

**Community, Identity, and Religious Leadership as Expressed
through the Role of the Rabbi's Wife**

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A Thesis
in
The Department
of
Religion

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

March 2008

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ISBN: 978-0-494-37736-9

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ISBN: 978-0-494-37736-9

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ABSTRACT

Community, Identity, and Religious Leadership as Expressed through
the Role of the Rabbi's Wife.

Susan Landau-Chark, Ph.D.
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This study analyzes the role of the Canadian rabbinical wife married to a rabbi who can be hired and fired from his position. While archival sources and secondary historical sources were utilized to some extent, the substantive work of the research is to be found in the interviews conducted over a period of three years. Interviews took place in areas where major Jewish populations reside such as Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver; and in the smaller Jewish communities throughout Canada, such as the Maritimes, Ottawa, Hamilton, London, and Winnipeg.

The interviews were sorted according to the year of birth of the interviewees. This provided a contemporary perspective on how these women function in the role today, as well as demonstrating the consistency of the position from the early 1950s to the present. Fifty-nine women, either currently or previously married to congregational rabbis, met with the researcher. They were asked to respond to a series of questions addressing aspects of their lives as rabbinical wives. The initial interview was tape-recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were then used in a follow-up email and/or phone interview to clarify issues that arose during the initial interview.

These interviews allow us to hear from the women themselves. Many of the women were wholly involved in their communities, despite the fact the role has no official status within the Jewish community. The rabbinical wife is required to be gracious and attentive to the needs of the community and will frequently have people in her home for religious and social events. At the same time, her position inhibits deep relationships with the people around her.

This research provides detail on the role of the rabbinical wife, and contributes to a re-reading of the history of religious leadership in the Jewish community.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would not have gotten off the ground without the constant and consistent support of my committee. Their verbal encouragement of my project was matched by their commitment to ensuring that I had the financial wherewithal to meet my research goals. Aside from her role as my primary advisor, Professor Norma Baumel Joseph has advocated on my behalf on numerous occasions as well as being available for countless “morale-boosting” sessions. Through her efforts I have been provided with substantial teaching and research opportunities, as well as the financial assistance (through the Department of Religion) that enabled me to present my preliminary findings at the Australian Association for Jewish Studies 18th Annual Conference on Women in Judaism. Professor Ira Robinson, who is also on my committee, encouraged both my written work and my participation in several conferences. He also assisted with funds through the aegis of the Institute for Canadian Jewish Studies in order that I could attend the Australian conference. The third member of my committee, Professor Norm Ravvin, Chair of the Institute for Canadian Jewish Studies has demonstrated unwavering support of my research. At various times during my doctoral program I received two fellowships through the Institute for Canadian Jewish Studies as well as funds through the Romek Hornstein Memorial Award, and through the Harris and Ann Wetstein Foundation Graduate Scholarship.

In 2006 I received funds to complete my research in the Atlantic provinces from Brandeis University’s Hadassah-Brandeis Institute Research Award. Also, in 2007 the Department of Religion, with the support of the Department Chair, Professor Lynda Clarke awarded me the Barry J. Schwartz Memorial Bursary.

Although my project took me across Canada, the larger part of the interviews and archival research took place in Montreal, Quebec, and Ontario. The travel to interviews throughout Ontario was made even more pleasurable through the companionship of Barbara Weiser who

willingly scheduled her research needs to coincide with mine. In Toronto, my stepfather, Ronnie Barnett, ensured that I made my meetings in a timely fashion especially when visiting areas poorly served by transit. In the Maritimes, my cousin, Joanie Sichel, also assisted in helping me meet my interviewees.

On the home front, in Montreal, my heartfelt gratitude goes to Donna Goodman for the many cups of coffee, and hours spent in coffee shops over the last eight years, as I bounced ideas, outlined theories, and analyzed drafts that had been emailed to her for discussion and comment. I also wish to reiterate how much I have appreciated the “eyes” and “ears” of the Department of Religion, Tina Montandon, Graduate Program Assistant *par excellence* who has also been there for me through countless progressions and regressions.

While the final form of the research is very much my responsibility, the data gathered represents the openness of fifty-nine women who were generous both with their time and with their thoughts about their life as rabbinical wives. I want to thank three rabbinical wives in particular: Norma Baumel Joseph, who stepped outside her role as my advisor so that I could interview her in her role as wife of Rabbi Howard Joseph; Karen Cahana, close family friend and avid supporter of my project, Karen was of tremendous assistance in the initial development of my questionnaire; and Elizabeth Bright, my first interviewee, who pointed out what I was missing in my questionnaire, thus directly contributing to a much more comprehensive research tool.

And lastly to my family, our daughter Sarah, who made a sincere effort to give Mom her writing time, and to my husband Arie, who is thrilled that I have finally reached this goal.

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INTRODUCTION

A curious exchange took place in the process of confirming an interview appointment. When the young Orthodox rebbetzin on the other end of the line asked if I knew how to get to her place, I replied in the affirmative, including the information that I had already interviewed a few rebbetzins who lived in her vicinity.¹ Her reply was to enquire if I had met with Rebbetzin W.; when I responded in the negative, she commented, “You must have a broad definition of who is a rebbetzin.” In her mind, it seemed to me, only Orthodox women could be rebbetzins. Her assumption that only the wife of an Orthodox rabbi can take on this title has been reinforced to some extent by the research of American scholar, Shuly Rubin Schwartz. In her book, *The Rabbi's Wife*, she concludes that the wives of rabbis serving liberal communities no longer have the interest or desire to commit themselves to a congregation on a full-time basis.²

My doctoral research had several goals. First, I had a strong desire to challenge the idea that the title “rebbetzin” is either limited to Orthodoxy or viewed by women in the liberal congregations as unfashionable and demeaning. My research was conducted in part to investigate whether women in liberal (non-Orthodox) congregations also consider themselves rebbetzins. This had been indicated by my Master’s research and the doctoral research enabled me to develop and explore the possibility. Second, I wanted to understand what public role(s) the rebbetzin actively maintains in congregational life. This data would then provide the template for addressing the as yet unexplored issue of the role of women married to ritual experts. Third, I wanted to articulate the rabbi’s wife’s place within her congregation and community, and

¹ Feminist theory takes issue with the power of naming and describing. For most of known history men have been responsible for naming and this has had a profound influence on women’s identity and self-perceptions. It is interesting to note that the wife of a rabbi was given the name *rebbetzin* by the Ashkenazim, Israelis use the term *rabbanit*, and the Spanish and Portuguese Sephardim use the term *rubissa*. By being named in this manner, the wife of the rabbi has in effect been set apart from the community of women.

² Shuly Rubin Schwartz, *The Rabbi's Wife: The Rebbetzin in American Jewish Life* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2006) 215.

fourthly I wanted to do this within the Canadian context. Canada has one of the five largest Jewish communities in the world outside Israel and yet too little is known about the role these women play in Canada's Jewish communities.³

For example, in 1994, in the course of conducting research on congregational sisterhoods the question arose as to the place of the rabbi's wife within these sisterhoods. I was initially drawn to this topic by a simple question: Why do the anniversary booklets of Canadian synagogues rarely include mention of the rabbi's wife? Was she invisible? Did she remove herself from all congregational activities? At least, why was she not named? Throughout this research I did not encounter any link between the rabbi's wife and the congregation's sisterhood or any other congregational activities. Further library searches revealed that in fact the rabbi's wife rarely is mentioned in Jewish historical writings contemporary or otherwise.

My Master's thesis tried to "bring the role of the rabbi's wife into history" through interviews with six women (from different denominations) and to learn from them what it was like to be married to a congregational rabbi. I was particularly curious about their congregational activities in light of the fact that there was so little written information. I felt that the responses to the interview questions as well as the many anecdotes about their experiences of the position would generate a new and a balanced perspective of the position of rebbetzin. At that time my questions were loosely structured and focused on relationships with children, friendships, and home life. While I had chosen not to specifically request details on the wife's involvement with the congregation or the larger community, this topic came up in every interview. There were also

³ United States (5, 280, 000); France (494,000); Canada (370,505); Russia (235, 000). The Canadian figure is taken from the Canadian Jewish Congress website. <<http://www.cjc.ca/template.php?action=stats&Language=EN>> [December 5, 2007], and its data is drawn from Charles Shahrar's *Census Analysis Series: The Jewish Community in Canada* (Montreal: UIA Federations Canada, 2004) and the remaining figures are taken from Sergio Della Pergola's article "World Population 2005" in the *American Jewish Year Book* (2005): 87-122. <<http://www.jewishdatabank.org/AJYB/AJY-2005.pdf>> (December 5, 2007).

several “key themes” that emerged from my preliminary study that I felt required comprehensive investigation. These key themes were five areas of contention inherent to the position, regardless of the women’s congregational affiliations: its intrusiveness; the use of their home for religious and social activities; the degree to which they could openly express themselves on certain issues due to their husband’s role; the implicit obligations in the position, and, how these obligations would insinuate themselves into the wives’ overall activities. These concerns were as much an issue for the women involved with non-Orthodox congregations as with Orthodox congregations; moreover, the women in the non-Orthodox congregations also perceived themselves as engaging in activities often ascribed to historical rebbetzins.

Each woman had commented on the changing role of Jewish women and had noted that these changes were creating challenges within their congregational communities. They also thought that these changes would eventually influence congregational expectations of the women who were rebbetzins. It was further felt that as more women entered the rabbinate there would be a shift in the expectations on spouses in general.

Had I “lucked out” and interviewed a unique group of articulate women who were intensively involved with their congregations? When I did the research for my Master’s thesis I had lived in the community for almost twenty years and had been involved with several congregations. Three of the women knew me personally, and the other three knew of me through both mutual friends and communal events and activities. Aside from being a known quantity, I had assured my interviewees that their conversations with me would remain anonymous thus enabling me to ask very personal questions.⁴ Would I find the same level of congregational activity, concerns, and issues among the rabbinical wives in other cities? One of the women was

⁴ As part of the ethics protocol of this particular research I had included in the Statement of Consent a line stating that the interview tapes would be destroyed for reasons of confidentiality six months after submission of my Masters thesis.

quite adamant that if I conducted my research in eastern Canada my results would look quite different.

In my doctoral research I explored concerns raised in my Masters study, in more detail and along a wider continuum: large city, small town; senior rabbi's wife, assistant rabbi's wife; large congregation, small congregation. I wished to provide a picture not only of her role but also, indirectly, of how the synagogue's "para-professional" is seen by the larger community. I decided to maintain the non-denominational aspect of my research, and to emphasize the public role of the Canadian rabbi's wife. By restricting myself to rabbinical wives in Canadian congregations, I was provided an opportunity to expand on the known history of Jewish religious institutions in Canada, and to examine any differences that might be a consequence of city size or town size versus congregational size, as well as possible regional differences. By emphasizing the public role, my questions could be formulated within a congregational and community framework, thereby increasing (I hoped) the likelihood of participation. Also, I planned to deposit the interview tapes with the Canadian Jewish Congress National Archives and felt that the interviewees were more likely to permit this if the questions were less invasive.

I again sought to gather historical background concerning the role of the Canadian rabbinical wife and this time sent out an email to archivists working in Jewish archives and historical societies across Canada (Appendix I). Sharon Segal, archivist for the Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada, wrote, "The Rabbi's wife, especially in the past, played such a vital role in the community and in her congregation. Yet she was often overlooked."⁵ Her response – disappointing but not unexpected – was echoed by the other recipients of my query who also indicated that little was to be found in the pages left in their care. The lack of primary and secondary Canadian Jewish sources underscored the value of my interviews in supporting a

⁵ Email to the author, July 5, 2006.

broader understanding of the role of the clergyman's wife. The interviews constitute the raw data not only for reconstructing the role within the broader Canadian social context today but, by extrapolation, historically.

In March of 2004, I began interviewing wives of rabbis across Canada – specifically, those married to pulpit rabbis (who can be hired and fired). I interviewed women in Montreal, Toronto, the Maritimes, the smaller towns in Ontario, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Richmond, and Victoria.⁶ A secondary issue of this research was the question of how marriage to a rabbi redefines the public role of a woman. These women, by marrying rabbis – the “symbolic exemplar” within contemporary North American Jewish society – took on a role that defined them as public Jews in a secular society.⁷

In my Master's thesis I indicated that documentation pertaining to the role was sparse. My review of the literature then indicated that the challenges faced by the rabbinical wife and her position in North American society had not yet been comprehensively addressed in any American Jewish history books. Two studies addressing the role of the rabbinical wife as well as that of the rabbi did exist: Rabbi Stephen Lerner, acting on behalf of the Rabbinical Assembly in the early 1970s, had sent out a series of ten questions to over sixty members of the Conservative rabbinate;⁸ and Dr. Theodore Lenn, acting on behalf of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), mailed out 471 questionnaires to its membership at the same time.⁹

Two studies of more recent vintage directly addressed the role of the rebbetzin. Carla

⁶ In Ontario, interviews were conducted in Ottawa, London, Hamilton, Kingston and Thornhill.

⁷ Rabbi Jack Bloom, *The Rabbi as Symbolic Exemplar: By the Power Vested in Me: For rabbis, other clergy, and the laity who care about them and their sacred work* (New York, London, Oxford: The Haworth Press, 2002).

⁸ Stephen Lerner, “The Congregational Rabbi and the Conservative Synagogue,” *Conservative Judaism* 29.2 (Winter 1975): 4. The feedback from the Lerner study was to provide an impression of the Conservative rabbinate, that could then be used to stimulate discussion on the relationship between individual rabbis and how the movement could best meet their needs.

⁹ Theodore Lenn & Associates, “The Rabbi's Wife,” *Rabbi and Synagogue in Reform Judaism* (West Hartford, CT: CCAR, 1972): 369–383. The objective of the Lenn study was to assess the satisfaction levels of the rabbinate in terms of training and the support provided by the CCAR.

Freedman's rabbinic thesis, "The Rebbetzin in America in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," brought together both primary and secondary sources on the North American rebbetzin.¹⁰ Shuly Rubin Schwatz, when writing up her preliminary research on the twentieth century rebbetzin "We Married What We Wanted to Be: the *Rebbetzin* in Twentieth Century America," concluded that her findings demonstrated "a decline in the special calling of the rebbetzin."¹¹

Schwartz' recent book, *The Rabbi's Wife*, brings the American rebbetzin to the forefront of our thinking about American religious leadership, and provides scholars of Jewish women's religious history with a solid foundation from which to further explore this position amongst contemporary American Jews. I found her discussion of sources especially fascinating. While she notes that "rebbetzins rarely left diaries or memoirs,"⁽²⁾ she adds that she was able to access saved speeches, newspaper clippings, letters in some cases, as well as articles written for *Outlook* and other Jewish newspapers and magazines.¹² Furthermore she notes American rebbetzins, were very active and did not shy away from publicity. This compares quite differently to the visibility of Canadian rebbetzins, who were often not fully named in their obituary notices; fewer still were writers of speeches, especially in the early decades of the twentieth century.¹³ Her

¹⁰ Carla Freedman, "The *Rebbetzin* in America in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," (Rabbinic Thesis, Hebrew Union College, 1990). In her research she mentions the Spouse's Support Network. Begun in 1982, the CCAR Spouse Support Group publishes a newsletter called the *Spousal Connection*. The newsletter is for the use of the rabbinical spouses of Reform rabbis, and reflects their needs and concerns. Its primary strength lies in its lists of contacts. Its letters and articles contain practical advice and encourage the rabbinical spouses to reach out for support when necessary.

¹¹ Shuly Rubin Schwartz, "We Married What We Wanted To Be: The *Rebbetzin* in Twentieth-Century America," *American Jewish History* 83 (June 1995): 246. Much of her research is drawn from the pages of *Outlook*, a magazine published by the Women's League for Conservative Judaism, as well as interviews.

¹² *Outlook*, a monthly magazine, was founded in 1930 by Carrie Davidson, wife of a rabbi, and was an outlet for many Conservative rabbis' wives to publish articles, and stories which often related to their position.

¹³ Schwartz notes that "obituaries proved valuable as records of how others viewed rebbetzins" (7). In Canada, several sources such as Lawrence Tapper's *A Biographical Dictionary of Canada Jewry, 1909-1914*, From the *Canadian Jewish Times* (Teaneck, NJ: Avotaynu Inc, 1992) and Gordon Dueck's *Thematic Index to Canadian Jewish Times, 1897-1914*, (Montreal: unpublished document, 2001) list the social 'comings and goings' of the well-heeled Jewish community, but little else. There is also Arthur Hart's *The Jew in Canada* (Toronto & Montreal: Jewish Publications Ltd, 1926) which provides biographies of those religious leaders associated with the established synagogues in Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa, and Winnipeg. While their wives are named, the only

discussion regarding the proliferation of articles from American rebbetzins from all denominations between 1944 and 1968, when “rabbis’ wives opted to share with lay people, the exceptional nature of their position”(131) only serves to underscore the absence of such documentation in Canada.

She notes that in the United States most rebbetzins no longer seem to want “the opportunity to touch people’s lives in such a unique way” and in fact consider themselves “free to opt out of congregational life” (130; 211). The ordination of women was seen by many as a challenge to the continuation of the rebbetzin role. In fact her current research reinforces her early opinion that today, at least within the Conservative and Reform congregations (where there are female rabbis), any influence attached to the role of rebbetzin is now somewhat diminished (208; 211).

The women I interviewed saw their role as quite separate from that played by women rabbis, and considered the rebbetzin position to be in the process of transformation. One young wife in her first congregation stated,

Yes, I am the wife of a rabbi, but please don’t call me rebbetzin ... because I just don’t know what that means. Yes, I’m a lawyer, but my husband’s not a lawyer, so you can’t give him that same title. ... So please don’t give me that title ... rebbetzin.¹⁴

Whereas another rabbi’s wife, in her sixth congregation, said,

I am the rebbetzin. I’m not ashamed to say that. Where a lot of rabbis’ wives, especially if you are marked with a Conservative synagogue, they don’t want to be called rebbetzin, ... I’m proud to be the rebbetzin. I feel that the rebbetzin definitely has a role.¹⁵

Schwartz had commented that the only groups today having expectations of its rebbetzins

information noted is whether they bore children in the marriage. A fourth source under development is the Canadian Jewish Congress National Archives Obituaries Project which involves translation from Yiddish to English of all obituary notices listed in the *Keneder Odler* (Jewish Daily Eagle) since November 19, 1908 (*Keneder Odler/Canader Adler* (Jewish Daily Eagle) Obituaries, translator Eiran Harris, from Yiddish: November 19, 1908–December 31, 1931. Canadian Jewish Congress National Archives Obituaries Project, Stage II, December, 2004. Where a woman is listed in the obituary section she is often listed as mother of, wife of or daughter of. On the odd occasion where the wife of a rabbi is listed nothing else is offered in terms of her life.

¹⁴ Interview, March 15, 2007.

¹⁵ Interview, March 1, 2004.

were the Orthodox and the Lubavitcher Hasidim. In light of her statements it was interesting to read a public affairs announcement from Yeshiva University advertising the launch of a new program “Rebbetzins Yarchei Kallah,” developed through the Center for the Jewish Future at Yeshiva University. The program, launched in February 2006, is “designed to give rabbis’ wives the opportunity to meet with seasoned professionals to discuss issues of self, family, and community in a safe and supportive environment.”¹⁶ The creation of a program to help Orthodox rabbis’ wives navigate their role echoes issues that arose both in my previous research and my current research. The derivative nature of the role of the rabbi’s wife creates issues for those who think they “married the man and not his profession.”¹⁷ Jack Bloom commented that “every rabbi’s spouse has married both a real live person and a symbol.”¹⁸ The Lenn study noted that a number of wives expressed concern around the position versus person issue. Schwartz has also commented about the difficulties inherent in separating the person from the position.¹⁹

The role of the rabbi’s wife has often been likened to the situation of women who marry political and /or government leaders or government functionaries such as ambassadors. For example, Betty Boyd Caroli reports that during President Coolidge’s tenure in the White House, Grace wrote: “This was I and yet not I – this was the wife of the President of the United States and she took precedence over me; my personal likes and dislikes must be subordinated to ... those things which were required of her.”²⁰ Certainly many of the women interviewed would have been able to identify with Grace Coolidge’s perception of her persona in her public position. For First Ladies, it mattered little what their personal likes or dislikes were, as long as

¹⁶ “Center for Jewish Future Holds First Program on Changing Role of Rebbetzins,” *Yeshiva University Communications/Public Affairs* February 13, 2006, July 3, 2006.
<http://spider.mc.yu.edu/news/articles/article.cfm?id=101121>

¹⁷ S. R. Schwartz, *The Rabbi’s Wife* 173; over half of those I interviewed used similar terminology to describe their marital relationships.

¹⁸ Bloom, *The Rabbi As Symbolic Exemplar* 145.

¹⁹ S. R. Schwartz, *The Rabbi’s Wife* 239.

²⁰ Ishbel Ross, *Grace Coolidge and Her Era: The Story of a President’s Wife* (New York: Dodd Mead & Company, 1962) 87.

their appearance in public as well as private, indicated no less than their full and active support for their husband's role. So with the wife of a rabbi, whatever her private inclinations or concerns, the expectation is that she will suppress these in order to assist her husband and be fully available to her husband's congregation.

Aside from the challenges particular to being the wife of a rabbi, there was also the question of adapting to life in Canada. Most of the wives are originally from the United States, so one might expect to see some of the American cultural differences in terms of their activities within the synagogue. To what extent is religious life, the synagogue, the rabbi, and the rabbi's wife influenced by Canadian Jewish history?

The discussion addressing Canadian Jewish religious history owes much to several Canadian historians who have spent a large part of their professional lives filling in the many gaps in the record of Canadian Jewish history. Benjamin Sack's *History of the Jews in Canada* was one of the first overall explorations of Canadian Jewish history, focussing predominantly on the Montreal community. David Rome, historian and archivist, was in a particularly unique position, initially as Director of the Montreal Jewish Public Library (1953–1973) and then as archivist and historian for the Canadian Jewish Congress (1973–1994), to write about Canadian Jewish history as it was being made. An astute observer of the Canadian Jewish social and political milieu for over fifty years, his publications dealt chiefly with Montreal, its cultural milieu, its educational issues, relationships between Christians and Jews, and in the world outside Montreal. He wrote mainly about Canadian "Jewish worthies," antisemitism, Labour Zionism and Israel.²¹ While reading Sack and Rome provided some background to my research, their data basically supported

²¹ Mr. Rome served as editor of the Jewish Western Bulletin in Vancouver, English editor of the Hebrew Daily Journal in Toronto and the Congress Bulletin of Canadian Jewish Congress. His publications are numerous and a full listing of these can be found in the CJC National Archives. CJC staff developed a finding aid for Rome's boxes P0126, and J0005, the aid provides a listing of his publications.

information found elsewhere.²² In 1992 Gerald Tulchinsky's first volume, *Taking Root*, of his two volume overview of Canadian Jewish history appeared, followed in 1998 by *Branching Out*. *Taking Root* was my introduction to Canadian Jewish history when I first began my studies in the field. Aside from these two volumes, much of my thinking on Canadian Jewish history, and on religious institutions in particular has been shaped by two unique and complementary courses. The first was given in the winter of 2002 through the Institute for Canadian Jewish Studies by Visiting Fellow Professor Richard Menkis.²³ The course, advertised as a "compact seminar" was a two week intensive examining the contribution of historians to the shaping of Canadian Jewish history. In the Winter 2006 semester, Professor Ira Robinson offered a new course that explored "Canadian Jewish history and the Canadian Jewish experience [as] seen through the lens of religion."²⁴

While much of the material in the chapters on Canadian Jewish religious institutions, and women in Canadian Jewish history, has already found its way into a number of books and articles, what is being presented in these pages is "a different shape" of the available historical materials.²⁵ One of the themes that emerged from the interviews was the difference between Canada and the United States in terms of denominational practice.

In what ways does a congregation's location, history, and its experiences with previous rabbis and their wives influence the activities and expectations of its current rebbetzin? One rabbinical wife noted:

²² While I made very brief use of Benjamin Sack and David Rome, and other writers of Canadian Jewish history such as Cyril Leonoff, and Harold Troper, there are those I did not use such as Irving Abella or Abraham Arnold. Again any of the material that I required that was covered by these authors could be found elsewhere and most importantly neither focused on women.

²³ Richard Menkis, *Reli-697H: Compact Seminar: Scholars, Identities, and Community*, Bronfman Centre, Montreal, January 14–January 25, 2002.

²⁴ Ira Robinson, *Reli-498L: The Canadian Jewish Experience: Jewish Identity and Religious Life in Canada*, Concordia University, Montreal, Winter 2006. Lecture: January 17, 2006.

²⁵ Richard Menkis, *Compact Seminar*, January 16, 2002.

I also think ... when I first came ... the previous rabbi's wife was more involved in sisterhood and did more for the *shul*. Maybe there was an expectation because of that or maybe that was just what they had in their heads of what they wanted the rabbi's wife to do. So ... I felt like that was a barrier that I needed to break down.²⁶

At the outset, several points emerged that demonstrate that, in Canada, the rebbetzin continues to be held to a similar standard of involvement as her husband, the paid rabbi; she feels she has the freedom to create a niche for herself within the congregation; and, that while there may be disdain by some wives for the term rebbetzin, many of their activities and involvements mirror those that have come to define the position within Jewish popular culture. In addition, in Canada, the place of the rebbetzin within her congregation does not appear to be an Orthodox-only role.

A number of the interview questions touch on aspects of the wife's "fit" with her husband's congregation in terms of congregational activities and expectations. Questions also address her personal concerns with issues of privacy, control, and opportunities for her own self-development. The issue of acceptance of role and the expectations accompanying that role could be a function of age, social context, years of experience in the role, large city versus small town, and career orientation. The age range of the women I interviewed is quite wide and was an influence on the kinds of participation rather than the participation itself.

Chapter One addresses the methodology and techniques used to gather data from the interviews. Oral history, especially when it targets a particular group, "allows one to consider the broader question of culture, societal influence ... relationships and common human experiences."²⁷ The interviews served as a primary source for understanding how these women perceive their roles, and how these roles function within the congregation and the community. This chapter also describes how the historical documents, archival material and secondary sources were used to track the historic development of Jewish religious institutions in Canada.

²⁶ Interview, July 20, 2005.

²⁷ David Mandelbaum, "The Study of Life History: Gandhi," *Current Anthropology* 14.3 (1973): 193–194.

Chapter Two examines Canadian Jewish women's history. The tendency, on the part of North American Jewish historians, has been to extrapolate the American experience, be it immigration, suburbanisation or feminism, to the Canadian Jewish experience. Discussions of North American Jewish religious, social, cultural, and communal history tend to use the American Jewish experience as the standard against which to assess Jewish religious presence and the strength of its integration into the North American (read American) social, cultural and religious environment. The Canadian experience, of importance to Canadian Jews, rarely registers within the many and varied books and articles addressing the North American experience. Canada is a different country with its own history and its own patterns of historical narration and my thesis will develop this distinctiveness vis-a-vis rebbetzins.

For example, a number of rebbetzins expressed surprise at the extent to which Christianity is present in the public schools. Coming from American communities where there is a clear separation between church and state within the public school system, one rebbetzin was dismayed to learn that

Christmas is part and parcel of the core curriculum for December ... what happens is pretty much from late November, until they get out for December break, Christmas is curriculum. It's part of the reading, it's part of the math.²⁸

Chapter Three introduces Canada's synagogues. What draws a Jew to one particular synagogue over another: location? rabbi? family? friends? Describing their narrative interviews, Steven Cohen and Arnold Eisen noted that "a large number of [their] subjects described the appeal of synagogue for them in terms of *community*."²⁹ The question then arises: who creates this sense of community: the members, the rabbi, or the board? The extent to which these facets of synagogue life work in tandem is revealed whenever someone new enters a synagogue and

²⁸ Interview, December 16, 2004.

²⁹ Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen, *The Jew Within: Self, Family, and Community in America* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000) 172–173. Their emphasis.

chooses to stay or not. One rabbinical wife commented, "I would say when I'm at *shul* I have a sense of – slightly more ownership than I would if I were a member in the congregation and so more responsibility if people come in and they're ... a new face I make sure that I introduce myself and that they find out who other people are – so helping to network people."³⁰ Another rabbinical wife also indicated that she felt that she had an obligation to make people feel welcome in the synagogue:

I'll sweep the room in trying to make sure that I make contact with people and say hello, if they're new people. I'll try to make a note to go and say "Hi and Welcome." You know I feel like [I am] playing an ambassador role for the synagogue itself.³¹

The feeling of ownership, the ability to reach out and welcome newcomers into the congregation is a function of the ambience of the synagogue. The same variables that converge to create "community" also impact and resonate on the role of the rabbinical wife. A very large part of her role takes place within her husband's congregation. Canadian congregations tend to be more traditional than their American counterparts and this is reflected in the expectations attached to the role of the rabbi's wife. This chapter brings together a great deal of information about Canada's religious institutions. As such it provides a "thick" description of Canadian Jewry's religious affiliations, which provides a context for discussing the "settling-in" experiences of the women when they first arrived in Canada. The chapter opens with a brief overview of the history of the major denominations, Reform, Orthodox, and Conservative, as they evolved within the Canadian Jewish framework, and also illustrates several recent additions to the available Jewish religious options. William Westfall notes that in Canada the materials of nation building have been put together in a way that is different from the United States.³²

³⁰ Interview, March 24, 2004.

³¹ Interview, August 31, 2004.

³² William Westfall, "Voices from the Attic: The Canadian Border and the Writing of American Religious History," *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, ed., Thomas A. Tweed (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, University of California Press, 1997)184.

Similarly, in as much as American Jews and Canadian Jews use the same prayer books and read from the same Torah, their religious institutions developed in a wholly different manner.

Chapter Four provides a brief exploration of the rabbinic role and how it has evolved in North America to become a position that Bloom describes as possessing “power and the ability to affect and influence others.”³³

Chapter Five presents the voices of the women interviewed, especially how the role has defined their social and professional lives. For example, one rebbetzin commented that she

often wonder[s] what I would have done had I not married a rabbi. ... Most likely I’ve sort of lost myself in the shuffle, but I always I think one of the reasons why [my husband] was so successful here, quite honestly, is because I helped him be successful. ... I think he was able to do a lot of the stuff he did because I was home and there were a lot of things he didn’t have to worry about.³⁴

The last chapter is a synopsis of the findings and considers the place of the rabbinical wife within the Canadian Jewish religious milieu today as well as any questions raised through the study.

³³ Bloom, *The Rabbi As Symbolic Exemplar* 151.

³⁴ Interview, August 31, 2004.

CHAPTER ONE METHODOLOGY

Historical truth is not something given from the start, which has only to be freed from certain accidental veils, but it is something that has to be newly created by constant fresh attempts on the part of the researching mind, ... in the acquisition of knowledge.¹

The feminist embrace of oral history emerged from a recognition that traditional sources have often neglected the lives of women, and that oral history offered a means of integrating women into historical scholarship, even contesting the reigning definitions of social, economic and political importance that obscured women's lives.²

While Ismar Schorsch, in the first quotation, is referring to the study of *Wissenschaft*, his statement is relevant to today's effort on the part of Jewish feminist historians to cast new light on Jewish history and to bring women into the Jewish historical equation. Rabbinic culture has been categorised, catalogued, and indexed. Yet no information exists as to the influences rabbinical wives might have exerted on the lives of their husbands.³ The written evidence of Jewish history reinforces the notion that the rabbi and his wife each occupied their own separate worlds. While the evidence that does exist appears to indicate that she was active in her own sphere, there is little available information that indicates her presence in his world. Documents, diaries, and journals that might attest to a rabbinical life other than that recorded in formal histories have yet to be discovered. An honest reading of history requires that the role of the rabbi's wife be more fully explored. Re-examining history, as recommended by Joan Sangster in the second quote, through oral history, offers a unique and provocative means of gathering information central to understanding women's lives and viewpoints.

My primary focus is the woman who is married to a pulpit rabbi, one who can be hired and fired. I began interviewing in March of 2004, and curbing the impulse to "do one more

¹ Schorsch, *From Text to Context* 3.

² Joan Sangster, "Telling Our Stories: feminist debates and the use of oral history," *Women's History Review* Volume 3, #1 (1994): 5.

³ As noted in my introductory chapter S. R. Schwartz has effectively demonstrated, at least in the case of the American rabbinate, that the rabbinical wives were much more than a support and helpmeet to their husbands.

interview,” conducted my last interview in March of 2007, having completed 59 interviews.

There were 118 women on my initial interview list of Canadian women who were or had been married to pulpit rabbis. This permitted me to interview several widows and where there was a divorce, if it was in the last 5 years I interviewed those ex-wives who were willing to be interviewed. There were interviews where I learned that divorce was in fact imminent, and there were interviews cancelled because of a husband’s position or a couple’s marital status being in flux.

I further reduced my potential list by ten as I chose not to interview the wives of Moroccan Sephardic rabbis, who resided mainly in Montreal, and who were French-speaking only. Given the cultural and religious contexts of the Moroccan Sephardic congregations, and their unique historical experience, this population would benefit from a wholly separate analysis of congregational expectations of the rabbi’s wife.⁴ Consequently my sample is Ashkenazi and North American only. The two Sephardic women that I did meet were both married to Sephardic rabbis employed by Sephardic congregations. However, both women were English-speaking and had followed Ashkenazic practices prior to their marriages.

It was important to be able to locate each woman’s voice within her frame of reference. The acceptance or non-acceptance of the role of rabbi’s wife could be a function of age, social context, years of experience in the role, large city versus small town, and career orientation. Whether or not one has young children, teenagers or adult children no longer living at home seems to define the forms of participation and its extent.

In setting the context for the interviews I surveyed historiographic, archival, and sociological

⁴ A feminist methodology demands that every effort be made to give voice to all those affected by a given situation or status. My decision not to include Sephardic women was considered. It was not simply limited to the issue of language. The interview questions focused on the concept of “rebbetzin” and that position’s attendant expectations and obligations. Drawn from an Ashkenazi literal and historical context, the idea has little or no bearing on the cultural context of the Sephardim. Imposing an Ashkenazi socio-cultural perspective on Sephardic voices would have been contrary to the intent of honouring those women’s voices. The wives of Sephardic clergy deserve a separate hearing, focused on their own context and cultural adaptation to Canada.

sources. As my research encompassed historical and contemporary perspectives I utilized several methodologies: 1) a text-based methodology a) to track the historic development of Jewish religious institutions in Canada, and b) to ascertain what, if any information was available concerning past Canadian rabbinical wives; 2) questionnaires were sent out to 198 synagogues to provide a “snapshot” of contemporary Jewish religious life throughout Canada as well as to provide a frame of reference for the women with whom I spoke; and 3) the recording of the oral histories from contemporary rabbinical wives willing to speak with me.

Tracking the texts

Aside from library and internet searches that aided in the creation of a reading list of secondary resources, extensive use was made of the Canadian Jewish Congress National Archives as a source for exploring primary documents. Housed in Montreal, its Director, Janice Rosen, and her assistant Hélène Vallée, steered me towards numerous file boxes: some revealed an abundance of information on my subject; others disappointed with their scarcity. Two sources became integral to my research. The first was the *Canadian Jewish Congress National Synagogue Directory* 5762/2001–2002 and 5765/2005–2007.⁵ These particular editions were the basis of both the synagogue mailing list and the contact list for rabbinical wives.⁶

The second resource was Sheldon Levitt, Lynn Milstone, and Sidney T. Tenenbaum's three-volume work, which gives mainly architectural descriptions and some historical data on all the

⁵ Email correspondence with Janice Rosen, July 6, 2007. Shirley Muhlstock Brodt, ed., *Canadian Jewish Congress National Synagogue Directory 5762/2001–2002* (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Jewish Congress, September 2001); also *Canadian Jewish Congress Charities Committee National Synagogue Directory 5767/2006–2007* (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Jewish Congress, September 2006). The Directory is further discussed in Chapter Four which addresses Canada's Jewish religious institutions.

⁶ The CJC National Synagogue Directory became a regular publication of the Canadian Jewish Congress when the offices were computerized in 1984. In a report presented November 1978 to the CJC from Moe Seidman, Chairman, National Religious Department, it was proposed that the CJC Synagogue Committee “structure a NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF SYNAGOGUES” (8). One of the Committee’s projects would be “the publication of a comprehensive Directory ... of synagogues across Canada.” (10). In a 1982 report by Rabbi Robert Sternberg, Director, National Religious Department, it was noted that work had begun four years previous on a National Synagogue Directory and that the publication date proposed would be 1983 (National Religious Department Annual Report 1982, 11).

synagogues across Canada formed prior to 1978.⁷ These books provided the raw data for the more popular publication by these authors: *Treasures of a People: the Synagogues of Canada*.⁸ For anyone embarking on a study of religious institutions, even non-Jewish ones, these volumes are a prototype for ensuring that every historical and architectural aspect of an institution is noted. Beginning in the summer of 1977, and continuing in the summers of 1978, and 1979, Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum photographed and catalogued every known synagogue – past and present – across Canada. This truly prodigious and eminently practical contribution to Congress Archives must surely have been present in the many discussions taking place about the need for a National Synagogue Directory.

Also of value in my overall research were the *American Jewish Year Book (AJYB)*, an annual publication of the American Jewish Committee since 1899, and the *Jewish Year Book* published by *The Jewish Chronicle* of London which has been publishing since 1896.

In the first years of its publication the *American Jewish Year Book* reported only on Canada's immigration and population statistics for the given year and these were gathered by the researchers for *AJYB*.⁹ The first full-length study on Canadian Jewry appeared in Volume 27 (September 19, 1925–September 8, 1926), and was written by Martin Wolff. Thirty-five years later in Volume 62 (1961), Louis Rosenberg wrote “Two Centuries of Jewish Life in Canada: 1760–1960.”¹⁰ The first substantive annual year in review for Canada written by a Canadian contributor was by David Rome for Volume 44 (1942–1943).¹¹ With the exception of the years

⁷ Sheldon Levitt, Lynn Milstone, Sidney T. Tenenbaum, *Shuls: A Study of Canadian Synagogue Architecture: Synagogues of Quebec and the Maritime Provinces; Shuls: Ontario, and Synagogues of Western Canada* (Toronto, ON: unpublished, 1979–1980).

⁸ Sheldon Levitt, Lynn Milstone, and Sidney T. Tenenbaum, *Treasures of a People: the Synagogues of Canada* (Toronto, Canada: Lester & Orpen Dennys Limited, 1985).

⁹ In the first decade of the 20th century Julius Greenstone and Louis Levin submitted information concerning Canada; between 1922 and 1942 Harry S. Linfield, Harry Schneiderman and Theodore Gastor contributed the materials on Canada.

¹⁰ Martin Wolff, “The Jews of Canada,” *AJYB*, Volume 27 (1925–1926): 154–229; Louis Rosenberg, “Two Centuries of Jewish Life in Canada: 1760–1960,” *AJYB*, Volume 62 (1961): 28–49.

¹¹ David Rome, “Canada,” in “Review of the Year 5702” *AJYB*, Volume 44 (1942–1943): 179–183.

1969 and 1973, every issue of the *American Jewish Year Book* contains a comprehensive overview of the state of Canadian Jewry in the previous year.¹² During the time that Louis Rosenberg was responsible for the submissions a greater emphasis was given to census data and statistical discussions.¹³ In the years after Louis Rosenberg, statistical data was variably provided by Leo Davids who wrote the Canadian submission in 1985, "Canadian Jewry: Some Recent Census Findings," (191–201). In 1995 (Volume 95) Jim Torczyner and Shari Brotman co-authored "The Jews of Canada: A Profile from the Census," (227–249). More recently, since 1989–1990, Charles Shahar, head of the National Jewish Demographics Study for UIA Federation Canada has been supplying Harold Waller with Canadian Jewish statistical data.¹⁴

The *Jewish Year Book* provided yearly lists of Canadian synagogues and their rabbis up to 1977.¹⁵ Aside from the very outdated introduction to its section on Canada, which is still in use, one difficulty with this publication was its lack of standardized naming and spelling.¹⁶ In the

¹² A number of individuals have laboured to provide this service to the *AJYB* directly and directly have made available a wealth of information to the Canadian Jewish researcher that might have been not that readily accessible or known. David Rome made his submissions between Volume 1945–1946 to Volume 1950, the write-up on Canada's immigration statistics in this volume was authored by Sidney Liskofsky; in Volume (1946–1947) Louis Rosenberg made his debut in Volume 48 (1946–1947) with his article "The Jewish Population of Canada: A Statistical Summary from 1850 to 1943," (9–50). Beginning in 1951 Rosenberg wrote the yearly submissions until 1966, with the exception of 1960 and 1962 when this responsibility was handled by Murray Shiff. Between 1967 and 1975 the write-up on Canada was variously written by Ben Kayfetz (1967 and 1968), Michael Solomon (1970 and 1971), Stuart Rosenberg (1972), and Melvin Fenson (1974–1975). Bernard Baskin took over in 1976 and continued until 1984. In 1986 Harold M. Waller undertook the responsibility of staying abreast of, and collating the diverse activities of Canada's Jews for the *AJYB*.

¹³ In his "Introduction" to the 1993 edition of Louis Rosenberg's *Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s* (Montreal & Kingston/London/Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993) Morton Weinfeld queries the co-operation of the staff at the Dominion Bureau of Statistics and shares that "perhaps ... they were delighted to discover another soul who shared their passion for census data" (xviii).

¹⁴ Charles Shahar has written a number of reports based on Canadian Census data dealing particularly with Jewish identity in Canada and these will be explored further in the chapter concerning Canadian Jewish identity.

¹⁵ The *Jewish Year Book* series held by the CJC National Archives begins in 1936. The inclusion of synagogues and rabbis located in England's Dominions seems to have begun with its first publication in 1896.

¹⁶ The section on Canada continues to open with the statement "Jews were prohibited by law from living in Canada so long as it remained a French possession." *The Jewish Year Book 2006* (136–137). The brief description continues to represent Canada in its status as a colony and then as part of the Dominion. The most recent historical source presented for information about Canada is Irving Abella's *A Coat of Many Colours: Two Centuries of Jewish Life in Canada*, 1990. It was disappointing to note that throughout the years of this journal's publication no effort had been made to educate British Jewry about its brethren in one of Great Britain's most loyal Commonwealth countries.

early years its listings of various synagogues changed sufficiently that initially I was at a loss as to whether the synagogue being mentioned was a continuation of an older one or in fact a new one under a similar name. For example, in Toronto the McCaul Street Synagogue was actually Beth Hamidrash Hagadol; in Montreal, Nusah Haary became Nushach Hoary and finally Nusach Ari, while the Stepineau became the Stepiner. Shaarey Tefillah became Shairai Tfdah for several years. Rabbis also seemed to appear and disappear as their names were incorrectly spelled. One year Rabbi Bernard Baskin seemed to be replaced by a Rabbi Paskin, and in the early years of one rabbi's tenure with Prince Albert, Saskatchewan's Congregation Beth Jacob, he was apparently named Rabbi Webet between 1956 and 1962, and only in 1963 did he become Rabbi Weber. Rabbi Meyer Schechter, rabbi of Montreal's Beth Aaron Congregation was listed as Rabbi Schacter during his tenure with that congregation. These errors pale in significance compared to a rather glaring error in the 1977 edition of the *Jewish Year Book*. This edition lists Rabbi Marvin Pritzker, trained at the Orthodox Yeshiva University, as the rabbi that year for the Conservative Halifax congregation Sha'ar Shalom, rather than the Orthodox Beth Israel where he was the rabbi.¹⁷ There were also a number of years when Tiferet Israel in Moncton, New Brunswick was listed as not having a rabbi, when in fact during these years Rabbi Lipa Medjuck was the respected and beloved rabbi of this congregation.

I was able to make a number of visits to the Ontario Jewish Archives: Director Ellen Scheinberg and her staff were of great assistance both during my visits and with my various email queries. Also I had several opportunities to scour the Ottawa Jewish Archives with the help of Laurie Dougherty. Between the archival and the secondary resources I was able to amass several file boxes of material concerning the early development of Jewish religious institutions in Canada. Securing information regarding the historical rabbinical wife was quite another issue.

¹⁷ Michael Wallach, ed. *The Jewish Year Book, 1977/5737/5738* (London: Jewish Chronicle Publications, 1977) 133.

In late June 2006, I sent an email to archivists across Canada associated with Jewish historical and archival societies requesting any information they could provide concerning any papers that might be housed in their archives that made reference to past rabbinical wives in their communities.¹⁸ Nearly all responded in a similar manner: there were apologies that “there is the odd mention of help and support” but on the whole “nothing substantial was written on this subject,” and then there were offers to put me in touch with contemporary rebbetzins.¹⁹ Robin McGrath suggested that a number of Newfoundland rebbetzins found life there financially and otherwise challenging.²⁰ Often “the women mostly had shops or something” in order to cope with their husbands’ limited incomes.²¹ Janine Johnston, archivist with the newly re-organized Jewish Museum and Archives of British Columbia/ Nemetz Jewish Community Archives noted that the British Columbia archives is in possession of “a single slide image of Rabbi Marcus Berner’s wife and Jewish Ladies, Victoria, circa 1920.” Johnstone went on to say:

While this image was titled ‘Rabbi Marcus Berner’s wife and Jewish Ladies, Victoria, circa 1920’, the title made me wonder whether Mrs. Berner was standing with women from the Hebrew Ladies’ Society of Victoria. In the later years of the Society, the group was commonly referred to as the Jewish Ladies or the ‘Ladies Auxiliary’.²²

The picture is not accompanied by a descriptive text, so the viewer has no indication of the relationship of Mrs. Berner to the unnamed women in the photograph. This is just another tantalizing remnant attesting to the activities of past Canadian Jewish women.

In the process of preparing a conference paper about past Montreal rebbetzins, it became apparent that even though there were anecdotes and a few noteworthy fragments, on the whole,

¹⁸ Correspondence June 30, 2006. See Appendix I for copy of email and the list of Jewish archivists to whom I wrote.

