I was, to another COS holding court on her years of going to support groups in order to come to terms with who she was. The listener, after listening for a few minutes, quipped, "Okay...maybe we were dysfunctional but hey, it worked!" Some of us have found relief through humour, just as the Jewish comedians.

Beginning with the popular best seller *Children of the Holocaust* and in the many subsequent discussions in the seventies, we heard testimony from children whose parents were unable to relate to them in what they felt was a normal parent-and-child way. There were stories of parents who directed their anger at the children themselves. At the other extreme, children spoke of never knowing as they were growing up that they were Jewish or never knowing what their parents had gone through then one day, perhaps rummaging through the attic for a lost item, they would suddenly happen on some papers. The results were devastating. With the group I interviewed, this was not the case. The extreme behaviour was just not there.

Yes. [Jake says] there was a residual bitterness that the people in the countries that they came from didn't do more, but in terms of the demonstration of how to get along with people and how to be respectful of people . . . universally . . . with the exception of maybe one person that I've known in my whole lifetime from that group, it was always one of fitting in, respectful.³

But it was more than just fitting in because the words of their narratives are driven by desire and closure as well as the need for change and movement.

Gliding

One significant aspect of the collective memories, arising out of the narratives of their lives, was how the children, who are now adults, learned to live severally, both in and out. They became adept at what I can only describe as 'gliding'. For me, the movement of gliding sums up the apparent seamlessness of our early lives, negotiating in and through, as well as navigating the cultural representations around us. It was the one thing we all shared. It was also the way *they* saw themselves, living within and without their worlds. They had the capacity to articulate themselves through the fractured, necessarily contradictory

³ Interview with Jake, 11.

structures of formed subjectivities . . . ⁴ It was a survival strategy that many of us learned to rely on if we were going to get along. If playing a role – in actuality, many roles – could get us through our lives, then that is what we did. No big deal?

I think it was, and is, a big deal, and knowing more about their stories can teach us not only *about* children's lived experiences but *how* they negotiated the divides of their lives and the consequences they suffered. Their narratives certainly reveal that through the changes they enacted and the accommodations they made. Constructing narratives imposes meaning and order in their lives.

Through my participants' personal testimonies, I heard how they both acted and were acted on, usually bracketed by their view that it was normal. Their words and stories spoke of being, in many respects, just like everybody else. If they were different, it was only because *all* immigrants went through these initial stages of adjustment in a new country. Much of the literature written from within and about other cultures seems to support this claim. Yes, these children *did* live 'normal' lives. They played with other kids – Jewish, Protestant, Catholic, immigrant and Canadian-born – they all hung out together. They went to school together. They were invited to each other's homes. Some joined clubs, some swam, others took music lessons. They took ballet lessons and were involved in all the activities thousands of Canadian children took part in during the buoyant postwar economy. Hana and Jake went to camp – maybe not expensive sleepover camp but close enough. Paulina was president of her BBYO chapter and elected Sweetheart one year. It mirrored what popular culture representations showed children doing.

⁴ Hall, "New Ethnicities,"

As I revisit the interviews, I never hear that the Holocaust was *insignificant* but it was never the centre of the discussions. But then, neither was it a part of the culture out there. When I brought up the subject, it was gently brushed aside or discussed within the broader context of their lives. It sounded very much like the responses to being Jewish, the two factors often tied in to each other. Parent experiences in the Holocaust, contrary to what much of the early literature disclosed, were not, the participants insisted, a major contributing factor in their lives. Yes, it happened and yes, it was tragic but parents lived their lives for the future, not the past. Even with those parents who never quite seemed to adjust, except for Paulina, no one really felt cheated. Eva certainly does not think of herself as deprived. As Suzanna described it, “we felt slightly different,”⁵ but it was always part of their background, their everyday life. You went about your business just like everyone else.