¹⁹ Agi Romer Segal, Archivist, Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta, Debby Shoctor, Archivist, Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Alberta and Northern Alberta, and Irma Penn, formerly the archivist for the Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada responded using these or similar words to my query.

²⁰ Robin McGrath, *Salt Fish and Schmattes: The History of the Jews in Newfoundland and Labrador from 1770* (St. John’s Newfoundland: Creative Publishers, 2006).

²¹ Robin McGrath, email correspondence, October 13, 2006.

²² Janine Johnston, email correspondence June 26th, 2007.

the dearth of information concerning the lives of these women made this as much a discussion about finding information as about portraying lives.²³ My experience writing about Montreal's early rabbinical wives demonstrated that active hands-on research of archival files is required to bring these various scraps of information together. It would not be inconceivable to adopt similar techniques for writing about the early rebbetzins in other Canadian Jewish communities.

The Canadian synagogue today

There are approximately 251 known Jewish religious institutions across Canada.²⁴ In the five years that I have been gathering information on Canadian congregations, several synagogues have merged, several have closed and new ones have taken form wherever Jews have suddenly found themselves in sufficient numbers to create a religious community.²⁵ Of these religious communities approximately 17 constitute synagogues attached to or part of schools, *yeshivot*, hospitals, senior and long-term care centres and a museum, and 38 are centres connected either to Chabad-Lubavitch, Aish Ha-Torah, Ohr Samayach and other Hasidic or specialized groups.²⁶ Of the remaining 196 "stand-alone" religious communities 58 are lay-led, of which 9 are Sephardic. There are 7 female pulpit rabbis in Canada one of whom is a student rabbi. There are also 9 religious communities with part-time rabbis. Within any given three month period a synagogue can be hiring or firing their rabbi, or the rabbi could be retiring, or the rabbi could have passed away. With the rabbinical role qualified to some extent by the relationship the rabbi has with his executive and Board, examining the place of his wife in the community requires marshalling data

²³ Susan Landau-Chark, "The Montreal Rebbetzin: Then and Now: Portraits In Time," Graduate Student Colloquium on Quebec/Canadian Jewish Studies (Montreal, Quebec, November 9, 2004).

²⁴ This is the number listed in the 2006–2007 CJC National Synagogue Directory. As the Directory relies on input from the congregations and community to keep abreast of changes it is likely that not all *shulelach* (storefront synagogues and home-based *shuls*) are sufficiently known beyond their membership to be listed in the directory.

²⁵ While I began my preliminary research in 2002 as part of my preparation for my comprehensive exam on Jewish religious institutions in Canada, often a conference paper, interviews or other academic endeavours would entice me away from the specific research at hand.

²⁶ All data is drawn from the 2006–2007 CJC National Synagogue directory.

on the current practices of the various synagogues. By “practices” I mean the frequency and type of service, lay versus professional participation, and the types of activities that take place in the synagogue. A questionnaire was distributed to the 196 stand-alone communities (Appendix II). To say that the feedback was sparse would be kind. Only twelve questionnaires were returned by mail. Several rabbis called and were quite willing to do the questionnaire by phone boosting the number to fifteen. Twelve more responded by email either with information (6) or to assure me that they had every intention of meeting my request. In one case, one of the archivists with whom I had been in correspondence offered to complete the questionnaire on behalf of a synagogue with which she was familiar. Several also called indicating their willingness to be queried and due to my own time constraints I was unable to engage in extensive follow-through with this aspect of my research. I had a much greater response to my questionnaire when I was able to call or speak with a rabbi or other informed synagogue official directly. As with the research on historical Montreal rabbinical wives, the hands-on approach in the archives combined with face-to-face interviews with the “historians” of today’s synagogues, provided a realistic and comprehensive assessment of Canada’s Jewish religious institutions.

The overview of Canada’s religious institutions is extensive. While it does contain a great deal of information that can be found elsewhere, the “information that is elsewhere” is not so easily accessed. It became quite clear that, after one had read Sack on the De Sola family, or about the Gold Rush and Temple Emanu-El in Victoria, or the evolution of the Holy Blossom in Toronto, one had almost exhausted the published materials on synagogues across Canada. While I do not wish to detract from my main thesis, the place of the rabbinical wife within her congregation, Canada’s Jewish religious institutions need to be presented in their own terms. The diverse information about Canada’s religious institutions gathered in chapter three is designed to provide a complete picture, in one place, of Canadian Jewry’s religious affiliations; to provide

the backdrop for discussion of the “settling-in” experiences of the women when they first arrived in Canada; and, not least, to provide future researchers a substantial starting point in their research.²⁷

Why oral history?

The term “oral history” itself is defined in a number of ways. It has been variously labelled as in-depth interviewing, taped or recorded memoirs, life history, personal narratives and life story. I have used the term to stand for all of these. Implicit in “doing oral history” is the understanding that a narrator/interviewee is recalling or commenting upon events or activities in his or her life while being recorded by the interviewer. This recording can be accomplished through tape recorders, video cameras or notebooks or some combination of these.

My initial exploratory study involved six women.²⁸ This allowed for extended interviews and discussion of themes. No attention was paid to the relationship between the rabbi’s wife and her husband’s congregation. My current research required that I speak with women married to congregational rabbis throughout Canada. While I was asking the women to reflect upon certain aspects of their lives as rabbis’ wives, I was also asking about their visible role in their congregations and in their communities. Sherna Gluck notes that “the oral history interview is highly variable and can therefore be tailored to the experiences and style of the individual interviewee.”²⁹ Susan Geiger notes that the “personal contextualization of women’s lives found in life histories makes them invaluable for ... preventing facile generalizations and evaluating theories about women’s experience.”³⁰

²⁷ I initially planned to include tables for each city listing all synagogues with their date of origin, incorporation, building changes, name changes and mergers. The diverse documents collected are their own study and will be expanded in a separate monograph.

²⁸ Susan J. Landau-Chark, “An Exploration of the Role of the Rabbi’s Wife” (Master’s Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1997).

²⁹ Sherna Gluck, “What’s So Special About Women’s Oral History,” *Frontiers* 2 (1979): 6.

³⁰ Susan Geiger, “Women’s Life Histories: Method and Content,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 11.2 (1986): 338.

The narratives of rabbinical wives have the potential to bring their position “into” history and to make their experience part of the written record.³¹ Caroline Daley comments, “What women remember and retell, and how they tell it, tells us much about their individual experiences and their understanding of their cultural place within their community.”³² It has been said that oral history thrusts life into history itself and widens its scope.³³ Revealing the contemporary experiences of women can enhance our understanding of women’s past experiences. Sue Middleton has commented, “When feminist oral histories cover extensive portions ... in an individual’s life they assist in ... illuminating the connections between biography, history and social structure.”³⁴

The interviews together with the social history bring the role of the wives into history, make it part of the contemporary written record of Canadian Jewish history, and reconstruct the role within the broader social context. In writing the life history of a rabbi’s wife we develop a primary source for understanding how these women perceive their roles, how these roles function within the congregation and the community, and possibly how these roles functioned historically. As noted previously, the CJC National Synagogue Directory was used to compile a potential list of rabbinical wives. By contacting those synagogues that had rabbis and requesting the name of the rabbi’s wife I was able to create a mailing list for my letter of introduction (Appendix III).³⁵

³¹ Shulamit Reinharz, *Feminist Methods in Social Research* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1992) 134.

³² Caroline Daley, “‘He would know, but I just have a feeling’: gender and oral history,” *Women’s History Review*, Volume 7, #3 (1998): 344.

³³ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford, London: Oxford University Press, 2000) 18.

³⁴ Reinharz 131. Reinharz quotes Sue Middleton from her article “On Being a Feminist Educationist Doing Research On Being a Feminist Educationist: Life History Analysis as Consciousness Raising,” *New Zealand Cultural Studies Working Group Journal* 8 (1984): 29–37.

³⁵ Towards the completion time of my thesis face-to-face interviews and follow-up interviews were not always possible; phone and email were a boon in this regard.

Why feminist research?

Sherna Gluck comments:

Women's oral history is a feminist encounter ... it is the creation of a new type of material on women; it is the validation of women's experiences; it is the communication among women of different generations; it is the discovery of our own roots and the development of a continuity which has been denied us in traditional historical accounts.³⁶

Feminist theory emerges from and responds to the lives of women.³⁷ Recording oral histories has been particularly useful for exploring women's history. Anderson et al have demonstrated that the oral interview provides

a picture of how a woman understands herself within her world, where and how she places value, and what particular meanings she attaches to her actions and locations in the world.³⁸

Early use of oral history was considered to be solely for gathering the recollections of the elderly who had personal experience of the past events or situations being studied.³⁹ It can involve interviews of a particular target group, either people working within the same factory or in the same community; or people of a certain age who have certain experiences in common or people who have had similar types of experiences during their lifetime or people of a particular ethnic group. The Personal Narratives Group notes that "personal narratives illuminate the course of a life over time and allow for its interpretation in its historical and cultural context."⁴⁰ Susan Armitage also notes that from a woman's particular experience one can generalize to women's common experience.⁴¹ The recording of oral histories is no longer restricted to oral historians.

³⁶ Gluck 5.

³⁷ The Personal Narratives Group, "Origins," *Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989) 4.

³⁸ Kathryn Anderson, Susan Armitage, Dana Jack, and Judith Wittner, "Beginning Where We Are: Feminist Methodology in Oral History," *Oral History Review* 1.5 (Spring 1987): 114.

³⁹ Robert Gant, "Archives and Interviews: A Comment on Oral History and Fieldwork Practice," *Geography* V.72 (Jan 1987): 27.

⁴⁰ The Personal Narratives Group 4.

⁴¹ Anderson et al 105.

This methodology has been used in such varied fields as religious studies, anthropology, humanistic sociology, business management, psychology, education, ethnic studies and biographical literature.

David Mandelbaum, a writer of life histories, notes, "Gathering individual life stories allows one to consider the broader questions of culture, societal influence, ... relationships and common human experiences."⁴² Mandelbaum further comments that the individual subjective experience is likely to be similar to that of others in the same culture and society.⁴³

Daniel Bertaux, a French sociologist, gathered the life stories of bakers, their wives, and their employees.⁴⁴ He conjectured that the stories they told would reveal "patterns of practice" specific to this particular strata of society.⁴⁵ He further conjectured that these patterns would be unique and observable in every bakery in France.

In recording oral histories from a select group, women married to congregational rabbis, the opportunity existed for exploring the women's experiences and reflections around their position, and its "fit" with the congregation and the larger community. I was looking for similar "patterns of practice" in the personal narratives of the rabbinical wives. In this instance the patterns of practice would refer to the particular set of social relations that are unique to the wife of a congregational rabbi and to her role within the congregation and community.

The interview

The Personal Narratives Group asserts that the interviewee, whom they call the interpreter, "is an active participant involved in distinctive ways with the shaping of a personal narrative."⁴⁶ When

⁴² David Mandelbaum, "The Study of Life History: Gandhi," *Current Anthropology* 14.3 (1973): 193-194.

⁴³ Mandelbaum 180.

⁴⁴ Daniel Bertaux, "From the Life History Approach to the Transformation of Sociological Practice," *Biography and Society: The Life History in the Social Sciences*, ed. Daniel Bertaux (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1981) 37.

⁴⁵ Bertaux 36.

⁴⁶ The Personal Narratives Group, "Whose Voice?" *Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989) 201.

the interviewee/interpreter tells her story, it is a process in which the events she has experienced are shared and interpreted for the interviewer. At the same time, the stories and anecdotes are presented in response to questions framed by the interviewer. The completed interview represents the collaboration between the two interpreters.⁴⁷

Kristina Minister put forth four recommendations for encouraging female narrators to actively participate in the interview.⁴⁸ These are one, women should do the interviewing; two, interviewers need to be alert to the “power factor” that can arise out of differences between the interviewer and the narrator in terms of age, class, ethnic affiliation and education; three, the interviewer should discard her own research-oriented time to follow the narrator’s temporal expectations; and four, at the end of the interview, the interviewer should reveal her personal investment in the project.⁴⁹ These recommendations were useful guidelines against which I could evaluate and assess my particular approach to interviewing my informants.

A number of writings by feminists address the issue of power and how this can influence the information revealed by the narrator as well as the interpretation of the material by the interviewer. This has been shown in a number of studies where significant differences exist between the narrator and interviewer with respect to gender, education, ethnicity, race, class and age. In the majority of the interviews I conducted, there were no significant differences between the narrator and the interviewer, such that the presence of power as a factor was negligible.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Reinhartz 131.

⁴⁸ Kristina Minister, “A Feminist Frame for Interviews,” *Women’s Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, eds. Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (New York and London: Routledge, 1991) 35. Prior to conducting any research requiring the participation of human subjects Concordia University obligates the researcher to submit the proposed research to an Ethics Review Process. In addition the individual participating must not only be informed of the reason they are being asked to participate, but the consent form that must also be signed lists the name of a Compliance Officer at Concordia University if they wish further information not directly related to the research (Appendix IV).

⁴⁹ Minister 35–36.

⁵⁰ Probably the greatest variable that I encountered was age: while many wives were within a range of ten years younger, ten years older than myself, many were young women new to married life, motherhood and the rabbinate, while several others were great-grandmothers.

Susan Armitage comments that we will learn what we want to know only by listening to people who are not accustomed to talking.⁵¹ The majority of women who find themselves married to rabbis of congregations are articulate and accustomed to speaking out on issues that are important to themselves and their congregations. Many of the women with whom I spoke have at least one university degree. As the partner of the spiritual leader of the congregation, "[the rabbi's wife] is not only the recipient of all his worldly goods, but seems to become automatically invested with all his special virtues, and ... endowed with all his 'scholarly degrees.'"⁵²

Like her husband, the wife is the recipient of visible signs of honour and respect from the congregation; and if they are the only congregation in a small town and are actively involved in their larger community, honour and respect will also be visible from the larger non-Jewish community. The implication in most feminist approaches to the interview is that the interviewer should play down her education in order not to intimidate the narrator. In this situation making the role of the academic more visible rather than less was a much more effective approach. As for the issue of time I understand Minister to be referring to the time required for the narrator to feel at ease with the interview. I will address this and the question of researcher investment later in this chapter.

One of the main questions concerns who is the master of the meaning. Marjorie L. DeVault comments that "language itself reflects male experience, and that its categories are often incongruent with women's lives."⁵³ The researcher needs to be alert for ambiguities in the interpreter's speech, problems of expression, and descriptions of activities that do not fit "known" labels. Bev James has also suggested that researchers should supplement

⁵¹ Minister 32. Kristina Minister quotes from Susan Armitage, "The Next Step," *Frontiers* 7,#1 (1983): 5.

⁵² Shoni B. Levi, "Don't Look Now, But She's A Rebbetzin," *Women's League Outlook* (March 1950): 8.

⁵³ Marjorie L. DeVault, "Women's Talk: Feminist Strategies for Analyzing Research Interviews," *Women and Language* Vol. X, #2 (1987): 33.

Verbal communication in interviews with attention to nonverbal communication, since often members of a subordinate group cannot clearly articulate their frustrations and discontents [which] may be expressed in inchoate ways such as laughter.⁵⁴

As mentioned previously, I did not expect my target population to have problems articulating their issues. Their being able to articulate the issues they were comfortable discussing is not meant to imply that wholly open sharing took place. On more than one occasion there was a long pause, a tightening of the lips, and a change of topic. Furthermore as I did not wish to create any discomfort during the interview, as soon as I sensed a withholding, I would immediately re-assure the individual that I was not interested in the details of a given event but only in her overall response and how she had felt affected by, for example, her husband's conflictual situations. However, I did suspect that the act of discussing a role for which there is no "factual" description and which is loaded with expectations, would create silences and perhaps some nervous laughter. My earlier findings indicate that the position places limitations on personal friendships.⁵⁵ Anderson and Jack comment that "the interview is an opportunity to document the experience that lies outside the boundaries of acceptability."⁵⁶ Few, if any of these women are used to speaking openly on the issues relating to their position.

Since my criteria for interviewing particular women was the fact that they were married to a congregational rabbi, it would have been inappropriate, from my perspective, to engage in a totally unstructured interview. While it was important for me to know how they perceive their position, it was as important to know the activities connected with their position. The semi-structured interview, according to Janice Raymond, "maximizes discovery and description" and seemed the most useful in this situation.⁵⁷ Gabriele Rosenthal comments that within "the

⁵⁴ Reinharz 20.

⁵⁵ Landau-Chark 110.

⁵⁶ Kathryn Anderson and Dana Jack, "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses," *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, eds. Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (New York and London: Routledge, 1991) 11.

⁵⁷ Reinharz 18.

interactional framework of the interview, [the life story is related] in a thematically focused context, and evolves around a thematic topic, usually established by the interviewer.”⁵⁸

Jennifer Jue, writing about the cultural identity of Chinese American women, outlined her research themes in the process of developing her questions.⁵⁹ Her research methodology was anchored within a feminist participatory research framework.⁶⁰ Jue notes that in the first phase of her research she reflected on her initial ideas for the research project.⁶¹ With other interested individuals she identified and developed a set of research questions to guide the interviews.⁶²

Her next step was to seek out interested individuals willing to participate in her study. Six women were selected and Jue encouraged these women through “dialogic retrospection” to reflect on their life experiences as Chinese American women.⁶³

To dialogue means to talk as equal partners in an exchange of not only information but also of sentiment and values. Dialogue is a means of discovering the sharedness of a problem, the connectedness of the lives, and the common ground for action ... Dialogue is more than a method of research, for to dialogue is to be human.⁶⁴

Jue emphasizes that the researcher and participant are collaborators in the development of the key themes. However, it is Jue who ultimately is responsible for analyzing the dialogic transcripts. Even though Jue engages in discussion with the participants to affirm their perspective of “the construction of meaning” within their dialogue, it is Jue who first defined the terms she wished to explore. The stories evolved to demonstrate her thesis. This raises questions about the extent to which knowledge of the reasoning behind the interviewer’s questions

⁵⁸ Gabriele Rosenthal, “Reconstruction of Life Stories,” *The Narrative Study of Lives*, eds. Ruthellen Josselson and Amia Lieblich (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993) 65.

⁵⁹ Jennifer Jue, “Chinese American Women’s Development of Voice and Cultural Identity: A Participatory Research Study via Feminist Oral History.” (PhD Thesis, University of San Francisco, 1993) 15. Her research themes centred around cultural identity, voice, silencing, language development, family history and stories.

⁶⁰ Jue 52.

⁶¹ Jue 52.

⁶² Jue 52.

⁶³ Jue 53.

⁶⁴ Jue 47. Jue quotes P. Parks, “What is Participatory Research? A Theoretical and Methodological Perspective” (Unpublished Manuscript, University of Massachusetts/Amherst, 1989) 14.

influences the narrator's story. Also one needs to ask to what extent the production of information is a consequence of the insider/outsider factor.

Another method using a small number of subjects and theme-based is the phenomenological interview. This is also described as "intensive interviewing" by Shulamit Reinharz and as "thick dialogue" by Alessandro Portelli.⁶⁵ In the phenomenological interview there are almost no prepared questions and no mention is made to the interviewee concerning any possible themes. The interviewee is called the co-researcher to indicate that as research subject, she or he is participating equally with the researcher, and that the exchange of information is co-operative rather than controlled by the researcher.⁶⁶ In the first stage of the interview one general question is put to the co-researcher and this question asks him or her to describe their feelings before the onset of a particular situation, during the situation, and after the completion of the situation. This methodology has been used for describing the power of break-through dreams, the onset of breast cancer, the experience of loss through a death, emotional abuse, and romantic love.⁶⁷ The co-researcher is given time to ruminate on their feelings or to sit in silence or to digress. After the first interview it is the role of the researcher to analyze the scripts and to elicit possible themes. The researcher returns a second time to the co-researcher and checks the script for possible errors. Also the researcher shares the themes and discusses their possible meaning with the co-researcher. The phenomenological interview is often emotionally intense for the co-researchers. It requires interview skills of restraint and listening, as well as co-researchers who are verbal and reflective.⁶⁸ The findings that come out of a phenomenological interview emphasize the

⁶⁵ Reinharz 21. Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 227–228. Thompson quotes from Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison, WI: 1997) 11–13; 72–78.

⁶⁶ Karen Lecovin, "An Existential-Phenomenological Approach to Understanding the Experience of Romantic Love," (Master's Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1990) 56.

⁶⁷ Each of these was the subject of either Masters or Ph.D theses through the Department of Counselling Psychology, University of British Columbia.

⁶⁸ Reinharz 21.

experience of the person arising out of an event rather than the nature of the event's communal, social or historical place in the life of the individual. While the aspect emphasized in my research is the effect of the public role as opposed to the experience of this role in the life of the rabbi's wife, it was impossible at times to ignore the meaning a particular event or incident had in the life of the rabbinical wife. While the phenomenological technique was not the predominate methodology of my interviews, the skill-set it requires, and the depth it provides to interview techniques generally, served as a useful secondary tool during a number of the more intensive interviews.

The researcher

As mentioned previously, my background is similar to that of the women I was interviewing: in terms of Jewish tradition, ritual and general position within a Canadian Jewish community.

Unlike the women I first interviewed, most of these women were strangers to me. However, as I am Jewish and they are Jewish I was not a stranger but rather, someone like themselves, who was part of *klal Israel*, the congregation of Israel, and therefore a kinswoman. I understood the shorthand used to refer to Jewish activities or Jewish ways of thinking. This certainly affected the interview. I was not a stranger or complete outsider. Nor did they seem to feel the need to explain their Jewish ritual or commitment to me. Although there were a couple of occasions when a knowledge check would take place to ensure that I really did understand Jewish terminology. Even though the chances of crossing paths again in another situation is highly unlikely, because we are both Jews, because people travel, and because I am not a complete insider, the issue of confidentiality became very important.

This brings me to the latter two questions raised by Kristina Minister about the perception of time on the part of the researcher and the narrator and about the extent to which the researcher shares her role with the interviewer. The fact that I was not seen as a stranger allowed the

interview to begin with a minimum of preliminary exchanges. Time issues that arose were more concern by the researcher that the informant would be nervous about the time allotted to the interview. The letter of introduction stated that the interview would take one to one and a half hours. Several had initially raised concerns about taking the time to participate in such a lengthy interview. Fortunately once the interview was underway the issue of time was rarely raised. Most of the interviews ranged between 45 minutes to an hour. I used ninety minute tapes and there were several occasions when I was required to use a second tape.

As for sharing researcher expectations with the informant I did not think that it was appropriate to share themes prior to the first interview. I did feel that it was appropriate before the interview, not after, as Minister states, to inform each woman about the factual aspects of my research and my interest in her role. What evolved out of the first interview would be the essence of our second discussion.

The questions

The set of questions developed for the interviews were divided into three sections: Biographical data, Married life, and Personal development (Appendix V). Before discussing the questions, it is important to share some of the process involved in creating the questionnaire. Once the first draft of the questionnaire was completed I met with a close friend who is a rabbi's wife. We had often discussed my research and she was very open to being involved on a practical level. The questionnaire in its penultimate form was very much a product of our discussions. When I used this questionnaire in my first interview, my informant made several excellent suggestions that I decided to include. These questions turned out to provide a rather unique lens on the rabbi/rabbi's wife relationship.

The biographical section asks about the religious and ritual practices of the informant's family of origin, friendships and education. A much debated topic in the field of Jewish identity

is the “drift” that takes place between generations. As one of the major concerns of this research is the maintenance of Jewish identity for women, the questions around family practices both ease the informant into the interview (as it is discussing past history) and provide (for some) a measure of her drift into Jewish practice.

The section on married life queries the informant as to her perceptions of her role, length of marriage, number of congregations experienced, issues around children, and home ownership (owned by family versus owned by the synagogue) and the kinds of things she saw herself doing for the congregation. As will be discussed in my analysis, the length of time one is with a congregation and the number of moves one is required to make affect the wives’ perceptions of their role and their place in the community. For a number of the women there was a disconnect between their response to the question “Do you recall any image conjured up by the phrase ‘rabbi’s wife’ or ‘rebbetzin’?” and the question “What kinds of things do you do as a rabbi’s wife within the congregation, within the larger community?”

The section on personal development inquires extensively as to her experiences in the congregation, relationship with children and husband vis-a-vis the congregation, and her own feelings of satisfaction around the position.

There are also several key themes embedded in the questionnaire that had emerged in my preliminary study and that I felt required a more comprehensive investigation. In my first study I had not specifically requested details on the wife’s involvement with the congregation or the larger community. This time I wished to see to what extent her views of congregational expectations meshed with her activities within the synagogue. The questions “How available are you to the congregation in general?”, “What expectations do you feel the synagogue has from you?” and “What kinds of things do you do as a rabbi’s wife within the congregation, within the larger community?” provide a picture not only of her role, but indirectly also of how the

synagogue's professionals are seen by the larger community.

I queried to what extent the wife was able to meet her religious/spiritual needs within the synagogue and asked not only about attendance at services but also what happened once she was in services: "Are you able to relax at services or do you tend to 'sweep' the room to see how people are responding?"

The issue of private and public space is an important part of any research in which women's concerns are at the centre. In my earlier study it was very much an issue for the women with whom I spoke and it was not one that was easily resolved. Even as they claimed that they held onto their privacy all six women opened their homes to their congregations to varying degrees. I wanted to see if this was a function of this particular city or if the size of city, or if the size of congregation affected the extent to which one opened one's home. Several questions address this theme – one addresses it directly by asking "How has this affected your sense of privacy?", others are more indirect: "Do you feel that your position requires you to behave differently? Has your cooking, dress, other ... changed as a result of your position? What did you do to accommodate? Do you feel you are in control of how you live?"

One of the corollary aspects of public and private space concerns the nature and formation of friendships. The women were asked "Do you have contact with other rabbinical families?" and also "Describe the relationships you have with other women in your congregation." A further area of enquiry hinged on whether or not the wife had her own career. Was she able to maintain a certain distance between her professional life and her congregational activities or was there slippage between the two roles. Two questions indirectly explore this issue: "Do you feel the role of rabbi's wife has helped or hindered your personal development?", and "What opportunities do you think have come your way because you are a rabbi's wife?"

As noted previously, the rabbi is the "symbolic exemplar" within contemporary North

American Jewish society.⁶⁹ What about the rabbi's wife? Does she view herself in the same manner? Aside from asking directly "Do you see yourself as a role model?", I also asked "Who is your role model" and "Who is your 'rabbi'?" I ended the interview by asking my informant to rate her situation: "On a scale of 1–10 how would you rate your satisfaction quotient with congregational life?", which often led to further revelations regarding her perceptions of the position.

As already noted, I utilized a semi-structured interview to draw out the stories of the women: their early years, their adolescence, their education, their marriages, and their congregational experiences to date. The women were encouraged to digress into details and to recount anecdotes. Open-ended questions such as "Can you elaborate on that?", "What was happening for you at that time?", and "Tell me more about that." helped to stimulate dialogue.

The specific interview questions allowed the individual to reflect upon and describe certain times in their life more fully. In reconstructing their stories, the interviewees select and relate those experiences that represent a thematically consistent pattern.⁷⁰ Within this framework the investigation took into account the importance of "starting with women's experiences."⁷¹

As mentioned, prior to the first interview letters of introduction were sent to women whose husbands held positions as congregational rabbis (Appendix VI). The letters were sent out usually a month prior to my being in the city where I was seeking interviews. One to two weeks after the letter was mailed a telephone call was made to each rabbinical wife to clarify any questions inspired by the letter and to set up an appointment. As will be discussed in my analysis (chapter five), 59 women agreed to be interviewed about their experience of being a rabbi's wife. While most interviews took place within the woman's home, there were several interviews in

⁶⁹ Jack H. Bloom, "'By The Power Vested in Me': Symbolic Exemplarhood and the Pulpit Rabbi," *Conservative Judaism*, Volume 1, Number 4 (Summer 1998): 59–66.

⁷⁰ Rosenthal 62.

⁷¹ Reinhartz 21.

offices, Starbucks, and malls.

Directly engaging with women, listening to and recording their responses is a way of both honouring their perceptions and of writing contemporary history. A woman's perception of her role informs us of her experience of the role. It also adds to our knowledge of what the role in general demands. The histories gathered as part of my dissertation will contribute to the transformation of women's place in Jewish history.

As noted earlier the rabbinical wives raised outside of Canada are often surprised when they encounter social and cultural differences at odds with their American experience. The next chapter will deal with women in Canadian Jewish history and illustrate some of the nuances in similarities between the two North American communities.

CHAPTER TWO WOMEN'S PLACE IN CANADIAN JEWISH HISTORY

Canadian conservatism has had implications for gender, ethnicity and religion ... [so] that most Jewish women in Canada before the turn of the twentieth century and many after ... elude the historian's gaze.¹

Michael Brown, in his monograph, *Jewish Women in Canada, 1738–2005*, attributes the lack of historical data on Canadian Jewish women to “Canadian traditionalism” which has emphasized the domestic role of women.² American Jewish women also had to contend with traditional perspectives regarding behaviours and activities. However, the larger population, with its manifold opportunities, enabled American Jewish women to challenge traditional role expectations at an earlier point in American Jewish history. In order to fully grasp the cultural variations that can influence the “fit” between the rabbinical family and the congregation, this chapter focuses on the historical place of Jewish women in Canada.

Despite similarities in the experiences of Canadian Jewish women and American Jewish women, differences exist, especially in the area of education (secular and Jewish), employment opportunities, and volunteerism. The Jewish woman disembarking in Halifax or Montreal experienced a history at variance from those who debarked at Ellis Island or other points south of the Canadian-American border, and this historical differential is part of the adjustment a contemporary rabbinical wife encounters on her arrival in Canada. The material in this chapter is presented according to the following four time periods: 1881–1921; 1921–1951; 1951–1981, and 1981 into the beginnings of the 21st century.

¹ Michael Brown, “From Gender Bender to Lieutenant Governor: Jewish Women in Canada, 1738–2005,” in *A Maturing Community: Jewish Women and Seniors in Canada*, ed. Martin Lockshin, *Centre for Jewish Studies Annual* 7 (2005) 4–5.

² Brown 4.

The years 1881–1921: On the outside looking in

Canadian Jewish history takes as its starting point the British conquest of Quebec (1759) and the American Revolution which took place shortly after (1776). With these two events a Jewish presence took root in Canada. In these years of Canadian history, women “contributed materially to the family economy” and were responsible for “almost every aspect of social reproduction” including the medical, spiritual, and educational welfare of the family and community.³ By Confederation (1867), however, women’s involvement outside the home had given way to the prevailing secular ideology of the Victorian Era known as the *Cult of Domesticity* or *True Womanhood*. Married women were being persuaded that

If she wishes to enjoy her husband’s society, she must be a keeper at home, and so arrange her family, as that he, when he returns from the care and noise and contention of the world, shall find a retreat in which sweet converse shall beguile him of his cares; and peace, and love, and order, and gentle welcome, and soothing sympathy, shall form a striking contrast to the scenes he has just quitted.⁴

This cultural model, made popular by Queen Victoria, emphasized that “home, hearth and heart” were the only obligations required of a married woman, and that it was the role of every woman to be married.⁵ This ideology coincided with the industrialization and urbanization of Western Europe, the United States and Canada, and was directed mainly to married women of the middle and upper classes.

Brown noted that expectations attached to the role of women in Canadian society “applied only loosely to the working classes and *petite bourgeoisie*.”⁶ These women were “permitted” to

³ Jane Errington, “Pioneers and Suffragists,” in *Changing Patterns: Women in Canada*, eds. Sandra Burt, Lorraine Code and Lindsay Dorney (Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart, 1988) 57. Errington attributes a part of this statement to Mary Ryan’s *Cradle of the Middle-Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790–1865* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 19, 24.

⁴ Reverend Robert Sedgewick, “The Proper Sphere and Influence of Woman in Christian Society,” A lecture delivered before the Young Men’s Christian Association, Halifax, Nova Scotia, November 1856. Reprinted in *The Proper Sphere: Woman’s Place in Canadian Society*, eds Ramsay Cook and Wendy Mitchinson (Toronto, ON: Oxford University Press, 1976) 29.

⁵ Elizabeth Langland, *Nobody’s Angels: Middle-Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995) 33.

⁶ Brown 4–5.

obtain employment as clerks, stenographers, typists, telephone operators, nurses, and as workers in factories. With the exception of the last, these positions required a certain amount of training and knowledge of the English language.

Paula Hyman notes that in the United States “Jewish social reformers (from the middle and upper classes) saw it as their duty to inculcate ‘American’ ideals to the newcomers.”⁷ While young single immigrant women took work in the factories, their mothers and younger siblings were encouraged to attend the settlement houses and take classes designed to teach the skills that would enable them to maintain the woman’s “traditional role” within the family.⁸

Historians of Jewish life and culture have commented extensively on the uniqueness of the Jewish immigration to North America when compared to other ethnic groups, particularly the Italian and southern European. Unlike these other groups, the Jew, whether he/she arrived in Canada or in the United States, had no intention of returning to his/her home country. Judith Seidel noted, “The Hebrew immigrant as a class, undergoes a somewhat different life history since, unlike most others, he immigrates as a family unit.”⁹

In the years prior to 1901 through to 1910 barely two thousand more Jewish males than Jewish females had immigrated to Canada, and between 1910 and 1920 the numbers of Jewish men and women were almost equal.¹⁰ The almost even ratio between the sexes represented a distinctive pattern among the new arrivals.

⁷ Paula Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representation of Women* (Seattle and London: The University of Washington Press, 1995) 106–107.

⁸ Hyman 108; Hyman quotes David Blaustein, *Memoirs of David Blaustein: Educator and Communal Worker*, Arranged by Miriam Blaustein (New York: McBride, Nast & Co., 1913) 170, who noted that in his classes (for immigrant Jewish women) “he avoided the temptation to use education” to introduce the latest American ideas re the role of women, but rather provided “programs that would make ... women more ‘womanly.’”

⁹ Judith Seidel, *The Development and Social Adjustment of the Jewish Community in Montreal* (September 1939, MA, McGill University) 1.

¹⁰ Seidel 13. Prior to 1901 3,086 Hebrew males, and 2,358 Hebrew females entered Canada; between 1901 to 1910 there were 14,028 Hebrew males, and 12,240 Hebrew females; between 1911–1920 there were 12,238 Hebrew males, and 12,374 Hebrew females. These figures reflect the “settled” population based on census figures rather than the immigrant population. These figures do not include outward migration to the United States or deaths that might have occurred.

Harold Troper has remarked that the Jews did not so much come to Canada as many were brought to Canada by family members who had arrived previously.¹¹ Husbands sent for their older children or their wife and children depending on availability of funds and the needs of family left behind. Prior to the appointment of Clifford Sifton as Minister of the Interior in 1896, Canada had almost had an open-door policy regarding its immigration procedures.¹² Sifton, concerned about the problems emerging in American cities introduced the concept of selective immigration, and tried to curb immigration to the cities by encouraging and promoting, “the immigration of farmers and farm labourers. We have not been disposed to exclude foreigners of any nationality who seemed likely to become successful agriculturalists.”¹³

It is likely that the “foreigners” to whom Sifton alluded were Jews who had entered Canada, first in the 1880s under government auspices with the assistance of Alexander Galt, and then in the 1890s with the aid of Baron de Hirsch.¹⁴ Despite the initial enthusiasm and good intentions of the settlers, few had practical farming experience and many of them, challenged by the lack of basic amenities, and concerned over their children’s futures made their way from the farming colonies into the cities.¹⁵ The majority of new immigrants congregated in Canada’s three major

¹¹ Harold Troper, “New Horizons in a New Land: Jewish Immigration to Canada,” in *From Immigration To Integration: The Canadian Jewish Experience: A Millennium Edition* eds Ruth Klein and Frank Dimant (Toronto, ON: B’nai Brith Canada, Institute for International Affairs, 2001) 5.

¹² Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond and John English, *Canada: 1900–1945* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1987) 56.

¹³ *A Report of the Canadian Immigration and Population Study: The Immigration Program*, Manpower and Immigration (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1974) 6–7; also, Mabel F. Timlin, “Canada’s Immigration Policy,” *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* (November 1960): 518.

¹⁴ Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto, ON: Lester Publishing Limited, 1992) 116–120.

¹⁵ There are only a handful of books addressing the the experiences of the Jewish farmer in Western Canada: Simon Belkin, *Through Narrow Gates: A Review of Jewish Immigration, Colonization and Immigrant Aid Work in Canada (1840–1940)* (Montreal, Canada: Canadian Jewish Congress and the Jewish Colonization Association, The Eagle Publishing Company, Limited, 1966); Vladamir Grossman, *The Soil’s Calling* (Montreal, Canada: The Eagle Publishing Company, Limited, 1938); Clara Hoffer and F. H. Kahan, *The Land of Hope* (Saskatoon, Sask: Modern Press, 1960); Cyril Edel Leonoff, *The Jewish Farmers of Western Canada* (Vancouver, B.C.: Historical Society of British Columbia and Western States Jewish Historical Association, 1984); Louis Rosenberg, “Chapter XXXIII: Jews in Agriculture,” in *Canada’s Jews: A Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s*, ed. Morton Weinfeld (Montreal/Kingston/ London/ Buffalo: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), and Michael Usiskin, *Uncle Mike’s Edenbridge: Memoirs of a Jewish Pioneer Farmer*, trans. Marcia Usiskin

cities: Toronto, Montreal, and Winnipeg.

In Canada, as in the United States, prior to WWI, the “ideal” family unit was that in which the male worked and earned enough to support the household. As the husband’s status was based on his ability as wage earner, the new cultural ideal for the Jewish man, at least in the United States, became the successful breadwinner rather than the scholarly learner. Women and men aspired to achieve the comfort associated with the middle-class: it has been noted that the full-time middle-class housewife appeared sooner in the American immigrant Jewish community than in other settlements.¹⁶ This continues to be an unexplored area within the Canadian Jewish milieu, but anecdotal material seems to indicate that newcomers to Canada rarely were able to attain this ideal within the immigrant generation, but it was realized in their children’s generation.

A number of historians have noted that the situation awaiting East European married women in America was not dissimilar from what they had left behind – as part of an economic unit these women were out in the market place seeking the best buys for their families. What was different for many women was that this was all that they were expected to do – unlike the “old world” where they were an overt contributor to the family’s economy – in this new world their financial contribution, while expected, was not officially acknowledged.¹⁷ In the United States, by the early 1900s, only 1% of married Jewish women were employed outside the house.¹⁸ However, many married women were employed in assisting with their husband’s store, taking in boarders,

Basman (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Peguis Publishers Limited, 1983). There are only a handful of personal documents that reveal the experiences of the Canadian Jewish farmers. In the diary by Clara Hoffer, for example, some of the details help us to “know” the early days of the Hoffer colony in Saskatchewan, and the issues she faced, however, the diary as presented in the *Land of Hope* stresses the efforts, and activities of Israel Hoffer, her husband.

¹⁶ Kathie Friedman-Kasaba, *Memories of Migration: Gender, Ethnicity, and Work in the Lives of Jewish and Italian Women in New York, 1870–1924* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996) 123.

¹⁷ Alison Prentice, Paula Bourne, Gail Cuthbert Brandt, Beth Light, Wendy Mitchinson and Naomi Black, *Canadian Women: A History*, 2nd edition (Toronto/Montreal/Fort Worth/New York/ Orlando/Philadelphia/San Diego/London/Sydney/Tokyo: Harcourt Brace Canada, 1996) 126–128.

¹⁸ Friedman-Kasaba 123.

or doing piecework within the home. Susan Jacoby notes that even though the Jewish daughters of immigrants had received a higher educational status, they continued to “play out the American...dream of staying home” supported by their husbands.¹⁹

Like the newcomers to the United States, immigrant women living in Canadian cities took in laundry, took in boarders, worked long hours in the family store, or did piece work at home in order to sustain the family.²⁰ In *Canadian Women: A History*, the authors commented that while East European Jewish women played a subordinate role in their religion, this was offset by their community’s acceptance of their active participation in the marketplace.²¹ It would seem that in Canada, at least according to the annals of Canadian women’s history, the “domestic ideology” that governed the lives of many Canadian-born women, and many American-born Jewish women, was not seen as an issue for East European Jewish women who had landed in Canada.²² Ruth Frager, writing in *Sweatshop Strife*, a study of the role of women in Toronto’s Jewish labour movement in the first three decades of the twentieth century, also observed that East European Jewish women were somehow exempted from the “cult of true womanhood.”²³ She remarked that Jewish women in their East European culture had a legitimate role to play in the marketplace, and that their domestic sphere often overlapped into the public one when it came to contributing to the financial well-being of the family: paid labour was not considered a bad thing.²⁴ Possibly being surrounded by family and friends from the same milieu lessened the need to overly imitate the host community. As in the United States, also in Canada, the “new arrivals ... learned [through their settled family and friends] how to cope with all the new facts of daily life ...

¹⁹ Susan Jacoby, “World of Our Mothers: Immigrant Women, Immigrant Daughters,” *Present Tense* Volume 6, #3 (1979): 50.

²⁰ Prentice et al 126–127.

²¹ Prentice et al 165.

²² Prentice et al 165.

²³ Ruth Frager, *Sweatshop Strife: Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement of Toronto, 1900–1939* (Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 150.

²⁴ Frager 150.

where to shop, how to wash.”²⁵ These were surface similarities, as the opportunities for Canadian Jewish women to advance educationally and professionally were quite limited when compared to the American experience, as even second generation Jewish women, especially those living in Montreal and Toronto, actively sought work in the garment industry.²⁶

In both Canada and the United States, arriving immigrant women who were married with children, whatever their age, were expected to remain home, whereas the older daughters, or younger sister (who might have arrived with her married sister) were expected to secure a paying position outside the home, and to contribute to the household until such time as they married. American history is replete with articles and commentary regarding the social mores and behaviours of the single Jewish women who arrived in New York and elsewhere in the United States in the late 1800s and into the early 1900s. In Canada, as in the United States, most unmarried women lived at home, either with parents, relatives or surrogate parents and worked long hours handing over significant portions of their earnings to their families.²⁷

In Canada, in 1891, domestic service accounted for 41% of single working women, most of whom tended to be immigrants.²⁸ By 1921 this had diminished to 11% as most single women preferred jobs within the factory system to labouring as a domestic servant.²⁹ The age of Jewish daughters and sisters at arrival, and with whom they came, to a large extent defined whether or not they would be going into the workforce or be able to avail themselves of the opportunities for an education. What were the educational options for a young Jewish woman arriving in Canada?

In the United States, school was seen as an agent of transformation moving the child away

²⁵ Elizabeth Ewen, *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars: Life and Culture on the Lower East Side* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1985) 162.

²⁶ Donna Goodman, “Montreal Jewish Women and the Immigrant Experience, 1900–1939” (unpublished paper, September, 1999) 17.

²⁷ Prentice et al 252.

²⁸ Prentice et al 128.

²⁹ Prentice et al 128.

from his/her culture to become American. Sydney Stahl Weinberg comments that “teachers patrolled lunchrooms, restrooms and schoolyards” handing out demerits to discourage the use of Yiddish.³⁰ Elementary school education was free, and by 1914 there were at least 5 free high schools serving the New York area.³¹ Access was free to College of the City of New York (boys) or Hunter College (girls) if one was able to manage a seat in a high school and complete the requirements.³² Much has been written on the assimilatory role of free education particularly in New York. However author Selma Berrol has noted that “Jewish school success has been greatly exaggerated” as even though both elementary and secondary schooling may have been free unless the family had sufficient income most children had to leave school after grade eight to help support the household.³³

In Canada, education was also seen as the way to Canadianize the young immigrant children. However, the schooling situation in Canada was complicated by the fact that education was under provincial jurisdiction.³⁴ Canada’s linguistic divisions further influenced the accessibility of educational opportunities in the early years of immigration. The influx of newcomers to Canada (and the United States) coincided with a new attitude toward “children and their welfare.”³⁵ The establishment of child labour laws, the concerns of educators with the health of children, and the “new science of psychology with its emphasis on child development” contributed to the notion of compulsory schooling for all children.³⁶

³⁰ Sydney Stahl Weinberg, “Longing to Learn: The Education of Jewish Immigrant Women in New York City, 1900–1934,” *Journal of Ethnic American History* (Spring 1989): 119.

³¹ Weinberg 123: footnote 5.

³² Leonard Dinnerstein, “Education and the Advancement of American Jews,” in *American Education and the European Immigrant: 1840–1940*, ed. Bernard J. Weiss (Urbana/Chicago/ London: University of Illinois Press, 1982) 48, 51.

³³ Selma Berrol, “Public Schools and Immigrants: The New York City Experience,” in *American Education and the European Immigrant: 1840–1940*, ed. Bernard J. Weiss (Urbana/ Chicago/London: University of Illinois Press, 1982) 38.

³⁴ Joseph Katz, *Education in Canada* (Newton Abbot, Great Britain: David and Charles, 1974) 18.

³⁵ F. Henry Johnson, *A Brief History of Canadian Education* (Toronto/New York/London/Sydney/Johannesburg/Mexico/Panama: McGraw-Hill Company of Canada Limited, 1968) 82.

³⁶ Johnson 85.

As early as 1864 Nova Scotia was unique in providing free secondary education to those who could pass the entrance examinations; yet it was not until 1915 that compulsory schooling was decreed and that was only for towns.³⁷ In Prince Edward Island compulsory schooling was imposed for ages seven to thirteen and the required number of weeks for attending school was extended from twenty to thirty weeks by 1920, and in New Brunswick a compulsory education law was passed in 1905 that was rarely enforced.³⁸ In Ontario, the Ontario Act of 1871 established compulsory schooling for four months per year for ages seven to twelve and in 1918 the age was raised to sixteen.³⁹ For immigrants and their families who were part of the migrations following the railroad west, settling in Manitoba offered a unique educational option. While Manitoba had passed the Public School Act of 1890, which instituted a non-sectarian school system, amendments made to the act (1897) guaranteed that whenever “ten of the pupils in any school speak the French language, or any language other than English as their native language, the teaching of such pupils shall be conducted in French or other such language, and English upon the bilingual system.”⁴⁰ With the increasing diversity of the population this situation created linguistic chaos and in 1916 the bilingual clause was repealed and the new School Attendance Act made education compulsory from ages five to fourteen.⁴¹ Alongside parochial schools, in both Saskatchewan and Alberta the non-sectarian school system was established (1892) based on the Ontario model.⁴² In British Columbia the Free School Act of 1872 established a non-sectarian system and in 1873 attendance was made compulsory from ages seven to fourteen.⁴³

³⁷ Johnson 87.

³⁸ Johnson 85. Newfoundland also introduced compulsory schooling in 1943.

³⁹ Johnson 85.

⁴⁰ Johnson 95. Excerpted from A. Lower, *Colony to Nation* (Toronto: Longman, 1947) 423.

⁴¹ Johnson 96. The lovely phrase “linguistic chaos” is taken from W. I. Morton’s *Manitoba: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957) 272.

⁴² Johnson 98.

⁴³ Johnson 80.

In Quebec the situation facing Jewish immigrant children was quite complex. Education was under the auspices of the Council of Public Instruction, which was divided into Roman Catholic and Protestant sections.⁴⁴ In 1903 Jewish representatives of the Montreal community, in co-operation with the Protestant Board of School Commissioners, secured the passage of an Act by the Quebec Legislature which dealt with school privileges for Jewish children: for Jewish children to attend school a certain fiction had to be put in place.⁴⁵ This fiction required “that for educational purposes all Jews were to be regarded as Protestant” thus enabling the Protestant School Board to provide education for Jewish children.⁴⁶ This Act remained in force until 1924.⁴⁷

Despite these issues, Jewish immigrants were highly motivated to enroll their children in public school. They were encouraged to speak English in the school at all times – from the morning opening ritual exercise, which included singing *God Save the King*, to saluting the flag, to reciting the Lord’s prayer to a short Bible reading.⁴⁸ In Canada, immigrant children were also punished if they were heard speaking in their mother tongue at school, rather than English or French.⁴⁹ Once a child completed their grade school education however, the ability to continue into high school was dependent on the family’s income needs. High schools in Canada were not free at that time, and given the family’s attitude towards women and education, as often as not a sister was encouraged to work in order to keep her brother in school. The tendency to discourage women generally to educate themselves beyond high school lasted much longer in Canada, and

⁴⁴ Wolff 224.

⁴⁵ Martin Wolff, “The Jews Of Canada,” *American Jewish Year Book* (1925): 226; Maxwell Goldstein, “The Status of the Jew in the Schools of Canada,” in Arthur Hart’s *The Jew In Canada* (Toronto and Montreal: Jewish Publications Ltd, 1926) 497–498.

⁴⁶ Wolff 227. The Act of 1903 also laid out that the school taxes of Jewish ratepayers were to be paid into the Protestant Panel; that members of the Jewish population were to enjoy all the rights and privileges of Protestants for educational purposes, and included a special conscience clause in favour of children of Jewish parents attending Protestant schools so that these children could be absent for Jewish Holy Days without penalty.

⁴⁷ Wolff 227.

⁴⁸ Robert F. Harney and Harold Troper, *Immigrants: A Portrait of the Urban Experience, 1890–1930* (Toronto/New York/Cincinnati/London/Melbourne: Van Nostrand Reinhold Ltd., 1975) 110.

⁴⁹ Harney and Troper 109.

immigrant children, especially the girls, were inclined to leave school much earlier than their counterparts in America. Like the larger community, Canadian Jewish women did not actively pursue advanced educational opportunities until after the Second World War.⁵⁰

Students were also required to sit for entrance exams to high school and at this time (1918) several English secondary schools

had seriously proposed to handicap Jewish competitors for entrance examination scholarships because their precocious development seemed to give them an unfair advantage over other candidates. They certainly obtain more scholarships in proportion to their numbers than other races.⁵¹

Paula Hyman, in speaking about the American immigrant experience, noted that Jewish immigrant women were passionate consumers of culture who “flocked to free courses of instruction.”⁵² Not only were there multiple evening classes where one could learn English, but there were also evening classes that helped prepare students for college.⁵³ In New York, in the first decade of the 20th century, single women made up the bulk of the first generation of Jewish female immigrants attending school: 25% of the American born women were daughters of immigrants; 40% of women attending evening classes were Jewish.⁵⁴ In Philadelphia, 70% of working women attending night school were Jewish.⁵⁵

Donna Goodman, in recounting her interviews with the now elderly daughters of immigrants, noted that none recalled their mothers going to school in Montreal, although one did mention that

⁵⁰ Sheva Medjuck, “If I Cannot Dance to It, It’s Not My Revolution: Jewish Feminism in Canada Today,” in *The Jews In Canada*, eds. Robert I. Brym, William Shaffir and Morton Weinfeld (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1993) 328.

⁵¹ J. T. M Anderson, *The Education of the New Canadian: A Treatise on Canada’s Greatest Educational Problem* (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd, 1918) 88.

⁵² Paula E. Hyman, “Culture and Gender: Women in the Immigrant Jewish Community,” in *The Legacy of Jewish Migration: 1881 and Its Impact*, ed. David Berger (New York: Social Science Monograph, Brooklyn College Press, 1983) 160.

⁵³ Weinberg 111–112.

⁵⁴ Weinberg 110.

⁵⁵ Weinberg 123, footnote 14: Caroline Manning, *The Immigrant Woman and Her Job* (Washington, DC, 1931) 27; also Selma Berrol, *Immigrants at School : New York City: 1898–1914* (PhD Thesis, Columbia University, 1967) 61, 63, 97, 99.

her parents had gone to night school to learn French.⁵⁶ While Montreal and Toronto provided evening English classes for the newcomers, and the settlement houses also provided classes, these classes did not offer the variety and the opportunities of the American school system. There are extensive records and data on the presence of Jewish women in the New York school system, especially the evening classes which could be attended after work, but comparable figures have yet to be determined for Canadian Jewish women. The young women who could, availed themselves fully of the opportunity to learn. The majority however, went out to work. A 1912 survey by National Council of Women indicated 35 percent of women between the ages of 15 and 24 were employed, and most of these were single women who would leave the workforce upon marrying.⁵⁷

In the United States, by the 1920s, most factory workers were young Italian immigrant women and Jewish single women were working in white-collar jobs such as secretary, bookkeeper, sales, as well as professions for those that had been able to finish college.⁵⁸ In Canada, during this same period, Ruth Frager noted that of the "13,200 people employed in the garment industry in Toronto, sixty per cent were female," mostly single, and in all probability between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four.⁵⁹

Most of the educational classes that were available for immigrant women reinforced the middle-class values of their Jewish reformers and social workers. For these young girls who needed to work and had no skills, schools were set up to teach sewing, typewriting, and domestic skills.⁶⁰ In New York, Kathie Friedman-Kasaba described how many of the volunteers working with the National Council of Jewish Women, which primarily served Russian Jewish women,

⁵⁶ Goodman 14.

⁵⁷ Cook and Mitchinson 166.

⁵⁸ Friedman-Kasaba 165–166.

⁵⁹ Frager 18.

⁶⁰ Maxine Seller, "The Education of the Immigrant Woman, 1900–1935," *Journal of Urban History, Special Issue: Immigrant Women and the City*, ed. Jean Scarpaci, Volume 4, #3 (May 1978): 310–312; Weinberg 109.

and their families, were well-educated, middle class German Jewish women.⁶¹ The Council courses and the settlement houses encouraged immigrant women to enroll in one of the numerous sewing and needlework courses that were geared specifically to immigrant women.⁶² For the young single immigrant women, the Clara de Hirsch Home in New York persuaded many of these young women to enrol in a domestic service training program, which included a three month apprenticeship with a family, thus teaching them American domestic skills while also providing the German Jewish volunteers with a seemingly unlimited supply of domestic help.⁶³

In Canada too, the settlement houses offered classes to both children as well as young (female) adults: English, nutrition, needlework, dressmaking and other domestic skills that would help a single woman obtain better paying work, and eventually help her to run her own Canadian household.⁶⁴ Citizenship classes were also provided for the parents, as were English classes.

One of the most striking differences between the United States and Canada was the fact that many of the volunteers working with Eastern European immigrants tended to also be Orthodox Jews like the immigrants – so that while they had “Canadianized” they were still traditional in their religious practice.⁶⁵ For example, in Toronto, when the Ladies’ Montefiore Society, which was attached to the Holy Blossom, offered services to the new arrivals, their policy of establishing need – through aggressive questioning, surprise home visits, and open criticism of the family’s domestic custom – horrified the East European community they were supposed to be helping.⁶⁶ In reaction, a number of East European women formed the Hebrew Ladies’ Aid Society which eventually was dominated by Russian and Lithuanian women.⁶⁷ Besides the

⁶¹ Friedman-Kasaba 119.

⁶² Friedman-Kasaba 112.

⁶³ Friedman-Kasaba 162.

⁶⁴ Prentice et al 128.

⁶⁵ Canada did not experience the large influx of German Jewish immigrants that had occurred in the United States.

⁶⁶ Speisman 145, 147.

⁶⁷ Speisman 146.

concrete aid offered through the Hebrew Ladies' Aid Society, sewing circles were formed that not only taught sewing but organized recreational activities for the elementary school children.⁶⁸ Edith Jacobs, wife of Rabbi Solomon Jacobs (Holy Blossom) was particularly interested in welfare work among Jewish working girls, and with her husband organized the first Jewish girls' club.⁶⁹ Aside from providing English classes for older teens, the club was kept open Saturday evenings providing a safe venue for these young women to socialize with both girl friends and boy friends.⁷⁰

In Montreal (1891), the Baron de Hirsch offered "night classes ... for adults, so that they should be under no handicap in the struggle for a livelihood on account of their ignorance of the language and customs of the country to which they had come."⁷¹ In 1902, in Montreal, the Jewish Endeavour Sewing School was formed to counteract the missions seeking to attract young Jewish girls.⁷² Targeted towards immigrant girls, this afternoon school offered sewing and dressmaking classes and endeavoured to teach them "honour, manners, cleanliness and neatness."⁷³ The Montreal Hebrew Ladies Sewing Society drew its participants from the established organizations in the city: the Sisterhood of the Spanish and Portuguese, The Ladies' Auxiliary of the Sha'ar Hashomayim Synagogue, and the Temple Emanu-el Sisterhood as well as other women's organizations that served the middle and upper middle classes of the Montreal Jewish community.⁷⁴ The members came together on a weekly basis. The goals of this group, aside from encouraging socialization between the Sisterhoods, was to raise the necessary funds (members donated a small fee) to purchase materials that the members would use to sew and repair

⁶⁸ Speisman 150.

⁶⁹ Heinz Warschauer, *The Story of the Holy Blossom Temple* (experimental edition), Toronto, 1956 p. 254. in file MG3A1 Holy Blossom, Ontario Jewish Archives.

⁷⁰ Speisman 162 footnote 14; Hart, "Jewish Girls' Club, Toronto" 269.

⁷¹ Wolff 191-192.

⁷² Arthur D. Hart, "Jewish Endeavour Sewing School, Montreal," *The Jew in Canada* (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Publications Ltd., 1926) 268.

⁷³ Hart 268.

⁷⁴ Hart 269.

garments for those community institutions serving the poor and needy.⁷⁵

This was also the beginning of the move away from volunteerism to the implementation of professionalization in dealing with both newcomers and families in need. In the United States, this shift from female volunteers to mostly male professionals took place in 1917 when the newly formed Federation for the Support of Jewish Philanthropies of New York summarily relieved “Sisterhood women of the work of family relief.”⁷⁶

In Canada the shift from volunteerism in immigrant and social services took place gradually over the years from 1916, when the Toronto Federation of Jewish Philanthropies first formed, to 1921, when Samuel Kaufman was brought from Indianapolis to be the Federations’s first professional executive director.⁷⁷ Initially the Federation used the volunteers of the ladies’ societies to distribute relief.⁷⁸ However the policy of “scientific philanthropy” to which Federation closely adhered, resulted in the withdrawal of these societies from Federation.⁷⁹ Without Federation resources to support their work, these societies could no longer function, and Federation took over their functions.⁸⁰ In his position as director, Kaufman replaced all volunteer workers with professionals, the first two of whom were women.⁸¹

The size of the community also affected advertising so that Canada’s smaller Jewish immigrant population arriving in Montreal or Toronto was not bombarded with advertising to the same extent as immigrants to New York City. Newcomers arriving in New York City were met by billboards advertising products, and Yiddish newspapers advertising what to buy and what to

⁷⁵ Hart 269. The institutions served with garments and bedding made by the Sewing Society were The Family Welfare, the Hebrew Orphans Home, Mount Sinai Sanitorium, the Neighbourhood House, and the Old People’s Home as well as the Maternity Hospital (National Archives File: Hebrew Ladies’ Society).

⁷⁶ Felicia Herman, “From Priestess to Hostess: Sisterhoods of Personal Service in New York City, 1887–1936,” in *Women and American Judaism: Historical Perspectives*, eds Pamela S. Nadell and Jonathan D. Sarna (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 2001) 167.

⁷⁷ Speisman 262–266.

⁷⁸ Speisman 265.

⁷⁹ Speisman 265.

⁸⁰ Speisman 265–266.

⁸¹ Speisman 266.

wear to be American. Andrew Heinze, analyzing the relationship between consumerism and American identity, noted that “Yiddish advertising developed a special dynamism that increased the receptivity of newcomers to fashionable American products.”⁸² In examining how quickly national advertisers targeted Jewish immigrants, Heinze compared the advertising section of a major Italian weekly with the Yiddish press.⁸³ The Italian paper was devoid of major American brands until 1905, and its ads were sedate.⁸⁴ Readers of the Yiddish press had become accustomed to bright visuals, “colour, boldface and eye-catching announcements” selling them everything from Quaker’s Oats to Life Insurance by the 1890s.⁸⁵ The papers promoted the traditional values of domestic harmony and a woman’s role as household manager. Through the use of ads offering quality products at “reduced” prices, Yiddish advertising reinforced the Jewish woman’s perceptions of herself as a wise shopper.⁸⁶ The Yiddish press attracted readers not only through its colourful advertising but its human interest stories and its perceived role as “an authority on urban living” in America.⁸⁷ Newcomers read the “Bintel Brief,” a popular column in the *Forward*, to learn about American customs, and their rights as newcomers, as well as to how to deal with the emotional turmoil of dealing with family left behind, missing husbands and Americanized children.

Montreal’s Yiddish newspaper the *Kenader Odler* began in 1907, almost forty years after New York’s *Di Yidishe Tsaytung*, and its mandate was to faithfully represent Canadian Jewish interests, promote Judaism and introduce its readership (mostly immigrants) to Canada and its politics and laws.⁸⁸ While there is no corresponding column to the “Bintel Brief” in the *Odler*,

⁸² Andrew R. Heinze, *Adapting to Abundance: Jewish Immigrants, Mass Consumption, and the Search for American Identity* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1990) 155.

⁸³ Heinze 159.

⁸⁴ Heinze 159.

⁸⁵ Heinze 159.

⁸⁶ Heinze 109.

⁸⁷ Heinze 153.

⁸⁸ Lewis Levendel, *A Century of The Canadian Jewish Press: 1880s–1980s* (Ottawa, ON: Borealis Press, 1989) 19.

Seidel writes that the “third page [of the *Odler*] might be called the woman’s page ... it contains social news ... which nearly every Jewish housewife of the first generation reads and cherishes.”⁸⁹ Seidel also notes that not on the women’s page but elsewhere there is a column called *Der Spiegel von Leben* (“The Mirror of Life”) and she describes this as a Dorothy Dix column rather than as a “Bintel Brief” column. Dorothy Dix, was the pen name of Elizabeth Meriwether Gilmer, a highly paid widely read female journalist whose column on love and marriage was syndicated in newspapers around the world.⁹⁰ The issues raised in the columns were not dissimilar however: concerns over the behaviour of assimilating children; concerns of newcomers around dating non-immigrant girls, and questions concerning Canadian folkways and practices.⁹¹

Heinz noted that by the 1880s American metropolitan dailies “had begun to address women distinctly as consumers offering advice on how to prepare meals, how to dress, and how to furnish the home.”⁹² Besides informing the Jewish woman about the American market place, the women’s page of the *Jewish Daily Forward*, for example, reinforced the acceptance of female participation in the world of work and politics.⁹³ While there were editorial letters and comments, to what extent these concerned women’s issues and concerns has not yet been explored in the Canadian Jewish press.

Seidel suggests in her research that the *Odler* was the paper of choice for “the least assimilated elements of the Jewish population” and for those with a reading knowledge of English there was the *Canadian Jewish Review* and the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*.⁹⁴ Eve Lerner

⁸⁹ Seidel 90.

⁹⁰ Dorothy Dix (1861–1951) was considered the forerunner of today’s popular advice columnists, and she began writing her column in the mid 1890s until her death. I found Seidel’s comment interesting as Dix (Gilmer) was not Jewish and yet the *Odler* modelled their column after hers and not after Abraham Cahan’s.

⁹¹ Seidel 91.

⁹² Heinze 151.

⁹³ Hyman 113–114; Hyman draws her material from Maxine Seller’s “Defining Socialist Womanhood: The Women’s Page of the *Jewish Daily Forward* in 1919,” *American Jewish History* 76, #4 (1987): 416–438.

⁹⁴ Seidel 89.

noted that “everything can be found in the pages of the *Odler*” and demonstrated how its ads during the interwar years were designed to make the purchaser believe that he or she could attain a Canadian identity through the advertised products.⁹⁵ However, the ads to which Lerner refers were drawn from the 1930s, forty years after such ads were a fixed component of Yiddish promotional advertising in the United States. While the ads displayed were particular to the holidays of Rosh Hashonah and Passover, the visuals used were of common Canadian scenes (skating ponds, hunting, pubs). Whereas in American ads, there might be a picture of a Passover *seder* table with a bottle of cola displayed to indicate its appropriateness for the holiday; or an ad for Crisco would illustrate how to use it in specifically Jewish dishes.⁹⁶ The ads used in American papers are specific to the creation of an American Jewish identity. What did this mean for an immigrant population living in Canada to read these same American ads in their Canadian Jewish newspaper? The images displayed in the *Odler* suggest there might have been less pressure from the Canadian Yiddish media to acculturate.

In the first decades of the 20th century, the established Jewish communities in both Canada and the United States were eager to Canadianize/Americanize their East European brethren. In both cases the “Downtowners,” as the East European Jews were called, tended to resist the overtures of their more well-off religionists and chose to integrate on their own terms. Articles from the United States tend to address assimilation, integration, and the role of antisemitism. Information on women in urban milieus discusses either their working milieu with some attention to the ethnic component (especially where the unions are concerned); the work of sisterhoods, and the initial development of women’s volunteer organizations; as well as the stereotypes that exist in film and literature. Articles (of which there are very few) written in the Canadian context

⁹⁵ Eve Lerner, “Twas the Night Before Yomtov: Interculturality and Advertising in the *Adler*,” Association for Canadian Jewish Studies Annual Conference, Beth Israel Synagogue, Halifax, Nova Scotia, June 1, 2003.

⁹⁶ Jenna Weissman Joselit, *The Wonders of America: Reinventing Jewish Culture, 1880–1950* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994).

emphasize education restrictions (Quebec, as a result of the increasing antisemitism), and the development of Canadian Zionist organizations.

Jews wishing to move out of their religious and/or cultural milieu had multiple opportunities in the United States. In Canada, unless they moved into the rural areas or small towns, Jews could choose from only three major cities. Assimilation was particularly complicated in Montreal, where social divides fell along linguistic-religious lines: on one side there was the Anglo-Protestant minority and on the other the French Catholic majority, and in between the Jew. These divides were accentuated by the distribution of physical space. Prior to 1931, 96.5% of mainly immigrant Jewish families occupied a

narrow strip of land wedged between the predominantly French-speaking east end and the predominantly English-speaking west end ... where from Sherbrooke St. to Jean-Talon St. Jewish households were clustered.⁹⁷

This buffer zone between two hostile forces symbolized in prose, poetry and narrative the particular “space” allotted to Jews within Quebec society. The difficulties encountered with the ongoing challenges for Jewish children to have equitable access to education, and the ever-present feeling of “differentness” in all probability contributed to the apparent cohesiveness of the Montreal Jewish community, which continues today to be perceived by those outside Montreal as the most traditional Jewish community in North America.

The years 1921–1951: Creating a comfort zone

After WWI, in both the United States and Canada, a tension existed between the domestic “ideal” woman and the fact that more women were now in the workforce. In Canada, after the war, clergy, doctors, and the government were keen for women to leave the workplace in favour of the returning men and promoted a domestic and maternal role for women that was highly

⁹⁷ Pierre Anctil, “Interlude of Hostility: Judeo-Christian Relations in Quebec in the Interwar period, 1919–1939,” in *Anti-Semitism in Canada: History and Interpretation*, ed. Alan Davis (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1992) 137.

idealized.⁹⁸ While physicians no longer insisted that too much studying (education) would damage a girl's ability to bear children, women's magazines, newspapers and books encouraged women to be educated (particularly in domestic science and childcare theories) in preparation for marriage and children.⁹⁹

During the 1920s in the United States the female labour force had grown 26% with over 500,000 of the new women workers in clerical types of positions and 450,000 in the professions.¹⁰⁰ While the impression seemed to be that women were in all the professions the reality was that women were still limited to specifically female professions – the majority toiled for low pay at menial occupations. Hyman notes that prior to World War I female Jewish garment workers constituted the majority of unionized women workers and the majority of the membership of the Women's Trade Union League.¹⁰¹ Within one generation Jewish women's membership in the garment industry had decreased significantly with their daughters becoming sale clerks and secretaries.¹⁰²

Drawing on statistics available only for 1921 and 1931, Louis Rosenberg noted that by 1931 in Canada, about a decade later than the United States, "Jewish women and girls in the clothing trade are giving way to non-Jewish girls."¹⁰³ The majority of Canadian-born Jewish working women and girls were in clerical occupations, and only 10.64% Canadian-born Jewish women and girls now worked in manufacturing, as compared to 41.86% foreign-born Jewish girls.¹⁰⁴ Although there was variation between the provinces (ranging from 13 percent in Saskatchewan and Alberta, and 19 percent in Ontario and Quebec) by 1921, more than 17 percent of all

⁹⁸ Errington 74.

⁹⁹ Prentice et al 159, 285.

¹⁰⁰ William Chafe, *The Paradox of Change* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) 64.

¹⁰¹ Paula Hyman, "Gender and the Immigrant Jewish Experience in the United States," in *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, ed. Judith Baskin (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1991) 229.

¹⁰² Friedman-Kasaba 168–169.

¹⁰³ Louis Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews* (Montreal: Bureau of Social and Economic Research, Canadian Jewish Congress, 1939) 174.

¹⁰⁴ Rosenberg 174.

Canadian women over the age of 15 were counted as members of the paid labour force, and constituted 15 percent of all paid workers.¹⁰⁵

Legislation in most provinces had extended school attendance with the exception of Quebec where school attendance was not compulsory throughout the province until 1943.¹⁰⁶ This had the dual effect of removing more children from the workforce, and of reinforcing the roles of wife and mother for married women.¹⁰⁷ Women (some, not all) had access to mechanized appliances that helped decrease housework. These made it possible to consider working outside the home. Feminist scholars have demonstrated that these time-saving appliances did not “save time” as the owning of these appliances resulted in higher standards for assessing one’s house keeping abilities.¹⁰⁸ For example, prior to the invention of the washing machine the middle class urban woman could send her family’s laundry out to be washed. With the advent of the washing machine, there was an expectation not only that clothes now always be cleaned and ironed, but that this could be done for the family without home help.¹⁰⁹

In both the United States and Canada, Jewish women were being blamed for the assimilation of their children into American/Canadian society and for the absence of their husbands from the synagogues. Shaffir and Weinfeld noted “the young [immigrants] were eager to discard the elements of a culture and religion that they perceived as unnecessary or burdensome.”¹¹⁰ Interestingly enough Donna Goodman, in her interviews of Montreal Jewish women raised in the 1920s noted that these women tended to be more accepting and respecting of their parents’

¹⁰⁵ Prentice et al 251.

¹⁰⁶ Johnson 85.

¹⁰⁷ Prentice et al 245.

¹⁰⁸ Prentice et al 284.

¹⁰⁹ Prentice et al 284. Now that the washing could be done in the home at any time there was a shift in the standards of cleanliness: people were expected to now change their clothes more often so that their clothes always looked freshly pressed.

¹¹⁰ Morton Weinfeld and William Shaffir, “Introduction,” in *The Canadian Jewish Mosaic* (Toronto/ New York/Chichester/Brisbane/Singapore: John Wiley & Sons Canada Limited, 1981) 11.

traditions.¹¹¹ The new generation of women – the daughters of immigrants were content to not go to college, and to not have careers, but to remain home. In her interview with Goodman, Rose Adelson responding to a question on aspirations commented, “...get married, have babies. What did we know? Career, shareer ... girls in those years didn’t have aspirations.”¹¹²

As married women who no longer worked, and with time “saved” in domestic duties, Jewish women were encouraged to engage in “good works” and become involved in extra-familial activities. For those who did stay home, Sochen notes that in America “a new type of Jewish woman was emerging: the professional Board member, middle and upper middle class women devoted a lifetime to Jewish organizational work.”¹¹³

In both countries women were being encouraged by their rabbis to bring their skills and enthusiasm into the care of their homes and the synagogue. On the one hand, Jewish women were now being told that their volunteer work in the larger community was an abandonment of their home responsibilities. On the other hand, the notion was promoted that for a Jewish woman participation in synagogue life was an acceptable extension of her work in the home: it was through her efforts in these “domestic areas” that she could most fully realize her potential. The upwardly mobile immigrant women joined sisterhoods as a way of expressing their religious commitment. They were able to engage in a new religious focus without disrupting the hierarchy of synagogue life. Housework was viewed as an expression of the woman’s personality – through her home she demonstrated her care for the family and only she could engage in this emotional work – no one could replace her, therefore she could not possibly consider working outside the home unless it was absolutely necessary. Thus woman’s traditional identification with the domestic sphere was reinforced.

¹¹¹ Goodman 5–6.

¹¹² Goodman 14 (Interview 1999).

¹¹³ June Sochen, *Consecrate Every Day: The Public Lives of Jewish American Women: 1880–1980* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1981) 68.

For middle and upper middle-class women marriage was now viewed as a partnership – a place where the wife created a refuge for her husband. This notion of woman-as-companion fit well with the increasing attendance of Orthodox Jewish women in the synagogue – with the modern synagogue the women could see what was happening and participate by observing – the Young Israel movement, prior to 1914, “introduced congregational singing” in an effort to involve women in the service.¹¹⁴ For these women the synagogue became a social place, a place for the whole family to be together and where they could dress up, and meet their friends. Sisterhoods were encouraged to form so that this generation of women could learn about Jewish traditions and practice.

In conforming to community expectations there were many social causes for a woman to choose: communal service, immigrant social service and Zionism. Women in Canada were coming together to form Zionist organizations – Hadassah drew its membership mainly from the middle classes as these women were financially able to support the programs. In 1925 Pioneer Women formed and it drew most of its members from working class and recent immigrant arrivals.¹¹⁵ While Jewish culture kept many women home, the reality of the depression propelled married women into the workforce.

As have others, Hasia Diner has noted that throughout the 1930s the more educated Jewish men and women were able to work either as teachers or in civil service jobs which protected them from the worst of the Depression.¹¹⁶ Diner also reports that “Jewish businesses failed at an alarming rate” and that between 1929 and 1933, 1400 of 2855 fur stores closed and half their

¹¹⁴ Jenna Weissman Joselit, *New York's Jewish Jews: The Orthodox Community in the Interwar Years* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990) 105.

¹¹⁵ Paula Draper and Janice 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, 1840s–1960s*, eds. Franca Iacovetta, Paula Draper, and Robert Ventresca (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

¹¹⁶ Hasia Diner, *The Jews of the United States: 1654–2000*. (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2004) 231.

jewelry stores vanished.¹¹⁷ Both Diner and Sarna indicate that “every local Jewish federated charity in the country was compelled to reduce its budget” and many Jews were forced to seek public relief.¹¹⁸

In New York city, by 1934, 52.1% of the female college students were Jewish.¹¹⁹ By the end of the 1930s it was the norm for Jews to graduate from high school. Because there were no job opportunities children tended to stay in school longer. The Depression has been viewed by some Jewish historians as a transitional moment for Jews – most of the American Jewish population was native born rather than immigrant. Davidowicz wrote that for the majority, these American born children (those not observant, not committed Yiddishists and not Zionists (of which there were few in the States at this time)) looked upon Jewishness and Judaism as a liability to becoming fully American, fully accepted and financially and intellectually successful.¹²⁰

However, many Jews (male and female) found that despite their learning and their skills their advancement into mainstream middle class employment opportunities were blocked. Henry Feingold noted that just as the daughters and sons of the East European immigrants were getting ready to discard much of their own culture, their hopes and expectations of moving into the Middle Class were blocked by the rise in antisemitism and the onset of the Depression.¹²¹ Deborah Dash Moore noted that the antisemitism of this period led to the notable concentrations of Jews in the garment trade and in the building trades.¹²² The overt antisemitism encouraged Jews to rely more extensively on those within their own community, thus creating their own

¹¹⁷ Diner 231.

¹¹⁸ Diner 231; Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004) 255.

¹¹⁹ Weinberg 126, footnote 66.

¹²⁰ Lucy Davidowicz, *On Equal Terms: Jews in America, 1881–1981* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982) 97.

¹²¹ Henry L. Feingold, *A Time for Searching: Entering the Mainstream: 1920–1945*, Volume IV, *The Jewish People in America* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992) 126.

¹²² Deborah Dash Moore, *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981) 13.

particular network for securing work.¹²³ A number of Jews also became proprietors, and thus were able to side-step some of the problems created by antisemitism: lack of advancement, fewer available jobs. Diner comments that even though there was short-term economic distress for Jews during the Depression, in fact, at least in the United States, it did not slow the migration of Jews from the older urban slums of a city to its more affluent residential areas.¹²⁴

In Toronto during this period, roughly one out of three Jews worked in the garment industry; also the majority of Toronto's garment shops were owned by Jews.¹²⁵ Whereas in New York many of the factory owners were German Jews, in Toronto the owners were often also East European Jews. Frager commented that the family and community ties between workers and manufacturers sometimes affected the militancy of the workers and sometimes led to concessions by the manufacturers.¹²⁶ "Making do" characterized the lives of many middle class women in the 1930s. For many middle class women their lives revolved around the home in their efforts to stretch their house budget.

By 1931 in Canada, 80% of the Canadian Jewish population continued to work and raise their families in its three major cities: Montreal, Toronto, and Winnipeg, and within these there was a tendency to cluster (self-ghettoization). Antisemitism was pervasive and made itself felt through residential, occupational and social discrimination. No Jews were allowed to rent or purchase in certain residential areas, beach and countryside places or participate in certain occupations (banking, insurance, real estate).¹²⁷ Due to the inability to buy housing in certain areas, the Jewish population tended to remain more closely concentrated in certain residential

¹²³ Moore *At Home in America*, 13.

¹²⁴ Diner 239.

¹²⁵ Frager 16, 18.

¹²⁶ Frager 212.

¹²⁷ Frager 13. Despite this discrimination on a personal level (unable to rent a summer home on Toronto Island), Joe Salsberg was a Toronto alderman for his municipal district and had not been prevented from holding public office.

areas for a longer period of time than those who sought their opportunities in the United States. This open antisemitism along with the daily tirades that took place in some of the city newspapers might have been one factor in contributing to the “tightness” (in the public eye) of the Jewish community in Canada, and as mentioned previously in relation to the Montreal experience, its traditionalism.

In Quebec antisemitism was rife and given support overtly through the Catholic church and the French Canadian media. Jews were physically and verbally harassed, universities instituted quotas, and throughout the 1930s, the “Achat chez Nous” movement – a boycott of all Jewish stores and businesses was supported by the French Catholic press, and a number of Church leaders, such as Abbé Lionel Groulx.¹²⁸

In Canada, boys and girls now remained in school an average of 10 years. However the ability to take advantage of the education offered was still based on class, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and whether one lived in the city or countryside. School curricula for girls emphasized their vocational skills and were designed to prepare a woman for marriage, motherhood, and careers that fit these roles. Women were not encouraged to think in terms of advanced education and were not expected to combine marriage and career. As in the United States a decade earlier, Canadian Jewish girls were expected to discontinue their studies to help a brother continue when cost was an issue. Goodman presents the situation facing Rae Parkovnick of Montreal, who, when her parents could no longer afford two tuition fees, left her studies in order that her brother could go on.¹²⁹

The data available from the United States demonstrating the advancement of Jewish women through higher education was not mirrored in Canadian Jewish society. The lack of opportunities, the closure of civil service positions to Jews, and the costs involved in attaining

¹²⁸ Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 174–176.

¹²⁹ Goodman 12.

higher education alongside the push to maintain women in the home combined to keep Jewish women from advancing professionally.

As women turned back from their volunteer efforts out in the community or gave up their jobs on marriage they turned to the various Jewish communal female organizations. In describing the Canadian women's organization, at least as they evolved mainly in Toronto, Draper and Karlinsky noted that the different Jewish women's groups drew their membership according to "particular social needs, language, and religious and political orientation of its member."¹³⁰ Jewish immigrant women from Western Europe and their daughters tended to join the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW); mothers and daughters who had been part of the early East European immigration (1880s and 1890s), despite having joined the middle class, did not identify with members of the NCJW and affiliated with the Zionist Hadassah organization.¹³¹ The more recent immigrant arrivals joined the Pioneer Women's Organization.¹³² Many of these same women also participated in their synagogue's sisterhood for the social, cultural, and educational activities that it offered.¹³³

Scholars of women's history see the work experiences of women during World War II both in the United States and Canada as the turning point for the movement of women into the larger community. In Canada, the war helped women's work become an acceptable part of middle class life. Unprecedented numbers of women left their homes to enter public employment and service, and by 1940 white collar work had become the dominant category of employment for white women. By 1942 there was active recruitment "through the creation of a national registry of single women aged 20 to 24" who could take over the jobs left empty by wartime conscription.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Draper and Karlinsky 189.

¹³¹ Draper and Karlinsky 190.

¹³² Draper and Karlinsky 191.

¹³³ Donna Goodman, *Montreal Synagogue Sisterhoods (1900–1949): A Female Community, Culture, and Religious World* (MA Thesis, Concordia University, 2004) 120.

¹³⁴ Prentice et al 343.

By 1943 as young single women went into the armed services, married women with children were recruited part-time to pick up the slack. In July of 1942 the federal government introduced the Wartime Day Nurseries agreement which would cover the costs of daycare services for children whose mothers worked in war industries.¹³⁵ The program which required the sharing of costs between the federal and each provincial government was accepted only in Ontario and Quebec.¹³⁶ In Quebec it served mainly the Anglophone community; French Canadian Catholic leaders condemned the program and denounced French-Canadian women for “abandoning their families for monetary gain.”¹³⁷ Despite the opposition of the church, French Canadian women continued to work. Like Canadian women elsewhere in the country, they worked because the money was needed.¹³⁸ One woman shared

I think it did a lot to finish off the idea that a woman's place and her only place was in the home ... and [a] girl could get a job and no questions asked and she was respected and well paid ... the war and working in plants so changed me. I became an entirely different person.¹³⁹

The public involvement of women during the war led to the belief that the roles of men and women in society were now equalizing. However, this was in fact incorrect as public applause for women's work was uttered in the same breath as assurances that things would return to normal once the war was over. It was expected that once the war was over women would return to their homes and again be dependent on their husbands. The only jobs that would be available would be those that were considered traditionally female occupations.

In the United States discussions were taking place about women's place in society after the war. In the 1920s there had been a definite increase in and preoccupation with heterosexual

¹³⁵ Prentice et al 344.

¹³⁶ Prentice et al 344.

¹³⁷ Prentice et al 344.

¹³⁸ Prentice et al 345.

¹³⁹ Prentice et al. 349; from Barry Broadbent, *Six War Years 1939–1945: Memories of Canadians at Home and Abroad* (Toronto, ON: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1974) 358.

relationships – the proportion of never marrieds fell from 20% to 5% by the mid-twentieth century. This same interest in heterosexual relationships according to some historians led to an increase in the defining of women as feminine – different from men such that by the 1940s motherhood was defined as the ultimate fulfilment of female sexuality.

Women's colleges were being attacked for encouraging women to think that they could do the same work as men. By forcing women to compete with men it had set them up for failure. Women's colleges should emphasize the differences between women and men and should prepare women for their lives as wives and mothers. This seemed less of an issue in Canada as women were still not attending university in great numbers.

As the various professionals were discussing what women should be doing the 1940s drew to a close and the 1950s became the era of the new "cult of domesticity."

The years 1951–1981: Becoming public Jews

By the 1950s in both Canada and the United States the notion of woman fulfilling her biological destiny through marriage and family was prevalent – a notion that had begun in the 1920s and 1930s. Ruth Schwartz Cowan noted that the mystique makers of these decades laid the groundwork for the 1950s – in that they promoted the notion that the goal of a normal woman was to acquire a husband, a family, and a home.¹⁴⁰

William Chafe writes that this was a time of intense preoccupation with conformity: Levittowns are being built and families are rushing from the cities to live in these look alike houses; the young housewife is now spending most of her time caring for family and children; her milieu is one of economic and political conformity; the nuclear family consists of the working father, the stay at home mom and the dependent children.¹⁴¹ Eventually, the early

¹⁴⁰ Susan Ware, *Holding Their Own: American Women in the 30s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982) 16.

¹⁴¹ Chafe 188.

promise of domestic technological advancements designed to release women from the bondage of housework proved to be an empty one.¹⁴² Elizabeth Ewen comments that the lives of these women lacked a clear sense of purpose: trapped by their marriage and a middle class lifestyle, these women had considerably less power in their homes than their own mothers or grandmothers.¹⁴³ In 1957 only 12% of Jewish women with children under 6 worked outside the home.

It is of interest to note that between 1945 and 1947, in the United States, despite women's labour force participation levels being higher than those in Canada during the war, they dropped nineteen per cent, while in Canada the drop was less than nine per cent during the same period. By the mid-1950s women's labour force participation in Canada was again on the rise.¹⁴⁴ Also, in Canada, by the end of the 1950s equal pay laws had been passed in all provinces except Quebec and Newfoundland.¹⁴⁵

During these years after the war all families, Jewish and non Jewish alike, sought collective involvement with a religious social life. Young American Jewish families were moving into suburbia further accelerating the assimilatory process. In the Sklare and Vosk *Riverton Study*, the suburban Jews whom they interviewed saw themselves primarily as Jews by religion.¹⁴⁶ The synagogue had become a mark of identification and a ticket of admission to the larger community so that even though more Jews seemed to be affiliated with synagogues, the majority affiliated for social rather than religious reasons. As will be discussed in more detail in the chapter concerning religious institutions, American Jewry raised a billion dollars to build a 1000 new

¹⁴² Ewen 268.

¹⁴³ Ewen 269.

¹⁴⁴ Prentice et al 380.

¹⁴⁵ Prentice et al 384.

¹⁴⁶ Marshall Sklare and Marc Vosk, *The Riverton Study: How Jews Look at Themselves and Their Neighbors* (The American Jewish Committee, May 1957) 25.

synagogues.¹⁴⁷ Sarna notes that in the United States there was a dramatic expansion of Jewish education: between 1948 and 1958, the number of children attending Jewish schools more than doubled, jumping from 239, 398 to 553, 600.¹⁴⁸ In 1959, the American Association for Jewish Education opined that “more than eighty percent of Jewish children attended one or another type of Jewish school during the course of their elementary school years.”¹⁴⁹

In Canada between 1945 and 1952 four million, one hundred and eighty-five thousand dollars was raised and spent on building Jewish day schools.¹⁵⁰ In Montreal, Adath Israel Congregation built its Hebrew Academy (\$350,000) which would enable “a Jewish child to receive his entire Hebrew and secular education from kindergarten to graduation from high school.”¹⁵¹ In the community of Winnipeg modern school buildings were raised during the year by the Winnipeg Talmud Torah and the Winnipeg Peretz Folk Schools.¹⁵² In 1954, the Jewish People’s school of Montreal began building its new edifice in the new Snowdon residential area at a cost of \$400,000.¹⁵³ A number of synagogues were adding classrooms as part of their expansion plans.¹⁵⁴ By 1959 “sixty per cent of all Jewish school children in Canada received some kind of formal Jewish education.”¹⁵⁵ Over thirty per cent of Jewish school age children in Montreal attended Jewish day schools; in Edmonton eighty per cent of Jewish school-age children attended its Talmud Torah day school; in Calgary 2500 Jews supported two Jewish day schools, and in Toronto, two community-supported Talmud Torahs expanded their facilities while a Labour Zionist day school closed due to lack of funds.¹⁵⁶

¹⁴⁷ Hertzberg, Arthur, *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) 309.

¹⁴⁸ Sarna 279.

¹⁴⁹ Sarna 279.

¹⁵⁰ Louis Rosenberg, “Canada,” *American Jewish Year Book* (1953) 228.

¹⁵¹ Rosenberg 228.

¹⁵² Rosenberg 228.

¹⁵³ Louis Rosenberg, “Canada,” *American Jewish Year Book* (1954) 170.

¹⁵⁴ Rosenberg 170.

¹⁵⁵ Murray Shiff, “Canada,” *American Jewish Year Book* (1960) 178.

¹⁵⁶ Shiff 178–179.

This second generation of Jews (in Canada) has also moved into another economic class. Paris commented that her Canadian born generation was the first to have access to widespread educational opportunities and certainly the first in which daughters as well as sons were *automatically* accorded the privilege.¹⁵⁷

Issues of religious identity are no longer primary for this generation. The adolescents growing up in America in the 1950s were more concerned with their looks, their social life and their future college education.¹⁵⁸ Whereas the parents of this generation might have considered shortening their name or altering it entirely in order to “fit,” during this period of conformity, their daughters “bobbed” their noses and straightened their hair.¹⁵⁹

Diner queried whether this period following on the end of the Second World War (1948), to the Six day War (1967) could be considered “A Golden Age” as during this time American Jewry experienced the “triumph of political and cultural liberalism, and prosperity and acceptance.”¹⁶⁰ American Jewry also experienced the Cold War and nuclear shelters, McCarthy and his lists, the Rosenberg trial, a polio epidemic, the civil rights movement, the capture of Adolf Eichman, his trial and execution, and a new form of antisemitism was taking form connected to events unfolding in Israel. In Canada, in 1960, the Quiet Revolution began in Quebec, and in 1963, the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) had set off bombs in Montreal.¹⁶¹ Of significant note in Quebec in this decade was the secularization of the Quebec educational system.¹⁶² The domestic science schools that the Church had promoted for Francophone women were abolished and

¹⁵⁷ Erna Paris, *Jews: An Account of their Experience in Canada* (Toronto, ON: MacMillan of Canada, 1980) 12. Author's emphasis.

¹⁵⁸ Joan J. Brumberg, “The ‘Me’ of Me: Voices of Jewish Girls in Adolescent Diaries of the 1920s and 1930s,” in *American Jewish Women's History: A Reader*, ed. Pamela S. Nadell (New York: New York University Press, 2003) 224.

¹⁵⁹ Brumberg 234; Diner 304.

¹⁶⁰ Diner 259.

¹⁶¹ Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 308.

¹⁶² Prentice et al 307.

teacher training was now transferred to the universities.¹⁶³

Against this background American Jewish feminism began to take shape in the late 1960s and early 70s in direct response to what is called the second wave of American Feminism.

Historian Deborah Lipstadt notes that the many events transforming American women's history in the 1960s – such as President Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women (1961), Betty Friedan's publication of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), the founding of NOW, the National Organization of Women (1966) – created the demand for the re-evaluation of women's position and role in every aspect of American life, including religion.¹⁶⁴

Fishman comments that the particular blend of feminism and Jewish feminism is a unique American hybrid that does not exist in exactly the same form among any other contemporary Jewish population.¹⁶⁵ To what extent the activities of the Canadian feminist movement influenced the Canadian Jewish feminists and to what extent Canadian Jewish feminists took their cues from their sisters south of the border has yet to be explored. Lacunae regarding Canadian Jewish feminism are rife. Brown's recent publication provides an overview of Canadian Jewish women's history, but is bereft of data for a thirty year period between the onset of WWII to almost the end of the 1970s.¹⁶⁶ An indicator that there is still much work to be done in the study of Canadian Jewish women.

William Chafe in writing about the changes that took place for American women in the 1960s notes that (in America) a "confluence of forces" created the setting for women's

¹⁶³ Prentice et al 306–307.

¹⁶⁴ Deborah Lipstadt, "The Impact of the Women's Movement on American Jewish Life: An Overview After Twenty Years," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry: An Annual, XI. Values, Interests, and Identity: Jews and Politics in a Changing World*, ed. Peter K. Medding (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995) 87.

¹⁶⁵ Sylvia Barak Fishman, "The Impact of Feminism on American Jewish Life," *American Jewish Year Book*, Volume 89 (1989): 13. Fishman, and other Jewish feminist authors distinguish Jewish feminism from general feminism in that Jewish feminism is seen as addressing the communal agenda (access to decision-making and power within the Jewish community), and the spiritual agenda (developing areas of ritual, law, liturgy, and religious education)

¹⁶⁶ Michael Brown, "Jewish Women in Canada," 3–29.

activism.¹⁶⁷ Was there a similar confluence of forces that could also be applied to the experiences of Canadian women?

Chafe labelled the first set of forces political currency and sanction: on the one hand women appeared to turn back to their roles as wives and mothers after WWII, caught up once again in a “cult of domesticity” that required them to be “models of efficiency, patience and charm.”¹⁶⁸ On the other hand concerns were being raised about the rising rates in divorce, addictions and mental illness.¹⁶⁹ Encouraged to gain an education, many women had difficulties adjusting to the isolated role of the suburban housewife. Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) sold over a million copies and added an articulate voice to the conversations that were now taking place over the role of women in society.