Even for those in the group who felt insecure, or who never quite felt comfortable or who never belonged to the mainstream, in the end, the issue of the Holocaust, they said, did not engulf them. The same seemed to hold true for the discussion around antisemitism. Like David Parker’s young Chinese people, these individuals have compartmentalized their lives, constructing “a segmentation between the private and public aspects of their lives marked by a keenness to downplay incidents of racism and discrimination.”⁶ The fictions afforded each one a sense of being ‘just like everybody else’. And it was *so* important to be normal, to be accepted in a culture that made it hard for anyone who stood out. That was part of the personal script we wrote. We all knew what our parents had gone through – directly or indirectly – but that was separate from our lives as new Canadians. The television programmes we watched, the movies we attended every Saturday afternoon – these were the normative discourses that showed us very clearly how we had to look and

⁵ Interview with Suzanna, 18.

⁶ David Parker, *Through Different Eyes: The Cultural Identities of Young Chinese People in Britain* (Brookfield, VT: Avebury, 1995), 233.

how we had to behave. Even those teachers who had a heightened sensitivity to our precarious positions, still, in the end, fell back on the white, Anglo-Saxon ideal we were expected to follow. The model we had to live up to was all around – and it was, or at least seemed to be, the dominant, most powerful representation.

Another interesting feature that came out in the course of the interviews was how we have, after finally learning the stories, forgotten – perhaps blocked? – the details of what happened to our parents during the war. “It’s the usual chronological problem.”⁷ concludes Suzanna. Gaps in memory were common during the interviews. More silence? Or more, perhaps, of wanting to make sense of their lives, trying to convince others by allowing “a possible fiction to take the place of history, and to build a new narrative which ought to carry through to a new dénouement.”⁸

With a fierce commitment to desire, the ‘authors’ of these stories construct and perform through the language of the narratives in ways that are not always apparent or comprehensible. Brooks, Haug and Steedman presented me with the tools of analysis for interpreting how they, as children and now, as adults, have constructed their own narratives of self-production: for example, Sy’s obvious reluctance and unease. His interview was one of the hardest for me. At first, I just said to myself, “Oh, that’s just the way he is – always was.” My questions during our interview elicited, at best, one- or two-word answers or he would bring the conversation to an end by saying he just couldn’t remember. I gave him the option, several times, of removing himself from the interview and the study entirely. He said no every time: he would continue. I felt certain there would be nothing to use. Surprisingly – I should have known better – despite what I thought would be a very lean interview, contained insights that still came through the gaps and the inconsistencies and the

⁷ Interview with Suzanna, I.

⁸ Peter Brooks, *Psychoanalysis and Storytelling* (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1994), 67.

nervous laughter. Insinuating itself was the sense of being apart, being different from the others and being unable to participate. Perhaps his resistance, an element that was present to varying degrees in all the interviews, reflects what must have been and continues to be contested issues for all of us. Was there a reluctance, an ambivalence on all our parts for I too, am implicated.

Despite the discourses operating around them, no one in this group succumbed entirely. Rather, they did and do exert some agency in their lives. They all lead Jewish lives. They strongly identify themselves as Jews and they openly talk about their parents' histories. Past stories have been incorporated into present stories. The fluidity and flexibility reflects, to repeat Stuart Hall's expression, "the extraordinary diversity"⁹ that comprises our subjective positions, our social experiences and our cultural identities.

It was at these points of discussion that I felt there was an appeal to me, the listener, to understand more than the words. There was a counter theme, of "not only what the narrative appears to say but also what it appears to intend."¹⁰ Throughout each person's script, an underlying 'song' would wind its way through the narrative and that was the admission of yes, they were different, remembering how it felt being who we were. While they have been affected in diverse ways and have interpreted their lived experiences in distinct transformative ways, the sense of dislocation and the desire to belong was always there – sometimes out in the open, at other times, as Cynthia Comacchio describes it, just hovering out of the corner of your eye, "never fully centred in their own lives and histories."¹¹ It was this appeal to normality that was so bound up with the notion of fitting

⁹ Stuart Hall, "New Ethnicities," in *Race, Culture and Difference*, ed. James Donald and Ali Rattansi, 252-259 (London: Sage, 1992), 254.

¹⁰ Brooks, *Psychoanalysis*, 61.

¹¹ Cynthia Comacchio, "Review of Doug Owsram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation*," H-Net Reviews (July 1997), 577.

in, variously and vigorously promoted during the postwar years in Canada. In the years following the war, media images especially not only told but showed us who belonged and who did not, who was part of the larger Canadian group and who was out at the margins looking in. Each participant's ability to engage with the culture of their childhood speaks to the strength of their parents' desires to make life normal for them. Their memories are so consumed with this that they have convinced themselves that they were normal.