In Canada a group of women had come together in 1960 and called themselves the Voice of Women whose main object then was to stand up to the “anti-Soviet hysteria of the time” and lobby for peace.¹⁷⁰ Rebick wrote that Voice of Women, a bilingual organization, was ahead of its time as “the second wave of feminism is agreed to have started in 1963 after the publication of Friedan’s book.”¹⁷¹ Doris Anderson noted in her autobiography that “*Chatelaine* probably missed the scoop of the century” when her managing editor, Jean Wright, dismissed *The Feminine Mystique* as “far too American,” noting that *Chatelaine* had already published stories on most of the material in Friedan’s book.¹⁷²

The second set of forces required, according to Chafe, is the presence of a catalyst to initiate protest: many women became active in the civil rights movement. Realization dawned on these

¹⁶⁷ Chafe 195.

¹⁶⁸ Chafe 187.

¹⁶⁹ Chafe 196.

¹⁷⁰ Judy Rebick, *Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution* (Toronto, ON: Penguin Canada, 2005) 3.

¹⁷¹ Rebick 5.

¹⁷² Doris Anderson, *Rebel Daughter: An Autobiography* (Toronto, ON: Key Porter Books, 1996) 174–175.

women that in the fight to gain racial equality the women were not seen as equals but as “housekeepers.”¹⁷³ Encouraged by the youth movements in Europe, and the anti-war and civil rights movements in the United States, several Canadian youth movements formed. As in the movements elsewhere, the women found themselves doing the cooking and the cleaning.¹⁷⁴ By the end of the decade a number of women’s groups had broken away from the larger student movements once it became evident that women’s issues were not going to be on the agenda of any of the male dominated groups.¹⁷⁵

The third force Chafe mentions is the number of educated women who had been active throughout the 1940s and 1950s in various women’s groups. He notes that many of these women had already engaged in much of the preliminary research that would demonstrate the various ways that women were maintained in their second class status through federal and state laws. Adding in the skills and knowledge gathered in working for civil rights – reading discriminatory policies and advocating for change, checking statutes for discriminatory clauses: these were now put to work to bring women’s issues and discriminatory concerns into political conscious.¹⁷⁶

In Canada, “a highly visible proliferation of women’s organizations mobilized an unprecedented range and number of women.”¹⁷⁷ Rooted in the first women’s movement, these established groups such as the NCWC (National Council of Women of Canada formed in 1896) had under its umbrella numerous women’s organizations as well as Protestant, Catholic and Jewish women’s organizations; the Federated Women’s Institutes of Canada (FWIC); the Cercles de fermieres (formed in 1940), and the United Church Women formed a bridge to the resurgence of the feminist movement in the late 1960s.¹⁷⁸ On top of its services to Jewish refugees, and its

¹⁷³ Chafe 198.

¹⁷⁴ Rebeck 9.

¹⁷⁵ Prentice et al 421.

¹⁷⁶ Chafe 199.

¹⁷⁷ Prentice et al 410–411.

¹⁷⁸ Prentice et al 410–411.

projects in Israel, the National Council of Jewish Women “gave considerable financial support to the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Canadian Red Cross, and other volunteer groups,” as well as worked to lobby government officials on issues such as equal pay for equal work, family planning, and a Canadian Bill of Rights.¹⁷⁹ In Quebec, rural women, who had initially formed the French Canadian Women’s Institutes, known as Cercles de fermieres, to promote women’s role on the farm and in the home, asserted their autonomy from the Catholic church.¹⁸⁰ As a result of a co-ordinated campaign on the part of these groups and others, the Royal Commission of the Status of Women was formed in 1967. Its mandate: to report on the general status of women in Canadian society and to recommend what steps the federal government needed to take to ensure that women had equal opportunities with men in all aspects of Canadian society.¹⁸¹ As noted previously Canada had put laws concerning equal pay into effect in the early 1950s, and this had been accomplished largely through pressure exerted by the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women’s Clubs, and representatives from the National Council of Women.¹⁸²

Lastly the social atmosphere had to be conducive to reform – although the ideal was that women’s place is in the home, even at that time more women were in the workforce and most of these women were the mothers of children between 6 and 18 years of age. The “ideal” had no base in reality. By the end of the 1960s it was acknowledged that women should have the same freedom as men to make life choices.

In Canada, the percentage of women in the labour force increased steadily, from thirty per cent in 1961 to 39 per cent in 1971.¹⁸³ More women were remaining in their jobs after marriage

¹⁷⁹ Prentice et al 410.

¹⁸⁰ Prentice et al 310, 410.

¹⁸¹ Prentice et al 416–417; Rebick 19.

¹⁸² Prentice et al 354–355.

¹⁸³ Prentice et al 355.

and even as they were having children. By 1985, for many Canadian women, childbearing, marriage and employment was combined.¹⁸⁴ Jewish women were also juggling their paid time (career and professional responsibilities) with their unpaid time (domestic obligations). As Medjuck has noted, throughout the 1980s and into the early 1990s, the Canadian Jewish community adopted a “blame the Jewish feminists” stance for the falling Jewish birth rate, the diminishing volunteer pool, and the rising rates of both Jewish divorce and intermarriage.¹⁸⁵

American Jewish women began examining their own status within Jewish tradition and within the political and social structure of the North American Jewish community as a result of their exposure to the civil rights movement and the American feminist movement.¹⁸⁶ Letty Cottin Pogrebin, co-founder and editor of *Ms* magazine, noted that her activist energies went into women’s organizations and general feminist consciousness-raising. She belonged to no Jewish organization or synagogue and felt only the most distant connection to the Jewish community. She also noted that many Jewish women trace their religious alienation and feminist epiphanies to being excluded from the rituals of mourning for a parent.¹⁸⁷

Lerner commented that “writers on the American women’s movement have been conspicuously silent about Jews” and that Jews have been essentially discounted in that history.¹⁸⁸ She wrote about the American feminist movement in its early years (1890–1940) and its neglect and support of Jewish issues despite the fact that many of its active members were Jews.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁴ Prentice et al 355.

¹⁸⁵ Medjuck 333–335.

¹⁸⁶ Rela Geffen Monson, “The Impact of the Jewish Women’s Movement on the American Synagogue: 1972–1985,” in *Daughters of the King: Women and the Synagogue*, eds Susan Grossman and Rivka Haut (Philadelphia and Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 5752/1992) 228.

¹⁸⁷ Letty Cottin Pogrebin, *Deborah, Golda, and Me: Being Female and Jewish in America* (New York: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1991) 149; 51.

¹⁸⁸ Elinor Lerner, “American Feminism and the Jewish Question, 1890–1940,” in *Anti-Semitism in American History*, ed. David A. Gerber (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986) 305.

¹⁸⁹ Lerner 317–318, 325.

Two conferences, each held under the aegis of the United Nations, the International Women's Decade Conference in Mexico in 1975, and the mid-decade conference in Copenhagen in 1980 passed a resolution that effectively identified Israel and Zionists as racist.¹⁹⁰ The most shocking aspect of these two conferences was that the American feminists with whom the Jewish women had worked and collaborated over many years did not come to their defence and in fact saw it as an opportunity to reveal their own latent antisemitic thoughts.¹⁹¹ Did Canadian Jewish feminists have similar experiences within the Canadian feminist movement? Rebick in discussing the Canadian women's movement makes only one brief mention of the "Jewish women's vote concerning abortion."¹⁹² There is no evidence in her writing of an identifiable link between any of the Jewish women's organizations and the feminist movement in Canada. There is also no written evidence that the Canadian feminist groups were affected by the anti-Zionist rhetoric at these two conferences. During this period between the two conferences, 1977–1980, Sheila Finestone, Montreal born, was the head of the La Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ). Was her presence an antidote to any antisemitic rumblings in the organization? Nora Gold's study "of Canadian Jewish women and their experiences of antisemitism and sexism" should be viewed as a first step towards a more complete examination, using a Canadian Jewish lens, of the feminist movement in Canada.¹⁹³ While one of Gold's respondees had her experience of antisemitism in what was perceived as her "safe little hold," a feminist theory class, there has not been any indication that the Canadian membership were publicly denouncing the Jewish women in their midst for the "killing of the fertility goddess and the matriarchy."¹⁹⁴ Indications are that Canadian

¹⁹⁰ Pogrebin 154–156.

¹⁹¹ Sylvia Barack Fishman, *A Breath of Life: Feminism in the American Jewish Community* (New York: The Free Press, 1993) 9.

¹⁹² Rebick 50.

¹⁹³ Nora Gold, "Canadian Jewish Women and their Experiences of Antisemitism and Sexism," in *Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal* Volume 1, Number 1 (Fall 1997)

<<http://www.utoronto.ca/wjudaism/journal/vol1n1/v1n1gold.htm>>

¹⁹⁴ Barack Fishman 10–11.

Jewish feminists identified more with the American Jewish feminist movement, than with the Canadian feminist movement, and that there were indeed issues that maybe now, almost thirty years later, can be openly explored.¹⁹⁵

By the end of the 1970s American Jewish religious life had experienced profound change. Within the Reform movement, Rabbi Sally Preisand's ordination in 1972 was to some extent attributed to the social changes taking place at the time.¹⁹⁶ The Reform movement, being of a practical bent, realized that the need for more rabbis to serve the growing congregations could not be met through male enrolment alone.¹⁹⁷

Within the Conservative movement, the demands of the women's group *ezrat nashim* had mostly been adopted by September 1973.¹⁹⁸ Judith Hauptman comments that by the end of the 70s and into the 80s every Conservative synagogue in the United States was accommodating feminism in some way.¹⁹⁹ In 1977 the Committee of Laws and Standards was again asked to study the question of ordination for women.

Since the early 1970s, some Orthodox women have organized women's prayer groups.²⁰⁰ From the beginning, *tefillah* group participants have been subjected to invective, and prohibitions as well as tolerance and support.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁵ Private communication.

¹⁹⁶ Ellen M. Umansky, "Feminism and American Reform Judaism," in *The Americanization of the Jews*, eds. Robert M. Seltzer and Norman J. Cohen (New York and London: New York University Press, 1995) 270.

¹⁹⁷ Gold, "Canadian Jewish Women"; Umansky 271.

¹⁹⁸ Alan Silverstein, "The Evolution of Ezrat Nashim," *Conservative Judaism* Volume XXX, Number 1 (Fall 1975): 44. The group issued a paper (January, 1972) to the Committee of Laws and Standards with the following demands: 1) that women should be considered bound to fulfill all ritual obligations equally with men; 2) that they should be granted membership in synagogues; 3) that they should be counted as part of the minyan; 4) that they should be full participants in ritual observance; 5) that they should be recognized as witnesses in Jewish law; 6) that they should be granted the right to initiate divorce; 7) that they should be permitted to attend rabbinical and cantorial school; 8) and that they should be encouraged to assume professional leadership roles in synagogues and in the general Jewish community.

¹⁹⁹ Judith Hauptman, "The Ethical Challenge of Feminist Change," in *The Americanization of the Jews*, ed. Robert M. Seltzer and Norman J. Cohen (New York and London: New York University Press, 1995) 300.

²⁰⁰ Sylvia Barack Fishman, "Negotiating Egalitarianism and Judaism: American Jewish Feminism and their Implications for Jewish Life," in *Jews in America: A Contemporary Reader*, Roberta Rosenberg Farber and Chaim Waxman (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 1999) 172.

²⁰¹ Barack Fishman, "Negotiating Egalitarianism and Judaism," 172-173.

The years 1981–today: Maintaining boundaries

One of the issues that both united and divided women was abortion. In the United States the Roe vs Wade decision had taken place in 1973.²⁰² In Canada the nascent women's movement had organized an abortion caravan to Ottawa.²⁰³ However it wasn't until 1988 that the abortion law was struck down as unconstitutional.²⁰⁴

Unlike the issues experienced by American women in their efforts to have the Equal Rights Amendment accepted, in Canada equality provisions were "enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms."²⁰⁵ Backhouse noted that Canada's very "different economic and social context" had cultivated a feminist climate in which even the radical arm of the women's movement was committed to the "ordinary political process" and advocated "dialogue even with those who differed."²⁰⁶ The need to be open to dialogue was seen as a necessity within the Canadian women's movement due to the reality of many Quebec feminists.²⁰⁷ The attitudes and responses of English-Canadian feminists regarding Quebec sovereignty, and the promotion by Quebec feminists of the recognition of Quebec as a "distinct society" was always a subtext to Anglophone and Francophone feminist co-operation.²⁰⁸ One of the issues to which both groups addressed their energies was that of violence against women.²⁰⁹ In this instance, the National Council of Jewish Women, and Jewish Women International have been proactive. Jewish Women International set up emergency apartments in Toronto, Montreal and Winnipeg, while

²⁰² Constance Backhouse, "The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada and the United States: An Introduction," in *Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States*, eds Constance Backhouse and David H. Flaherty (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993) 13.

²⁰³ Rebick 35–36.

²⁰⁴ Rebick 157.

²⁰⁵ Backhouse 7. The Charter was enacted in 1982 under the Trudeau government.

²⁰⁶ Backhouse 13; Jill Vickers, "The Intellectual Origins of the Women's Movements in Canada," in *Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States*, eds Constance Backhouse and David H. Flaherty (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993) 51.

²⁰⁷ Backhouse 6.

²⁰⁸ Backhouse 6; Vickers 54.

²⁰⁹ Backhouse 10.

the National Council of Jewish Women founded Auberge Shalom in Montreal, the first Jewish shelter in Canada.²¹⁰

Michele Landsberg noted that in Toronto in the 1980s “there seemed no plausible way ... to act on one’s principles in a context that was both Jewish and feminist.”²¹¹ Nemiroff also addresses how difficult it is within Canadian, particularly Quebec society, to find a place as a secular Jew and as a feminist.²¹²

Sylvia Fishman (1989) noted that in the twenty years since the beginnings of the feminist movement American Jewish women were not only more highly educated than previous, but that their education was directed towards occupational goals.²¹³ Unlike the women of the previous generation who might have attended college and received a general arts degree, the women of the 1980s were attending higher educational institutes with very clear ideas regarding their career interests and as a consequence were less likely to consider marriage or family until these personal goals were met.

Sheva Medjuck’s article (1993), which draws on the data retrieved from the 1986 census, reiterates that Jewish cultural norms did not encourage Canadian Jewish women to pursue higher education. While better educated than the average Canadian woman the spread between Jewish men and women in Canada in the area of higher education seems much wider than that between Jewish men and women in America. The idea that too much education is detrimental to finding a husband seems to have held sway for a longer period of time in Canada.²¹⁴

²¹⁰ Norma Joseph, “Jewish Women in Canada: An Evolving Role,” *Immigration and Integration* (Toronto: Institute for International Affairs, B’nai Brith Canada, 2001) 188.

²¹¹ Michele Landsberg, “MJF—Lonely in Toronto,” *Canadian Woman Studies; Jewish Women in Canada*, Volume 16, #4 (Fall 1996): 78.

²¹² Greta Hofmann Nemiroff, “A Feminist, First: Speculations of a Secular Jew,” in *From Memory to Transformation: Jewish Women’s Voices*, eds. Sarah Silberstein Swartz & Margie Wolfe (Toronto, ON: Second Story Press, 1998) 93–109.

²¹³ Sylvia Barak Fishman, “The Changing American Jewish Family Faces the 1990s,” in *Jews in America: A Contemporary Reader*, eds. Roberta Rosenberg Farber and Chaim Waxman (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 1999) 64.

²¹⁴ Medjuck 330.

A possible contributing factor to the educational differences between American and Canadian Jewish women was put forward by Yael Gordon-Brym and is worthy of follow-up.²¹⁵ Gordon-Brym examined the 1971 Census of Canada occupational tables by sex and ethnic group, and noted that the highest degree of socioeconomic inequality was between Jewish men and Jewish women.²¹⁶ For example, while 15 per cent of Jewish men were to be found in the top socio-economic category, only 5 percent of women were.²¹⁷ Furthermore a close reading of the professional category indicated at first glance Jewish men and women seemed to be equally represented, in fact Jewish men held the prestigious better paying positions, and in the teaching profession Jewish men tended to be university professors, and Jewish women mainly elementary school teachers.²¹⁸ It was Gordon-Brym's premise that this inequality was perhaps due to the higher proportion in Canada of manly East European Holocaust survivors: the number of East Europeans settling in Canada were numerically less than those entering the United States but relative to the smaller size of Canada's Jewish community these newcomers had a greater impact on the host community²¹⁹ Also as the East Europeans tended to be Orthodox, Gordon-Brym conjectured that the stricter religious practices and their customs as regards the role of women meant there was less pressure on the women to seek better employment opportunities compared to the men.²²⁰ While there was no follow-up to further explore these ideas, Sheva Medjuck's later analysis of the 1986 data, as previously discussed, supported Gordon-Brym's speculations concerning Jewish cultural norms.

In 1989 the majority of Jewish mothers continued to work, at least part time. Both Fishman

²¹⁵ Yael Gordon-Brym, "The Changing Role of Canadian Jewish Women," in *Canadian Jewish Women of Today: Who's Who of Canadian Jewish Women*, ed. Edmond Y. Lipsitz (Downsview, Ont.: J.E.S.L.Educational Products, c1983) 11–20.

²¹⁶ Gordon-Brym 16.

²¹⁷ Gordon-Brym 16.

²¹⁸ Gordon-Brym 16.

²¹⁹ Gordon-Brym 16.

²²⁰ Gordon-Brym 17.

and Medjuck further address the concerns of Jewish communal leadership regarding the deleterious effect a working mother has on her children and point out that there is historical precedence for Jewish women to be married, with children, and working. Working women find that any extra time they have is best used with their families rather than in volunteer work. Medjuck, like Fishman, notes that the community needs to develop child-friendly environments if it wishes to hold onto its volunteers.²²¹

Since the 1980s there has also been a quantifiable increase, not only in the number of Jewish working mothers, but also in the number of children in the Jewish community coming from single-parent homes. The rising rate of divorce brought to light the issues that surround the *get*, a writ of divorce.²²² The ability to obtain a *get*, aside from religious practices and community, is also a function of whether a woman resides in Canada or the United States. In Montreal (1985), a group of concerned women, the Orthodox *Va'ad HaRabonim* of Toronto, and B'nai Brith Canada organized, and advanced an educational and advocacy campaign to include a protective clause in the Canadian Divorce Act.²²³ Within the relatively short period of five years, the goal was accomplished: a national amendment was passed into law and signed August 12, 1990, banning anyone, throughout Canada, from maintaining barriers to the religious remarriage of their spouse.²²⁴ There has been no comparable action in the United States. New York State (1983) passed the Get Law: Domestic Relations Law 253, which is similar to the relevant clause in

²²¹ Medjuck 333–334.

²²² In Jewish divorce law the marriage is legally terminated when the husband *gives* his wife, or her proxy, the *get*. The transfer of the *get* must take place in the presence of three male witnesses who constitute the *beth din*, the religious court of law. Without the transfer of a *get*, a woman remains chained to her husband. A woman cannot give her husband a *get*. Even when a woman has received a civil divorce, if her husband has not given her a *get*, she is considered still married and is unable to remarry. In both the Conservative and Orthodox movements a *get* is required for a divorce. A *get* is not required in Reform Judaism. This chained status makes the wife an *aguna*. There is no agreement among the various Orthodox communities as to a solution regarding the plight of the *aguna*, a woman unable to obtain her Jewish divorce.

²²³ Joseph 189.

²²⁴ Joseph 189.

Canada's Divorce Act.²²⁵ This past year (2007), the Maryland State Senate failed to pass a similar law (Bill 533) by a small margin.²²⁶ Today, the Coalition of Jewish Women for the *Get* led by Evelyn Brook, continues its educational and activist mandate.²²⁷

Since 1982 a women's *Rosh Hodesh* prayer group began in Montreal, Canada and has been meeting monthly ever since.²²⁸ The Montreal group holds its services in a synagogue and uses Torah scrolls; since 1993, they have also had their own prayer book. The Women's *Tefillah* Network, of which the Montreal group is a part, is found throughout the United States and Canada, England, Australia, and Israel.²²⁹

Also since the early 1990s, as part of the desire to create new ritual experiences, groups of women have been meeting to celebrate specifically women's seders.²³⁰ Women's seders in the United States and Canada have introduced two new objects into the Jewish ritual realm: an orange on the seder plate and Miriam's Cup on the seder table.²³¹ In 1991, Kolel: A Centre for Liberal Jewish Learning, a Reform initiative, headed by Rabbi Elyse M. Goldstein, was established in Toronto as a place to "explore the world of Jewish learning through Jewish texts and thought and to connect the many faces of Judaism in a liberal, pluralistic environment."²³² One of the women I interviewed was very enthusiastic about Kolel noting, "I'm also very committed to the classes that I take at Kolel you know it has to be something big for me to skip a

²²⁵ "Civil Divorce and Gets," *Jewish Women International*, 2006 Jewish Women International [November 9, 2007] <http://www.jwi.org/site/c.okLWJ3MPKtH/b.3412835/k.5F8A/Civil_divorce_and_gets.htm>

²²⁶ *Jewish Women International* [November 9, 2007].

²²⁷ The organization held vigils across Canada on the Fast of Esther in order to highlight the plight of the *agunah*. They produced a documentary film, *Untying the Bonds..... Jewish Divorce*, with funds from the Canadian government.

²²⁸ The Montreal Tefillah Group is twenty-five years old and is one of the very few that meets in an Orthodox synagogue and actually holds services on Rosh Hodesh.

²²⁹ "Women's Tefillah Groups – Courtesy of The Women's Tefillah Network." © 2000 - 2001: EDAH <<http://www.edah.org/tefilla.cfm>> [August 23, 2007].

²³⁰ Sonia Zylberberg, *Transforming Rituals: Contemporary Jewish Women's Seders* (PhD Thesis, Concordia University, 2006).

²³¹ Sonia Zylberberg, "Proclaiming Presence: Women, Oranges and Seder Plates," Association for Canadian Jewish Studies Annual Conference, Beth Israel Synagogue, Halifax, Nova Scotia, June 2, 2003.

²³² "Kolel's Mission Statement" *Kolel: The Adult Centre for Liberal Jewish Learning* <http://www.kolel.org/pages/about_us.html> [August 23, 2007].

class I mean I just need that for my own self-nourishment.²³³

Sheva Medjuck noted that almost twenty years later (1993), there were still very few synagogues in Canada where women could participate as full equals.²³⁴ Thirteen years after her article and thirty years after the “rebellion” of *ezrat nashim*, Montreal today (2006) has four Conservative synagogues and only one has become fully egalitarian.

In Toronto also, there has been a slow evolution in Conservative synagogues, where “more and more women are taking part in some aspect of the service.”²³⁵ There are eight congregations affiliated with the Conservative movement in the Greater Toronto area and only two are fully egalitarian, the other six are non-egalitarian or partially egalitarian.²³⁶

In December of 2005, at the Conservative biennial convention held in Boston, Rabbi Menachem Creditor of Sharon, Mass., commented that it’s immoral to allow non-egalitarian synagogues to be part of the Conservative movement.²³⁷ Challenging not only the delegates from Canadian Conservative congregations but also challenging the philosophy of *halachic* pluralism - an approach affirmed by movement leaders. Rabbi Steven Saltzman of Toronto’s Adath Israel Congregation responded by proposing the establishment of a Canadian “sovereignty association” within the Conservative movement that would agree to disagree with the American movement.²³⁸

This chapter has demonstrated how Canada’s particular historical and cultural ambience affected the lives of Canadian Jewish women. Today the educational and cultural variations between American Jewish women and Canadian Jewish women are very much lessened in terms of achievement and involvement within the Jewish “civil service” milieu. Within the religious

²³³ Interview, Toronto, July 20, 2005.

²³⁴ Medjuck 338.

²³⁵ Frances Kraft, “Conservative movement faces ‘daunting challenges,’” *The Canadian Jewish News: Internet Edition* (November 16, 2006/25 Cheshvan, 5767) <http://www.cjnews.com/viewarticle.asp?id=9701> [November 20, 2006].

²³⁶ Kraft (November 16, 2006/25 Cheshvan, 5767).

²³⁷ Kraft (November 16, 2006/25 Cheshvan, 5767).

²³⁸ Kraft (November 16, 2006/25 Cheshvan, 5767).

milieu there are still wide variations not the least being the more traditional leanings of the Canadian Jewish population overall.

The next chapter will examine the development of the various Jewish religious institutions across Canada and how the differences that do exist within the denominational context impact on the “settling-in” experience of the rabbinical wife.

CHAPTER THREE JEWISH RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN CANADA

“traditional society” describe[s] the whole of world Jewry, at least from the talmudic era (200 CE) up to the age of European Emancipation during the first half of the nineteenth century.¹

In his introduction to *Tradition and Crisis*, Katz uses this concept “traditional society” to demonstrate that the communities in which Jews resided were governed wholly by adherence to *Halacha* (Jewish Law). With emancipation, neither the rabbis nor the *kehillot* had any authority to enforce religious discipline. Richard Cohen has written that this new freedom to live where one wished “required Jews to make decisions of wide cultural and social implications concerning where they would reside, with whom, and how they would create their public and private spaces and system of values.”² The element of choice was a new feature of Jewish ritual involvement as well as of Jewish identity.

Since the second century CE, the portable character of the synagogue had enabled Jews to organize their communal life, and to assemble anywhere to conduct a “regular service.”³ The additional factor of choice made it possible to debate what constituted a “regular service” for Jews now living with these new conditions. Reform Judaism emerged as one solution to the quandary of retaining one’s Jewish cultural identity while lessening one’s visible Jewish practices. Even though the descendants of Katz’ “traditional society” – as it existed mainly in the

¹ Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971) 3. *Halacha* proscribed the religious and communal practices and behaviours of the majority of Jews during this period, and served to bind near and distant Jewish communities to a common standard. Any custom, cultural or local variation was but an adaptation of the recognized standard.

² Richard Cohen, “Urban Visibility and Biblical Visions: Jewish Culture in Western and Central Europe in the Modern Age,” *Cultures of The Jews: A New History*, ed. David Biale (New York: Schocken Books, 2002) 735. *Kahal* or *kehillah*: term to describe the Jewish medieval model of social organization that existed in the various towns where a sufficient number of Jews resided. Depending on the size of the *kehillah*, it would support a highly elaborate infrastructure of fraternal, charitable, social welfare, educational, and occupational associations, all of which were permeated with religious significance; also the various *kehillot* throughout Europe functioned independently of each other.

³ Levine 2; Salo W. Baron, *Christian Era: The First Five Centuries*, Vol. II (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1952) 284. Baron notes that “ten Jews could assemble anywhere in public or in private [and] ... conduct a regular service.” Baron does not outline the nature of a regular service.

Eastern part of Europe – were the majority in the formation and building of many of Canada's early Jewish religious institutions, a brief overview of these different "Judaisms" highlights the ways in which they developed their Canadian praxis.

Forms of Judaism and their positions within the Canadian Jewish milieu

Reform Judaism

The Reform movement can be traced back to Israel Jacobson, who opened a Reform synagogue in his Berlin home in 1815, and by 1818 the first Reform Temple was dedicated in Hamburg.⁴ In Western and Central Europe, Reform-minded Jews were debating the merits of various amendments to the "traditional" service; in the United States, at the time, Isaac Leeser, "pastor of the Hebrew Portuguese Congregation of Philadelphia" described how "each congregation makes its own rules for its government, and elects its own minister."⁵

By the 1870s, in most American congregations, substantial reforms had either been introduced or revisions were taking place.⁶ Jick noted that Jewish religious reform in nineteenth century America began with a series of modest ritual changes and shifts in emphasis which were primarily concerned with appearances and social conformity, and that these outside influences came from American Unitarianism as much as from German-Jewish reform.⁷ These changes had not been imposed by rabbinical leadership but rather had emerged out of the desire of the lay leaders to be part of the American establishment.

During these same years in Canada the "most influential element culturally in Montreal until

⁴ Seltzer 581–582. In medieval times the synagogue had been called by Christians the Synagogue of Satan. Renaming the synagogue "Temple" represented a symbolic shift in Jewish thought and self-perception. In terms of integrating into the host society, the term "Temple" did not carry the negative associations attached to the medieval synagogue.

⁵ Leon A. Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue, 1820–1870* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1976) 68. Jick is quoting from Daniel Rupp, *An Original History of the Religious Denominations at Present Existing in the United States* (Philadelphia: J.Y. Humphreys, 1844) 368.

⁶ Jick 124.

⁷ Jick 82. The occasion for introducing reforms was usually the construction of a new synagogue – the two most common reforms instituted were – the delivery of sermons in English, and the installation of an organ.

the 1880s was the Orthodox Spanish and Portuguese synagogue which took its religious orientation from the western Sephardic community in England.”⁸ Tulchinsky noted that the “Jewish community in Canada did not receive significant numbers of German Jewish immigrants with Reform impulses.”⁹ Unlike the American experience, in which Reform Judaism occupied a major portion of the American Jewish religious landscape, in Canada, there were only three reform congregations – Toronto, Montreal and Hamilton – until after the Second World War. These will be discussed in further detail in the sections on the individual communities.

The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, formed in 1873 through the initiative of Isaac Meyer Wise, sponsored the establishment of the Hebrew Union College in 1875 as a response to the need for native-born (American), English-speaking rabbis.¹⁰ The Reform synagogues that were eventually established in Canada looked to the Hebrew Union College for its rabbis and drew some but not all of its ideas from the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. In recent years the Leo Baeck College in London, England has also been a source for Canadian institutions of trained Reform-minded rabbis.¹¹

In the United States, the Reform synagogue was staunchly opposed to Zionism, although a few significant Reform leaders actively espoused it. However in Canada, many of the Reform rabbis, and certainly their congregations and the Jewish communities in which they lived, were proud Zionists. Speisman notes that when Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath, tried to bring the prevailing anti-Zionism of American Reform into Toronto’s Holy Blossom Temple (Reform) in the late 1920s, the congregation was outraged, and a sizeable secession from the synagogue took place.¹²

⁸ Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, xxi.

⁹ Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, xxi.

¹⁰ David Kaufman, *Shul With a “Pool” : The “Synagogue-Center” in American Jewish History* (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 1999) 12. also Jick 190.

¹¹ The first female rabbi to serve a Canadian institution was trained at Leo Baeck, and there are several Canadian Reform and Conservative communities today whose leadership were trained at the Leo Baeck College.

¹² Stephan A. Speisman, *The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937* (Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1979) 242.

Reform Judaism's message of social justice and other universal values has been predicated on active Jewish engagement beyond the Jewish community.¹³ While the activities of the early Reform rabbis created ripples within and without their congregations, their activities did not increase the attraction of Reform Judaism for Canadian Jews at that time. Today, the Reform congregations are in the majority in the United States, and the Canadian Reform congregations have increased their numbers significantly beyond the original three. Despite this appearance of growth however, the Reform movement in Canada continues to attract fewer adherents.¹⁴ Reform Judaism, in recent years, has reintroduced aspects of traditional ritual. The inclination toward greater use of tradition combined with Reform's message of universal social justice, and the recasting of Jewish values – *tikkun olam* – into a universal value are very appealing to contemporary Jews. This could eventually lead to greater congregational affiliation.¹⁵

Today in Canada there are twenty-five Reform congregations across the country.¹⁶ The majority of these, seventeen, are scattered throughout Ontario, four of which are located in the Toronto area. Most of these were formed after 1980. Of the twenty-five congregations across Canada, fourteen congregations employ full-time rabbis, two of whom are female; nine of the congregations are lay-led, one has a female part-time rabbi and one has a female rabbinical student.¹⁷

¹³ Gerald Tulchinsky, "'Justice and Only Justice Shalt Thou Pursue': Considerations on the Social Voice of Canada's Reform Rabbis," *Religion and Public Life in Canada: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Marguerite Van Die (Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 2001) 313.

¹⁴ Richard Menkis, "Both Peripheral and Central: Toward a History of Reform Judaism in Canada," *CCAR Journal*, Volume 51, 4 (Fall 2004): 43.

¹⁵ Cohen and Eisen 106–107.

¹⁶ See "Methodology" for a discussion of the CJC National Synagogue Directory. The 5767/2006–2007 is the one used for quantifying the various religious institutions across Canada. The Directory was used as the "decisor" of Canadian religious institutions. If a "minyan" had not appeared in the Directory (even though active according to its participants) it was not included in the working list of Canadian religious institutions.

¹⁷ These numbers and the breakdown of full-time, part-time and student rabbis reflect the situation today (October 12, 2007). There have been sufficient hirings, firings, changes from part-time to no rabbi, and female to male in the past several years that it would be inappropriate to list these numbers without qualifiers as to their stability.

Orthodox Judaism

Orthodoxy's initial response to the looming challenges facing Jews was to encourage resistance to all forms of change. Biale notes that "these tendencies to equate law with custom, and to favor rigid codes over talmudic discourse were to become characteristics of East European ultra-Orthodoxy and its twentieth-century heirs."¹⁸ In his discussion of East European Jewish Orthodoxy, he remarks on the necessity of distinguishing between tradition and Orthodoxy, and comments that the "overwhelming majority [of Jews] continued to live traditional lives ... in terms of their daily practices, values, and aspirations."¹⁹

These daily practices, whether they concerned home, community or marketplace, were conducted, to some extent, within a particular Jewish frame of reference that had been understood and accepted by most of the Jews living in these communities. Practices and customs which were in place prior to emancipation, were now being recast as representative of a specific religious attitude: one that reframed one's "daily and habitual practices" with unaccustomed meanings, terminology and obligations. For the majority the apparent changes in nomenclature had little affect on their behaviours. The divergence between Orthodoxy and tradition was especially salient in the early migration to North America. Those Jews whose practices remained in place on account of the communities in which they lived, rather than from any sense of renewed religious obligation, found that once they immigrated to America, they could choose to practice their faith or not as there were no longer any community obligations in place. The evidence from those years (1900–1917) indicates that large numbers "of immigrant Jews failed to attend synagogue," and for those that did attend it was more because they "were drawn to these [Orthodox] *shuls* as ... a connection to home, and a place where extended family and old friends

¹⁸ David Biale, "A Journey Between Worlds: East European Jewish Culture from the Partitions of Poland to the Holocaust," *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, ed. David Biale (New York: Schocken Books, 2002) 814.

¹⁹ Biale 805.

could meet.”²⁰

When the first East European Jews began arriving in Canada, they came to a country that was British in nature and whose religious leadership came from London, England. When the first Jews settled in Lower Canada, even though they were Ashkenazi Jews from England, either British-born, or from England via Eastern Europe, they chose to formally constitute the first synagogue as Sephardic as this had been their most recent religious experience.²¹ When large numbers of East European immigrants began arriving in Canada, the Montreal community had expanded sufficiently to host two Orthodox synagogues: the Spanish and Portuguese, and its break-away of 1846, the Shaar Hashomayim which adhered to the customs of the English (Ashkenaz), German and Polish Jews. The customs of the East European arrivals differed sufficiently from the prevailing Orthodox Ashkenaz norm of the German and Polish Jews that they formed their own congregations within as short a time as possible after their arrival. Both Sara Tauben, in her research on Montreal “downtown” synagogues, and Stephen Speisman, in his book, *The Jews of Toronto*, note that as soon as there were sufficient co-religionists from a particular area in Central and Eastern Europe or Russia – be it Galicia, Kielce, Oistreich, they would establish their own congregation where the *minhagim* (customs) of their particular region could be followed.²² In the first decades of the East European immigration over two dozen Orthodox congregations were established across Canada. Tauben comments that these small synagogues or *shulelach* did not indicate the presence of a pious community, but rather “represented more a distinction between the various immigrant communities than between secular and religious.”²³

²⁰ Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2004) 161; Tauben 58.

²¹ Robinson, Lecture notes: January 17, 2006.

²² Tauben 58; Speisman 102.

²³ Tauben 44–46.

In postwar Canada, “traditional Judaism” experienced a revival. In America, despite the influx of Hasidic leaders and Orthodox leaders, the numbers affiliating with Orthodoxy remained small overall; and while these were influential in terms of the eventual shifts in modern orthodoxy, the religious affiliation today within the United States that is Orthodox remains under 10%.

In the post war period, the entry into Canada of Lubavitcher Hasidic refugees as well as other Orthodox immigrants influenced religious education through the *yeshivot* they established soon after arrival. The Orthodox congregations created more religious day schools, offering instruction from kindergarten through high school. Today Chabad has at least twenty locations in the Montreal area, eight in the Toronto area, and is found in Halifax, Ottawa, Nepean, Hamilton, London, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, Richmond, and Surrey. Also there is a trend within Orthodox congregations to engage Lubavitch trained rabbis, increasing the likelihood of a shift to the right within their synagogues. One example of this trend is the hiring by the Chevra Kadisha B’nai Jacob of Lubavitch rabbi, Asher Jacobson, as its new spiritual leader.²⁴ In 1999 the congregation was debating retaining its Orthodox character or becoming Conservative; the hiring of Rabbi Jacobson demonstrates a decisive commitment “to strengthening the synagogue’s Orthodox affiliation.”²⁵ Also Lubavitch-trained religious leaders are to be found in many of the Young Israel pulpits across Canada today.

In Canada, the Orthodox communities and the Hasidic communities together combined contribute to the continuation of Orthodoxy as the majority denomination. There are 106 Orthodox congregations of which 27 identify specifically as Sephardic. There are at a minimum

²⁴ “A New Rabbi At The Largest Orthodox Synagogue In Montreal,” *Canadian Jewish News* (July 17, 2000): 6M. Congregation Chevra Kadisha B’nai Jacob News. <<http://www.ckbj.org/PressReleases.htm>> [December 12, 2007].

²⁵ Janice Arnold, “Lubavitch rabbi making changes at Chevra Kadisha,” *Canadian Jewish News* (July 17, 2000): 6M. Congregation Chevra Kadisha B’nai Jacob News. <<http://www.ckbj.org/PressReleases.htm>> [December 12, 2007].

39 Hasidic congregations of which 27 are Chabad-Lubavitch. There is one Lubavitch yeshiva in Montreal, as well as an outreach centre. Throughout the rest of Canada there are 12 schools, senior centres, and hospitals that offer Orthodox services to their residents.

Conservative Judaism

The tensions that existed between the Orthodox and Reform supporters called for a third way to evolve: the roots of Conservative Judaism can be traced to Zacharias Frankel (1801–1875).²⁶ In 1854 Frankel was head of a new rabbinical seminary in Breslau which served as the forerunner of the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary in New York.²⁷ In addressing the formative years of Conservative Judaism in America, Karp noted that the "religious radicalization of Reform and the growing insularity of Orthodoxy brought those with centrist tendencies together."²⁸ With the establishment of the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1887, its founders hoped that "pulpits [would] become strongholds of the written and oral law."²⁹ With the agreement of Solomon Schechter to undertake the presidency of the Seminary in 1902, the religiously diverse Conservative rabbinate became both scholarly and capable of conversing with the American-born children of the East European immigrants. Although the Conservative movement shares ideological roots with the German positive-historical movement, Jack Wertheimer comments that the "Conservative synagogue with its particular mix of social and religious activities was a twentieth-century creation of American Jews."³⁰

The Conservative movement had a slow start in Canada. The first congregation to affiliate with the nascent Conservative movement was the Shaar Hashomayim in Montreal. During the

²⁶ Seltzer 605.

²⁷ Sarna, *American Judaism*, 147.

²⁸ Abraham Karp, "The Conservative Rabbi—'Dissatisfied But Not Unhappy,'" *The American Rabbinate: A Century of Continuity and Change: 1883–1983*, eds Jacob Rader Marcus and Abraham J. Peck (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1985) 106.

²⁹ Karp 111. quotes Rabbi Sabbato Morais, *Proceedings of the First Biennial Convention of the Jewish Theological Seminary Association held in New York on Sunday March 11, 5648 (1888)* (New York, 1888) 20.

³⁰ Jack Wertheimer, "The Conservative Synagogue," *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (Hanover & London: Brandeis University Press, University Press of New England, 1995) 111.

course of a monthly general meeting (8 August 1882) it was reiterated that “that all additions and alterations affecting our service be sanctioned by a recognized Orthodox rabbi ... and [that it be] understood that all prayers and ceremonies be conducted in a strictly Orthodox manner.”³¹

Although the Shaar defined itself as “strictly Orthodox,” it often “turned to the [Conservative] Seminary for help in solving its rabbinical problems” and thus was encouraged to hire Rabbi Abramovitz, one of the first graduates of the Seminary, and who described himself as Orthodox.³² The Shaar Hashomayim amended its by-laws in 1973, replacing the word “Orthodox” with the word “traditional,” and in October 2000 “disassociated itself from the Conservative movement.”³³

In the United States a number of initially Orthodox synagogues moved into the Conservative camp as their congregants’ needs shifted. In Canada however, the majority of synagogues remained firmly in the Orthodox fold until the 1950s. The building boom that was taking place in the United States in the post war years was also taking place in Canada, and a large portion of these new synagogues chose to be affiliated with the Conservative movement.

There are presently forty-five Conservative synagogues in Canada and of these nineteen are lay-led. The majority continue not to count women in a minyan, and the decision in March 2007 that “the Jewish Theological Seminary would accept qualified gay and lesbian students to [its] rabbinical and cantorial schools” according to Rabbi Saltzman (Adath Israel, Toronto) “constitutes the last nail in the coffin of any facade that this [the Conservative] movement is Halakhic.”³⁴ To-date the “rumblings” have not evolved into concrete action on the part of

³¹ Rabbi Wilfred Shuchat, *The Gate of Heaven: The Story of Congregation Shaar Hashomayim of Montreal, 1846–1996* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000) 55.

³² Shuchat 49; Karp 116.

³³ Rabbi Wilfred Shuchat, *The Gate of Heaven: The Story of the Shaar Hashomayim of Montreal, 1846–1996*, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000) 409; Janice Arnold, “Montreal Conservative Synagogue declares independence,” *Canadian Jewish News: Internet Edition* (November 2, 2000).

<<http://www.cjnews.com/pastIssues/00/nov2-00/front5.asp>> [May 14, 2007]; Harold M. Waller, “Canada,” *American Jewish Year Book* (2001): 293.

³⁴ Arnold M. Eisen, “JTS to Ordain Gay and Lesbian Clergy,” <news@jtsa.edu> March 26, 2007; Harold M.

Canadian Conservative synagogues and their rabbis. While there have been discussions of establishing a Canadian Conservative group along the lines of sovereignty association this has not yet taken place.³⁵

New Religious Choices

The end of the twentieth century has seen a shift to the right creating subsets of Orthodoxy: traditional, modern and “ultra”. Conservative Judaism has also birthed several significantly different approaches to Judaism. Schoenfeld notes that “the institutional structure of the branches of Judaism has become blurred and more complex.”³⁶

In 1922 Mordecai Kaplan persuaded a number of like-minded individuals and families to assist him in establishing what would become the Society for the Advancement of Judaism (SAJ).³⁷ Under Kaplan’s leadership the Society “became a center of left-wing Conservative Judaism.”³⁸ With the publication of his book, *Judaism as a Civilization* (1934), Kaplan appeared to be establishing Reconstructionism as an alternative movement.³⁹ However it was not until 1963, that Kaplan’s supporters were finally able to convince him that his philosophy and writings could only be effectively taught in a school dedicated to the training of Reconstructionist rabbis.⁴⁰ Kaplan resigned from the Jewish Theological Seminary, and in 1968 (October) the

Waller, “Canada,” *American Jewish Year Book* Volume 105 (2005): 307.

³⁵ The term “sovereignty association” was coined by the Quebec Sovereignty Movement to describe one possible political relationship that would provide the province of Quebec greater autonomy within Canada.

³⁶ Stuart Schoenfeld, “The Religious Mosaic: A Study in Diversity,” *From Immigration to Integration: The Canadian Jewish Experience: A Millennium Edition*, eds., Ruth Klein and Frank Dimant (Toronto, ON: Institute for International Affairs, B’nai Brith Canada, 2001) 178.

³⁷ Eric Caplan, *From Ideology to Liturgy: Reconstructionist Worship and American Liberal Judaism* (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press, 2002) 16.

³⁸ Caplan 16. first mentioned in *SAJ Review* 5, No. 4 (9 October 1925) np; and then repeated in Marc Lee Raphael’s *Profiles in American Judaism: The Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist Traditions in Historical Perspective* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc, 1984) 189; Mel Scult, *Judaism Faces the Twentieth Century: A Biography of Mordecai M. Kaplan* (Detroit, IN: Wayne State University Press, 1993) 96.

³⁹ Caplan 126; also Sharon Gubbay Helfer, *Lavy’s Shul: A Canadian Experiment in Reconstructionism* (PhD Thesis, Concordia University, 2006). 118. Gubbay Helfer notes that Becker was amongst those who finally persuaded Kaplan to resign from the Jewish Theological Seminary.

⁴⁰ Caplan 134.

Reconstructionist Rabbinical College opened its doors.⁴¹ In Canada today there are four Reconstructionist synagogues. Dorshei Emet in Montreal, is the oldest, formed in 1960. Darchei Noam in Toronto recently moved into its own building, the former Adath Shalom.⁴² Both these synagogues have full-time rabbis. The Ottawa Reconstructionist Havurah is lay-led, and there is a small but growing part-time Reconstructionist community (Ahavat Olam) in Vancouver led by Rabbi David Mivasair.

There are twelve congregations that define themselves as traditional. These include the Shaar Hashomayim, already mentioned, and eleven congregations that range from traditional but egalitarian to traditional and Orthodox. There appear to be some differences between those congregations labelling themselves traditional and those opting for the label unaffiliated. The “traditional” congregations seem to have a larger member base and several employ full-time rabbis. The five congregations that have chosen to label themselves as unaffiliated are lay led and are situated either on the outskirts of a large city or in those areas in Canada where there are less than 5,000 Jews. These congregations can be found on the South Shore of Montreal in Quebec; in Owen Sound, Sault Ste Marie, Thunder Bay in Ontario, and in Coquitlam and White Rock/Surrey in British Columbia. Aside from saving on the costs involved with affiliating with a parent organization, the unaffiliated community can maintain the appearance of appealing to both majority and minority religious leanings.