This leads to another aspect of these testimonies and it has to do with exclusions and their consequences. Living in both the Christian and the various Jewish communities was, they said, an everyday, taken-for-granted assumption, to be dealt with as necessary. The suggestion that it was anything serious or traumatic was either brushed aside, explained, or completely denied. Each person's *one* remembrance of a 'Jewish incident', the one that stands out in his or her memory, reveals how these Jewish children of Holocaust survivors did, despite protestations to the contrary, lead racially structured lives. Each story, different from the next, illustrates how racism is not a singular social phenomenon. Not essential, it can be tracked in many places, at various times in history and with different consequences. And yet, all racisms "fundamentally structure social experience, people's interactions with others, their life chances, and the meanings that they can make."¹²

When Anna's teacher demanded to know what kind of Jew she was, at that moment he was classifying all Jews into one fixed, homogeneous category, not allowing for any one else's meaning but his own. Racializations are not necessarily racist but when he essentialized her Jewishness, he was separating her from the dominant group, *his* group, pushing her out of the inner circle. She had chosen to define her own Jewishness and initially, had the courage to say it. But the unequal relationship between them, the power

¹² Timothy J. Stanley, "Why I Killed Canadian History: Towards an Anti-Racist History in Canada," *Social History* (Fall, 2001), 94.

exerted by a teacher over a student, soon silenced her. After lunch, she did not return. He had erased her identities, including her own sense of what it meant to be Jewish. She had no choice but act the role of the Jew he had constructed.

Racisms can operate through language as in the case with Jake's neighbour who used the derogatory Polish word *jid* and Ilana's friend's father who used the word *kike*. When I asked Ilana how she reacted, if at all, Ilana told me she "didn't know what to do, what to say."¹³ Both she and Jake kept quiet, not calling attention to themselves, not stepping forward to confirm their Jewishness. They were silenced. Jake insisted that it was just an expression. It wasn't, and isn't, though, 'just an expression' because those two little words denied *their* meanings. Many Jews I know, including myself, when we meet people for the first time, almost immediately, directly or indirectly, make some remark or reference to our Jewishness, thus announcing who we are. Our history, our remembered 'one incident' – or more – is enough to keep us on guard against any possible menace of antisemitism. Rob, when he perceives a social situation that threatens to move in that direction, removes himself physically.¹⁴ That is why we remain, as Ilana suggests, vigilant, looking for other Jews, feeling safer in numbers.

Racisms involve the organization of exclusions based on racialization. It can be discursive, as in the name calling or it can involve exclusion from a group or institution. When Eva was 'outed' by her Gentile neighbours – good friends of her parents up until then – she was told to go to her own synagogue, where she belonged. That was deliberate. In Barry's case, I don't think it was deliberate. His mentor's ignorance, though well-meaning, labelled Barry without his approval or prior knowledge. It also caused Barry anxiety, leading him to question his own security, whether he had committed a faux pas so egregious

¹³ Interview with Ilana, 15.

¹⁴ Interview with Rob, 16.

that his job was on the line. Ironically, Barry was the one who tried to smooth things over, convincing his boss that it was okay. In a later incident, the roles were reversed, with Barry now the senior man. His junior, fearful of ‘coming out’ – even though he could have stayed hidden because of his name – did not know what to do about the Jewish holidays. He knew Barry was Jewish but still he moved cautiously, taking those tentative steps, seeming to ‘look around to see if it was safe’. Hiding, whether purposeful or ascribed, is part of the essence of racism, having to do with non-trivial consequences. The hiding, the passing – these were common in the face of the messages and the representations in the fifties. And nowhere was this more prevailing than on TV.¹⁵ The imagined, white community constructed a norm, one that became so accepted that it went practically unnoticed.¹⁶ As a result, some, just like those Hungarian Jews Suzanna described, went to church to hide only to find other Jews doing the same thing. In the small towns, their efforts at passing as Christian were often so successful that their Jewishness and their Holocaust history was lost. Deliberate or intended, the exclusions – and inclusions – are still the same.

Racialization is not just done to *another* person. It can also be a process of self-defining. Sy’s Jewish teacher, though not hiding his religion, had marked out his own boundaries. When he sent Sy to the office for wearing shorts that day, he was, Sy felt, acting as a Jew, not as a teacher. It was Sy’s perception that his action was antisemitic.

¹⁵ A case could be made that films did contain certain elements of dissent from the white, Anglo-Saxon norm but in the case of adolescents, the films at the Saturday matinees were geared towards the teenagers and television was much more available to greater numbers. Not everybody went to the movies – some couldn’t afford the money – but everybody in this group had a TV.

¹⁶ Jessamyn Neuhaus, “The Way to a Man’s Heart: Gender Roles, Domestic Ideology, and Cookbooks in the 1950s.” *Journal of Social History* (Spring, 1999), 2.

These examples also brought to mind the notion of ‘performance’ where the performativity of Jewishness could be trotted out or not. This is very suggestive of what Judith Butler talks about in regards to gender.¹⁷ Butler’s idea of identity is that it is just that, a performance, not an essential core that is biologically inherited. Our identities, gendered and otherwise, are the dramatic *effect* of our performances. Seen in this way, each person’s sense of self – our ‘being the same but different’ – came about because of the roles we performed everyday. The performance *is* the identity – and identities – we adopted and which formed us as subjects. We measured ourselves in relation to what we saw every day. Whether against our wills or voluntarily, the fictions become our identities.

Butler would argue that these performances are part of working towards change and understanding how contradictions can operate within the same individual and within groups of individuals. These sites of contestations point to how individuals cannot easily be slotted into neat and tidy categories. Just as culture is a hybrid, so too are their identities.¹⁸ Rather than looking for that one story that tells it all, future research must be capable of articulating the wide variety of historical subjective positions. Interrogating the intersections of their multiple and contradictory subject positions leads to a discussion of the consequences of the everyday practices and representations of the culture around them and how these children ultimately structured their lives. The analysis must shift the emphasis from the notion of an essential universal self to one that is socially constructed – multiple, complex and unendingly reconstituting itself.

¹⁷ Judith Butler, “Imitation and Gender Insubordination,” in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss, 15-29 (New York and London: Routledge, 1991).

¹⁸ See Cameron McCarthy and Warren Crichlow, *Race, Identity and Representation in Education* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993).

While people are different, they do also share certain points of similarity, writing and playing out their scripts in a particular historical context. Everyone in this group would have wanted to belong. No one wanted to be anything but Jewish or anyone other than the children of their heroic parents but it was because of who they were that made them different: not only different but missing from the larger picture. Their images and their stories were absent. It was such a denial, though, of who *we* were, of what our families had gone through and miraculously survived. At certain times, certain details or occurrences will trigger early memories, reminding me – and my contemporaries – of these messages, still influencing who we are today. It has further implications for how we teach our teachers and our children.¹⁹

Jake observed: “I mean, it’s important, it’s significant, but it’s not the only thing in our lives. It didn’t subsume us. It didn’t overcome us. We lived normal lives. And the only thing missing in our lives, frankly, was not having any immediate family.”²⁰ Ironically, neither did the families on TV. No one on television had grandparents. No aunts or uncles or even cousins joined in during holidays such as Christmas. If outsiders did come in, they were usually neighbours or someone the family had befriended. It looked much like our families did in those first years after our arrival in Canada. Imagine, because of the Holocaust, we *were* the idealized nuclear families of the postwar.

¹⁹ See “Implications for Education” below.

²⁰ Interview with Jake.

Implications and Further Study

I would suggest that we do need to recover alternative histories and alternative memories to that espoused in contemporary institutional discourses...not as a form of nostalgia but as an important aspect of remembering for the present.²¹

In the introduction, I quoted David Morley and return to him now. He makes the crucial point that we as teachers must always remember, that "readers are always already formed, shaped as subjects, by the ideological discourses which have operated on them prior to their encounter with the text in question."²² The texts that I have been looking at have been those of popular culture. What has been revealed is an unresolved tension between the psychological underpinnings of this thesis and their links to broader historical patterns and forces. For example, this thesis has drawn on certain psychoanalytic concepts without exploring them in depth. One way to further develop the research done here is to think through these issues and the links between people's psychological lives and the forces of the culture around them.