When the Jewish Theological Seminary voted, in 1984, to accept women into the rabbinical program, this was the impetus for the “minority consensus” to fully break with the Conservative movement.⁴³ In 1990 it changed its name to the Union for Traditional Judaism, and in 1991

⁴¹ Caplan 136.

⁴² Frances Kraft, “Darchei Noam moves into its reconstructed home,” *The Canadian Jewish News* (February 7, 2008): 3, 21.

⁴³ Neil Gillman, *Conservative Judaism: The New Century* (West Orange, NJ: Behrman House, Inc, 1993) 145.

created the Institute of Traditional Judaism (the Metivta), its rabbinical training program.⁴⁴ The new movement had ramifications for one of Vancouver's major congregations. As the Conservative congregation Beth Israel was bringing the issue concerning the ritual participation of women to a vote amongst its membership, a splinter group broke away to form the Sharei Tefillah congregation which shortly thereafter affiliated with the Union for Traditional Judaism.

Additionally, for those desiring to affiliate outside all mainstream movements there is Aleph: the Alliance for Jewish Renewal. Throughout the 1960s Rabbi Schacter-Shalomi brought together the diverse liturgical changes, meditation practices, and modes of prayer that would come to define Jewish Renewal practices. Initially, Schacter-Shalomi ordained rabbis who had worked and studied one-on-one with him; then, in the early 1990s, he undertook to develop a rabbinic track program that could train Jewish Renewal rabbis without his ongoing involvement. In Canada there is an active Jewish renewal congregation, Or Shalom, in Vancouver. There are several small *havurot* around the country that self-label as Jewish renewal but they have not officially affiliated with Aleph.⁴⁵

A more recent option for religious seekers is Rabbi Berg's Kabbalah Centre in Toronto which began as a series of classes in the late 1980s. In 1988, the organization was granted status as a charitable religious organization and proceeded to establish itself, under the leadership of Karen and Philip Berg, as a social and educational centre.⁴⁶ Unlike most Jewish religious institutions, the Kabbalah Centre does not maintain a system of membership making it difficult to assess the size of the core community.⁴⁷ Even though Jewish families continue to celebrate particular Jewish life-cycle events at the Kabbalah Centre, the Centre also engages in outreach to

⁴⁴ Gillman 145; 148.

⁴⁵ A *havurah* is a small group of congregants, who gather together to socialize, celebrate Jewish holidays, learn more about Jewish subjects, or take any focus that the group chooses.

⁴⁶ Jody E. Myers, *Kabbalah and the Spiritual Quest: the Kabbalah Centre in America* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007) 66.

⁴⁷ Myers 71.

non-Jews, and defines itself in universalistic rather than specifically Jewish terms.⁴⁸

What does it mean for a congregation or a community to bind itself to particular religious options? Are Reform, Conservative and Orthodox the same across Canada or are there regional differences? How does being Orthodox work in a small town as opposed to the larger city? The next section will explore these questions and describe the historical experiences of some of the religious institutions in each city. This section of the chapter is divided into four different time frames; within each time frame prominent aspects of a community's religious institutional development will be highlighted.

The years pre-1881–1921: Transplanting the known

Montreal

It is highly likely that there were at least ten Jewish merchants living in Montreal between 1759 and 1760.⁴⁹ The date Jews first entered Montreal is attached to the conquest of Quebec by the British: the physical defeat took place in 1759, and a year later Jewish traders were accompanying the British army into Montreal.⁵⁰ There is no record of when they actually began meeting together to pray but by the end of 1768, the decision was made to form Congregation Shearith Israel.

Four years after Reverend de Sola arrived, the first Canadian census (1851) informs us that there were 181 Jews living in Montreal at that time, 307 in all of Canada. In 1871 prior to the influx of East Europeans, Montreal's Jewish population was 409 and by 1891 the Jewish population had reached over 2,000 (2,473).⁵¹

⁴⁸ Myers 70–73.

⁴⁹ Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, 10–11; David Kaufman, ed., *The Continuing History of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation of Montreal, 1768–1993: 25 Years of Renaissance* (Montreal, Canada: Robert Davies Publishing, 1996) 10.

⁵⁰ Daniel Elazar and Harold Waller, "Chapter 3: The Foundations of Montreal Jewry," in *Maintaining Consensus: The Canadian Jewish Polity in the Post War World* (Lanham: University Press of America; [Jerusalem]: Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 1990) 69.

⁵¹ Louis Rosenberg, "A Gazetteer of Jewish Communities in Canada showing The Jewish Population in each of

When Reverend de Sola arrived in Lower Canada (1847), almost two dozen synagogues had formed in the United States as a result of the influx of German and Polish refugees to that country. Prior to his arrival in Montreal, conflicts over *minhagim*, prayer services and religious leadership resulted in the break away that lead to the formation of a second synagogue in Montreal. A group of English, German and Polish members of Shearith Israel made the decision to form their own synagogue (1846). By 1880 there were two other synagogues, one in Toronto (1856), and one in Victoria (1862), on the west coast of Canada.

Prior to 1881 the small sized Jewish community were of British and German stock and were indistinguishable to a great extent from their Anglo-Canadian counterparts. Menkis comments that “the nature of Anglo-Canadian culture reinforced the outlook of the Jewish elite ...[and] many of the acculturated Jews [looking] for a form of English respectability were drawn to the Anglo-Jewish religious life.”⁵² Evelyn Kallen also noted that the efforts made by acculturated Jews to move in Anglo-Canadian social circles resulted in “the convergence of characteristics between the two groups (was) such that within one generation intermarriage was taking place at a rapid pace.”⁵³ This community, however, bore little similarity to the German Jews living in the United States. While some few in Canada did assimilate the majority religiously identified themselves as observant Jews.⁵⁴

Initially Reverend Abraham de Sola and his son Meldola, who held the pulpit of the Shearith Israel synagogue in succession for about seventy years, defended the “old faith” in Montreal, and successfully kept the tiny Reform group out of the mainstream of religious life in the

the Cities, Towns & Villages in the Census Years 1851–1951,” *Canadian Jewish Population Studies*, Number 7 (1957): 1–2. The first national census – post-Confederation took place in 1871.

⁵² Menkis 45.

⁵³ Evelyn Kallen, *Spanning the Generations: A Study in Jewish Identity* (Don Mills, ON: Longman Canada Ltd. 1977) 40.

⁵⁴ Even at this early date Canadian Jews were proud active Zionists, a characteristic that will be addressed more fully later in this chapter.

community.⁵⁵ Temple Emanu-El of Montreal formed as a Reform congregation in 1882. Brown notes that contrary to the prevailing spirit of Montreal in which the English speaking Jews looked to England for guidance, the Reform group looked to the United States as several of their founding members were Americans “upon [whom]... the aims of American Reform Judaism had made an indelible impression.”⁵⁶ Lack of funds, in the Temple’s early years, contributed to a high turnover of clergy: seven rabbis had been hired and fired from its founding in 1882 until twenty-four years later in 1906, when Nathan Gordon replaced Jacob Kornfeld.⁵⁷ Because of, or in spite of the situation with other Jewish religious and communal organizations, the Temple Emanu-El remained for its first 20 years or so, more open to the Gentile community than the Jewish and maintained an isolationist stance towards all things Jewish.⁵⁸ By 1909 this open antipathy towards the Reform on the part of the Orthodox leadership had diminished to some extent. As Brown noted the “acceptance by the gentiles” (as a result of participation by Temple members with their counterparts in the Christian community) and the subsequent diminishing of Orthodox fears regarding their own status and acceptance in the larger community, contributed to the reinvolvement of Temple members in Jewish communal activities.⁵⁹

The immigrants arriving in Canada had a very different experience from the immigrants arriving in the United States.⁶⁰ In Canada there was a different geographical concentration than in

⁵⁵ Michael Brown, “The Beginnings of Reform Judaism in Canada,” *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol 34 (1972): 330–331.

⁵⁶ Brown, “Beginnings of Reform Judaism,” 324.

⁵⁷ Brown, “Beginnings of Reform Judaism,” 325.

⁵⁸ Brown, “Beginnings of Reform Judaism,” 330.

⁵⁹ Brown, “The Beginnings of Reform Judaism,” 332.

⁶⁰ Following are some materials that focus on the Canadian Jewish immigrant experience in the late 19th and early 20th century: Simon Belkin, *Through Narrow Gates: A Review of Jewish Immigration, Colonization and Immigrant Aid Work in Canada (1840–1940)* (Montreal: The Eagle Publishing Co. 1966); Lloyd P. Gartner, “Jewish Migrants en Route from Europe to North America,” *The Jews of North America*, ed. Moses Rischin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987) 25–43; Robert F. Harney and Harold Troper, *Immigrants: A Portrait of the Urban Experience, 1890–1930* (Toronto/New York/Cincinnati/London/Melbourne: Van Nostrand Reinhold Ltd, 1975); Erna Paris, *Jews: An Account of their Experience in Canada* (Toronto, ON: MacMillan of Canada, 1980); William Shaffir, and Morton Weinfeld, “Canada and the Jews: An Introduction,” *The Canadian Mosaic*, eds. M. Weinfeld, W. Shaffir and I. Cotler (Toronto and New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1981) 7–20; Harold Troper, “Jews and Canadian Immigration Policy, 1900–1950,” *The Jews of North America*, ed. Moses

the States.⁶¹ In Canada, newcomers came to Montreal, Toronto, and the West (Winnipeg) whereas in the United States, by the 1840s sizeable Jewish communities existed in all major cities up and down the eastern seaboard, in the mid-West, and on the Gulf coast.⁶² By 1915, in the United States, cities in the South hosted sizeable Jewish communities. Cincinnati had emerged as a leading centre of Jewish religious life as the Reform movement had its Rabbinical College there. Philadelphia was a major educational and cultural hub, and Chicago had attracted a huge Jewish population. These communities were independent of New York, a city one-quarter Jewish by 1914 and the residence of about half of all America's Jews.⁶³ Canada had no counterpart to these cities or to the numbers in terms of population growth.

Up until the mid-twentieth century, the acceptance of newcomers to America was premised on the understanding that they would adapt, acculturate and become American – whether or not they maintained their own traditions within the privacy of their home was not part of official public discourse. In Canada, maintaining one's ethnic ties *and* “fitting in” was encouraged. The BNA Act (1867) recognized certain rights for religious groups (Catholics and Protestants) and linguistic groups (Anglophones and Francophones) and thus legitimated a collectivistic approach to the notion of rights in contrast to the American emphasis on individual rights.⁶⁴

As mentioned previously, in Canada, unless one moved into the rural areas or small towns there were only three major cities where one could live, and in terms of assimilating into the larger non-Jewish community in Quebec especially, this was not an option: on one side there was

Rischin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987) 44–56, and Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of The Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto, ON: Lester Publishing Ltd, 1992).

⁶¹ William Shaffir and Morton Weinfeld, “Canada and The Jews: An Introduction,” *The Canadian Jewish Mosaic* (Rexdale, ON: John Wiley and Sons Canada Ltd, 1981) 7–20; Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, xv, and Gerald Tulchinsky, “The Canadian Jewish Experience: A Distinct Personality Emerges,” *From Immigration to Integration: The Canadian Jewish Experience: A Millennium Edition*, eds., Ruth Klein and Frank Dimant (Toronto, ON: Institute for International Affairs, B’nai Brith Canada, 2001) 19.

⁶² Tulchinsky, “The Canadian Jewish Experience,” 23.

⁶³ Tulchinsky, “The Canadian Jewish Experience,” 23.

⁶⁴ William Shaffir, and Morton Weinfeld, “Canada and the Jews: An Introduction,” *The Canadian Mosaic*, eds. M. Weinfeld, W. Shaffir and I. Cotler (Toronto and New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1981) 15.

the Anglo-Protestant minority and on the other the French Catholic majority, and in between the Jew – highly likely this was a factor not only in the maintenance of the Jewish community as a cohesive group (at least to the outside world), but to the tendency “[for] Montrealers to remain adamantly, almost pugnaciously Orthodox.”⁶⁵ Aside from the open expressions of antisemitism from the French-Catholic majority throughout this period and until after the second World War, one could speculate that the strong Catholic environment exerted an influence that encouraged the Jewish community of Montreal to also remain, in their religious identity at least, traditional and conservative in their political and social outlook.

The presence of antisemitism, especially during the interwar period, is not contested: its pervasiveness, its intensity, and its meaning (for the Jewish and the Francophone communities) continue to be debated.⁶⁶ Pierre Anctil notes that the Jews “were simply an aberration” jeopardizing the equilibrium that had been established between the French-Catholic population to the east of Montreal, and the Anglo-Protestants living in the western part of Montreal.⁶⁷ He further comments that Montreal’s Jews were considered outsiders by both the French and English communities and that while the “French antisemitic agitation” did not endanger Montreal Jews, the quieter actions of the Anglophone community, especially the imposition of quotas at McGill affected the future livelihoods of many young Jews.⁶⁸ Esther Delisle, however, in her examination of this time-period, maintains that French antisemitism both propelled the *achat chez-nous* (“buy from ourselves”) campaign as part of a larger effort to encourage Jews to leave Quebec, and was a major factor in the denial of Canadian entry visas to Jewish refugees.⁶⁹ Xavier

⁶⁵ Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, xxi.

⁶⁶ For a basic introduction to the issue of antisemitism in Quebec see Dana Herman’s *In the Shadow of the Mountain: A Historical Re-evaluation of the 1988 Outremont Dispute* (MA Thesis, McGill University, 2003).

⁶⁷ Anctil 136–137.

⁶⁸ Anctil 158–159.

⁶⁹ Esther Delisle, *The Traitor and the Jew: Anti-Semitism and the delirium of extremist right-wing nationalism in French Canada from 1929–1939* (Montreal/Toronto: Robert Davies Publishing, 1993) 187; 138–139. See also Irving Abella & Harold Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933–1948* (Toronto, ON: Lester & Orpen Dennys Publishers, 1983) 41–42.

Gélinas refers to the *achat chez nous* movement as “defensive anti-Semitism” the goal of which was not to punish Jews but to return control of the small business economy to French Canadians.⁷⁰ While Anctil underscores the fact that the antisemitic actions and propaganda were confined to a small minority, he comments that “Montreal Jews came to fear French and Catholic extremism.”⁷¹ Unfortunately the various analyses of Quebec’s history as regards its Jewish population has not lessened the suspicion and unease with which Montreal Jews continue to regard the Québécois (as will be addressed in a later section).

A closer reading of the few Canadian Jewish materials that are available indicate that not only the smaller numbers, but a variety of other reasons (political environment, religious milieu, occupational opportunities) gave an alternate shape to the Canadian Jewish immigrant experience. Benjamin Sack, one of the first authors of Canadian Jewish history commented that “suddenly one was aware of the Jewish masses actually reshaping the Jewish environment.”⁷² With the influx of East European Jews, the characteristics of the Canadian Jewish community were radically altered. Unlike their predecessors, the East Europeans were not assimilationist and sought full integration while maintaining their traditions and their ethno-cultural distinctions. The earlier arrivals to Canada had viewed themselves as differing only in their religious outlook; the East Europeans viewed themselves as religiously and culturally different in that they emphasized their ethnic and linguistic distinctiveness.

Between the time the first refugees had settled sufficiently to come together as a religious

⁷⁰ Xavier Gélinas, “Notes on Anti-Semitism Among Quebec Nationalists, 1920-1970: Methodological Failings, Distorted Conclusions” *Studies in Quebec History* © 2007 Claude Bélanger, Marianopolis College <<http://faculty.marianopolis.edu/c.belanger/quebechistory/docs/jews/Anti-SemitismandQuebecNationalists.html>> [May 16, 2007]. “Notes on Anti-Semitism Among Quebec Nationalists, 1920-1970: Methodological Failings, Distorted Conclusions” presented as part of the Seminar Series, Department of History, Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario, October 8, 1998.

⁷¹ Anctil 159.

⁷² Benjamin G. Sack, *Canadian Jews – Early in this Century*. New Series #4. National Jewish Archives, CJC, Montreal (1975):1. Sack notes that “the first 5 years of the 20th century 17, 288 [newcomers] surpassed the total Jewish population in the country in 1900.” (see 1901 census) 2.

community (about 1885) and 1911, seventeen congregations had formed, four alone in the year 1904; ten between 1903 and 1911. The B'nai Jacob, established in 1885, moved into its first building in 1903, as did the Chevra Kadisha.⁷³ During this time the city's Jewish population had burgeoned from 2,500 (1895) to almost 29,000 in 1911. Nine more synagogues, all Orthodox, were formed in the years leading to 1921. In 1921 Montreal's overall Jewish population of 45,216 was served by approximately 30 congregations, 27 of which served the East European immigrant community. Schoenfeld, in discussing the religious milieu of the 1900s, noted that "despite the traditional form of immigrant synagogues, the ritual observance of the membership was highly variable."⁷⁴ Rabbi Wilfred Shuchat also noted that in the first decade of the twentieth century "all kinds of minyanim and 'mushroom' synagogues abounded."⁷⁵ These new synagogues, Shuchat noted, "specialized in the cantorial art and were more interested in bringing hazzanim (cantors) to their congregations than rabbis."⁷⁶

In these decades, and up until the postwar period (1950s) Orthodoxy pertained to how one prayed but not necessarily how one lived. The Orthodox *minhagim* were familiar and even while immigrants were working at becoming part of the new country, the *shulelach* remained "gathering places where the newcomers could feel welcome, and respected."⁷⁷ By 1921 the Montreal Jewish population now stood at 42,817; in addition Montreal West had 25 Jews living there; Cote St. Luc 10, Outremont 1,195, Pointe Claire 18, Verdun 149, and Westmount 1,002.⁷⁸

⁷³ Shuchat 67.

⁷⁴ Schoenfeld 170. This is further supported by Sara Tauben's study which illustrates the dominating presence of Orthodox synagogues in the immigrant neighbourhoods

⁷⁵ Shuchat 67.

⁷⁶ Shuchat 67.

⁷⁷ Tauben 80–81.

⁷⁸ Rosenberg 7–9.

Toronto

In September 1849, Abraham Nordheimer and Judah Joseph purchased land for a cemetery under the name of the Hebrew Congregation of the city of Toronto.⁷⁹ A congregation in name only, it was a further seven years (September 1856) before Lewis Samuel was able to gather eighteen of Toronto's 65 Jewish adult males to form its first Jewish congregation.⁸⁰ In its early years the congregation relied upon Canada's "unofficial but universally recognized leader of Canadian Jews," Reverend Abraham de Sola, as well Dr. Nathan M. Adler, Chief Rabbi of England, for queries and conflicts.⁸¹ In the early 1860s, dissatisfied with both the long-distance relationship with Dr. Adler, and Reverend de Sola's Sephardic responses, the congregation turned to the American Ashkenazi congregations, specifically Rabbi Samuel Meyer Isaacs of New York's Congregation Shaarey Tefillah, to be its new mentor.⁸² In 1871 the congregation changed its name from the Sons of Israel to Holy Blossom Toronto Hebrew Congregation, and in 1894 finally became a chartered institution under the provincial act regarding religious institutions.⁸³ From 1890 until 1901 and the arrival of Rabbi Solomon Jacobs from England, the Holy Blossom had experienced a series of rabbis who had attempted to bring in various reforms, found themselves stymied, and had then moved on to more reform minded congregations in the United States.

Other than Rabbi Wittenberg, a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary and "Orthodox in his views" the previous rabbis who were trained in England, had been quite intent on moving the Holy Blossom along a reformist path. It was only with the hiring of Rabbi Jacobs that those members with Reformist tendencies were persuaded to maintain the status quo. In the meantime, East European immigrants were moving to Toronto, but at a slower pace than Montreal. Until

⁷⁹ Speisman 16.

⁸⁰ Speisman 21.

⁸¹ Speisman 29-30.

⁸² Speisman 30.

⁸³ Speisman 32.

1900 only five congregations, including the Holy Blossom had been formed. Between 1900 and 1911 fifteen *shulelach* were established. In a synopsis of its early history the congregants of the B'nai Israel Beth David synagogue wished to emphasize their difference from

the other *shuls* being formed at the time and noted that unlike so many other congregations which purported to serve the "landsleit" of a particular community or country of origin ... this congregation was to serve Jews pure and simple hence they called it B'nai Israel.⁸⁴

By 1921 eleven more had been formed for a total of thirty-one *shuls* and *shulelach* of which thirty were Orthodox serving a Jewish population of 34, 619.⁸⁵

Winnipeg

The first Jews to establish themselves in Winnipeg came from England, Germany and the United States in 1878 and were adherents of Reform Judaism.⁸⁶ These were soon overwhelmed by the increasing numbers of East Europeans arriving in Winnipeg. With their arrival it seemed that there would now be sufficient numbers to build a synagogue. Unfortunately the two groups that had joined together for this purpose had very little in common.

The Reformers broke away to establish the "Montefiore Hebrew Benevolent Society" in April, 1884, and this Society then reconstituted itself as a congregation, taking the name Beth El, hoping to attract some of the increasing numbers of newcomers in their midst.⁸⁷ The Orthodox contingent renamed itself the Sons of Israel. Despite the efforts of both congregations neither on its own could raise the funds required to both build and maintain a synagogue. The Reform group and the Orthodox group came together again 1887 under the new name Beth El of Israel, in the hope of achieving this larger goal: a synagogue.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ B'nai Israel Beth David Congregation: 50th-19th Jubilee, Downsview, Ontario, 1965-66, 1.

⁸⁵ Rosenberg 13.

⁸⁶ Cherie Smith, *Mendel's Children: A Family Chronicle* (Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press, 1997) 15.

⁸⁷ Arthur A. Chiel, *The Jews in Manitoba: A Social History* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1961) 74. whose goals were "to promote some means to aid the erection of a Jewish reformed temple, and to assist deserving objects of charity." Also Chiel 130.

⁸⁸ Chiel 77.

It took the community two years to secure the resources to build what would become the Shaarey Zedek.⁸⁹ On September 3, 1889 the cornerstone laying proceedings for the Shaarey Zedek took place and on the evening of Thursday, March 20, 1890, Dedication Services were conducted by Dr. Samuel Marks, a Minneapolis rabbi, with Shaarey Zedek's first clergyman, Rev. Abraham Benjamin.⁹⁰ This was the same Dr. Samuel Marks of whom it was said

when he arose on the pulpit to show his great wisdom and eloquence in the language of the country, ... he appeared to them as an angel of salvation ... to shed new light [and to drive] away all the shadows of ignorance and ancient customs from past generations.⁹¹

Dr. Samuel Marks had been invited to Montreal in 1881 to conduct High Holiday services in order to ascertain whether or not he would be suitable for the Shaar Hashomayim.⁹² As evidenced by his impromptu speech on the necessity of casting aside or reworking Judaism's medieval rituals and customs, the Shaar rejected his application and Temple Emanu-El of Montreal was the beneficiary as he stayed with the Temple for seven years.⁹³

Chiel noted that the Shaarey Zedek hoped to encompass the entire Jewish community at the time and made provision for prayers in the synagogue to be conducted using both the Ashkenazic and Sephardic rituals.⁹⁴ The courtesy of the Ashkenaz group was short-lived, as shortly after the dedication of the synagogue the Sephardic group were asked to leave.⁹⁵ Shortly thereafter the Sephardic group acquired a small building under the name Sons of Israel, and the group had now

⁸⁹ Chiel 78.

⁹⁰ Chiel 78-79.

⁹¹ Y.E. Bernstein, *The Jews in Canada (in North America): An Eastern European View of the Montreal Jewish Community in 1884*, translated from the Hebrew by Ira Robinson, Canadian Jewish Studies Chapbook Series #1 (Montreal, QC: Hungry Books, 2004) 15.

⁹² Shuchat 14.

⁹³ Shuchat 37. Rabbi Shuchat's terminology in describing Marks resignation (before they could reject him) and his rather quick hiring by the Temple is curious. He comments that the speech, the resignation, and then the hiring almost appeared to have been orchestrated. Temple was very new and not well-funded, and some of its members had been involved in the Shaar. One can speculate that, by having the Shaar bring in Dr. Marks for the High Holidays, they thought this would indirectly assist the Temple financially.

⁹⁴ Chiel 79.

⁹⁵ Chiel 80.

grown to include many of the East European arrivals.⁹⁶ After a fire destroyed their small wooden building, they resolved to build a new one and chose the name Rosh Pina.⁹⁷ The Rosh Pina congregation reached full stature when in February, 1894, spiritual leader, Rev. Moishe Shechter was engaged *tzu ekten als reverend* (“to act as reverend”); he unfortunately did not stay long as he was not paid sufficiently to support his family.⁹⁸

Several years after Rosh Pina had formed members of the Shaarey Zedek were lobbying for a “more modern religious service.”⁹⁹ Finally in November, 1903, the reformers left the Shaarey Zedek to form the Holy Blossom Congregation, in honour of the Toronto synagogue but soon transformed itself as Shaarey Shomayim – a synagogue that would have a “modern-traditional” outlook and invited Rabbi Dr Elias Friedlander of Montreal (formerly with Temple Emanu-El) to take the pulpit.¹⁰⁰ Despite member satisfaction with the manner of worship within the Shaarey Shomayim, the leadership was concerned with the “paucity of attendance at regular services” as was the Shaarey Zedek at this time.¹⁰¹ In 1912 the Shaarey Shomayim hired Rabbi Solomon Philo (who had been part of a small Reform congregation in Vancouver) and soon after terminated his contract as a consequence of performing the marriage of a gentile man and a Jewish woman.¹⁰² With the dismissal of Rabbi Philo, the Shaarey Zedek and the Shaarey Shomayim entered into negotiations and remerged in 1913 as the Shaarey Zedek.¹⁰³ The new Board of the Shaarey Zedek wrote to Chief Rabbi Hertz who recommended Reverend Sandheim, who joined the congregation in 1914.¹⁰⁴ Several other congregations had formed by this time including the Beth Jacob in

⁹⁶ Chiel 80.

⁹⁷ Chiel 80; Smith 18.

⁹⁸ Arthur Chiel, *Jewish Experiences in Early Manitoba* (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Jewish Publications, 1955) 78–79.

⁹⁹ Chiel, *The Jew in Manitoba*, 81.

¹⁰⁰ Chiel, *The Jew in Manitoba*, 83.

¹⁰¹ Chiel, *The Jew in Manitoba*, 84.

¹⁰² Chiel, *The Jew in Manitoba*, 84.

¹⁰³ Chiel, *The Jew in Manitoba*, 84–85.

¹⁰⁴ Chiel, *The Jew in Manitoba*, 85.

1907. Founded as an Orthodox synagogue to meet the need of both “longtime residents and newcomers” Beth Jacob invited Winnipeg’s Rabbi Kahanovitch, to be its leader. He made such an impression in the community that he was invited to be the rabbi for all six of Winnipeg’s Orthodox congregations.¹⁰⁵ By 1921 there were almost 15,000 Jews living in Winnipeg (14, 449) and nineteen separate congregations had formed – all Orthodox.

Vancouver/Victoria

Jewish life in British Columbia began in Victoria. The Fraser River gold rush lured both adventurers and those who would supply them with the required materials. A first-hand account of Victoria at that time is reported by Cyril Leonoff:

Victoria was assailed by an indescribable array of Polish Jews, Italians, fisherman,... speculators of every kind,... and brokers of every description.... They came to sell and to speculate, to sell goods, to sell lands, to sell cities, to buy them and sell them again to greenhorns, to make money and begone.¹⁰⁶

The Jews who travelled up the Pacific coast between 1850 and 1860 from San Francisco, California were mainly middle-class and moderately well-off Jews of German origin.¹⁰⁷ By 1858 there were enough men to gather a minyan together for prayer and by August, 1862 the Victoria Jewish community had established its congregation.¹⁰⁸ By 1863 there were now 242 Jews in Victoria making it the second largest Jewish community in British North America.¹⁰⁹ Within five years of the arrival of the city’s first Jew (Francis J. Sylvester, 17, July, 1858) the Jewish community dedicated its building Temple Emanu-El (13 September, 1863) which was opened

¹⁰⁵ Harvey Herstein, “Jewish Religious Leadership in Winnipeg, 1900 to 1963,” *Canadian Jewish Historical Society Journal* Vol. 2 (1978): 41. Besides his appointment as religious leader for Beth Jacob, Rabbi Kahanovitch was rabbi for Tifereth Israel, Congregation Alteres Israel, Adath Yeshurin, Knesseth Israel, House of Ashkenaz, and Ohel Jacob.

¹⁰⁶ Cyril E. Leonoff, *Pioneers, Pedlars, and Prayer Shawls: The Jewish Communities in British Columbia and the Yukon* (Victoria, BC: Sono Nis Press, 1978) 13.

¹⁰⁷ Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, 91.

¹⁰⁸ Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, 88.

¹⁰⁹ Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, 87; 89.

with considerable fanfare.¹¹⁰ Reverend Dr. Morris Cohen was the first rabbi of the Temple.¹¹¹ In retrospect, the year of Temple Emanu-El's dedication marked the highpoint of the Victoria Jewish community as the community's growth slowed as the gold rush declined and dominance in commerce and transportation was ceded to Vancouver.¹¹² As elsewhere in Canada, Vancouver was soon populated by East Europeans seeking a refuge from the Russian pogroms. The national railroad now went from coast to coast opening up the Western provinces and British Columbia to new settlement. Most newcomers came to Vancouver in family groups, and most were mainly poor, working-class or lower middle-class immigrants from Russia and Poland.¹¹³

Rabbi Solomon Philo arrived in Vancouver in 1894, having previously served the Victoria congregation.¹¹⁴ With twenty-two families he formed Vancouver's first Reform congregation: Temple Emanu-El.¹¹⁵ In 1892 the few Russian immigrants who had made it all the way to Vancouver began meeting and as in other Jewish communities across North America "from the beginning a split developed between the more 'Americanized' English-speaking Jews, and the new East European immigrants who were Yiddish-speaking and strictly Orthodox."¹¹⁶ Zebulun Franks had been organizing Orthodox services since his arrival in Vancouver (1887) and in 1907 he and his fellow East Europeans established The Sons of Israel-B'nai Yehuda.¹¹⁷ In 1910 they purchased land and by 1912 had built a small synagogue.¹¹⁸ The community had grown sufficiently that by 1917 the Sons of Israel incorporated as the Schara Tzedec and hired a rabbi,

¹¹⁰ Leonoff 19–20; Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, 89.

¹¹¹ Leonoff 21.

¹¹² Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, 90–91.

¹¹³ Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, 91.

¹¹⁴ Leonoff 127; in *Taking Root* (92) Tulchinsky lists Rabbi Philo as having come to Vancouver in 1884.

¹¹⁵ Leonoff 127.

¹¹⁶ Leonoff 127.

¹¹⁷ Leonoff 127. Leonoff's information was drawn from the following sources: Vancouver Jewish Bulletin, 15 July 1925 (p.8); "In Search of History: The Story of our Shul," Dedication Schara Tzedec pp.35–44; "Fifty Years of Schara Tzedec," 50th Anniversary Yearbook (Vancouver 1957): 26–30 and 43–47, and Lou Zimmerman, "Congregation Schara Tzedec is Vancouver's Oldest Synagogue," Centenary Edition pp.13–16.

¹¹⁸ Leonoff 128.

Nathan Pastinsky, who was considered “the personification of Vancouver Jewry.” The Reform group had delayed its synagogue building in order to provide support to the Schara Tzedec, and was unable to regain sufficient membership to establish itself as functioning religious institution.¹¹⁹ By 1921 Vancouver had 2, 407 Jews with one synagogue that served the whole community to a degree.¹²⁰

The Atlantic Region

It took a little longer for the East European immigration to make its way to the smaller towns and cities beginning to dot the Canadian landscape. In 1909 the Jewish community in St. John’s, Newfoundland organized its Hebrew Congregation.¹²¹ In 1913 the Jewish community in the northern end of Sydney, Whitney Pier, organized itself into the Adath Israel Congregation and built its synagogue; in 1916, New Waterford organized the Sons of Israel Congregation, and in Sydney, in 1919 “a group of young men seeking a more Conservative service” Temple Sons of Israel and dedicated their building in 1920.¹²²

Somewhat earlier, St John, New Brunswick was the first city in the Atlantic Provinces to organize a Jewish congregation. The early community held its first religious services in Autumn 1879 celebrating the New Year with a cantor from Boston, a Torah scroll, and a tenth man.¹²³ By 1896, the community numbered some 30 Jewish families, and they formed Congregation Avath Achim to conduct services, and employ a rabbi.¹²⁴ In 1898 “an impressive ceremony” launched the synagogue.¹²⁵ In Saint John also, the story of the acculturated Jew and his nemesis, the recent

¹¹⁹ Leonoff 128. Leonoff notes that even though the Reform group had ceased to meet as a congregation the Ladies Auxiliary of Temple Emanu-El of Vancouver continued to operate a Sunday school for children until it came under the auspices of the Council of Jewish Women.

¹²⁰ Leonoff 128.

¹²¹ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum 9.

¹²² Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum 22; 19; 20.

¹²³ Eli Boyaner, “The Settlement and Development of the Jewish Community of Saint John,” *Collections of the New Brunswick Historical Society*, No. 15 (1959): 80–81.

¹²⁴ Boyaner 83.

¹²⁵ Boyaner 84.

East European arrival, repeated itself. Despite the Orthodox tenor of Avath Achim's services, the use of English, the emphasis on decorum and, in all probability, a case of the "up-towners" and "down-towners" only on a smaller scale, occasioned a split within the congregation.¹²⁶

Interestingly enough when the time came to physically separate (1907) the founding community of Avath Achim moved to the Hazen Avenue building, leaving the Avath Achim building to the new congregation. In the next decade acculturation would work its magic on the East European community and by 1919 discussions were under way to remerge the two congregations. Both groups recognized that united the Jewish community would have the resources to accomplish that much more for its members which numbered eight hundred and fifty persons.¹²⁷ In 1921 the new synagogue was incorporated as the Shaarei Zedek.¹²⁸

Halifax was the second city in the Atlantic Provinces to build a synagogue in 1895.¹²⁹ As had happened across the bay in Saint John, Halifax experienced dissension between those wishing to acculturate and those wishing to maintain their accustomed practices. In 1906, a second synagogue formed and located itself on Robie Street. The Starr Street building was destroyed in the Halifax explosion of 1917, and by 1920 was in the process of being rebuilt.¹³⁰

In 1900 the Glace Bay Jewish community decided to build a synagogue and it was completed in 1902.¹³¹ In 1906 the Yarmouth Jewish community incorporated as the Agudath Achim society and purchased the Free Baptist Church for its use.¹³²

In 1909 the Jewish community Moncton, New Brunswick was of sufficient size and like-minded to form a cohesive community, hire a rabbi and to begin saving for a synagogue.¹³³ In fact a

¹²⁶ Craig Chouinard, "A Tale of Two Synagogues: Culture, Conflict and Consolidation in the Jewish Community of Saint John, 1906-1919," *Canadian Jewish Studies*, Vol. 2 (1994): 6-7.

¹²⁷ Chouinard 15; Rosenberg 5.

¹²⁸ Chouinard 13.

¹²⁹ Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, 86.

¹³⁰ Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 28-29.

¹³¹ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum 12.

¹³² Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum 24.

¹³³ Sheva Medjuck and Morty M. Lazar, "Existence on the Fringe: The Jews of Atlantic Canada," *The Canadian*

sizeable number of the early Moncton Jewish community had started arriving from Durbonne, Lithuania in 1898 – family men – they had arrived first, and then sent for their wives and children.¹³⁴ In the early years this common heritage served a positive purpose. Aside from coming from the same town, members nearly all settled together on the same street.¹³⁵ In more recent years the “hereditary status” factor has created conflict within the congregation.

Canada's Smaller Cities and Towns

In the province of Quebec, enough Jews had settled in Quebec City by 1852 to organize themselves into a congregation called Beth Israel.¹³⁶ It was only in 1908 that the congregation had the funds to build a synagogue and incorporate as the Congregation Bais Israel.¹³⁷ A second congregation, Ahavat Shalom, had also formed by this time.¹³⁸ Sherbrooke, Quebec was a needle-trade centre between the two world wars.¹³⁹ Its Jewish population had begun to increase around World War I, so that by 1917 there was a large enough Jewish population to organize Agudath Achim.¹⁴⁰ While the arrival of the East Europeans brought new Jewish life to most small communities, by 1909 the second of the two Jewish cemeteries had closed in Trois Rivières, effectively removing all traces of what had once been a vibrant Jewish community in the 1800s.¹⁴¹

In Ontario, Ottawa, by 1892, had sufficient numbers to found first, the Adath Jeshurun, and then in 1902, Agudath Achim. From only 398 Jews in 1901, the Jewish population jumped

Mosaic, eds. M. Weinfeld, W. Shaffir and I. Cotler (Toronto and New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1981) 250.

¹³⁴ Medjuck and Lazar 250.

¹³⁵ Hagit Hadaya, “From Moncton to the Pier to Glace Bay: Case Studies in Maritime Synagogue Architecture,” Association for Canadian Jewish Studies Conference, Halifax, N.S., June 1, 2003.; Medjuck and Lazar 250.

¹³⁶ Sheldon Levitt, Lynn Milstone, Sidney T. Tenenbaum, *Shuls: A Study of Canadian Synagogue Architecture*. Book 1: Synagogues of Quebec and the Maritime Provinces (Toronto, ON: unpublished, 1980) 131.

¹³⁷ “An Act to Incorporate the Congregation Bais Israel” Edward VII, Chapter 153. Assented April 14, 1908. CJC National Archives File, Congregation Beth Israel Ohev Shalom Quebec Box#1 3/1.

¹³⁸ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum 131.

¹³⁹ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum 134.

¹⁴⁰ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum 134.

¹⁴¹ Janice Arnold, “Trois Rivières commemorates Jewish past,” *The Canadian Jewish News* (July 13, 2006): 6.

dramatically to 1,772 by 1911, and a third synagogue was established, the B'nai Jacob (1911).

Hamilton's first Jewish settlers were of German origin, and they arrived shortly after Hamilton became a city.¹⁴² They founded Anshe Shalom, the first Reform congregation in Canada, in 1853, for the same reasons as Holy Blossom – to have a cemetery. Initially the Hebrew Benevolent Society, it was incorporated in 1863 as the Anshe Shalom Congregation and its first by-laws state that “the mode of worship is to be progressive and in the spirit of our modern age.”¹⁴³ In 1882 the congregation erected its first building, and the congregation, under the guidance of its president, Edmund Scheuer, implemented certain Reformist tendencies such as mixed seating, and dropped the observances for the second day of festivals.¹⁴⁴ While certain American Reform influences began to affect the main group in Toronto in the 1880s, Brown notes that Anshe Shalom was very much shaped by the German Reform movement – for its first 20 years sermons were preached in German, and in the early years the majority of its rabbis were trained in Germany.¹⁴⁵ The Hamilton Jewish population increased substantially between 1881 and 1901, and these newcomers were mostly traditionally inclined Eastern European Jews, who were not interested in the Reform services at Anshe Shalom.¹⁴⁶ Freeman Campbell reiterates the reasons for the splintering of Anshe Shalom and the formation of the Beth Jacob Synagogue:

a small group of more Orthodox thinking Jews ... could not see eye to eye on the question of the observance of Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year. The Orthodox section, favoring a two-day observance in place of one, withdrew.¹⁴⁷

Unable to accept liberal practices, the Orthodox group held their first services in 1883, and in 1887 was granted its charter as Kahal Kodesh Bais Jacob (Holy Congregation House of Jacob).¹⁴⁸

¹⁴² Elazar and Waller 260.

¹⁴³ “A Short History of Anshe Shalom” (n.a.) In *Dedication Book to Commemorate the Opening of the New Temple Anshe Shalom, King Street West at Kline Crescent, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, 1952–53*. (n.p.)

¹⁴⁴ Speisman 43.

¹⁴⁵ Brown, “The Beginnings of Reform Judaism,” 326.

¹⁴⁶ Elazar and Waller 260.

¹⁴⁷ Majorie Freeman Campbell, *A History of Beth Jacob Congregation Published in Honour of its Eightieth Anniversary* (Hamilton, Ontario: Beth Jacob Synagogue, 1969) 2. Ontario Jewish Archives: MG3 B4.

¹⁴⁸ Freeman Campbell 3.

In 1906 the Hess Street Synagogue was founded, and the Adas Israel grew out of an Orthodox minyan that had begun in 1912.¹⁴⁹

In London, the first Jewish gathering for the purposes of prayer seems to have taken place in 1888.¹⁵⁰ Congregation B'nai Israel was then formed and in 1896 London's first synagogue was built.¹⁵¹ Despite the small size of the community, a personal conflict led to the formation of a second Orthodox congregation in 1907: Congregation Ben Judah was established and held services in a newly purchased and renovated church.¹⁵² Jewish Windsor, settled predominantly by East European Jews from Russia and Poland, quickly formed a synagogue, the Shaarey Zedek. Up until the 1920s it remained the only synagogue in Windsor.

Also by this time the Jewish population had grown sufficiently in Regina, Saskatchewan to build the Beth Jacob Synagogue in 1913.¹⁵³

The Canadian Jewish population overall was 120,421 as the country moved into the interwar years and the Second World War.¹⁵⁴

The years 1921 – 1951: Settling in

In these, the interwar years and the years immediately following WWII, events outside the Jewish community were to reshape existing and future religious institutions. Suburbanisation – North American style actually began in the 1920s with the active use of the automobile.¹⁵⁵

“Between 1920 and 1930 when automobile registrations rose by more than 150% the suburbs of

¹⁴⁹ Elazar and Waller 261. The Adas Israel website in its section “Adas History in Brief” <http://www.adasrael.ca/about_us_history.htm> notes the Adas Israel was established in 1914, and in the volume by Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, on Ontario synagogues the date is listed as 1920.

¹⁵⁰ Hart 149; but also see Elazar and Waller 279.

¹⁵¹ Hart 149; Elazar and Waller show 1899 (279).

¹⁵² Hart 159.

¹⁵³ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Synagogues of Western Canada* (Toronto, ON: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1979–1980) 38.

¹⁵⁴ Rosenberg 4–24.

¹⁵⁵ Gamm 25.

the nation's 96 largest cities grew twice as fast as the core communities."¹⁵⁶

Suburbanisation in the 1920s was also associated with a new type of congregation – the synagogue-center. Mordechai Kaplan founded the Jewish Center in 1917, and this became the prototype for future synagogue-centers – all aspects of Jewish life were brought together in a single facility which would include “school rooms, a library, auditorium, a gymnasium and a synagogue.”¹⁵⁷ Following World War II, the center movement, in the United States, spread to the suburbs where decentralized Jewish communities could utilize larger plots of land to create new centers of activity merging religious with social functions. Kaufman in his study, *Shul with a Pool*, concludes that “the synagogue centre is the first synagogue type without precedent in the European past. It is originally and quintessentially American.”¹⁵⁸ As will be discussed in the section on Montreal, there also, a “synagogue-center” was built, but its completed structure bore little relationship to Mordechai Kaplan’s original vision. For Kaplan, the “synagogue-center” embodied within it his notion of Judaism as a civilization.¹⁵⁹ The synagogue-center would not only be a place for study and worship, but also individuals and families would be enlightened by exposure to the various arts: painting, sculpture, music, and literature and made healthy by exposure to sports such as swimming, basketball, and hockey. In later years also, large multipurpose synagogues were built in several cities across Canada: being quintessentially Canadian, these buildings, like the ancient synagogues, were places of study, of worship, and of socializing. Kallen, noted that while second generation Jews were highly acculturated to Anglo-

¹⁵⁶ Gamm 25. Gamm is quoting from Kenneth Jackson’s book *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) 175.

¹⁵⁷ Kaufman 3, 249. see also Deborah Dash Moore’s article “A Synagogue Center Grows In Brooklyn,” in *The American Synagogue*, ed., Jack Wertheimer (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 1987) 297–326.

¹⁵⁸ Kaufman 2.

¹⁵⁹ Mordechai M. Kaplan, *Judaism as a Civilization: Toward a Reconstruction of American-Jewish Life* (New York: Schocken Books, 1967). According to Kaplan “Judaism is more than religion: it encompasses for Jews, a common history, literature, language, land, social organization, holy places, heroes, standards of conduct, social and spiritual ideas, and aesthetic values” (Kaplan 19). Kaplan’s concern was that American Jews would not stay “loyal” to Judaism if the emphasis was solely the religious requirements; by broadening the parameters of Judaism at the lay level this would encourage Jews to remain Jews within the American context.

Canadian norms there was a desire “to maintain a balance between the distinctive ... aspects of the traditional heritage and those Anglo-Canadian ways of viewing and doing things.”¹⁶⁰

The host community worshipped and studied in churches, and engaged in their non-religious endeavours in their Young Men and Women’s Christian Associations. Eager to “fit,” and not appear too different, Canadian Jews built Jewish Community Centres, also called Young Men’s Hebrew Associations as places to engage in non-religious activities. The “ideal” of the American “synagogue-center” could not traverse the border. However one notion concerning the synagogue did cross borders and that was the tendency for congregations in these decades to build highly visible and imposing synagogues. Like the large synagogues built in Europe and in the United States in the nineteenth century, the acculturated Canadian Jews wanted to demonstrate to each other and themselves that they had achieved the transformation from immigrant to Canadian Jew. As Tauben has pointed out, the history of a number of the synagogues indicates that “these buildings spoke more to the aspirations of the congregants rather than to their financial stability.”¹⁶¹ With the movement of the Jewish population away from the various city centres and their synagogues by wealthier members, and eventually even the not so wealthy members, synagogues were left with deficits, debts and expenses as their boards tried to decide where to move, and where to build.¹⁶² The effects of these influences can be seen when synagogues begin to amalgamate in order to survive. Many of the congregations were hoping that their “substantial synagogues” would appeal “to the affluence, ambition and self-confidence of their Jewish middle-class members” who were also now the second generation.¹⁶³

In response to the massive upheavals created by the Russian Revolution, the ensuing devastating civil war, and the terrible Ukrainian pogroms, the Canadian Jewish Congress

¹⁶⁰ Kallen 59.

¹⁶¹ Tauben 54.

¹⁶² Tauben 56.