No child, no student is a *tabula rasa* when he or she enters the classroom. Culture has permeated students' language, organizing and constructing, forming and shaping their consciousness of reality, indeed, of their *selves*. In an investigation of preservice teachers' responses to popular films about teaching, Judith Robertson found that teachers themselves come into the classroom with "images of teaching from popular culture (including cine-texts) to help form their identities in complex and unexpected ways."²³ To be sure, we all of us inhabit a multi-cultural, multi-dimensional environment which is "the framework on

²¹ Cathryn McConaghy, "Awkward Memories: Monuments to Women's Vulnerability," manuscript submitted to the journal *Gender, Place and Culture*, n.d., n.p.

²² David Morley, "Changing Paradigms in Audience Studies," in *Remote Control: Television, Audiences, and Cultural Power*, ed. Ellen Seiter, Hans Borchers, Gabriele Kreutzner and Eva-Maria Warch, 16-43 (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 21.

²³ Judith P. Robertson, "Popular Culture and the Female Primary School Teacher," *Canadian Journal of Education*, 22, no. 2, (1997), 124.

which we build our meanings of who we are as subjects."²⁴ Teachers must not stand aloof and must not ignore the complexities that operate within each child. Rather, teachers need to become engaged participants in the process of understanding how culture is a broad site of learning and how our own identities and that of our students are formed as social subjects.

From the interviews I conducted, I wanted to achieve a greater understanding of this process in order to 'read' the complex narratives that relate how we are located in our worlds. As a teacher, I need to search for a means to assist education's ability to think dynamically about the uses and affects of texts in society. As a teacher of teachers in training, I want these future educators to know that there are many smaller histories, many stories waiting to be told, so that they "may begin to understand not only the constituted nature of reality, but also the burden of a past that provides models crucial for the formation of individual and collective identities."²⁵ The models we construct are not meant to be cookie-cutter molds nor the definitive last word but instead, they are meant to be jumping off points for further discussion and, it is to be hoped, deeper insight. In this study, I attempted to interrogate how children, now speaking as adults, engaged with the popular culture around them. I found that contrary to those accounts that would have individuals unqualifiedly accepting the dominant messages, their responses were always negotiated and mediated. As attractive and as potent as the images were, individuals learned to reconstitute themselves, to accommodate themselves to the outside world and to the spectrum of discourses offered to them everyday. Neither passive nor completely oppositional, their desires and ultimately their memories speaks to their resilience and perhaps of the strength and flexibility of other children. History, "the sum total of previous human activities and

²⁴ Graeme Turner, *British Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (Cambridge, MA: Unwin Hyman, Inc., 1996), 26.

²⁵ Judith P. Robertson, "'Art Made Tongue-Tied by Authority': A Literary Psychoanalysis of Obstacles in Teacher Learning," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 17, 1 (2001), 27.

experiences, that which shapes the present and defines its possibilities."²⁶ is also a reconstruction of how individuals make meaning of their pasts. However, the traditional historical narratives do not always include their 'histories'. One of my primary goals has been to document the exclusions as well as to push their stories towards the centre, to teach within an anti-racist framework. Admittedly, the acceptance and emergence of ethnic studies beginning in the seventies did produce "an extensive and wide-ranging examination of the experiences of different groups."²⁷ but children, with certain exceptions, remained outside. Recognizing this neglect, there have been calls for them to not only come out from behind the shadows but to speak. Relating how children and families functioned in the postwar years, both publicly and privately, remains very open to further research, alongside the other areas of increased scholarly activity.²⁸

* * * *

George Gerbner has stated that humans use stories to tell themselves about the world.²⁹ These stories and their messages shape and reinforce our conception of life, our behaviour and our expectations. The popular culture of postwar Canada was a powerful storyteller. Representations such as those on television, made it "difficult for us to imagine anything else."³⁰ There were, as well, the *other* kinds of images that were subtler and more

²⁶ Timothy J. Stanley, "The Struggle for History: Historical Narratives and Anti-Racist Pedagogy," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 19, 1 (1998), 41.

²⁷ Neil Sutherland and Jean Barman, "Out of the Shadows: Retrieving the History of Urban Education and Urban Childhood in Canada," in *The City and Education in Four Nations*, ed. Ronald K. Goodenow and William E. Marsden, 87-108 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 87.

²⁸ Special Issue on Childhood and Family in the Twentieth Century, *The Canadian Historical Review* 78, no. 3 (September 1997); Neil Sutherland, "Introduction," *The Canadian Historical Review* 78, no. 3 (September 1997), 384. As Sutherland points out in his introduction to the issue, the four articles "only suggest rather than represent the wide range of work being conducted by Canadian historians on children and childhood, on families and the family."

²⁹ *The Electronic Storyteller: Television and the Cultivation of Value*, prod. and dir. Sut Jhally, 32 min., Media Education Foundation, 1997, videocassette.

³⁰ *The Electronic Storyteller*.

pervasive. Those were the images of ourselves that were silent or masked and thus rendered powerless. It was part of a grand historical narrative that was selective, one that helped to constitute an imagined community and which too often perpetuated racism by denying it a voice.³¹ The messages these children heard and saw were too often in contradiction to their own lived experiences, forcing them to adopt strategies to help them negotiate the divides in their lives. The popular culture representations they watched on TV and in the movies taught them well. It was where each one learned what was normal, who belonged and who was different. One can hear it in their words, sometimes in their denials, at other times in their actions.

However, there were other processes occurring. While being influenced, to various degrees by the discourses operating around them as they were growing up, none of them wholly swallowed the dominant discourses of the culture around them. While the ideologies of the media, those drawn from fantasy and myth, organized our ideas and belief systems, they were not so overwhelming that they entirely transformed our lives. They were not the *only* decisive factor. Often, first as children and then as adults, each one was able to transform everyday, common sense understandings to suit their own needs and hopes and sometimes, their fears. They are the stories they tell and the ones they live by today.

Our histories need to be nudged, stretched and studied to include the voices of those who are otherwise mute or absent. Through an active engagement with *their* texts, *their* voices might tell us what we have not heard before. Stories are told for a purpose. They are appeals both on the part of the teller and the listener. We all have to listen.

³¹ Stanley, "The Struggle for History."

APPENDIX 1: Advertisement for Subject Recruitment**SEEKING RESEARCH STUDY PARTICIPANTS**

I am currently writing a PhD thesis at the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education. I am researching the topic "NEGOTIATING THE DIVIDES: HOW CHILDREN OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS MADE MEANINGS OF THEIR CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES FROM THE CULTURE AROUND THEM".

I would like to interview first-born children of survivors who were raised in a small town in the 1950s and 1960s. The interview process will be a minimum of 1½ hours. All data is strictly confidential, with identifying features removed. Only approved transcripts will be used. Participants may withdraw at any time.

Reference: Dr. Timothy Stanley, Associate Professor, University of Ottawa, 562-5800 ext. 4161

If you are interested in participating, please notify Bruria Lindenberg:

tel: 613.225-2208 · fax: 613.225-7833 · e-mail: bruriacooperman@home.com

APPENDIX 2: Consent Form

Principal Investigator: _____
 Affiliation: _____ Telephone no: _____

Whenever a research project is undertaken with human participants, the written consent of the participants must be obtained. This does not imply, of course, that the project in question necessarily involves a risk. In view of the respect owed the participants, the University of Ottawa and the research funding agencies have made this type of agreement mandatory.

The purpose of the study is to research how children of Holocaust survivors made meanings of the popular texts around them.

If I agree to participate, my participation will consist essentially of attending one session, to be taped, lasting a minimum of 1½ hours, the location to be selected by the participant. I will also be asked to review and approve the transcripts and if there is any addition or omission, I am free to edit at my discretion.

I understand that the contents will be used for a PhD thesis and future research and publications and that my confidentiality will be respected.

I understand that since this activity deals with very personal information, it may induce emotional reactions which may, at times, be negative. I have received assurance from the researcher that every effort will be made to minimize these occurrences.