¹⁶³ Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 3; Speisman 304.

appealed to the Canadian government to permit the dependents and relatives of Canadian Jews to enter Canada.¹⁶⁴ Accordingly, in the 1920s, there was a new, albeit smaller immigration cohort from the Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania of approximately 48,000 Jewish immigrants, including the 5,000 Russian immigrants “stuck” in Roumania.¹⁶⁵ Tulchinsky comments that this sizeable group included a small number of young intellectuals who likely had a strong enriching influence on Jewish cultural life in Canada.¹⁶⁶ By the 1930s there was a definite closing of the gates into Canada so that with the decline in immigration the Jewish community was now into its second generation who were native born and did not see themselves as beholden to the ways of their parents. This made itself felt especially in the synagogues: Speisman comments that in Toronto synagogues were having difficulty meeting their *minyan* needs.¹⁶⁷ This was especially problematic for the Orthodox as prior to 1914, at least in Toronto, most Jewish factories and stores closed for Shabbat; by 1915 a few Jewish shops began to remain open on Shabbat, and by the early 1920s Jewish stores were regularly conducting business on Saturdays.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Belkin 95.

¹⁶⁵ Oddly enough neither Harold Troper in his articles “Jews and Canadian Immigration Policy, 190–1950,” *The Jews of North America*, ed. Moses Rischin (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1987) 44–56, or “New Horizons in a New Land: Jewish Immigration to Canada,” *From Immigration to Integration: The Canadian Jewish Experience: A Millennium Edition*, eds., Ruth Klein and Frank Dimant (Toronto, ON: Institute for International Affairs, B’nai Brith Canada, 2001) 5–18 or Gerald Tulchinsky in *Branching Out: The Transformation of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto, ON: Stoddart Publishing Co. Ltd., 1998) 32–62 discuss the actual numbers of Jews who made it into Canada by 1931. All three discussions make mention of the 5000 permits that were to go to the stranded Russians in Roumania. The overall message however is that the doors were closing, immigration was tightening its restrictions and no one except one hundred or so here and there was being permitted to enter Canada. In Tulchinsky’s footnotes to his chapter on Immigration he indicates that between 1921 and 1931 44, 810 Jewish immigrants entered Canada (he is quoting L. Rosenberg, *Canada’s Jews*, 1939: 136). In William Shaffir’s article “Jewish Immigration to Canada,” in *Two Nations, Many Cultures: Ethnic Groups in Canada* ed Jean L. Elliott (Scarborough, ON: Prentice-Hall of Canada Ltd., 1979) 280–289, he notes that between 1920 and 1930 48, 434 Jewish immigrants made it into Canada. In his more recent article “The Canadian Jewish Experience: A Distinct Personality Emerges,” *From Immigration to Integration: The Canadian Jewish Experience: A Millennium Edition*, eds., Ruth Klein and Frank Dimant (Toronto, ON: Institute for International Affairs, B’nai Brith Canada, 2001) Tulchinsky notes (28) that 50,000 Jews arrived during the 1920s. Nothing further is said on how this not insignificant number of Jews managed to enter when the doors were indeed closing.

¹⁶⁶ Tulchinsky, “The Canadian Jewish Experience,” 28.

¹⁶⁷ Speisman 278. In his footnote to this comment Speisman notes that Goel Tzedec for example, was employing men in order to secure a minyan. Also that members who were no longer in walking distance of the synagogue, were driving. (300).

¹⁶⁸ Speisman 277–278.

Despite the arrival of immigrants from Europe these new arrivals tended to be more political than religious joining secular groups rather than synagogues. The religious dimension of Canadian Jewish life appeared to have stabilized. By 1936, after the period of mass migration, demographer Louis Rosenberg counted 153 congregations in Canada of which one hundred and forty were Orthodox synagogues, nine were Conservative Synagogues, and four were Reform temples.¹⁶⁹ Rosenberg noted that these figures did not include the numerous halls and other meeting places which are converted into temporary places of worship during the High Holy Days.¹⁷⁰ The postwar influx of refugees: 11, 064 between 1947 and 1952 changed the Canadian religious scene.

Montreal

By 1920 virtually the entire city section from the waterfront north, in a belt of a few blocks wide on either side of St. Lawrence-Main to the lower reaches of Outremont, constituted a huge, predominantly Jewish enclave of factories, shops, synagogues, and tightly packed housing.¹⁷¹

The Spanish and Portuguese (Shearith Israel), still situated on Stanley street, experienced seven rabbis following the death of Meldola de Sola (1918) until the hiring of Rabbi Solomon Frank (1947).¹⁷² The synagogue was having such financial difficulties during the Depression that the leadership had opened discussion with the recently formed Shaare Zion in an attempt to ease their mutual plights.¹⁷³ In an attempt to reduce their guilt over not being able to fully pay Rabbi Bender, the Board (1939) permitted "Rabbi Bender, whilst still continuing as our Rabbi, ... to aid as advising rabbi to the new Outremont Congregation," thus providing Rabbi Bender with

¹⁶⁹ Rosenberg 197-198.

¹⁷⁰ Rosenberg 197-198.

¹⁷¹ Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 22.

¹⁷² Solomon Frank, *Two Centuries in the Life of a Synagogue Bicentennial Corporation of Spanish and Portuguese Jews* (Montreal, Quebec, 1971) 99. See Table x for a complete listing of rabbis who served the Spanish & Portuguese.

¹⁷³ Frank 101.

another source of income.¹⁷⁴ Unwittingly what was probably seen by the Board as an act of generosity, resulted in the move of Rabbi Bender (1940) to the newly formed Adath Israel Synagogue in Outremont.¹⁷⁵ The Adath Israel congregation was probably the first in Montreal, and likely in Canada, to conceive of itself as a synagogue and community centre.

Diamond in his book, *Orthodox Jews in Suburbia*, opined that the congregation as social centre which encompassed the bureaucratization of the synagogue, the introduction of a middle-class styles of decorous worship, and the construction of architecturally modern sanctuaries, could be linked to the broader suburbanization of the religious community, and the combining of suburban middle class styles with religious traditionalism.¹⁷⁶ Many of the synagogues built in 1950s–1960s made the effort to first build the social hall and then the sanctuary, whereas the synagogues being built in the 80s–90s – almost 30 years later – the sanctuary came first, then the social hall.¹⁷⁷

As noted previously the “meaning” and “role” of the Canadian synagogue-center differed dramatically from the American Jewish experience. Incorporated in 1938, the “Adath Israel Congregation and Community Centre of Outremont,” was located in the heart of Outremont, an entirely residential community.¹⁷⁸ Tauben comments that in fact the building plans allowed basically for the same multi-functional spaces that were already available in the other large synagogues; that “the congregation’s primary definition of ‘community centre’ [focused] on the establishment of a school”; and that this was the first congregational day school in Montreal and the second in all of North America.¹⁷⁹ The Adath not only left behind the European model in its

¹⁷⁴ Frank 101.

¹⁷⁵ Frank 101.

¹⁷⁶ Etan Diamond, *And I will dwell in Their Midst: Orthodox Jews in Suburbia* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000) 66.

¹⁷⁷ Diamond 67.

¹⁷⁸ Tauben 117.

¹⁷⁹ Tauben 118.

new building, but developed a uniquely Canadian interpretation of the American model.

Temple Emanu-el had already moved to its present location on Sherbrooke Street in 1911, and in 1927 Rabbi Stern took the pulpit.

Under Rabbi Abramowitz's steady leadership the Shaar Hashomayim took over the mantle of congregational leadership within the city. Kaufman wrote that "by enlarging its scope, [Rabbi Abramowitz] turned it into one of the leading synagogues in the country."¹⁸⁰ In 1922 it moved from its location at McGill College to its present site at Kensington and Cote St. Antoine.¹⁸¹

In the early 1920s Poale Zedek built its sanctuary and a group of Polish Jews came together to establish Hadrath Kodesh. Also in 1922 Young Israel of Montreal was established. From 1925 and throughout 1926 ten new Orthodox *shuls* formed.¹⁸²

In 1925 the Shaare Zion, a Conservative synagogue from its inception, established itself on Claremont Avenue. In Stuart Rosenberg's summary of the Montreal community, he noted that the Shaare Zion was a "break-away" from the Shaar Hashomayim, in the 1920s.¹⁸³ Rabbi Shuchat, in his discussion of the Shaare Zion, commented that

there appeared to be no special issue that motivated the rise of the Shaare Zion, other than the members' desire to have their own congregation, which would allow them to become more involved without the pressure of a large institution.¹⁸⁴

Rabbi Dr. Julius Berger, a Winnipeg born graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary was invited to be their spiritual leader.¹⁸⁵ The B'nai Israel which had formed in 1930 and shared space with the Jewish People's School, joined the Shaare Zion in 1932.¹⁸⁶ After losing its

¹⁸⁰ Kaufman 215.

¹⁸¹ Shuchat 81-83.

¹⁸² Tauben 149-152: Beth Israel and Shmuel, Yavneh B'nai Parnass, Chevra Mishnayoth, Shevet Achim d'Beth Avraham, Anshey Moroshe, Beth Joseph, Israel Bal Shem Tov, Metzudath David, Shlomo Beth Zion, and Kerem Israel.

¹⁸³ Stuart Rosenberg, *The Jewish Community in Canada* (Toronto/Montreal: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 1970) 144.

¹⁸⁴ Shuchat 107.

¹⁸⁵ Dr. Zvi Cohen, *Canadian Jewry: Prominent Jews of Canada* (Toronto, ON: Jewish Historical Publishing Co., 1933) 268.

¹⁸⁶ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum 83; Isabelle Bouchard and Gabriel Malo, *Les Synagogues du Plateau Mont-*

building to a fire (1939), the Shaare Zion relocated to its present site on Cote St. Luc road.¹⁸⁷

During these next decades several synagogues merged, several closed and new ones opened. Sack's words celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of Chevra Thilim in 1936, could have been applied to any one of the small *shuls* and *shulelach*:

they sought to find a place where they could do things in their own manner both socially and in terms of religion. Not being able to accustom themselves to the existing *shuls*, they determined to create an environment according to their own spirit.... As these Jews could not adjust themselves to the existing synagogues, they decided to establish new *shuls* here and there.¹⁸⁸

As the community moved from the inner first area of settlement, the synagogues followed or risked losing their membership. For example in 1929, Beth David purchased a church located at the south east tip of Outremont; Tauben notes that this new location drew not only old members but brought in many new members.¹⁸⁹ Several synagogues, desirous of appearing successful, opted to build more elaborate buildings. One such was the Beth Yehuda, built in 1923 it was placed on a sheriff's sale due to unpaid bills to contractors, and rescued thanks to the intervention of several generous members.¹⁹⁰ Tauben comments that it is unlikely that this situation was unique to Beth Yehuda.¹⁹¹ By 1930 Hadrath Kodesh, experiencing a shortage of funds and members, merged with Adath Yeshurun, which had even fewer members but a large building.¹⁹²

As mentioned previously Rabbi Bender worked with the newly formed Adath Israel in an advisory capacity. Once the congregation was incorporated in 1938 under the name of the Adath Israel Congregation and Community Centre of Outremont, Rabbi Bender accepted their

Royal au siècle: inventaire préliminaire, Volume II (August 2000) #17.

¹⁸⁷ Shuchat 167.

¹⁸⁸ Tauben 47. Benjamin G. Sack, "Sixty Years of Existence of a Shul," *Sixtieth Anniversary Publication of 1936 of the Chevra Thilim synagogue* (trans by S. Tauben).

¹⁸⁹ Tauben 104.

¹⁹⁰ Tauben 56.

¹⁹¹ Tauben 56–57.

¹⁹² Tauben 149; Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum 58.

invitation to be their spiritual leader and left the Spanish and Portuguese synagogue. By the time Rabbi Frank took up his position with the Spanish and Portuguese synagogue (1947) it had lost its standing as leader in the larger Jewish community. A year earlier the congregation's leadership had finally accomplished the move from its downtown location to St. Kevin and Lemieux, its fourth and present site.¹⁹³

The years immediately prior to the war and during the war were very much a period of consolidation. In 1938 the Beth David celebrated its Fiftieth Anniversary, and in 1943 Anshei Ozeroff marked its silver anniversary as well as the dedication of their new building.¹⁹⁴ No new congregations were formed until after the war when in 1949 a group of European immigrants founded Adath Yerayim.¹⁹⁵

By 1951 there was a large enough Jewish population in Western Notre Dame de Grace to prompt consideration for a building that would house a synagogue, a Hebrew school, and a community hall.¹⁹⁶ In July of 1951 a group of 16 families had expanded sufficiently to elect officers and organize into the Jewish Congregation of Western Notre Dame de Grace.¹⁹⁷ The group that was to become the Shaare Zedek synagogue, the second Conservative synagogue in Montreal, was also the advance guard of what was to become the largest voluntary movement of people across North America: the postwar move to the suburbs.

Toronto

Kayfetz, in his overview of the Toronto Jewish community, labels the period between 1930 to the end of the second World War a "static" period in the development of Toronto's Jewish population as immigration had ceased, giving the community a chance to pause and to settle.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹³ Frank 101.

¹⁹⁴ Tauben 108–111; 63–67.

¹⁹⁵ Bouchard and Malo #1.

¹⁹⁶ *Shaare Zedek Souvenir Book*. 1955: 4.

¹⁹⁷ *Shaare Zedek Souvenir Book*. 1955: 4.

¹⁹⁸ Ben Kayfetz, "The Jewish Community in Toronto," *A People and Its Faith: Essays on Jews and Reform*

Speisman notes that by the 1920s, the ward was no longer sufficiently Jewish to continue operating the Lyric theatre, the chief venue for Yiddish productions.¹⁹⁹ The ward's Jewish population "had moved in westward channels following the arteries of Dundas, College and Harbord Street to Shaw or Dovercourt."²⁰⁰ By the 1930s "the great bulk of the population lived south of Bloor Street," and even at the end of this period under discussion (1951) "the majority of the Jewish community institutions, such as synagogues, schools, recreation centres and social service agencies [were still] concentrated in the older area of settlement south of St. Clair Avenue."²⁰¹

This period coincides with what the sociologists called the maturation of the second generation (of American Jews). Daniel Elazar asserted that the second generation established public affiliation – institutional Judaism – as a central mode of "being Jewish" in modern America.²⁰² Institutional development in the form of larger synagogues, mutual benefit societies, social and fraternal organizations as well as the pro-Zion organizations were for Toronto's Jews as much a part of the Canadianization process as a means of staying within their own milieu. Just as in early Montreal, previously modest but functional *shuls* sought to build large and imposing edifices.²⁰³ For example, the Polish Jewish community had been on the lowest rung of the economic scale relative to the other ethnic groups within the Jewish community, yet when they moved into their new synagogue on Henry Street, it was called "The Great Synagogue," due to

Judaism in a Changing Canada, ed. Albert Rose (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1959) 25.

¹⁹⁹ Speisman 238.

²⁰⁰ Elazar and Waller 160.

²⁰¹ Elazar and Waller 160.

²⁰² Daniel Elazar, *Community and Polity*, (1976). It's worth noting that Elazar and Waller in their discussion of the Toronto Jewish community use the notion of generational divisions to apply to the overall Jewish community rather than specific groups in the community. The period that they label as being second generation (1883–1917) coincides with the beginnings of the East European migration. In Canada, this is when the first generation is arriving. So that when American Jewish historians describe the period between 1920 and 1950 as the "product of second generation integration," ie. third generation activity; in Canada, this period is the second generation. Thus the differential use of "generational" terminology and their accompanying years makes it difficult to compare and contrast the experiences of the Jewish populations in Canada and the United States. (154–156).

²⁰³ Tauben 108–111.

its size, structure and use of elegant materials.²⁰⁴ A number of other synagogues also built in these years prior to the Depression.

With the death of Rabbi Jacobs in 1920, the leadership at Holy Blossom threw off all pretence of Orthodoxy and hired Rabbi Barnett Brickner, a graduate of Hebrew Union College to be their spiritual leader. Shortly after his arrival he secured the necessary support to introduce the American Reform *Union Prayer Book* for use in Sabbath services, and brought about the affiliation of Holy Blossom with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.²⁰⁵ Over the next thirty years there would be five rabbis serving at Holy Blossom for various lengths of time. During this time Holy Blossom moved further up to a new building on Bond Street as the congregation had insufficient space for its growing religious school and social programs. The decision was made to move again, and in May of 1938 Holy Blossom was officially opened at its present location “on the hill” on Bathurst Street.²⁰⁶

In the early 1920s the Goel Tzedec exhibited the characteristics of the middle-class synagogue of the period: decorum at services, elimination of offerings, enhancement of the status of women through the formation of a Ladies Auxiliary.²⁰⁷ Despite these modern adjustments, the leadership had not moved to officially affiliate with the Conservative movement. It finally did so with the arrival of Rabbi Jesse Schwartz (1925), who convinced the synagogue to formally affiliate.²⁰⁸ Rabbi Schwartz left shortly after (1927) and Rabbi Samuel Sachs joined the Goel Tzedec and saw the congregation through a number of modest changes including bringing the

²⁰⁴ Speisman 304.

²⁰⁵ Speisman 215.

²⁰⁶ Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 3; Sheldon Levitt, Lynn Milstone, Sidney T. Tenenbaum, *Shuls: Ontario (1979–1980), A Study of Canadian Synagogue Architecture*. Book 2: Synagogues of Ontario (Toronto, ON: unpublished, 1980) 61–62 notes in its summary of Holy Blossom that those responsible for securing Holy Blossom’s new location were excited that “the site of Holy Blossom is on one of the crests of a hilly section of Bathurst Street” (61–62).

²⁰⁷ Speisman 226. The elimination of the sections of the service dealing with Temple offerings was a hallmark of Conservative Judaism at the time.

²⁰⁸ Speisman 227. This is the same Rabbi Schwartz who was later to participate in the founding of the Montreal Board of Jewish Ministers.

women down from the balconies “to sit on the ground floor.”²⁰⁹ It would be another 20 years before the Goel Tzedec would entertain mixed seating.

Speisman implies that while there were some similarities between the Goel Tzedec and Chevra Tehilim, the Chevra Tehilim membership was less status conscious and so experienced less pressure to modernize.²¹⁰ Furthermore, when it came to matters involving modification of Orthodoxy, Rabbi Gordon brooked no changes.²¹¹ When Rabbi Gordon passed away in 1937, Rabbi Reubin Slonim, a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary was invited to take over the pulpit, which he did, for two years.²¹² When Rabbi Slonim returned to McCaul Street in 1947, the synagogue became affiliated with the Conservative movement.²¹³

In 1942, Adath Israel moved to its second location at Bathurst and College and in 1947 it hired its first full-time rabbi, Erwin Schild.²¹⁴ In 1943 the Agudath Israel congregation came into being through the efforts of fifty young students: refugees from Germany and Austria who had been held in Quebec “prisoners of war” camps.²¹⁵ These students had been released from the camps through the efforts of Yeshivath Torat Chaim and Canadian Jewish Congress.²¹⁶ In 1947 the Pride of Israel mutual benefit society incorporated as a synagogue. In 1949 the Sharei Shomayim completed its sanctuary on St. Clair just as the population was moving north.²¹⁷ By 1959 Congregation Beth Emes had formed and was building its synagogue in the Bathurst Manor district: the first to do so.²¹⁸

²⁰⁹ Speisman 229.

²¹⁰ Speisman 230.

²¹¹ Speisman 230.

²¹² S. Traub; (ed) *History of the McCaul Street Synagogue: Golden Anniversary: 1887–1937*. Published Toronto, 1938 (n.p.).

²¹³ Traub n.p.

²¹⁴ Milton P. Haberman, “The History of Our Congregation,” *Golden Jubilee Book: 1902–1952, Adath Israel Congregation* (Toronto, ON, 1952) n.p.

²¹⁵ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Shuls: Ontario*, 79.

²¹⁶ David Rome, “The Jewish Angle: Internees,” *Hebrew Daily Journal* (Toronto), February 16, 1942. n.p.

²¹⁷ Diamond 47–48.

²¹⁸ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Shuls: Ontario*, 23.

Vancouver/Victoria

In Vancouver's small community the immigrants who had settled first in the east end, and who had built a new synagogue in 1921, began moving towards the south and west very rapidly in the 1920s almost completely deserting the older area. In 1925 a meeting was held to "to organize a new congregation with an English-speaking rabbi."²¹⁹ Quite a few meetings later, in November of 1932, the Conservative congregation Beth Israel formed.²²⁰ On account of the Depression it would be 1948 before the Beth Israel was able to erect its own building.²²¹ In the early 1940s Max Charkow, an active member and a president of the Schara Tzedec, left the congregation with enough men to form a new minyan.²²² As in other communities when congregations "modernized" there were bound to be some dissatisfied members. In 1943 Mr. Charkow created the Beth Hamidrash B'nai Jacob, an Orthodox congregation that would follow the Sephardic *minhagim*.²²³ In 1947 Schara Tzedec had built its new building in its present location at Nineteenth and Oak.²²⁴ Gerber notes that Vancouver's population doubled between 1941 and 1951, attributes the growth to the arrival of the refugees after the Second World War.²²⁵ At this time the community itself was moving to the west side of Vancouver to Oak Street, where its two major synagogues and the Jewish Community Centre had located.

The Atlantic Region

As indicated previously, by 1920 the two synagogues in Saint John, New Brunswick – Ahavath Achim, and the one on Hazen Street – had amalgamated to become Congregation Shaare Zedek. Like all the towns and cities with sizeable Jewish communities at this time Saint John also,

²¹⁹ Leonoff 129.

²²⁰ Leonoff 129.

²²¹ Leonoff 129.

²²² Leonoff 129.

²²³ Leonoff 129.

²²⁴ Jean M. Gerber, *Immigration and Integration in Post-War Canada: A Case Study of Holocaust Survivors in Vancouver, 1947–1970* (MA Thesis, UBC, September 1989) 44.

²²⁵ Gerber 43.

engaged in the active establishment of social and fraternal organizations, social service societies and an immigrations society.²²⁶ Chouinard calls these decades the “Golden Age” of Saint John Jewry as the community was able to maintain “the institutional trappings of large Jewish centres, while maintaining a sense of *gemeinschaft*.”²²⁷ In 1929 the Fredericton Jewish community incorporated the Sgoolai Israel Synagogue. Services were held in the Rabbi’s home until 1934 when the synagogue was built.

Synagogue building was going on throughout the Atlantic provinces during the 1920s: in 1923 the Sons of Israel synagogue in New Waterford was built; in 1924 Moncton built its synagogue Tifereth Israel; in 1931 St. John’s, Newfoundland Hebrew Congregation built its synagogue.²²⁸

Canada’s Smaller Cities and Towns

In Ontario, in 1947, the Brantford Jewish Community formed the Brantford Hebrew Association and purchased land for its synagogue, which was completed in 1950 and named Beth David; Brockville established the Beth Jacob in the mid-1940s and by 1971 had closed its doors.²²⁹ Cambridge officially incorporated its synagogue, Congregation B’nai Israel, in 1947.²³⁰

In 1921, the Hamilton Jewish population was 2,560, by 1951 it had not increased to the same extent as other towns and cities (3,158).²³¹ This would change in the postwar decades but not quite yet. In 1957, one rebbetzin commented “there was nothing here – no day school, no mikveh ... Being here was very hard in the very beginning.”²³² A second rebbetzin, who arrived in 1966 noted that

²²⁶ Chouinard 15.

²²⁷ Chouinard 16.

²²⁸ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Shuls: A Study of Canadian Synagogue Architecture*. Book 1: Synagogues of Quebec and the Maritime Provinces 19, 4, 9.

²²⁹ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Shuls: Ontario*, 127, 125.

²³⁰ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Shuls: Ontario*, 129.

²³¹ Rosenberg 11.

²³² Interview, July 12, 2005.

there was a university – but Jews weren't here, the hospital was not – once McMaster hospital became a factor in town, then Jews began to move in. You found here and there an academic who didn't really – not many of them identified as Jews at the time, and people didn't move to town. It was a very provincial town in that way.²³³

The Jewish population in Ottawa and its surrounding area grew from 2, 799 in 1921 to 4, 510 in 1951, almost double.²³⁴ Again in the postwar period when the restrictions were lifted on the hiring of Jews in government positions Jewish Ottawa experienced even further growth.

Between 1921 and 1951 in Winnipeg, most of the Jewish population lived in the area known as the North End. The population movement from the North End only began after WWII.

Between 1921 and 1931 the Jewish community had its largest growth spurt (over three thousand) – in all likelihood the last of the refugees able to make it into Canada. Between 1931 and 1952 there were barely 900 more Jews added to Winnipeg's population.²³⁵ Moshe Stern in his article on the Va'ad Ha'ir in Winnipeg noted that in 1933 there were seventeen synagogues serving a Jewish population of about seventeen thousand.²³⁶ Rabbi Kahanavitch, spiritual leader of Beth Jacob, continued to also serve as rabbi for a number of the lay-led congregations.²³⁷

In Regina, Beth Jacob Synagogue was building its second sanctuary in 1924.²³⁸ The town of Yorkton built the Sharei Shomayim, and by the 1930s the community had grown to 40 families.²³⁹ In Calgary, by the end of 1935, its Jewish community was now large enough to organize a second congregation, and to begin building, in 1936, a home for Beth Israel Synagogue, which was not completed until after the war (1949).²⁴⁰ In Medicine Hat, sometime after 1928, the Jewish community bought an old garage (which it remodelled) in which to hold

²³³ Interview, July 12, 2005.

²³⁴ Rosenberg 10–13.

²³⁵ Elazar and Waller 308.

²³⁶ M. S. Stern, "Communal Problem Solving: The Winnipeg VA'AD HA-IR 1946," *Canadian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, volume 4 (1980): 16.

²³⁷ Chiel 87.

²³⁸ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Synagogues in Western Canada*, 38.

²³⁹ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Synagogues in Western Canada*, 43.

²⁴⁰ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Synagogues in Western Canada*, 44.

its services and established the Sons of Abraham Synagogue and Center.²⁴¹

The years 1951 – 1981: Testing, challenging, re-structuring

When the children and grandchildren of immigrants began the slow exodus from the urban core into what has been called the second area of resettlement during the 1920s and 1930s little was written as this move was seen as improving one's circumstances. Sociologist Ernest R. Mowrer wrote that at that time much of the movement was to vacant areas that still existed within the city limits where the individual could purchase the land and build upon it as they wished.²⁴²

In postwar Canada and the United States, the demobilization of the armed forces and the influx of new immigrants demanded a new approach to the housing shortage. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s large tracts of housing were built and then sold as a package and large numbers of people were moving into homes that externally and in their interiors tended to look alike, and were located on what was previously farm land in both Canada and especially the United States. The image of suburbia has come to be shaped by that famous suburb Levittown, the product of William J. Levitt, home builder.²⁴³

The American suburban milieu had a set of fixed characteristics: it was homogenous, both in population and physical appearance; there was an emphasis on the youthfulness of the residents, and the reproductive and child-socializing functions of the suburbs; and it provided an "environment in which family ties [could] be strengthened."²⁴⁴

The legendary family of the 1950's, complete with appliances, station wagon, backyard barbecues and tricycles scattered on the sidewalks represented ... the first whole-hearted effort to create a home that would fulfill virtually all its members personal needs through an expressive and energized personal life.²⁴⁵

²⁴¹ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Synagogues in Western Canada*, 55.

²⁴² Ernest R. Mowrer, "The Family in Suburbia," *The Suburban Community*, ed., William M. Dobriner (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1958) 147.

²⁴³ Albert I. Gordon, *Jews in Suburbia* (Beacon Hill, Boston: Beacon Press, 1959) 31–32.

²⁴⁴ Laura J. Miller, "Family Togetherness and the Suburban Ideal," *Sociological Forum*, V. 10, #3 (1995) 395.

²⁴⁵ Miller 401. Miller is quoting Elaine Tyler May, *Homebound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988):11.

In Canada, young Jewish families were also part of this exodus from the older sections of the city to the suburbs. In Vancouver, they moved from the east-end immigrant quarter to the newer, lower-middle-class west-side neighbourhoods; in Winnipeg, Jews moved out of the old north end to adjacent West Kildonan and southward into River Heights; in Toronto, the main Jewish migration pushed up Bathurst Street past St. Clair, Eglinton, and Lawrence; in Montreal, the biggest movement was from Outremont over the mountain into Cote des Neiges, Notre Dame de Grace, and the western suburbs of Saint-Laurent, Chomedey, Dollard-des-Ormeaux and Cote St. Luc.²⁴⁶

Canadian suburbanisation diverges significantly from the “given North American paradigm” both in the experiences of the cities, and the experiences of the Jewish communities in Canada’s cities. One of the signal differences lies in the different histories of Canada and the United States. Canada’s history with France resulted in a centralized urban system in Quebec, and Canada’s history with England resulted in a decentralized urban system in Ontario.²⁴⁷

Even with Canada’s influx of refugees and its own experience of demobilization the Canadian population grew more slowly than its neighbour to the south and this permitted a more orderly urban and suburban growth.²⁴⁸ This allowed a number of urban centres to remain intact and avoided the decayed war-like zones of America’s major cities.²⁴⁹

Moving over the mountains to Notre Dame de Grace or Cote des Neiges prior to arriving in Cote St Luc or up Bathurst Street prior to reaching Thornhill seeded these areas with communities that continue to exist today. If the American suburbanisation model had been followed the ensuing growth and change would have looked quite different as the population flow would have moved from the city to Cote St Luc or from Kensington market to Thornhill

²⁴⁶ Tulchinsky 277; Gerber 43–44.

²⁴⁷ Paul-André Linteau, “Canadian Suburbanization in a North American Context: Does the Border Make a Difference?” *Journal of Urban History* Volume 13, No. 3 (May 1987): 267.

²⁴⁸ Linteau 267.

²⁴⁹ Linteau 260; 267.

without first moving along Cote des Neiges in Montreal or Bathurst Street in Toronto. Etan Diamond in his book *Orthodox Jews in Suburbia* uses terminology coined by urbanist Kevin Lynch to describe how “Bathurst Street acted like a ‘path’ that connected various ‘districts’ or neighbourhoods into a single community.”²⁵⁰ As will be discussed in more detail below, those communities that tried to develop off the beaten path were doomed, whereas even though Kensington in Toronto was downtown it was still perceived as part of the path and therefore not impossible to access mentally and emotionally.

In the United States, the flight to the suburbs consisted mainly of the middle and upper middle classes, seeking not only affordable housing, but also housing in areas untouched by issues of race or ethnicity.²⁵¹ In Canada, issues of race were not factors for moving to the suburbs: it was more the workers as well as the burgeoning middle-class that moved in order to access cheaper housing for themselves.

Another factor contributing to the suburban vision, at least in the United States, was the widespread belief that cities were places of wickedness and moral degradation while the countryside was virtuous and wholesome.²⁵² In terms of the American Jewish flight to the suburbs – escaping the city and its historical association with Jews – it could have been considered another step along the road to becoming “real Americans.”

During these years after the war all families, Jewish and non Jewish, sought collective involvement with a religious social life. In the 1950s and 60s in North America, a billion dollars were raised to build a 1000 new synagogues.²⁵³ While Rosenberg perceived congregational

²⁵⁰ Etan Diamond, *And I will Dwell in Their Midst: Orthodox Jews in Suburbia* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000) 50. Diamond draws this notion from Kevin Lynch’s *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 1960).

²⁵¹ Linteau 260; 269.

²⁵² Mowrer 152; Wendell Bell, “The City, the Suburb, and a Theory of Social Choice,” *The New Urbanization*, eds. Scott Greer, Denis L. McElvath, David W. Minar, and Peter Orleans (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1968) 135; James L. Wunsch, “The Suburban Cliche,” *Journal of Social History*, Volume 28, #3 (Spring 1995): 643–659.

²⁵³ Arthur Hertzberg, *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter: A History* (New York:

affiliation in Canada as similar to the American Jewish experience, in fact it was very different. Canadian families were not driving long distances to attend synagogues, nor were they necessarily leaving behind their Orthodox affiliation to attend more liberal synagogues. In Toronto, for example, even though young Toronto Jewish families were moving north, along Bathurst Street, away from downtown, they consistently moved to within walking distance of a synagogue.²⁵⁴ Similarly in Montreal, families moved into areas either near where a synagogue had been built or organized to build a synagogue in the area. Tulchinsky noted that between 1945 and 1952, eight million dollars was spent on synagogue development, and that in the bigger cities, downtown congregations re-established in new synagogues built by members who had moved to the suburbs; the new structures were sometimes an amalgamation of two or three congregations, and other synagogues were built for entirely new congregations on the cities' outskirts.²⁵⁵ By 1960 there were 206 congregations of which 174 were Orthodox, 25 were Conservative and 7 were Reform.²⁵⁶ Rosenberg commented that this "rise in synagogue building and membership appeared to be motivated by a desire to 'belong' rather than to a strong religious conviction."²⁵⁷ However even though Reform more than doubled its congregations and the Conservative movement almost tripled its Canadian branches, it was still the Orthodox movement in Canada that had the greatest growth numerically.

Gordon studied eighty-nine American suburban Jewish communities to ascertain how the acculturation of suburban Jews might adversely affect the Jewish family and by extension, the Jewish community. Gordon noted that synagogue membership in the suburbs correlated to several factors: while families tended to affiliate as soon as their children were old enough to

Columbia University Press, 1997): 309.

²⁵⁴ Etan Diamond, 3–5.

²⁵⁵ Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 277–278.

²⁵⁶ Rosenberg 189.

²⁵⁷ Rosenberg 190.

attend Hebrew or Sunday school, there was also the consideration of financial costs of membership.²⁵⁸ The more economical the housing the greater the likelihood that families with young children would join the area synagogue. Also Gordon noted that if the non-Jewish residents of a particular suburb were actively affiliated with the church, then the Jewish families would also become involved relatively quickly with the synagogue.²⁵⁹

Gordon opined that the synagogue was valued “in suburbia less as a religious institution than as usually the first organized body to provide a physical structure [for] Jews [to] meet as Jews within the community.”²⁶⁰ Another perspective on Jewish worship in the suburbs of America was presented in a 1962 doctoral thesis addressing the suburbanization of the synagogue and noted the “differences between Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform were declining in importance” and that the synagogue was experiencing a trend “toward the middle.”²⁶¹ Sodden noted that in postwar suburbia “synagogue affiliated American Jews wanted to achieve acculturation but avoid assimilation” and that “ethnicity blended with religion [made] this possible.”²⁶² He further noted that the suburban synagogue was a product of its environment in that it offered laymen the opportunity to establish the kind of synagogue they desired and the opportunity to emphasize the needs of their children.²⁶³ In conclusion, he noted that his data fully supported Jacob Marcus’ prediction of the “ultimate amalgamation of the Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform synagogues.”²⁶⁴ Aside from being a cautionary tale that one should beware of making predictions based on data, the suburban experience as it unfolded in the United States bears little relationship to what is understood as the Canadian suburban Jewish experience. Tulchinsky has written that

²⁵⁸ Gordon 86.

²⁵⁹ Gordon 86.

²⁶⁰ Gordon 94.

²⁶¹ Jacob Sodden, *The Impact of Suburbanization on the Synagogue* (Doctoral Thesis, New York University, 1962) 402.

²⁶² Sodden 402.

²⁶³ Sodden 403.

²⁶⁴ Sodden 416. He is quoting from Jacob R Marcus’ article “A New Kind of Jewry in the Year 2000?” *Metropolitan Star* (June, 1957) 9.

this difference in development contributed to a Canadian Jewish community that has become more traditional, more superficially unified, and more culturally homogeneous than our United States cousins.²⁶⁵ As Robinson has noted, unlike Conservative congregations in the United States, in Canada, “Conservative congregations [have remained] relatively more resistant to the trend toward egalitarianism.”²⁶⁶ Whether or not Canada’s Jewish community is more culturally homogeneous has yet to be established. Again as noted by Robinson, there are large Sephardic communities in the two major Jewish population centres in Canada: Toronto and Montreal. There has also been a small but steady influx of South American Jews. Will their practices merge with those of the larger Jewish population or will each Sephardic community maintain its unique practices? The research has yet to be conducted among this population. Certainly, as will be raised in the chapter focussing on the rabbinical wives, coming to Canada, for a number of wives, challenged their self-perceptions. One rebbetzin shared that while her husband had his letter of intent from the congregation, she was slightly taken aback that she was viewed as a dependent and therefore also covered by this letter, at least as far as immigration was concerned. She commented that she “was absolutely and completely disregarded – I sat there in the immigration office – they didn’t even – I think they took down my name – I’m not sure at all – I think, and two dependents – I think that’s what we were.”²⁶⁷

Surveys of movement identification across Canada in the 1960s and 1970s show a substantial shift as identification with the Conservative movement became as common as identification with the Orthodox. Existing Conservative congregations were joined by those whose suburban reloca-

²⁶⁵ Tulchinsky, “The Canadian Jewish Experience,” 28. This is an odd statement, especially the phrase “superficially unified”; is this a veiled reference to the Canadian Jewish Congress and its need to present a certain unified front to the non-Jewish world.

²⁶⁶ Robinson, “Canadian Jewry Today: Portrait of a Community in the Process of Change,” *Changing Jewish Communities*, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs No 12 (15 September 2006, 22 Elul 5766) <<http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=254&PID=0&ID=532>> [October 14, 2007].

²⁶⁷ Interview, July 19, 2005.

tion coincided with a decision to identify as Conservative, and by newly organized congregations.

Sussman notes that in the late 1960s American synagogues were primarily accessible by automobile and were signifiers to demonstrate status or social aspirations rather than to encourage active participation in Jewish organized communal life.²⁶⁸ Wertheimer notes that suburban synagogues were emphasizing their “pediatric mission” which produced “spectacular increases in synagogue memberships” which under closer analysis had not transformed into increased participation at worship services.²⁶⁹ While the suburban synagogues were for many American Jews vastly different from the synagogues of their childhoods, the Canadian suburban experience in some instances replicated or strengthened the ritual practices Canadian Jews had experienced growing up. For example, one rebbetzin describing her congregation when it first formed in the early 1950s:

The community itself wasn't an Orthodox/frum community – Montreal is a very traditional city so when they decided to build-to form a congregation out on the West Island a group of people diverse people came together and they decided to form an Orthodox congregation, even though most of them were not, but because their families, their parents mostly, were affiliated with, and these people grew up in an Orthodox congregation.²⁷⁰

Also during this period immigrants once again flowed into Canada. Three groups in particular would impose their imprint on the Canadian Jewish community. In 1956 after the Hungarian revolution, 5028 Hungarian refugees moved to Canada, out of whom 1,020, that is over 20%, were Jewish.²⁷¹ In the early fifties Jews began to arrive from Morocco and other

²⁶⁸ Lance J. Sussman, “The Suburbanization of American Judaism as Reflected in Synagogue Building and Architecture, 1945–1975,” *American Jewish History*, Volume LXXV, Number 1 (September 1985): 31–32.

²⁶⁹ Jack Wertheimer, “The American Synagogue: Recent Issues and Trends,” *American Jewish Year Book*, Volume 105 (2005): 10; 12.

²⁷⁰ Interview, April 26, 2004.

²⁷¹ Peter I. Hidas. “Canada and the Hungarian Jewish Refugees 1956-1957,” <<http://www3.sympatico.ca/thidas/Hungarian-history/Exodus.html>> [June 3, 2007]. Hidas drew this figure from the correspondence of J. S. Macdonald, Vienna, to External Affairs, Ottawa, 9 January 1957, NAC, Records of the Immigration Branch: RG 76, 1865-1988 (RG 76), Box 862, file 555-54-565, pt. 2; also Louis Rosenberg writing for the *American Jewish Year Book* (1958) notes that “from June 1956 to the end of May 1957 more than

Middle Eastern countries, speaking French, and challenging the prevailing notion of Jewishness.²⁷² In the early 1970s through to the 1980s several hundreds of Soviet Russian Jewish families entered Canada under the aegis of Hias/Jias.²⁷³ This group was very different from its predecessors in terms of social and religious expectations.²⁷⁴

In these years not only suburbanisation was reshaping Jewish life. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, American Jewish feminism began to take shape. This has been addressed in more detail in the chapter on Jewish women in North America but it bears being addressed briefly because of its repercussions for Jewish religious life. By the end of the 1970s and into the 1980s every Conservative synagogue in the United States was accommodating feminism in some way. However the demand for ordination for women was still not being met. In 1977 the Rabbinical Assembly Committee on Laws and Standards was again asked to study the question of ordination for women. In the mid 1970s Rela Geffen Monson and Daniel Elazar conducted a survey entitled "Women in the Synagogue Today" to evaluate congregational support for women's participation amongst the Conservative synagogues in the United States.²⁷⁵ In the United States many of the synagogues in the Conservative movement were making changes to permit women's participation, in Canada it seemed to be "business as usual." Canadian Jewry's more traditional approach was a boon to one young rebbetzin and her husband:

Finding a congregation where the women's issue wasn't a problem was difficult.
Finding a *shul* that didn't incorporate music ... during the services on Shabbat was

3,000 Jewish refugees from Hungary were admitted to Canada" (231).

²⁷² Louis Rosenberg, "Canada," *American Jewish Year Book*, Volume 59 (1958): 230; Shuchat 158–159.

²⁷³ Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 292–293.

²⁷⁴ Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 294.

²⁷⁵ Daniel J. Elazar and Rela Geffen Monson, "Women in the Synagogue Today," *Midstream*, Volume 27, 4 (1981): 25. Their study found that the urban small congregations retained traditional roles for women, while the west coast congregations and suburban areas more likely to permit women to participate with full equality. A 1962 survey by Rabbi Aaron Blumenthal of 250 Conservative rabbis found that half honored women with aliyot, 2/3rds honoured women with the opening and closing of the ark as well as kiddush and havdala, (as pointed out these are highly visible activities but not significant as the scrolls are not touched) and slightly less than half allowed women to count in a minyan as well as chant the service.

very difficult, ... Canada has always been slow on the uptake in this area, [so] when he was offered the job he was just delighted ... we were delighted.²⁷⁶

In March of 1976 the Religious Services Committee of a Canadian affiliate of the United Synagogue of America sent out questionnaires to the then twenty-eight Conservative synagogues across Canada.²⁷⁷ Even though the Committee on Law and Standards had given the go-ahead to make changes that would allow for the inclusion and participation of women, each individual congregation could make the choice on the basis of local "*minhag*" as to whether or not it wished to allow these changes in its services.²⁷⁸ The questionnaire was designed to examine the extent (if any) to which Canadian congregations were adopting these changes and twenty-one synagogues had reported back.²⁷⁹ Lazar noted that there were significant inconsistencies between the way a Bar Mitzvah was conducted and a Bat Mitzvah, and that there was "less than equal treatment of women in the structure of adult religious participation."²⁸⁰ In respect of participation in religious services the majority of Canadian Conservative synagogues were to lag several decades behind the United States.

Montreal

For the Jews of Montreal and Quebec the challenges presented in these decades (1951–1981) were framed by the Parti Québécois and its first referendum on separating from Canada. As in Czarist Russia, when the May laws were promulgated many Jews voted "with their feet" and left, so throughout the 1970s and especially the 1980s, Montreal Jews voted with their feet and moved to Toronto and Vancouver leaving as we shall see a depleted and aging Ashkenazi community, whose Jewish population in 2001 numbered 92, 975.²⁸¹

²⁷⁶ Interview, August 31, 2004.

²⁷⁷ Morty M. Lazar, "The Role of Women in Synagogue Ritual in Canadian Conservative Congregations," *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, Volume XX, No.2 (December 1978): 166.

²⁷⁸ Lazar 167.

²⁷⁹ Lazar 167.

²⁸⁰ Lazar 167.

²⁸¹ Ira Robinson, "Canadian Jewry Today: Portrait of a Community in the Process of Change," *Changing Jewish Communities*, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs No 12 (15 September 2006, 22 Elul 5766)

Unlike the situation in the United States, or even its neighbour to the West (Ontario), the move to the suburbs corresponded to an increase in the building of Conservative and in the United States, Reform synagogues, for the Jews of Montreal their commitment to tradition seemed to be strengthened by the building of primarily new Orthodox synagogues.

As mentioned previously, amongst the influx of refugees after the war were a number of Hasidic and ultra-Orthodox groups who acted quickly to re-establish their communities, schools and *yeshivot*. By 1955, there were three Montreal *yeshivot* training young men in Torah studies, and some of their graduates were the first Canadian-trained Orthodox rabbis to serve in congregations.²⁸² The *yeshivot* were Dr. Mordechai Lewin's Merkaz HaTorah (Mir) which had to finally close in 1978; the Lubavitch yeshiva under Rabbi Leib Kramer, and the First Mesivta.²⁸³

Beth Hamedrash Hagadol, first established in 1917, disbanded in the early 1950s; the name was retained by a newly formed group that had called itself Beth Shira; the newly named Beth Hamedresh Hagadol amalgamated with the Tifereth Israel and established itself on Mackenzie street opening the only Hebrew afternoon school in the area.²⁸⁴ Members of Tifereth Israel, dissatisfied with the financial consequences of the merger left to start a new synagogue, Beth Israel, in Cote St. Luc.²⁸⁵ Shomrim Laboker (1954) moved to Plamondon, Beth Zion organized in Cote St. Luc, and Beth Ora organized in St. Laurent.²⁸⁶ In October 1955 the Board of B'nai Jacob addressed the amalgamation of Chevra Kadisha and B'nai Jacob, which took place in 1956.²⁸⁷ In 1958, Hungarian refugees who had settled in Montreal after the 1956 Hungarian revolution, came

<<http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=254&PID=0&ID=532>> [Saturday, September 02, 2006]; also Charles Shahar, *The Jewish Community In Canada*, 2001 Census Analysis Series (UIA Federations Canada, 2004) drawn from Canadian Jewish Congress Home Page <<http://www.cjc.ca/template.php?action=stats&Language=EN>> [December 10, 2006].

²⁸² Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 284; also Rosenberg, *American Jewish Year Book* (1958): 235.

²⁸³ Rosenberg 235; Shuchat 157.

²⁸⁴ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Synagogues of Quebec and the Maritime Provinces*, 40.