I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, before or during an interview, refuse to participate, and refuse to answer questions without penalty.

I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I, in turn, assure other participants that I will treat in the same confidential manner any information I may obtain in the context of this project.

Any information requests or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project may be addressed to the Secretariat of the Ethics Committee (562-5800, ext. 4057). If I have any questions, I may contact Professor Timothy Stanley, Tel.: 562-5800, ext. 4161. There are two copies of the consent form, one of which I may keep.

_____ Participant's signature	_____ Date
_____ Researcher's signature	_____ Date
_____ Thesis Director	_____ Date

I, _____, am interested in the study, "NEGOTIATING THE DIVIDES: HOW CHILDREN OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS MADE MEANINGS OF THE TEXTS AROUND THEM" by Bruria Lindenberg Cooperman of the Faculty of Education of the University of Ottawa.

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Demographics

- a) Age
- b) Gender
- c) Composition of family of origin
 - parents
 - # siblings
 - birth order
- d) What did your Father do? Mother?
- e) Describe the community in which you grew up.
- f) Did you go to Hebrew School/Talmud Torah?
- g) Did you attend synagogue?
- h) Who were your friends?
- i) Which school did you go to? Who were your classmates?
- j) What did you do in your spare time?

2. Memories of TV

- a) Did you have a TV?
- b) When did you get a TV?
- c) How many TVs did you have in the house?
- d) Where was the TV in the house?
- e) Who watched TV?
- f) How much time did you spend watching TV?
- g) Why did you watch TV?
- h) What programmes did you watch?
- i) Which ones were your favourite? Why?
- j) Any favourite characters? -Beaver/Eddie Haskel/Mr. Anderson...?
- k) Did you know who was Jewish on TV? How did you know? What was said?
- l) What did you think of the families/characters portrayed on TV?
- m) Did you or your parent(s) ever buy something you just *had to have* that you saw on TV?

3. Movies

- a) Did you go to the movies? How often?
- b) If so, what kinds of films did you see?
- c) Why did you go?
- d) What kind of movies were your favourite? Cowboys-Adventure-Comedy-Musical-Romance...
- e) Did you have any idols? Who were your favourites? -and why?
- f) Did you ever want to be like anyone in the movies?
- g) Did any one movie or movies made by a certain star catch your special attention? Why?

4. School

- a) Which school did you attend?
- b) Who went to this school? What was the composition?
- c) How many Jews attended this school?
- d) Did people know you were Jewish?
- e) How was your Jewishness known? Was it talked about? Ignored?
- f) Did you experience antisemitism? How? When? Are there any specific incidents you remember?
- g) Did anyone know that your parents were survivors? -Did you discuss it with anyone? Who?
- h) Was it ever discussed in school? In history class? In any other context?
- i) Did you ever write about the Holocaust? At school? Privately?

5. The Holocaust

- a) Which parent(s) were survivors? mother father both
- b) What was the degree of acculturation of your parents to Canada/North American? ...Did they speak English well?
- c) Who were your parents' friends with? Canadians? Other Ethnic? Jews? Survivors?
- d) How was the Holocaust experience incorporated in your family?
- d) Did you talk/discuss the Holocaust? How much? In what context?
- e) Was there any 'embarrassment' when the Holocaust was discussed? In what way?
- f) How did other Jews react to the Holocaust? Were there any Remembrances? - Memorials?
- g) Did you watch the Eichmann trials on TV? What is it discussed? -at school? - Hebrew school?
- h) Do you remember ever seeing a TV programme or a movie or reading about the Holocaust?

APPENDIX 4: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

This thesis is based on interviews with the following nine people. I have used pseudonyms that I thought were close to the 'feel' and 'sound' of their real names. The list is chronological.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date of Interview</u>	<u>Town</u>
Ilana	November 27, 2000	'South-central town'
Paulina	November 28, 2000	'South-western town'
Jake	December 3, 2000	'South-central town'
Rob	December 3, 2000	'South-central town'
Seymour	December 4, 2000	'South-central town'
Anna	December 4, 2000	'South-central town'
Barry	December 4, 2000	'South-central town'
Eva	December 9, 2000	'Northern-town'
Susanna	December 24, 2000	'South-central town'

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