²⁸⁵ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Synagogues of Quebec and the Maritime Provinces*, 35, 44.

²⁸⁶ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Synagogues of Quebec and the Maritime Provinces*, 91, 54, 47.

²⁸⁷ Bernard Figler, "The Story of Two Congregations: Chevra Kadisha and B'nai Jacob." Unpublished essay. (No date) 10; 12-13.

together to form a congregation dedicated to the Hungarian Jewish Martyrs/Beth Hazicharon.²⁸⁸

Also in 1958, Zichron Kedoshim was named as a memorial to the martyrs of the Holocaust as well as being the product of a merger of four “downtown” synagogues: Anshei Ukraina, Beth Matesyohu, Beth Moishe, and Beth Israel and Beth Samuel.²⁸⁹

Despite the overwhelming number of synagogues that chose to affiliate with Orthodoxy, a second Conservative synagogue formed in the 1950s, as did a second Reform congregation. In 1953 Lavy Becker was approached to assist with the development of what was to become the Congregation of Beth-El in the Town of Mount Royal, the first Conservative synagogue in Montreal to have official mixed seating.²⁹⁰ Temple Beth Shalom (Reform) was formed in Montreal’s West End in 1953 and dedicated in 1954.²⁹¹ A casualty of the election of the Parti Québécois in 1976, this synagogue closed its doors in 1980 and merged with Temple Emanu-el.²⁹²

The Shaare Zedek Congregation of Western Notre Dame de Grace was incorporated in 1952.²⁹³ However at the time it functioned as an Orthodox synagogue. Rabbi Leffell, its founding rabbi, implemented the switch from separate seating to family (mixed) seating in 1962 so that there were now four Conservative synagogues in the greater Montreal area.²⁹⁴

By 1960 the Spanish and Portuguese congregation finally had the financial means to complete the synagogue sanctuary which was dedicated in 1963.²⁹⁵ In 1960, Lavy Becker founded the Dorshei Emet in Montreal – the Reconstructionist movement’s first congregation in

²⁸⁸ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Synagogues of Quebec and the Maritime Provinces*, 63; also The Montreal Synagogue Finder: A Guide to Synagogues Past and Present (Montreal, Quebec: Canadian Jewish Congress National Archives, June 2006) n.p.

²⁸⁹ Tauben 143.

²⁹⁰ Gubbay Helfer 109.

²⁹¹ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Synagogues of Quebec and the Maritime Provinces*, 48.

²⁹² *Temple Voice*, Volume 75 #9 (July-August 1998/Elul 5758) 3, 16. ZH Temple Emanu-El Box 2; recent additions 2000.

²⁹³ *Shaare Zedec Souvenir book*. 1955: 4

²⁹⁴ Conversation with Leon Penn, Montreal (October 18, 2004)

²⁹⁵ Frank 102.

Canada. Gubbay Helfer notes that the congregation built its synagogue (1966) in the affluent suburb of Hampstead, physically distant from the small immigrant synagogues of the downtown core and at this time had the ambience of a “latter-day shteibl” that recalled the self-help ethic of earlier generations.²⁹⁶ In 1965 the original Tifereth Israel group that had formed the Jewish Community Centre of Cote St Luc and Hampstead, the group that left the Shaare Zedek when it moved to mixed seating, and four downtown *shuls* – Tifereth Jerusalem, Beth David, Beth Yitzhak, and Kohol Jeshurun – merged to form the TBDJ: Tifereth Beth David Jerusalem.²⁹⁷

A major shift in the religious make-up of the community took place when French-speaking Jews began arriving from Morocco, and other Sephardic groups arrived from Iraq, Egypt, Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Algeria and Tunisia.²⁹⁸ As the Sephardic population grew they established their own congregations, both “as the mosaic of communities that integrated into the congregational life” of the Spanish & Portuguese as well as in other congregations.²⁹⁹ In 1978 the Rabbinate Sepharade du Quebec formed and by this time there were eight Sephardic congregations of varying sizes.³⁰⁰

In 1952, the Jewish community in Quebec City, Beth Israel-Ohev Shalom, built a new synagogue. In 1966 the community had its first full-time rabbi, Rabbi Prager. Unfortunately by the mid 1970s the community had dwindled and Rabbi Prager was asked to reduce his hours to part-time.³⁰¹

²⁹⁶ Gubbay Helfer 177.

²⁹⁷ Shuchat 167; AJYB (1965) 328; Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Synagogues of Quebec and the Maritime Provinces*, 101.

²⁹⁸ Howard Joseph, “25 More years of Community Life,” *The Continuing History of the Spanish & Portuguese Congregation of Montreal, 1768–1993: 25 years of Renaissance* (Montreal 1996) 45.

²⁹⁹ Joseph 45.

³⁰⁰ The eight Sephardic synagogues are: Merkaz Sepharade (1957), Congregation Maghen David (1969), Congregation Sepharade Kol Yehuda (1978), Congregation Sepharade Or Hahayim (1978), Congregation Sepharade Beth Yossef (1978), Congregation Beth Rambam (late 1970s), Rabbinate Sepharade (1978), and Congregation Sepharade Ohel Ya’akov.

³⁰¹ Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 339.

Toronto

The authors of *Crestwood Heights*, a study in the early 1950s of an affluent suburb of Toronto, described the religion of its residents, Jews and Christians alike, as more a matter of habit than of deep convictions, more a socially useful practice than a source of spiritual solace.³⁰² In matters of religion, the *Crestwood Heights* study meshed with Marshall Sklare's *American Riverton Study* which noted that "religion in America [1952] was concerned ... with ethical and humanitarian questions," so that ritual observances, even the home observances had experienced a marked decline.³⁰³ Although religion qua religion is not the focus here, it bears noting that the issues raised over fifty years ago by the authors of *Crestwood Heights*, and reiterated by Schoenfeld, are precisely those advanced today by Arnold Eisen, Steven Cohen, Sidney Schwartz and others addressing issues of Jewish identity and the role of the religious institution in perpetuating and encouraging that identity. One of the findings at that time, that the "individual ... picks and chooses what is personally important" even to the extent of religious affiliation, continues to challenge those concerned with "Jewish continuity" and low synagogue attendance.³⁰⁴

Diamond presents another perspective on suburbanization when he pointed out Toronto's experience: "the Jewish community moved not only its residences but its entire religious infrastructure to the new suburban environment."³⁰⁵ Not only were the downtown synagogues relocating to the suburbs but at the same time new synagogues were being formed by Hungarian

³⁰² Stuart Schoenfeld, "Re-reading a Canadian classic: *Crestwood Heights* as a study of the invisible religion," *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology/La Revue canadienne de Sociologie et d'Anthropologie* 25:1 (February 1988): 458. Schoenfeld is quoting John Seeley, Alexander Sims, and E. W. Loosely, *Crestwood Heights: A Study of the Culture of Suburban Life* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956) 214.

³⁰³ Marshall Sklare and Marc Vosk, *The Riverton Study: How Jews Look at Themselves and Their Neighbours* (New York: The American Jewish Committee, May 1957) 10–11.

³⁰⁴ Steven Cohen and Arnold Eisen, *The Jew Within: Self, Family, and Community in America* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000); Sidney Schwartz, *Finding a Spiritual Home: How a New Generation of Jews Can Transform the American Synagogue* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000); also see Jack Wertheimer, "The American Synagogue: Recent Issues and Trends," *American Jewish Year Book* Volume 105 (2005): 3–83; Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman, *Rethinking Synagogues: A New Vocabulary for Congregational Life* (Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2006).

³⁰⁵ Diamond 32.

and German refugees who had arrived in Toronto after the war and “were quickly establishing themselves ... along Bathurst Street.”³⁰⁶ While many of these newly established synagogues were Orthodox, a number of these bastions of Orthodoxy switched to Conservatism en route up Bathurst Street. On a number of occasions the switch was the result of an older congregation merging with a new one.

In terms of downtown synagogues the Agudath Israel moved into a renovated duplex on Bathurst Street in 1952.³⁰⁷ The Adath Israel Roumanian Orthodox congregation also made the decision to relocate, and finally did so in 1957 as a Conservative congregation.³⁰⁸ In 1952 the Goel Tzedec and Beth Hamedrash Hagadol Chevra Thilim amalgamated to become the Beth Tzedec and in 1955 moved into its new premises on Bathurst Street.³⁰⁹ In 1956 the congregation invited Rabbi Stuart Rosenberg to be their spiritual leader.³¹⁰

In 1956 Radomer Mutual Benefit Society organized as an independent society Bnai Radom to form the Conservative synagogue Beth Radom.³¹¹ Bnai Israel, one of the “downtown” synagogues made the move north up Bathurst Street in the 1960 when it merged with the Beth David to become the Conservative B’nai Israel Beth David.³¹² As mentioned previously not all congregations chose to follow the path up Bathurst Street and this created problems later for their synagogue. One such congregation was Congregation Beth Am formed in 1954 in the vicinity of Keele and Sheppard, quite a distance from the Bathurst corridor.³¹³ Aside from the internal

³⁰⁶ Diamond 39.

³⁰⁷ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Shuls: Ontario*, 10.

³⁰⁸ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Shuls: Ontario*, 3.

³⁰⁹ *Beth Tzedec Congregation Dedication*, Toronto, Canada (Friday December 9, 1955/25 Kislev, 5716).

³¹⁰ Stuart Rosenberg 166.

³¹¹ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Shuls: Ontario*, 35.

³¹² *B’nai Israel Beth David Congregation: 50th–19th Jubilee, Downsview, Ontario, 1965–66*. (4–5) In 1953 a group of young couples broke from Tifereth Joseph to form the first Conservative congregation in the Wilson Heights area. Wilson Heights Congregation formed to serve families moving up Bathurst Street; in May of 1955 became the Beth David and in 1956 it hired Rabbi Pappenheim, who not only stayed on through the merger but was with the congregation until his death in 1984.

³¹³ Harvey Meirovich, “The Rise and Decline of A Toronto Synagogue: Congregation Beth Am,” *Canadian Jewish Historical Society Journal* Volume 1 (1977): 99.

politics that plagued the synagogue, its location limited any possibilities of growth. Meirovich noted “the installation of permanent pews coincided with a visible fall in membership” and by the early 1970s the membership had stabilized at 250 families but school enrolment (a major draw for future membership) was at a low of 100 students.³¹⁴ At the conclusion of his paper, Meirovich points out the factors that could make or break Beth Am, the most significant being if a portion of its younger membership relocate closer to the Bathurst corridor.³¹⁵ Meirovich’s research took place between 1975 and 1976. In a footnote he notes that as his “paper is going to press” the factor that would cause the Beth Am to “close its doors” occurred, and in September 1977 the congregation merged with B’nai Israel Beth David.³¹⁶

Prior to 1959 a small group of people had gotten together to form the Beth Emeth Synagogue, a Conservative synagogue which was the first synagogue to move into the Bathurst Manor district of Downsview.³¹⁷ In 1963, the Bais Yehuda Synagogue merged with Beth Emeth and in 1976, the Hebrew Men of England, in the same manner as Bais Yehuda, sold its building and its funds and its membership amalgamated with Beth Emeth Bais Yehuda Synagogue.³¹⁸

In 1953 a number of non-native Torontonians came together to form Clanton Park Synagogue. A disagreement in 1955 resulted in a break-away group then forming Machzikei Hadas.³¹⁹ In the early 1950s another new Orthodox congregation had formed: the Shaarei Tefillah in North York.³²⁰ This congregation held its services in homes and storefronts until the phase of its building was completed in 1955; in 1968 Anshe Apt merged with this congregation, and in 1976 there was a second merger with Anshe Lubavitch.³²¹

³¹⁴ Meirovich 105–106.

³¹⁵ Meirovich 108.

³¹⁶ Meirovich 110, fnote 1.

³¹⁷ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Shuls: Ontario*, 23.

³¹⁸ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Shuls: Ontario*, 23.

³¹⁹ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Shuls: Ontario*, 56.

³²⁰ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Shuls: Ontario*, 94.

³²¹ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Shuls: Ontario*, 94.

Also four new Reform synagogues came into being in these years. In response to the need for a second Reform congregation in 1954 a young rabbi (Jordan Pearlson) was recruited to come every two weeks from the United States to guide, to prod and to inspire.³²² With Rabbi Pearlson's encouragement this Wilson Heights' community organized itself into Temple Sinai and moved into its new building in 1958; Temple Beth-El in Don Mills formed in 1959; Temple Emanu-el formed in 1958 under the spiritual leadership of Rabbi Louis Cashdan, and in 1971 Rabbi Michael Stroh was the founding rabbi of Temple Har Zion in Thornhill on the far upper reaches of Bathurst Street.³²³

It is worth noting here that in the 1960s, "many [American] synagogues were sited in wooded areas, well off major thoroughfares" emphasizing individual aspects of congregational member relationship rather than the communal needs.³²⁴ This is not a description of Canadian synagogues, most of which tend to be very close to major thoroughfares or no more than a street or two away. However there are several synagogues that are located in the picturesque Bayview area of Toronto and while near major roads and streets, the psychological distance of being located in Bayview was raised as an issue by several of the interviewees. In 1967 two congregations (Conservative), the Shaarei Tikvah (formed April 14, 1964) and the Bayview Synagogue Association (formed September 1, 1966) merged to become the Beth Tikvah and in 1970 the congregation moved into its own building.³²⁵

In June 1966 a letter went out to members that "the services of Chevra Tiferes Israel Anshei New York synagogue were to be discontinued and its assets disposed."³²⁶ In August of that same

³²² 36th Anniversary Celebration of Temple Sinai: 1954-1990 (November 23, 24, 25, 1990, Toronto, Canada) 5.

³²³ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Shuls: Ontario*, 111; 21; 104; 109.

³²⁴ Sussman 43.

³²⁵ "Beth Tikvah's History," *Beth Tikvah Congregation Dedication*, September 10-12, 1971 in Ontario Jewish Archives Beth Tikvah file MG 3 A25.

³²⁶ Correspondence in file Ontario Jewish Archives Congregation Anshei New York-Chevrat Tifereth Israel MG 3 A71.

year the synagogue amalgamated with the Beth Joseph Lubavitch Congregation henceforth to be called Beth Joseph Anshe New York Congregation.³²⁷

In the early 1950s fifty families arrived in Toronto from Morocco. In his history of the Sephardic community, Sydney Bendahan noted these immigrants were not like the East Europeans who had arrived at the end of the nineteenth, beginning of the twentieth century.³²⁸ Bendahan was very emphatic that these newcomers were not refugees but mostly people who elected to create for themselves and their children a new way of life in a new country.³²⁹ Bendahan tells us, unlike Montreal where the “Sephardic community [had] been accepted,” it was one of the “biggest failures of the Jewish Agency” in the settling of the Sephardic Jews in Toronto as there was so little information and communication that the “majority of the established community [was] not even aware of their existence in this city.”³³⁰ The Magen David Sephardic Congregation was formed in 1958, under the leadership of Mr Bendahan, and in July 1978, they purchased “an existing synagogue” built and owned by Rabbi Gertner.³³¹ Also in 1958 a group of Sephardic Jews from Tangiers came together to form Petach Tikvah Anshei Castilla Congregation.³³² In 1966 they purchased the Brunswick Street Shomrei Shabbat synagogue and in 1975 opened the doors of its new building barely a block off the Bathurst corridor.³³³ Tifereth Israel was begun in 1969 by a group of Moroccan Jews, and Minyan Sepharad organized itself into a congregation in 1977.³³⁴

³²⁷ Congregation Anshei New York-Chevrat Tifereth Israel MG 3 A71.

³²⁸ Sydney D. Bendahan, “The Sephardic Community in Toronto,” (unpublished manuscript) Paper was written by Sydney Bendahan for a speech given to the CJC, 22nd regional conference, June 11, 1973. Ontario Jewish Archives.

³²⁹ Bendahan 15.

³³⁰ Bendahan 14, 15.

³³¹ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Shuls: Ontario*, 74–75. Rabbi Gertner’s daughter sold it to the Magen David Congregation.

³³² “Established Sephardic Community Welcomes Moroccans Newcomers,” *The Toronto Jewish Reporter* (April 7, 1965) 12.

³³³ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Shuls: Ontario*, 80.

³³⁴ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Shuls: Ontario*, 115.

Winnipeg

As Winnipeg Jews moved out of their homes in the North End to the newly forming suburbs they built new synagogues, schools and social facilities, replacing virtually all of the previously existing institutional networks.³³⁵ Until 1981 Winnipeg was still the third largest Jewish community. In *Maintaining Consensus*, Elazar and Waller commented that in Winnipeg the synagogues appeared to be given less importance as institutions except by the Orthodox minority.³³⁶ Attendance at either of the two Conservative synagogues, the Shaarey Tzedec and the Rosh Pina, signified high socio-economic status rather than religious conviction.³³⁷ Customarily synagogues are perceived as places to pray. In Winnipeg it appeared that to be the custom that the synagogue was a place to be seen. What is interesting to note is how Elazar and Waller, outside observers, chose to reinforce this perception by including in their Winnipeg assessment the rankings of the rabbis of three synagogues, Shaarey Tzedec, Rosh Pina, and B'nay Abraham (Orthodox) in terms of status.³³⁸ Finally in the 1960s a Reform congregation formed: Temple Shalom.

Vancouver

In Vancouver, they moved from the east-end immigrant quarter to the newer, lower-middle-class west-side neighbourhoods.³³⁹ Since the completion in 1947 of the new Schara Tzedec on Oak Street, the membership of its break-away, Beth Hamidrash, had been both shrinking and aging. In 1972 the community sold its building to a recently organized Sephardic group.³⁴⁰ In 1976, Temple Shalom, the Reform congregation that had been meeting in a Unitarian church since its

³³⁵ Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 277.

³³⁶ Elazar and Waller 317.

³³⁷ Elazar and Waller 317.

³³⁸ Elazar and Waller 329.

³³⁹ Jean Gerber 43.

³⁴⁰ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Synagogues of Western Canada*, 59.

inception, acquired the Masonic Temple on West 10th Avenue for its new home.³⁴¹ Besides moving into west-side of Vancouver, many young families were also moving over the bridge from Vancouver into Richmond. By 1977 there were sufficient families to organize the Beth Tikvah Congregation (Conservative).³⁴²

Canada's Smaller Cities and Towns

After 1967, a number of Jewish communities in the small towns across Canada diminished as their Jewish population moved into the nearby cities. Tulchinsky noted that the diminishing presence of Jews in the small communities and the closure of their *shuls* was, in many instances, being replaced by new edifices that sometimes included community centres and educational facilities.³⁴³ He named Saskatoon, Halifax, and Brantford, Ontario as “typical of these centres.”³⁴⁴ In Edmonton, Beth Ora, its first Reform synagogue was formed in 1980.

In looking at reasons for synagogue affiliation – the tendency in the United States had been to separate ethnicity and religious affiliation. These concerns changed in the late twentieth century. Moving into the twentieth-first there are definite changes in how Jews view their religious life but as yet there is not sufficient data on how this will affect synagogue attendance in Canada or the rabbi's role.

The years 1981– to the present: Reformation and adaptation

When Canada's census was taken in 1981, the fallout from the changed political climate in Quebec continued to demonstrate demographically how other parts of Canada had benefited from Montreal's ongoing population loss. Between 1971 and 1981 Montreal had experienced a net loss of seven thousand Jews: the majority had moved to Toronto making that city now the largest

³⁴¹ Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Synagogues in Western Canada*, 63.

³⁴² Levitt, Milstone, and Tenenbaum, *Synagogues in Western Canada*, 58.

³⁴³ Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 277.

³⁴⁴ Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 339.

Jewish centre in Canada.³⁴⁵ A good number had moved to the West Coast: an oft-repeated Vancouver Jewish anecdote is that half the Jews in Vancouver come from Montreal and the other half come from Winnipeg. In 1981 the overall Jewish population stood at 312, 060 of which 42 percent lived in Toronto.

Tulchinsky has provided a succinct overview of small city life by the early 1980s.³⁴⁶ Jewish life was declining in the small outlying centres as the children moved away to seek career and educational opportunities that were not available in their home towns. However as the smaller towns were shrinking in terms of Jewish population, the larger towns and cities were creating “edge-cities” or “techno-burbs” to accommodate their growing population.

Joanna Price has demonstrated that today’s suburbs have been replaced by “edge-cities” or “techno-burbs.”³⁴⁷ The highways that separated family life from the work world are now crowded with industrial subdivisions, shopping malls and entertainment complexes. The suburbs today are more like little cities: they share the same concerns of the urban core, offer cultural events, job opportunities, and shopping as well as slums, crime and lack of employment opportunities.³⁴⁸

As older synagogues were having to close for lack of a minyan, new synagogues were opening on the outskirts of Toronto especially, Montreal, Ottawa and Vancouver.

By 1991 Canada’s Jewish population was 356, 315: the figure represents those Jews who identified as Jewish by religion and Jewish by ethnic origin (281, 680); those who identified as Jewish by religion with another ethnic origin (36, 390), and those who saw themselves as ethnically Jewish and having no listed religion (38, 245).³⁴⁹ Vancouver had moved into third

³⁴⁵ Leo Davids, “Canada: Canadian Jewry: Some Recent Consensus Findings,” *American Jewish Year Book*, Volume 85 (1985): 193.

³⁴⁶ Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 339.

³⁴⁷ Joanna Price, “Between Subdivisions and Shopping Malls: Signifying Everyday Life in the Contemporary American South,” *Expanding Suburbia: Reviewing Suburban Narratives*, ed., Roger Webster (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000) 125.

³⁴⁸ Wunsch 36.

³⁴⁹ Jim L. Torczyner and Shari L. Brotman, “The Jews of Canada: A Profile from the Census,” *AYJB*, Volume 95 (1995): 229.

place over Winnipeg in terms of Jewish population size, and even though Montreal continued to cede first place as most populous Jewish centre to Toronto, its expected Jewish demise went the way of all predictions as 75 to 80 percent of the estimated 18,870 to 25,805 Sephardic Jews living in Canada, lived in Montreal.³⁵⁰ As Torczyner and Brotman further noted a considerable proportion of (8.5) Canadian Jewry are immigrants: a factor which contributes to stronger ethnic and religious identification as well as the higher rates of synagogues attendance and ritual observance when compared to the United States.³⁵¹

Sheva Medjuck, writing in 1993, noted that there were very few synagogues in Canada where women could participate as full equals.³⁵² Canadian Jews still tend to be more traditional than their American neighbours: however, even though there is now a greater tendency to identify with the Conservative movement, the issue of women's participation continues to be an ongoing challenge for a number of Canadian Conservative synagogues. However as mentioned in the section on Conservative Judaism, this has been compounded by the recent decision to permit the ordination of gay and lesbian rabbis.

The most recent census figures for Canada (2001) show a Jewish population (370,505) that experienced the smallest increase (3.7 per cent) for any non-Christian religion.³⁵³ Charles Shahar has attributed the modest growth to the high birthrate of the ultra-Orthodox.³⁵⁴ At the same time, even while Canadian Jewry maintains its traditional stance, the true number of individuals participating in the religious life of their communities is diminishing. The raw data and particulars for the changes that have taken place especially since 1980 have yet to be marshalled

³⁵⁰ Torczyner and Brotman 242.

³⁵¹ Torczyner and Brotman 246–247.

³⁵² Sheva Medjuck, "If I Cannot Dance to It, It's Not My Revolution: Jewish Feminism in Canada Today," *The Jews in Canada*, eds., Robert J. Brym, William Shaffir, and Morton Weinfeld (Toronto, ON: Oxford University Press, 1993) 338.

³⁵³ Harold M. Waller, "The Americas: Canada," *AJYB*, Volume 104 (2004): 250.

³⁵⁴ Waller, *AJYB* (2004), 250–251.

and written down in a comprehensive manner – there is still much to learn as to how the Canadian Jew has kept “faith” and yet integrated into what is now for most Jews – their homeland.

Montreal

While the continuing political uncertainty in Quebec has contributed to the presence of an aging, rather than youthful (except for the Hasidim) population, the fact that Quebec is French-speaking has lured both Sephardim from French-speaking lands, and Spanish-speaking Ashkenazim from Latin America, although the numbers of immigrants expected to immigrate from South America have yet to materialize. The suburb of Cote St. Luc continues to be home to the largest Jewish community in Montreal, the second largest being the West Island. Even though one third of the Jewish population living in Cote St. Luc today is elderly, in recent years it has become home to a flourishing Sephardic Orthodox population with their multiple *shulelach*. Even though much of their immigration had taken place between 1958 and the mid 1970s, it was only as the second generation was reaching adulthood, that the host communities and immigrant communities actively sought to overcome their previous suspicions and animosities towards each other.

While the loss of Ashkenazi Jewry has led several *shuls* to close or to merge, other places like the Bagg Street *shul* in down town Montreal, have been given a new lease on life, and as always break-aways continue to occur.

In 1995 Beth Hamedresh Hagadol Tifereth Israel on Mackenzie Street merged with Shomrim Laboker.³⁵⁵ Ongoing differences between Rabbi Shmidman and the Tiferet Beth David Jerusalem resulted in the Rabbi and his supporters leaving to set up their own congregation, the Noam Jewish Centre.³⁵⁶ Since his death in August 2005, the centre has continued but is lay-led.

With the decline in health of Rabbi Miklos Shnurmacher, the Hungarian Martyrs synagogue

³⁵⁵ Janice Arnold, “Two Shuls Merge,” *Canadian Jewish News* (August 31, 1995). (n. p.)

³⁵⁶ Interview, August 1, 2004.

merged with the Chevra Kadisha in January 2002.³⁵⁷ Members of Beth Hazichoron continued to look to Rabbi Miklos Schnurmacher as their leader until his death in 2005. On February 26, 2006, Congregation Chevrashas held a farewell service to officially close its synagogue doors.³⁵⁸ After the service, members then carried the congregation's Torah scrolls several blocks west to the Spanish and Portuguese where the scrolls will be housed in their own Aron Kodesh, in a prayer hall designated for the use of the Chevrashas congregation.³⁵⁹ In August of 2007, Congregation Ahavat Shalom Nusach Haari, formed in 1910 (Nusach Haari) and 1915 (Ahavat Shalom-Anshei Galicia) merged with Dollard des Ormeaux Congregation Beth Tikvah.³⁶⁰

Thirty years after the "rebellion" of *ezrat nashim* in New York, Montreal has three Conservative synagogues and only one, the Shaare Zion, became fully egalitarian in 2001.

Toronto

As the recipient of many Montrealers leaving Quebec, Toronto's Jewish population surpassed Montreal as demonstrated through the growth of new synagogues on the outskirts of the community.

In the years prior to August 1981 a group of Jews had come to the Bayview area wanting to *daven* according to Orthodox practices. In November 1980, the group had incorporated as the North East Hebrew Congregation aka Kehillat Sharei Torah.³⁶¹ Through Rabbi Witty, contact was made with Yeshiva University, and Rabbi Eliot Feldman was hired to be their rabbi.³⁶² In 1987 they had a building of their own, which like Beth Tikvah, Kehilla Sharei Torah is also

³⁵⁷ *The Montreal Synagogue Finder: A Guide to Synagogues Past and Present*, Canadian Jewish Congress National Archives, June 2006, Montreal, Quebec. 43.

³⁵⁸ Janice Arnold, "Chevrashas Moves into Spanish and Portuguese Shul," *Canadian Jewish News* (March 9, 2006): 4-5.

³⁵⁹ Arnold 5.

³⁶⁰ Janice Arnold, "Downtown shul Merges with Congregation Beth Tikvah," *Canadian Jewish News* (August 23, 2007): 8. The official name is now Congregation Beth Tikvah Ahavat Shalom Nusach Haari.

³⁶¹ Diamond 49.

³⁶² Kehillat Sharei Torah File Box, MG 3 A51, Ontario Jewish Archives

located in Bayview.³⁶³ Location has presented issues for some of the rabbinical wives living off the Bathurst corridor:

There isn't a car pool situation, I'm really on my own out here – that's the biggest – is the biggest, that is the biggest burden, is isolation. There's usually a support system in Orthodox communities – you have car pool – I drove my children to school every single day and picked them up. So missing that support is like probably my biggest grievance. It's not the *shul*'s fault, but that's just, have to know that's what you're in for, if you're out[side] of the Orthodox community.³⁶⁴

Although the Lodzer Congregation had first formed in 1953 as a mutual benefit society for survivors from Lodz Poland who made it to Canada, in 1981 it formed itself into a Conservative synagogue. When Rabbi Kaufman joined the Lodzer in 2002, women had been permitted aliyot but were not counted in a minyan. A three-month trial was put in place permitting women to be counted: this period came and went without any undue comment. The by-laws of the synagogue were amended to reflect the new reality.³⁶⁵

In the early 1980s, academics and professionals who lived in downtown Toronto began to frequent the First Narayver.³⁶⁶ Over the years as members had moved north or passed away, it had managed to stay functioning.³⁶⁷ Initially the Orthodox faction within the synagogue accepted the move to gender equality by “appropriating the traditional male status for women.”³⁶⁸ However when the liberal faction tried to remove the *mehitzah* from the main sanctuary, the younger members were threatened with a lawsuit.³⁶⁹ The lawsuit was eventually dismissed and those who were unhappy with the move to full egalitarianism left the *shul*.³⁷⁰

In a multipurpose building serving Reform Jews, the Thornhill Community Mikveh was

³⁶³ Kehillat Shareii Torah File Box, MG 3 A51, Ontario Jewish Archives; Diamond 50.

³⁶⁴ Interview August 17, 2005.

³⁶⁵ Email Correspondence with Rabbi Matthew Kaufman, June 19, 2007.

³⁶⁶ Susan Sapiro, “Heritage and Heresy: The First Galitzianer Traditional-Egalitarian Congregation,” *Jewish Folklore and Ethnology Review*, Volume 19, No. 1–2 (1997): 27.

³⁶⁷ Sapiro 27.

³⁶⁸ Sapiro 28.

³⁶⁹ Sapiro 28.

³⁷⁰ Sapiro 28.

built, certified by a Detroit expert, and opened in 1994.³⁷¹ In 1995, Temple Kol Ami formed with Rabbi Nancy Wechsler, trained at Leo Baeck College in London, as their founding rabbi.

In 1997, Sephardic Kehilla Centre had its grand opening and is located near the boundary between Toronto and Thornhill on Bathurst Street, and recently celebrated its tenth anniversary.

Canada's Smaller Cities and Towns

In the Atlantic provinces, Halifax's Conservative synagogue, Shaar Shalom, made history when, following the retirement of Rabbi Jacob Chinitz, it hired Canada's first Conservative female rabbi (Rabbi Pamela Hoffman) in 1994.³⁷² St. John's Shaarei Zedek synagogue moved into history, as its last rabbi left in 1982; even with reconstituting the synagogue as egalitarian in 2002 movement out of the community could not be stemmed.³⁷³ The remaining few families were unable to maintain the building and decided to sell it.³⁷⁴

In writing about the population losses in the smaller communities, Tulchinsky commented that "this was especially poignant in the centuries-old Jewish community of Quebec City."³⁷⁵ As in Saint John, the remaining thirty-five families were unable to meet expenses and were forced to put the synagogue up for sale.³⁷⁶ The congregation continues to have services and bought a duplex that functions as a house of prayer.

In Ontario, the Beth Zion congregation in Oshawa was still able to support a full-time rabbi and his family in 1997.³⁷⁷ Until 2002 the community had a part-time rabbi and now relies on the services of a part-time cantor. In Kingston, although Iyr-Ha-Melech was formed in 1975, it was

³⁷¹ Geraldine Sherman, "Total Immersion," *Toronto Life* (November, 1997).

<<http://www.geraldinesherman.com/Mikveh.html>> [December 12, 2007].

³⁷² Harold M. Waller, "Canada," *AJYB*, (1995): 222; *Canadian Jewish National Synagogue Directory*, ed. Shirley Brodt (1994/5754); *Reform Judaism Canada*, Volume 2, #2 (Winter 1994/5754): 2, a publication of the UAHC Canadian Council for Reform Judaism.

³⁷³ Ron Csillag, "Sole synagogue in Saint John to be sold," *Canadian Jewish News* (March 4, 2004): 28.

³⁷⁴ Csillag 28.

³⁷⁵ Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 339.

³⁷⁶ Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 339.

³⁷⁷ In reporting Sisterhood news (p.4) in the Beth Zion bulletin of June 1997/Sivan 5757, Cheryl Frayne wrote that the "[Sisterhood was] eagerly awaiting the arrival of the new rebbetzin Rifky Karfunkel."

not until 1993 that the congregation took steps to hire a rabbi to come in once a month. In Brantford, the synagogue was finally closed in July 2001 as there was no longer anyone to maintain or attend services. In Kitchener-Waterloo, Temple Shalom established itself in 1996 as joint occupant with a local United Church congregation in the Cedars Worship and Community Centre. In 1991, Or Hadash formed in Brampton, and shortly after re-organizing as a congregation (1993), it became a Reform affiliate (1994).³⁷⁸

Out West, the towns of Medicine Hat, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, and Lethbridge were no longer able to sustain either rabbis or synagogues.³⁷⁹

In 2002 in Winnipeg, the Beth Israel Congregation, Bnay Abraham Synagogue, and Rosh Pina amalgamated to form the new Etz Chaim synagogue.³⁸⁰

In British Columbia, in Vancouver Or Shalom (1982) began as a havurah (small group of friends) led by Rabbi Daniel Siegel and Hanna-Tiferet Siegel. Allied with the Jewish Renewal movement the congregation resided in a bungalow off Cambie Street for many years until 1993, when it purchased its present building. The congregation hired its first female rabbi, Rabbi Laura Kaplan Duhaime, in January 2005. In 1986 Temple Shalom was fire-bombed, and the Schara Tzedec synagogue made its offices available for use by Rabbi Bregman until their new home on Oak Street was completed. As mentioned previously, when the Sharei Tefillah formed in 1984, it joined the UTJ, a relationship that is still in force despite the synagogue's membership dues being past due.³⁸¹ Also in the past five years a Young Israel community has formed in Richmond, several Chabad *shulelach* have been established in Vancouver, Surrey and Victoria. Also a new Reform group has formed in Victoria.

³⁷⁸ Ontario Jewish Archives, Canadian Council for Reform Judaism, File MG 3 A 84; also "History," Or Hadash Website (2008) < <http://www.orhadash.org/aboutus/history/> > [February 18, 2008].

³⁷⁹ Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 339.

³⁸⁰ Harold M. Waller, "Canada," *American Jewish Year Book* (2003): 324.

³⁸¹ Email correspondence, Rabbi Schachar Orenstein, May 13, 2007.

While the formation of synagogues based on the place of one's birth is no longer evident in the Ashkenazi communities, within the Sephardic communities, congregations continue to reflect the birth homes of their members. Will this change for the Sephardic community also as their members age or will their Canadian children and grandchildren, unlike the Ashkenazi community, be able to retain their ties?

Since the beginning of this new millennium a number of American scholars have tackled the question of the role of the synagogue in contemporary Jewish life.³⁸² When measurements are taken of religious and communal involvement, Canadian Jews continue to be more involved than American Jews with almost every practice listed.³⁸³ Also as Robinson notes surveys addressing affiliation "show Canadian Jews to be more affiliated with Orthodoxy and less with Conservatism or Reform relative to Jews in the United States."³⁸⁴

As noted in the methodology section, a questionnaire (Appendix II) was sent to the non-Hasidic synagogues listed in the *Canadian Jewish Congress Synagogue Directory*. I was particularly interested in responses to those questions which asked "What are the synagogue's most well-attended programs? Least well-attended programs?" and "What would you define as the main issue of the synagogue today?" I was curious to see if the concerns raised by the rabbis in response to these questions were similar to the issues put forth by the women I interviewed. While synagogues across the country struggle with aging populations, this has become a major concern in the smaller communities. The smaller communities also suffer from a diminished

³⁸² Sidney Schwartz, *Finding a Spiritual Home: How a New Generation of Jews Can Transform the American Synagogue* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000); Jack Wertheimer, "The American Synagogue: Recent Issues and Trends," *American Jewish Year Book*, Volume 105 (2005): 3–83, and Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, *Rethinking Synagogues: A New Vocabulary for Congregational Life* (Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2006).

³⁸³ Practices listed are attends Passover seder, lights Chanukah candles, fasts Yom Kippur, keeps the Sabbath, separates milk and meat dishes, handles money on Shabbat, and observes the Fast of Esther.

³⁸⁴ Ira Robinson, "Canadian Jewry Today: Portrait of a Community in the Process of Change," *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*, No 12, 15 (September 2006, 22 Elul 5766). <<http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=254&PID=0&IID=532>> [November 21, 2006].

Jewish population, as the younger members of the community leave their homes for opportunities in Canada's larger cities, and from a lack of funds to draw religious leaders to their communities; the larger synagogues also are concerned with the aging demographic, the lack of young people, and the need to inject Jewish spirituality into their congregation. When hiring a rabbi, one of the considerations is the perceived ability of that rabbi to draw families to the synagogue and so increase its membership. The rabbi's spouse (and this is mainly the wife in the Canadian milieu) and the question of her potential contribution to the congregation is no longer verbalized as openly as in previous years. While no congregation today has expectations that when they hire a rabbi they are getting "two-for-one," there are still basic expectations of the wife's involvement in her husband's career. Before addressing how the wives view these obligations and expectations, as well as their congregations, the next section provides a brief overview of the role of their husband the rabbi in contemporary society.

CHAPTER FOUR RABBINICAL FUNCTION: THEN AND NOW

The Rabbi is a paradigm of both clergy and lay communal readers. Any position of this sort carries with it great influence and enormous challenges. The rabbinate is a constantly evolving institution, its role changes with the society and milieu it serves.¹

Initially the rabbinical role focused on its adherents becoming teachers and educators of *halacha*.

This role soon adapted to include being seen as a *Shliach Tzibbur* (communal representative in prayer). Since the mid-twentieth century the abilities to counsel, engage in administration, and to fundraise are primary qualities for those who would be pulpit rabbis.² Numerous writings exist that describe, challenge, and reflect upon the centrality of the rabbinical position within the Jewish community (and those who occupy the position).

Some authors specialize in writing about the development of the modern rabbinate. For example, Ismar Schorsch, one-time Chancellor of The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, has written extensively about the dilemmas facing the traditional *Ashkenazi* rabbi, who still functioned primarily as an expositor of Jewish civil and religious law at the end of the eighteenth century.³ Others document the early years of American Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist Judaism such as Marc Lee Raphael in his volume *Profiles in Judaism* to demonstrate the central role played by many of these rabbis in the shaping of American Judaism.⁴ Recently Jack Wertheimer, Provost of The Jewish Theological Seminary, edited a two volume anthology addressing all aspects of Jewish religious leadership, from Talmudic times to the present.⁵ Rabbis like Berel Wein and Jack Bloom, to name two, have taken it upon themselves to

¹ Berel Wein, *Tending the Vineyard: The Life, Rewards and Vicissitudes of Being a Rabbi* (New York: The Shaar Press, 2007) 10.

² Jack H. Bloom, *The Rabbi As Symbolic Exemplar: By the Power Vested in Me* (New York/London/Oxford: The Haworth Press, 2002) 139. Bloom describes the “ideal pulpit rabbi” as the direct descendent of the ideal *Schliach Tzibbur* described by Moses Mintz of Hamburg in the sixteenth century.

³ Ismar Schorsch, “Emancipation and the Crisis of Religious Authority: The Emergence of the Modern Rabbinate,” *Revolution and Evolution: 1848 in German Jewish History*, eds. Werner E. Mosse, Arnold Paucker, and Reinhard Rürup (Tubingen: JCB Mohr, 1981): 207.

⁴ Marc Lee Raphael, *Profiles in American Judaism: The Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist Traditions in Historical Perspective* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984).

⁵ Jack Wertheimer, *Jewish Religious Leadership: Image and Reality*, Volumes 1 and 2 (New York: The Jewish

inform the reading public about what is involved in being a rabbi today.

This chapter will briefly present the rabbinical role prior to emancipation, and illustrate how its adaptation to North American society set the parameters for women who married rabbis. It is a curious point that from the fourteenth century on scholars desiring ordination had to be married.⁶ Certainly by the twentieth century it is a “given” as the “chief obligation of the rabbi’s wife is definitely to assist in the work of the synagogue over which her husband presides, and to interest herself wholeheartedly in the people he serves.”⁷

As discussed briefly in the chapter, “Women’s Place in Canadian Jewish History,” the pervasive ideology of the “cult of domesticity” meshed smoothly with the “new” role expected of Jewish married women. In as much as each Jewish married woman was to look to the needs of her household, and support her husband in his endeavours, how much more so was the expectation that the rabbi’s wife not only support her husband in his endeavours but also the congregation which they both served. This notion of “wholehearted” service evolved through the shift in attitude not only towards women, but also in the expectations communities had of their rabbis after emancipation.

The rabbinical role prior to emancipation

Toward the end of the first century of the Common Era, the Yavneh Sanhedrin (rabbinical assembly) had assumed supreme legislative and regulatory functions.⁸ By the third and fourth centuries synagogues had assumed a more central role in rabbinic circles, and rabbis were involved in three specific areas: preaching, adjudication of *halakha*, and education.⁹ Jerome

Theological Seminary, 2004).

⁶ Simon Schwarzfuchs, *A Concise History of the Rabbinate* (Oxford, UK and Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1993) 54.

⁷ Ruth Wolf Levi, “I Married a Rabbi,” *I Married a Minister*, ed. Golda R. Bader (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1942) 166.

⁸ Robert M. Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought: The Jewish Experience in History*. (New York, NY: MacMillan Publishing Co, 1980) 247.

⁹ Levine 461–462.

Carlin and Saul Mendlovitz noted that the early rabbi became the religious specialist, basing his authority “on an intimate knowledge of the written and oral law” and thus was called upon to teach and to be a decisor of the Law.¹⁰

By the early Middle Ages, the rabbis gained ascendancy in Jewish communal religious matters and were influential in formulating the synagogue’s religious dimension.¹¹ The emerging rabbinate of the Jewish Middle Ages was a wholly new entity and bore little resemblance to the rabbinic institutions of antiquity.¹²

By the late Middle Ages the weakening power of the *Yeshivot* and *Geonim* in Babylon and Israel contributed to the enhancement of the rabbinical office in Europe. In the tenth century various Diaspora communities were demanding the rights and responsibilities of leadership. These new communities created new areas of responsibility for the rabbi. By the eleventh century, rapid community growth and changing economies compelled these community volunteers to seek out scholars of Jewish law who would act on behalf of the community.¹³ Rabbis were now called upon to be teachers, preachers and spiritual heads of their communities.¹⁴

Those who were scholars achieved an elevated status, and were accorded positions of leadership within their communities. These positions entitled the scholar to earn his living as “Judge and Decider” for the community.¹⁵ In the second half of the fourteenth century the term

¹⁰ Jerome E. Carlin and Saul H. Mendlovitz, “The American Rabbi: A Religious Specialist Responds to Loss of Authority,” *Understanding American Judaism: Toward The Description of a Modern Religion*, ed. Jacob Neusner (New York, NY: Ktav Publishing House, 1975) 167. As a decisor, the rabbi interpreted *Halacha* when required, and also acted as judge in both civil and religious matters.

¹¹ Steinsaltz 470.

¹² Simon Schwarzfuchs, *A Concise History of the Rabbinate* (Oxford, UK and Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1993) 5.

¹³ Schwarzfuchs 10.

¹⁴ L.I Rabinowitz, “Rabbi, Rabbinate,” *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1971 ed. 1452.

¹⁵ Haim Hur Ben-Sasson, ed., *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976) 597. Ben-Sasson cites the following example from *Pesakim u-khetavim*, Decisions and Writings, to indicate that the scholar was very protective of his position “because of the money that comes to the pockets of the leaders from divorces and *halizah* and hearing the oaths of women and the payment for the blessings of betrothal and

semikhah, that had been used by the Sanhedrin to confer ordination, was brought back into usage.¹⁶ It acquired the force of hallowed authority. The statement by R. Moses Mintz that “every rabbi and expert has been ordained a rabbi by a preceding rabbi all the way back to Moses our Master ... and no householder ... may in any way question the words of the rabbi” gave rise to the concept of “the chain of ordination” which took on the force of *halacha*.¹⁷ In France this became problematic as local rabbis used the “ordination” to challenge the authority of the central leadership.¹⁸ Here also, the rabbi, functioning as a leader in his city, had the authority to maintain a yeshiva, conduct weddings and grant divorces, control the measures for selling liquor and oil, as well as engaging in activities that would revitalize the community and keep it vibrant.¹⁹ By the fifteenth century, there was one rabbi for each locality and this rabbi was supported by the community.²⁰

Throughout Europe, the rabbi was now a paid professional, albeit an elected paid professional. As there was, at this time, a surplus of ordained scholars no position was very secure. Some rabbis moved many times before finding a community that “fit.” Upon being hired, the rabbi received detailed contracts outlining both obligations to the members of the community, and compensation for services rendered. The contracts, however, were not a guarantee of position. The real power was in the hands of the lay leadership who elected the rabbi, and

espousal.” (Warsaw, 1882, #128.p.25).

¹⁶ Schwarzfuchs 31–33. *Semikhah*, ordaining through the imposition of hands, originated with Moses, who laid his hands on Joshua and so ordained him as God had commanded (Num 27:23). Ordination was usually conferred by a Master upon his disciple. The ordained individual was entitled to judge and decide law. In the second century of the Common Era the Emperor Hadrian forbade the granting of *Semikhah* in order to undermine the Sanhedrin. It was finally discontinued in the fifth century (425 CE), when the office of the Patriarchate ceased to exist. Reinstatement of the term *Semikhah* in the mid 1300s was an attempt to regulate use of the rabbinic title. Granting of *Semikhah* was now a written document. The qualified individual would now receive a certificate that enabled him to instruct and to judge, and to receive payment for these services. Also, the certificate named the rabbi with whom he had learned.

¹⁷ Ben-Sasson 598

¹⁸ Ben-Sasson 598.

¹⁹ Ben-Sasson 599.

²⁰ Rabinowitz 1447. The notion of *sekhar battalah* – that a rabbi should be compensated for loss of time (to engage in financially productive labour) due to preoccupation with the rabbinical office – was put into place.

negotiated his contract.

Despite the conditions framing his job description, and the tenuousness of the position it was the rabbi's role to provide the community with some kind of judicial and religious authority.²¹ Rabbinic authority now encompassed all issues of morality, family hygiene, diet, business relations, sexual life, education, dress as well as religious ritual.²²

Prior to emancipation, the communities in which the rabbis served were often defined by their host government through the imposition of social and political restrictions.²³ These limitations were the context for the maintenance of Jewish religious norms.

Coping with modernity

Jewish religious responses to modernity unfolded along distinctive lines influenced by the geographical regions in which they occurred. The role of the community-supported rabbi (in Southern and Western Europe) was now that of a scholar and a spiritual leader, an educator in Jewish law and lore, and a judge in civil matters.²⁴ Once judicial authority was abolished in Central Europe (1781–1784) Jewish community members no longer felt compelled to be guided by the appointed resident rabbi.²⁵

Rabbis had no power to enforce religious discipline, and Jewish religious affiliation now had an element of choice. Adam Ferziger comments that the secularizing trend gained momentum and that particularly in Germany, by the mid-nineteenth century over half the German-Jewish population no longer adhered to *halachic* observance.²⁶ The early Reform rabbis were concerned

²¹ Schwarzfuchs 12–13.

²² Carlin and Mendlovitz 169. The origins of this comment are to be found in an article titled "Judaism," *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, VIII (1935):431 by Ismar Elbogen

²³ Calvin Goldscheider and Alan S. Zuckerman, *The Transformation of the Jews* (Chicago, ILL: Chicago University Press, 1984) 14.

²⁴ Morton M. Berman, "The Role of the Rabbi: What Was, What IS, and What Shall the Rabbi Be?" (Address delivered at the Exercises of the Jewish Institute of Religion, New York, NY, 8 Oct. 1941).

²⁵ Adam Fertizger, "Constituency Definition: The Orthodox Dilemma," *Jewish Religious Leadership: Image and Reality*, Volume 2, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New York, NY: The Jewish Theological Seminary, 2004) 537.

²⁶ Fertizger 537.

to stop the flow of conversions to Christianity and assumed functions that were alien to the traditional rabbi. Carlin and Mendlovitz labelled these adjustments the *Protestantization of rabbinic function*.²⁷ Reform rabbis borrowed certain functions from the Protestant ministry and incorporated these into a new rabbinic role. This new role required that the rabbi be a strong preacher. Until the early twentieth century Orthodox rabbis did not consider preaching or giving a sermon a part of their synagogue duties. From Reform's beginnings preaching and sermonizing were part of the rabbi's job description. The Reform rabbi was also responsible for conducting the prayer service, and officiating at marriages and burials. Within Orthodox communities the obligation to comfort the mourner, and visit the sick was carried out by the *Bikur Cholim* committee.²⁸ In Reform congregations this function came under the heading of pastoral counselling and was seen as the bailiwick of the rabbi. Today, even where a synagogue has a committee fulfilling this function the family of the sick person will often feel slighted if the rabbi does not also come to visit. This aspect of congregational responsibility and duties was consistently included by the women in their lists of what they perceived as expectations and obligation from both the congregation and their husbands. One of the younger rebbetzins shared how

there's a lot of pressure to try to remember who's in the hospital, whose sick, whose died, whose having a great celebration simcha, what is going on with everyone. ... and I know I've embarrassed myself before by saying, you know, "Shabbat shalom," and "How are you doing?" to somebody whose just lost somebody and not knowing that – that's why I now get emails about people who have died in the community because it's just like it can be very embarrassing when you don't know that somebody's loved one has died.²⁹

A more seasoned rabbinical wife commented

²⁷ Carlin and Mendlovitz 186. Carlin and Mendlovitz italicise the phrase *Protestantization of rabbinic function*.

²⁸ Isaac Klein, *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1979): 271–272. The term *Bikur cholim* refers to the *mitzvah* of visiting the sick. The primary purposes of visiting the sick was to make the person comfortable, cheer him/her up, and pray for his/her recovery. This was such an important task that the early rabbinical teachers imbued this social obligation with religious significance. Traditionally the obligation is incumbent upon everyone. Many synagogues have dedicated committees to perform this *mitzvah*. In today's synagogues these committees often see their mandate as extending beyond physical sickness to include all aspects of healing.

²⁹ Interview, March 8, 2004.

I think that the congregation puts such demands on the rabbinical family so to speak, the wife, the children, the mother or father if they're alive, they put such demands that the fish bowl [image] comes into play and you feel like you are in a fish bowl. ... I don't find being in a fish bowl satisfying.³⁰

The seeds of the notion that a rabbi (and his wife) should be more involved with the emotional and spiritual life of his congregants can also be found in the Hasidic movement. In Eastern Europe – White Russia, Galicia, Lithuania and central Poland – the decline in the eighteenth century of the authority and autonomy of the rabbinate coincided with the advent of the Hasidism.³¹ While the rabbi was still considered a teacher and expert on religious law his role within Hasidic communities greatly diminished. The leadership provided by the *Rebbe/Zaddik* brought a new dimension to the rabbinical role. The *Rebbe/Zaddik* was the primary spiritual authority for his disciples, a teacher, a counsellor, and a friend, “and a confessor to whom the *Hasid* could unburden his heart.”³² The *rebbe*’s duties included pleading to God on behalf of his followers, and involving himself in their *daily* cares and anxieties.³³ These two apparently contradictory functions combined – educator and religious expert, and *Rebbe/Zaddik* – are sought after qualities in the contemporary North American rabbi. A point to which I will return later in this section.

Training for the North American rabbinate

Jick noted that intellectual leadership in Germany in the early part of the 1800s was preoccupied with issues of emancipation and assimilation and ignored the question of emigration.³⁴ Only in the 1840s did a handful of rabbis reach America: men without prior distinction, and with credentials that were frequently questionable.³⁵

³⁰ Interview, March 1, 2004.

³¹ Ben-Sasson 770.

³² Harry M. Rabinowicz, *The World of Hasidism* (Hartford, CT: Hartford House, 1970) 184.

³³ Seltzer 494.

³⁴ L. A. Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue, 1820–1870* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1976) 39.

³⁵ Jick 40.

In Canada, however, a different response was unfolding. As mentioned previously, the Jews living in the United States looked to their Christian counterparts in their desire to adapt, whereas in Canada, the nascent Jewish community looked not so much to their Christian counterparts but more to London's *Sephardic* community for guidance in its development. As indicated in the chapter on synagogue development, and as will be illustrated further in this chapter, the expectations placed upon Canadian rabbis by their congregations appear to be nuanced towards valuing tradition and ritual.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the one synagogue in what was still Upper and Lower Canada, Shearith Israel, had sufficient funds to engage a full-time religious leader. In 1847 Reverend Abraham de Sola came from England to take up the post. Raised in England, his father was rabbi of the Portuguese congregation in London and had ensured that his son received a thorough Hebrew education as well as comprehensive training in oriental languages, literature, theology and Jewish history.³⁶

Reverend De Sola was in frequent correspondence with Isaac Leeser, appointed *chazan* (1829) at Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia, and as such, must have been aware of the American congregational expectations of the "rabbi/reverend" role.³⁷ Jicks noted that Leeser was the only articulate religious leader of American Jewry at that time and that his function within his congregation strongly resembled that of his Protestant counterpart: conducting religious services, preaching sermons, supervising religious education, officiating at weddings and funerals, and performing pastoral duties.³⁸ Leeser and De Sola also recognized the importance of maintaining social contact with the non-Jews in their respective communities. Leeser contributed to Rupp's

³⁶ Sack, *History of the Jews in Canada* 137.

³⁷ Richard Menkis, "'In this Great, Happy and Enlightened Colony' Abraham De Sola on Jews, Judaism and Emancipation in Victorian Montreal," *L'Antisémitisme Éclairé: Inclusion et exclusion depuis l'Epoque des Lumières jusqu'à l'affaire Dreyfus*, eds Ilana Y Zinguer et Sam W. Bloom (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003) 330–331.

³⁸ Jick 67–69.

An Original History of the Religious Denominations in the United States in 1844.³⁹ De Sola affiliated with McGill University through his teaching, and saw much of his role as “building bridges between Jews and non-Jews.”⁴⁰

Leeser realized the need for “rabbis trained to serve American congregations” and established Maimonides College in Philadelphia July (1867).⁴¹ Unfortunately his prescience was not shared and the college closed on his death in 1868.⁴² Isaac M. Wise, attuned to Leeser’s concerns, persuaded thirty-four congregations to meet in 1873 to form the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.⁴³ In 1885 this same group sponsored the formation of Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati for students desiring to be Reform rabbis.⁴⁴

In the same way that the “Orthodox” response to the *haskala* had been formulated chiefly as a response to the Reform movement, now that Reform had established its presence, Rabbi Henry P Mendes, rabbi of New York’s Shearith Israel, and nephew of Abraham De Sola, called a meeting of his Orthodox colleagues to form a response to the growing influence of American Reform.⁴⁵ Despite his absence in American historical discussions of this event, Rabbi Meldola De Sola, successor to his father at the Shearith Israel in Montreal, and Rabbi Mendes’ cousin, was one of the active participants in this effort to “create a Jewish Institute of Learning ... [for] rabbis who would stand for the ‘Torah and Testimony.’”⁴⁶ Organized with “uncompromising adherence to the tenets of Orthodox Judaism,” Rabbi David De Sola Pool noted that their Orthodoxy was in fact the Judaism of historic American Sephardic synagogues, the adapted

³⁹ Jick 68.

⁴⁰ Menkis 331.

⁴¹ Jick 187.

⁴² Jick 187.

⁴³ Jick 190.

⁴⁴ Jick 190.

⁴⁵ Jeffrey S. Gurock, “Resisters and Accommodators: Varieties of Orthodox Rabbis in America, 1886–1983,” *The American Rabbinate: A Century of Continuity and Change: 1883–1983* eds., Jacob Rader Marcus and Abraham J. Peck (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1985) 12.

⁴⁶ Gurock 15; Brown 103.

Judaism of Isaac Leeser and Abraham De Sola.⁴⁷ For the East European immigrants now arriving to America, this was not Orthodoxy. Faced with the possible failure of trying to superimpose East European institutional forms on an increasingly Americanized community, established East European synagogues and Central European Orthodox synagogues came together in 1897 to found the Orthodox Union (OU) “to protect Orthodox Judaism ... and to protest against declarations of Reform rabbis not in accord with the teachings of our Torah.”⁴⁸ In 1897 the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary was founded to “promote the study of the Talmud and to assist in educating and preparing students of the Hebrew faith for the Hebrew Orthodox Ministry.”⁴⁹ In 1903 the Union of Orthodox Rabbis recognized it as the only legitimate *yeshiva* in North America and in 1915, a merger of the Etz Chaim High School, and the Rabbi Elchanan Seminary resulted in the creation of the Rabbinical College of America, and the Seminary became the sole *yeshiva* for training Orthodox rabbis.⁵⁰

The centrist group initially established by Sabato Morais, Henry Mendes and others, realized that they were no more comfortable with East European Orthodoxy than they were with Reform. The infamous banquet that accompanied the ordination of Hebrew Union College’s first class, in 1883, helped to hasten the establishment of a seminary “that would be true to the traditions of Judaism and fully at home in the culture of America.”⁵¹ In its early years however, it had

⁴⁷ Raphael 84; David De Sola Pool, “Judaism and the Synagogue,” *The American Jew: A Composite Portrait*, ed., Oscar I. Janowsky (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1942) 50. De Sola Pool wrote that “this American Orthodoxy adapted itself to the American environment, without sacrifice of essential Jewish values. It [had] an anglicized pulpit, an English-speaking rabbinate, and orderly ... services. It offered a modern Jewish education, and [believed] in ... secular education” (50).

⁴⁸ Jeffrey S. Gurock, “The Orthodox Synagogue,” *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed*, ed., Jack Wertheimer (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, 1987) 52. In his article for Wertheimer, Gurock noted 1897 as the year the OU formed; in his article for Marcus and Peck (p. 22), Gurock dates the OU from 1898 and his quote is taken from *American Hebrew*, (January 4, 1901): 231.

⁴⁹ Charles S. Liebman, “The Training of American Rabbis,” *Understanding American Judaism: Toward the Description of a Modern Religion*, Volume One: *The Rabbi and the Synagogue*, ed., Jacob Neusner (New York, NY: Ktav Publishing House, 1975) 224–225.

⁵⁰ Raphael 142.

⁵¹ Abraham J. Karp, “The Conservative Rabbi— ‘Dissatisfied But Not Unhappy,’” *The American Rabbinate: A Century of Continuity and Change: 1883–1983*, eds. Jacob Rader Marcus and Abraham J. Peck (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1985) 109–110; Sarna, *American Judaism*, 144–145.

difficulty drawing qualified faculty or students: Karp noted that in its first fifteen years it had graduated “less than a minyan.”⁵² In 1902, the Jewish Theological Seminary was reorganized under the direction of Rabbi Solomon Schechter, under whose leadership “the Conservative rabbinate took shape and became a factor in the religious life of American Jewry.”⁵³

By the turn of the century, “America was producing native-trained rabbis” who became for their congregants “visible symbols of those values which American Jews held dear.”⁵⁴ In the emerging American-Jewish pattern, congregational life continued to be dominated by laymen, and rabbis were frequently reminded of the precariousness of their positions.⁵⁵

The situation was not that different in Canada – reverends and rabbis rotated through the early congregations with great regularity.⁵⁶ The movement of religious leaders between synagogues is not confined to the early years. Often when a town was shrinking a rabbi had no choice but to seek alternative employment. On other occasions when communities were springing up in the newly built suburbs it offered many a rabbi a fresh start with a new and growing community. Sometimes there was not a good “fit” between rabbi and synagogue; and sometimes a rabbi would leave only to return a few years later much appreciated by his previously recalcitrant congregation.

⁵² Karp 113.

⁵³ Karp 113.

⁵⁴ Jonathan Sarna, “Introduction,” *The American Rabbinate: A Century of Continuity and Change: 1883–1983*, ed., Jacob Rader Marcus and Abraham J. Peck (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1985) 7–8.

⁵⁵ Jick 130. See also Stephen Fried, *The New Rabbi: A Congregation Searches for its Leader* (New York/Toronto/London/Sydney/Auckland: Bantam Books, 2002) for a more current view of this issue as well as Hasia R. Diner, “Looking for Leadership in All the Right (and Wrong) Places: The Place of the Laity in the History of American Judaism,” *Jewish Religious Leadership: Image and Reality*, Volume 2, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New York, NY: The Jewish Theological Seminary, 2004) 591–609, for another perspective on laity involvement.

⁵⁶ As with the individual synagogues sufficient data has been acquired to illustrate for each congregation its religious leadership from its beginnings til today. While the anniversary books of synagogues list their rabbis, sometimes even with anecdotes attached to each, the rabbis are presented within the framework of their synagogue. By listing rabbis according to congregation and city the pattern of movement of rabbis between congregations, and between cities across Canada, becomes clearer. Also with each new hiring one can speculate on the religious “drift” occurring in the congregation. Again time limitations require that this data, like the data on the synagogues, be set aside for a separate monograph.

In Montreal, as mentioned previously, seven rabbis had held the Temple pulpit prior to Nathan Gordon being hired in 1906, the Shaar Hashomayim had also experienced seven rabbis from its founding until the hiring of Rabbi Abramowitz in 1902, and the Shearith Israel, with the death of Meldola De Sola, had three rabbis in the ten years before Rabbi Bender was hired in 1928. The East European *shuls* remained mostly lay-led or relied on a *hazzan* for their prayer needs, calling on community rabbis for special occasions. B'nai Jacob in Montreal presented a challenge to fifteen individuals seeking to fill the position of religious leader for the community before hiring Reverend J. Kravetz in 1927 who then stayed for 20 years. The established Toronto congregations seemed to be more discerning in their hiring practices. Both the Holy Blossom and the Goel Tzedec experienced reasonably stable religious leadership in their early years. As mentioned previously most Toronto and Montreal congregations relied in the early years on their *hazzanim* to conduct services. In Winnipeg, from the arrival of Rabbi Kahanovitch in 1907 when he was unanimously elected by six congregations to be their rabbi; until 1956, one rabbi fulfilled the rabbinical function on behalf of several small Orthodox *shuls*.⁵⁷

It was not until the first decades in Toronto, and even later in Montreal that some of these congregations finally hired English speaking rabbis. Tulchinsky comments that

rabbinical influence in Canadian major cities during the early decades of the twentieth century was mixed reflecting both the growing importance of the United States where the Reform and Conservative academies were in the ascendent and the continuing association with British rabbinical leadership.⁵⁸

The role of the religious professionals in the congregation shows another dimension of the tension between continuity and change. In its early years, Holy Blossom employed reverends, who had a wide range of ritual skills, but not the learning or authority of a rabbi. When the congregation decided it needed an English-speaking preacher to give sermons and to be its representa-

⁵⁷ Rabbi Abraham Kravetz was the last rabbi to fill this supervisory position and he did so until his death in 1962.

⁵⁸ Tulchinsky 257.

tive to the larger community, it turned to the chief rabbi of England for recommendations; he sent, in succession, two Orthodox-trained minister-preachers.⁵⁹ Both left for more liberal congregations in the U.S. and were followed by one of the first graduates of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York: Rabbi David H. Wittenberg.⁶⁰ After two years, the contract of the Jewish Theological Seminary graduate was not renewed and Holy Blossom brought Rabbi Solomon Jacobs from England, who served until his death in 1920.⁶¹ As mentioned, Rabbi Jacobs, supporting a traditional orientation was able to restrain the pace of ritual innovation, with his death in 1920, the congregation affiliated with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.⁶²

From theory to application

By the time Rabbi Sachs, a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary (1916) came to the Goel Tzedec, it was firmly ensconced within the Conservative movement. Rabbi Sachs was with the Goel Tzedec for twenty years, arriving in 1926, and retiring in 1947. Speisman noted that Rabbi Sachs, “in line with the practice of his predecessors and with what Goel Tzedec had come to expect of its rabbis, was active in communal work outside the synagogue.”⁶³ During the course of his rabbinical career, Rabbi Sachs was involved in an active capacity with a diverse number of Jewish and non-Jewish communal organizations.⁶⁴ The rabbi’s role within the Canadian milieu had little in common with its Talmudic forbears. Speaking in 1948, barely a year after Rabbi Sachs had left his Conservative pulpit, Rabbi Dr. A. Feldman, President of the CCAR, noted:

⁵⁹ Tulchinisky 256. These were Dr. Barnett Elzas (1890–1893), and Rabbi Abraham Lazarus (1894–1900) both trained at Jews’ College in London.

⁶⁰ Speisman 52–53.

⁶¹ Speisman 53. Despite Rabbi Wittenberg’s apparent liberal tendencies and his satisfaction with his position, the officers of the congregation considered him too “Orthodox” for their tastes and did not renew his contract.

⁶² Speisman 215

⁶³ Speisman 234, fnote 21.

⁶⁴ Speisman 234. He was at various times involved with the Canadian Zionist Federation, B’nai Brith Anti-Defamation League, the Board of Education, The Jewish Big Brother Movement, the Family Welfare Bureau of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, Canadian Jewish Congress, and the Advisory Board of the Ontario Cloak and Suit industry, an Ontario Department of Labour position.

As in other aspects of Jewish living, so in the rabbinate, important changes have occurred. ... The Rabbis of today, specially in America have not the same function which the Rabbis ... in other ages had ... only the title is left, only the externals of the office remain. The content of the Rabbinate has changed. Its character is wholly different.... we today have priestly functions. We conduct services, we lead our congregations in public worship, we invoke blessings, we dedicate children, we officiate at weddings and funerals ... we today have Levitical functions ... we... are ... teachers. We are preachers ... in the eyes of our generation ... preaching has become our primary function. ... another role has been added ... ambassador to the Gentile.⁶⁵

From the early years of Jewish religious institutional development in Canada, there were Canadian born rabbis, for example, Meldola De Sola succeeded to the pulpit of Shearith Israel in Montreal on his father's death, and rabbis like Rabbi Berger, who was born in Winnipeg, and who returned from his training in the United States to serve in Canadian congregations, the Canadian Jewish religious leadership tended to be weighted with American born and American trained rabbis. Michael Brown noted that whatever adaptations were taking place in the religious sphere in the United States, these same adaptations were being transformed to accommodate the Canadian context.⁶⁶ There have been several situations where Canadian response, rabbinical and otherwise has differed greatly from that of seemingly like-minded peers in the United States. As noted previously when Rabbi Eisendrath vocalized his anti-Zionism from the Holy Blossom pulpit as well as in the pages of the *Canadian Jewish Review*, he alienated many of his congregants.⁶⁷ In the autumn of 1946, thirty-seven rabbinical students of the Lubavitch Hasidic movement arrived from Shanghai.⁶⁸ In retrospect their arrival has become one of those pivotal moments in the history of a community that has since become recognized as the ushering in of a "purer," committed and involved Orthodoxy. These refugees of the Lubavitch Yeshiva near

⁶⁵ Rabbi Dr. A. Feldman, "Rabbis in Fact: The Rabbi Formerly and Today," Commencement Address Given at the Ordination and Commencement Exercises of the Jewish Institute of Religion, New York, June 3, 1948. Reported in the *Canadian Jewish Review* (July 2, 1948) 9.

⁶⁶ Michael Brown, *Jew or Juif?: Jews, French Canadians, and Anglo-Canadians, 1759-1914* (Philadelphia/New York: Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 5747/1987) 104-105.

⁶⁷ Speisman 242.

⁶⁸ Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 284.

Warsaw, as well as others from Satmar, Belz, Klausenberg, and Tash added new vibrancy to the Montreal Orthodox community.⁶⁹ Although numerically small, these Hasidim were influential. Their arrival, and the arrival of refugees who were Orthodox but not Hasidic served as a prod to the Orthodox congregations. Canadian-born Jews were turning away from the Orthodox synagogues of their childhoods; the influx of active observant Jews modelled the possibilities of being both Canadian and observant. It is curious to note that a year after the first group of Lubavitch Hasidim arrived in Montreal a proposal went out to all the English-speaking rabbis concerning the organization of a Board of Jewish Ministers of Greater Montreal.⁷⁰ Two issues seem to guide the Board's formation: at that time, Montreal had a small number of rabbis (if one counts only those speaking English) and this was bound to change; and by providing a structure whereby rabbis could meet (regardless of ideological differences) would help maintain the perception that Montreal "is a tolerant community, far more united than most."⁷¹

Approximately twenty years later, in 1962, Rabbis Plaut (Reform), Wurzberger (Orthodox), and Rosenberg (Conservative), formed the Toronto Rabbinical Fellowship.⁷²

In the years directly after the war, a number of European-trained rabbis managed to obtain pulpits across Canada. At this time also, as pointed out previously in the chapter on religious institutional development, with families moving into suburban areas, synagogues were being built to service these families. Rosenberg comments that there were 206 synagogues by 1960, and that almost half of the additional synagogues identified as Conservative or Reform and these, unlike the Orthodox congregations, "had its own rabbi."⁷³

⁶⁹ Tulchinsky, *Branching Out*, 284.

⁷⁰ Shuchat 333–334. The rabbis participating in the Board's first meeting were Rabbi Charles Bender (Adath Israel); Rabbi Dr. Chaim Denberg (B'nai Jacob); Rabbi Dr. Samuel Cass (Hillel); Rabbi Jesse Schwartz (Zionist Organization of Canada); Rabbi H. Stern (Temple Emanu-El); Rabbi Maurice Cohen (Shaare Zion); and Rabbi W. Shuchat (Shaar Hashomayim); Stuart E. Rosenberg, "The Burgeoning Synagogue," *The Jewish Community in Canada*, Volume 2: *In The Midst of Freedom* (Toronto & Montreal: McClelland & Stewart Ltd, 1970) 62.

⁷¹ Shuchat 334.

⁷² Rosenberg 62.

⁷³ Rosenberg 66.

Gordon in his assessment of the role of the American suburban rabbi noted that “the Rabbi is a preacher, educator, youth worker and counselor, as well as recruiter of new members and the congregation’s ‘ambassador of good will’ to the Christian community.”⁷⁴

Ottawa journalist Max Bookman also penned a description of the “current duties of a Rabbi in Canada” and it is telling how the Canadian requirements differ from those of the American rabbi.⁷⁵ The main duties of a Canadian rabbi are

the religious leadership of his congregants, conducting services, preaching in the Sabbath and Jewish holidays, officiating at religious ceremonies such as marriages and burials. In many instances a Rabbi is also called upon to act as the religious school administrator and even as a teacher in a congregational school or a community Talmud Torah (Hebrew School) in addition to other duties. Many rabbinical leaders are also scholars, writers, authors as well as the executive head of a local or national organization.⁷⁶

The Canadian description emphasizes the role of the rabbi as teacher and scholar, and makes no mention of the expectations placed on the American rabbi: to be both a recruiter of new members and to represent the congregation to the non-Jewish community. Often, in Canadian communities, the size of the city or town in which the congregation is located, whether or not is the only Jewish congregation in the community, and whether the congregation has a history of interaction with the non Jewish community, are deciding factors as to whether the congregation adds “ambassador to the Gentiles” to the rabbi’s job description.

In their now classic work addressing the loss of rabbinical authority, Carlin and Mendlovitz were prescient in their assessment of the evolving role of the American rabbi, as they noted that “the scholar-saint role...the most characteristic rabbinical role in the Jewish community, ...submerged under the impact of Emancipation, [will] re-emerge as the most characteristic

⁷⁴ Albert I. Gordon, *Jews in Suburbia*. Beacon (Hill, Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1959) 89; 93.

⁷⁵ Max Bookman, “Orthodox, Conservative, Reform Congregations in Canada,” in *Canadian Jewish Reference Book and Directory*, ed., Dr. E. Gottesman (Montreal, QC: Central Rabbinical Assembly of Canada, 1965) 225.

⁷⁶ Bookman 225–226.

rabbinic role.”⁷⁷

The research of Steve Cohen and Arnold Eisen buttresses the value of the “scholar-saint role” especially for the unaffiliated Jew. During the course of their research, when asking interviewees who or what influenced their Jewish commitment, it was noted that for most of them “rabbis ... loomed large in [their] subjects’ impression of the synagogue.”⁷⁸

I loved what he said about Shabbat. It was the first time I ever heard a rabbi say you don’t have to do it like your grandmother. I never had that permission from a rabbi before. Always, it’s never enough.⁷⁹

Chaim Waxman, in his recent article concerning “the role and authority of the rabbi within a voluntary context” challenges the usefulness of the scholar-saint role with unaffiliated Jews today.⁸⁰ He comments that the three major rabbinical seminaries are trying to produce graduates who meet this qualification: rabbinical scholarship combined with spirituality.⁸¹ While the interpretation that the rabbinical schools have given to the scholar-saint role may not be an effective model, for the unaffiliated, or loosely affiliated, the *Rebbe/Zaddik* is viewed as very approachable and is doubly appealing when combined with scholarship. There are many congregations where the “scholarship factor” is of less suasion for the congregation than other traits a rabbi may have. For example, one rabbinical wife commented that how concerned she was that when her husband became a rabbi “he won’t have any time for Talmud whatever.”⁸²

In describing the myth surrounding the “Symbolic Exemplar,” Bloom states: “in his [the rabbi’s] very being, [he is] the quintessential Jew,” and that this legacy provides much of the

⁷⁷ Carlin and Mendlovitz 414.

⁷⁸ Cohen and Eisen 171.

⁷⁹ Riv-Ellen Prell, “Communities of Choice and Memory: Conservative Synagogues in the Late Twentieth Century,” *Jews in the Centre: Conservative Synagogues and Their Members*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2000) 312.

⁸⁰ Chaim Waxman, “The Role and Authority of the Rabbi in American Society,” in *Rabbinic and Lay Communal Authority*, ed. Suzanne Last Stone, The Orthodox Forum Series, Series editor, Robert S. Hirt (Jersey City, NJ: Ktav Publishers, 2007) 110.

⁸¹ Waxman 109–110. The three rabbinical seminaries are the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS), the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), and Hebrew Union College (HUC).

⁸² Interview, August 31, 2004.

rabbinic power to touch individual lives.⁸³ Not only does the congregant have expectations that his/her rabbi can work miracles but there is also a certain awe or attitude in which the rabbi is held. Several of the wives felt that this “awe” or respect towards the rabbinical position was more prevalent in Canada than in the United States. According to one rabbinical wife:

[F]rom what I know from our colleague friends in the States, especially in the greater New York area, rabbis there are treated as staff, and therefore, whatever they own there, they own your life, and it’s not like that here at all. ... I don’t know how much the attitude contributes to how we are in their home (this family lives in a synagogue-owned home), but it’s been fine.⁸⁴

Another wife also commented that they had remained with the congregation because they had been treated with such respect:

[P]eople treated the rabbi and his wife with respect from then [since they came to the congregation] until today. That is really one of the reasons why we are still here – I mean my husband gets opportunities to go to different places, or to change if he wanted to, but the people [in these other places], the respect that they had for the clergy, [was not the same].⁸⁵

A rarely discussed issue is the political “fit” with the congregation and the larger Canadian Jewish community. One of the points that Rosenberg raises in his discussion on the “Americanization of Canadian Judaism” is that without its own modern rabbinical school, Canadian rabbis (as already indicated) are imported from the United States.⁸⁶ According to Rosenberg, on account of the training of Canada’s religious leadership “the inexorable conclusion [is] that Canadian Judaism must reflect...the design and structure of American Judaism.”⁸⁷

Rosenberg wrote this in 1970, and almost forty years later, Canada’s traditional orientation continues to exert its influence on the American rabbis who serve Canadian Jewish communities.

⁸³ Jack H. Bloom, *The Rabbi As Symbolic Exemplar: By the Power Vested in Me* (New York/London/Oxford: The Haworth Press, 2002) 136–137.

⁸⁴ Interview, July 19, 2005.

⁸⁵ Interview, April 26, 2004.

⁸⁶ Rosenberg 68. Rosenberg is not considering the Hasidic seminaries, or the Orthodox rabbis who provide private “*smicha*” in his discussion.

⁸⁷ Rosenberg 68.

Speaking at the 1993 UAHC Biennial Convention, Rabbi Alexander Schindler renewed his call for giving a greater role to non-Jews in the synagogue.⁸⁸ Rabbi Daniel Gottlieb, then Executive Director of Canadian Council of Reform Rabbis noted “the consensus of our rabbis and lay leaders does not support Rabbi Schindler’s position.”⁸⁹ Similarly the rabbis within the Canadian Conservative movement tend to be more traditional than their colleagues in the United States. The majority of Conservative congregations in Canada continue not to count women in a minyan.

Of the 59 women I interviewed, 11 were married (or had been married) to husbands born or raised from a young age in Canada. The majority (41) of my interviewees were married to Americans. Most of the Americans have also been trained in American rabbinical institutions. Despite the fact of their training in some cases, they have moved to Canada to serve in the more traditional Canadian Jewish communities, where a number of them are part of the resistance to any liberalization of the Canadian Jewish pulpit. Several of the wives commented how the “push for egalitarianism...is not quite as bad here in Canada” and therefore their husbands were able “to accommodate within what [they] believe.”⁹⁰

Each rabbi brings his home experience and his training to a wholly new environment. Most of them also bring their wives and families. There are several rabbis who have chosen to leave their families behind but these tend to be rare. Not only does the rabbi have adjustments to make but his wife and children must also adjust, not all succeed.

Rabbi J. Pearlson of Temple Sinai in Toronto, in opening the CCAR Plenary in 1993 in Montreal, had noted that his own marriage and his own parenting taught him what the textbooks could not: “not all wives are happy being in the goldfish bowl of public exposure; not every

⁸⁸ Reform Judaism Canada, Volume 2, #2 (Winter 1994/5754) File MG 3 A 84 Canadian Council for Reform Judaism, Ontario Jewish Archives.

⁸⁹ Reform Judaism Canada, Volume 2, #2 (Winter 1994/5754) File MG 3 A 84 Canadian Council for Reform Judaism, Ontario Jewish Archives.

⁹⁰ Interview, August 15, 2005.

spouse can still smile week after week from the painful social-snare that is a place at the head table.”⁹¹

In the next chapter the wives will share how they cope with “the goldfish bowl of public exposure,” adjust to congregational requirements, and create a niche (or not) for themselves within the congregation.

⁹¹ Rabbi Jordan Pearlson, “Mi Li Umah Ani – A Senior Rabbi’s Perspective,” Keynote Address. CCAR Plenary, Montreal, 1993. Ontario Jewish Archives, Temple Sinai Box, MG 3 A9 52-5-1.

CHAPTER FIVE FACING CHALLENGES: MAINTAINING THE SELF

[M]ost Jews...choose to make a distinction between public life and private life ... individuals who choose a public Jewish identity indicate that it is central to their lives.¹

[A]s the wife of the rabbi there are expectations on you sort of where you eat, where you shop, what you shop, what you are doing on Shabbat, what you are not doing on Shabbat, and because you are under such a microscope to see ... what your level of observance is, does she come to *shul*, does she not come to *shul*?²

The chapters “Women’s Place in Canadian Jewish History” and “Jewish Institutional Development in Canada” describe the swiftness with which the majority of North American Jews discarded visible Jewish ritual practices and dress in order to conform to the cultural norms of the host community. Cohen has noted that with modernity – at least ideally – the individual now had two personas: public and private.³ The practice of religion was to be confined to one’s private or home space and not to be “seen” in public discourse. Congregational rabbis, as indicated in the previous chapter, are both visible and public with their Jewish practices. By default, his wife also is seen as a “carrier” of a public Jewish identity. The perception of the rabbinical couple as “public” Jews, or as one wife described herself and her husband, as the “professional Jews” in the congregation, implies that members of a congregation are “justified in watching” the rabbinical couple to ensure that they uphold and maintain these visible levels of Jewish practice.

While most of the women I interviewed insisted they had not *intentionally* married pulpit rabbis, they emphasized that they could not imagine being married to someone who was not committed to developing themselves Jewishly, be it through religious, social, communal, or educational involvement. What these women did not expect, either once their husbands had

¹ Stuart Schoenfeld, “Canadian Judaism Today” in *The Canadian Jewish Mosaic* eds M. Weinfeld, W. Shaffir and I. Cotler (Rexdale, ON: John Wiley & Sons Canada Ltd., 1981) 142; 147.

² Interview, July 19, 2005.

³ Cohen 16–18.

decided to become congregational rabbis or even in those situations where their husbands-to-be were already pulpit rabbis, was the extent to which *their* public behaviours became subjected to the scrutiny of the congregation.

Having accumulated several thousand pages of transcription from the fifty-nine interviews, this chapter will focus on those responses that reflect the concerns and activities of the rabbinical wife, her public role, and how these impinge on her sense of self within that role.

The first section will provide the biographical material for the fifty-nine women interviewed from across Canada. This material covers religious affiliation, ages, place of birth, religious affiliation of family of origin, peer group affiliation, and education.⁴

The raw data of the interviews will be presented in seven broadly defined categories, and within each category the specific questions raised in the interviews will be addressed. The boundaries between categories are not fixed so there is overlap between the various issues raised. The second section "Entering the rabbinical world" deals with the concerns raised by this potential change in status as well as what image or response was evoked by the term "rebbetzin." What were the values inherent in this term that raised concerns for them or not? The third section "Congregational activities: Expectations and obligations" examines the very broad category of expectations and obligations arising from her perceptions of the role, the congregation's perceptions, and those of her husband. What does she do in her position, and what does she think she is supposed to do? The fourth section "Taking responsibility and sharing the load" addresses the question of career: is it his career or their career? How does she see herself in relation to her husband's position and to what extent does this affect her pursuit of her career? This issue loomed large for a number of women as the desire to be supportive to their husbands at times

⁴ In the process of validating the transcripts one of the interviewees requested that the contents of her interview not be used for personal reasons. Although unable to use specific statements made by her, the quantitative aspects of her responses remain a part of my general discussion.

tended to collide with their ability to maintain their own sense of self at least professionally. The fifth section "Creating space for personal and spiritual growth" looks at the area of spiritual and personal growth and the extent to which these can be suppressed in the face of congregational realities. A secondary aspect of this issue was that of private time and the ability of the rabbinical wife to maintain her own sense of privacy. The sixth section "Life in the small and not so small communities" looks more closely at the size of the congregation and how this factor, as well as that of city size, influences the participation of the rabbinical wife, as well as being a possible contributing factor to her isolation. The seventh section "Overall satisfaction with congregational life" looks at the levels of satisfaction experienced by the women in their congregations as well as their perceptions of the "rebbetzin" as role model. This last section also addresses some of their thoughts for the future of their particular role within the congregation

The interviewees

Biographical Information

The fifty-nine women interviewed ranged across the Jewish religious continuum in terms of congregational affiliation. Twenty-three women are connected to Orthodox congregations, of these twenty-three, two are Sephardic. As mentioned previously, these two women are English speaking and were raised in Ashkenazi homes. Three women were raised Lubavitch and follow Lubavitch *minhagim*, customs. Twenty-four women are married to rabbis employed by congregations affiliated with the Conservative movement. Fifteen of these women live in Ontario, ten residing in the Greater Toronto area. Of the remaining nine women, four are in Montreal, two in Winnipeg, and three in British Columbia. Six women are married to rabbis affiliated with Reform congregations; two women are affiliated with Reconstructionist congregations, and four women are married to rabbis whose congregations, while not affiliated with any movement, define themselves as traditional.

Of the fifty-nine women interviewed, five were widows, two became so shortly after I had interviewed them, two were divorced, and three had separated. Two of the women interviewed were newlyweds in their first year of marriage and congregational life.

Three of the women had been involved in rabbinical life for almost fifty years, and were still associated with their first pulpit. Fourteen women have been in the congregational rabbinate for over thirty years: only three of these women had experienced being associated with one congregation in that time. Nine women had been involved for over 20 years, and of these only one was still in her husband's first congregation. Sixteen women had not yet experienced 10 years in the congregational rabbinate, and three were just beginning (one year or less). Nineteen women were with their first pulpit – seven had moved five or six times, some changing countries in their husband's quest for a congregation that "fit." The youngest rebbetzin at the time of my interviewing was twenty-five years old.

Table I: *Generational denominational divisions*

Denomination	Generational Divisions		
	Silent Generation 1925–1944 (13)	Boomer Generation 1945–1960 (29)	Generation X 1961–1981 (17)
Orthodox	6	8	5
Sephardic		1	1
Lubavitch			3
Conservative	5	12	6
Reform		5	1
Reconstructionist		2	
Traditional	2	1	1

Table II: *Denominational divisions by region*

Canadian Regions	Denominational Divisions				
	Orthodox	Conservative	Reform	Reconstruction	Traditional
Atlantic Region	3				
Quebec	9	4	1	1	3
Greater Toronto	4	12	1		1
Ontario sans Toronto	4	3	3		
Winnipeg	1	2			
British Columbia	2	3		1	

Social Context

Aside from factors such as social milieu and family orientation, a third key aspect of identity is the time period in which an individual is born, as well as the place of birth. The age range of the women covers three generational divisions: the “Silent Generation,” 1925–1944; the “Boomer Generation,” 1945–1960; and “Generation X,” 1961–1981.⁵

Thirteen of the women interviewed were born between 1925 and 1944 – three were born prior to 1930, six in the 1930s, four prior to 1945. Of these thirteen women, one was born in Canada and one came to Canada from New York as a young child, and one was born in Europe and came to Canada as a preteen. *Forward* reporter Nathaniel Zalowitz, writing in the 1920s commented,

there are ghettos for the foreign Jews and ghettos for native-born Jews ... four-fifths of all the Jews ... practically have no social contact with the Gentiles ... for the overwhelming majority of the Jews in America assimilation in any true sense of the term is out of the question ... despite the fact that we have attended American public schools and universities, read American paper and books, patronize the same theatres and subways and buses, we are ... keep ourselves at arm's length from the bulk of the American population.⁶

⁵ As with will such divisions, these dates are somewhat arbitrary and open to modification, a few years either way. Their importance to me was as a tool for finding a category for comparison that was not fixed to denomination, but rather to age. It was remarkable how closely these seemingly imaginary generation boundaries actually reflected how these particular women presented themselves. Of course, nobody ever fits completely into any slot.

⁶ Nathaniel Zalowitz, *The Forward*, July 4, 1926, quoted in Moore “The Emergence of Ethnicity” 114; Moore

Zalowitz has succinctly outlined the “growing-up” experiences of this cohort. The American women, and to some extent the Canadian women also, were growing up at a time when second generation Jews were sending their children to public schools that were predominantly Jewish. Deborah Dash Moore, in her doctoral thesis, addressed the inherent conflict experienced by some second generation American Jews: on the one hand, they chose not to retain their Jewish ties, and yet, on the other, they still could not, and had not, fully assimilated into American life. Moore later comments that the synagogue at this time became a place for ethnic-based socializing and group activity.⁷ Karen Brodtkin, in discussing her parent’s New York milieu (1930s) also notes that the “ethnic and classic sense of what it meant to be a Jewish man or woman—were forged in residentially and occupationally ghettoized communities.”⁸

By the end of the 1930s, the notion of “ethnicity,” first used by Jewish scholars and theorists in the 1920s, was reintroduced to the American public.⁹ With the removal of racial references as markers for identifying Jewishness, some Jewish academics promoted “ethnicity” as the new marker.¹⁰ Once the second generation began to move away from wholly Jewish neighbourhoods, ethnicity as a form of self-identification was seen as a sign of incomplete integration.¹¹ Lucy Dawidowicz noted that “[World War II] had a transfiguring effect on American Jews and their idea of themselves as Jews.”¹²

The publication of Will Herberg’s book *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American*

uses the translation of Zalowitz’s article reprinted in the *Jewish Daily Bulletin*, July 7, 1926.

⁷ Moore, “The Emergence of Ethnicity” 289; also Moore, “Chapter 3: A World of One’s Own,” in *At Home in America*, 62–87.

⁸ Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ, and London: Rutgers University Press, 1998) 5; also see Moore, “The Emergence of Ethnicity”; and Moore, *At Home in America*.

⁹ Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006) 190.

¹⁰ Goldstein 193.

¹¹ Brodtkin 35–36.

¹² Edward Shapiro, “World War II and American Jewish Identity,” *Modern Judaism* Volume 10, #1 (February 1990): 65. Shapiro is quoting from Lucy Dawidowicz’s *On Equal Terms: Jews in America, 1881–1981* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982) 129–130.

Religious Sociology, in which he argued that Americans no longer identified ethnically but in religious terms was a boon to the Jews.¹³ Even though Jews comprised only 3% of the American population, Herberg, by giving Jews parity with Protestants and Catholics, had, with his publication, enabled Jews to be seen now, not only as legitimate representatives of the “American Way of Life,” but also miraculously “constituting one third of the American population.”¹⁴

With the new emphasis on religion rather than ethnicity as the locus of group identity, Jews, Herberg noted, were abandoning their ethnic ways and becoming a purely religious community.¹⁵ Sociologists Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenblum noted that the “significance of the Jewish organization must be understood: it partly fills the vacuum created by the erosion of the natural community of family and neighborhood.”¹⁶

By joining an Americanized synagogue, Jews were joining the American middle class. In the process of “Americanizing” these Jews abandoned or substantially modified those practices which they thought would inhibit their integration, and retained through reinvention and transformation, certain levels of observances to ensure group survival.¹⁷ Researchers at the time noted that those practices which were more readily abandoned included those which made large and repeated demands on time and energy (e.g. daily prayer), and those which found little cultural support or understanding in the wider society.¹⁸ Also dropped were those practices which tend to segregate Jews from their neighbours such as dietary laws.¹⁹

¹³ Shapiro 81; Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1960)

¹⁴ Shapiro 81.

¹⁵ Herberg 31–35.

¹⁶ Steven Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity* (New York and London: Tavistock Publications, 1983) 43; Cohen is quoting from Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenblum, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier: A Study of Group Survival in the Open Society* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979) 252.

¹⁷ Cohen 25–26.

¹⁸ Cohen 25.

¹⁹ Cohen 25.

Twenty-nine of the women are part of the baby-boomer generation: eight of the women were born between 1945 and 1950; fourteen between 1951 and 1955, and seven between 1955 and 1960. Of this cohort, five were born outside of North America, one came to Canada at a young age; seven are Canadian born, one of whom was raised in the United States, and fourteen of the women are American-born.

Sociologist Herbert Gans, writing in the 1950s about suburban Jews, noted:

Cultural patterns which are transformed into symbols ... must be easily expressed and felt, without requiring undue interference in other aspects of life ... [such as] Chanukah, a minor holiday in the religious calendar has become a major one in popular practice, partly since it lends itself to impressing Jewish identity on the children.²⁰

As the holidays that tend to be child-centred are also the ones that are food-centred and celebrated mainly in the home, the onus is then on the women in the household (mother, grandmother, wife) to ensure that the family maintains its holiday celebrations. A number of the women expressed that kashrut had been maintained because their grandmother, their mother's mother, lived with them. For several of the women, once their grandmother died, kashrut in the home ceased to be an issue. One rabbi's wife noted:

We were brought up in a kosher home – the reason for that was mostly because my grandmother – my mother's mother lived downstairs from us, and she was a much more traditional Jew, so my mother thought in order to make her happy... my grandmother had a major influence on our lives I guess.²¹

Other women also indicated that even where the grandparents did not live with the family their presence offered a contrast to their non-religious homes. One rabbinical wife noted,

I grew up really with no religion in the house but my grandmother who survived the Holocaust – both my grandmother and my grandfather, my father's parents came in '58, after the Hungarian revolution, came to Israel ... and they were very religious so at the age I believe I was whatever age I was in '56 or '58. I was introduced to a really new part of the family and because we went to visit my grandparents every

²⁰ Herbert J. Gans, "Symbolic Ethnicity in America," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Volume 2, Number 1 (January 1979): 10.

²¹ Interview, April 21, 2004.

weekend, every Shabbat then we were there for Friday *kiddush* and then we were for *havdala*.²²

Another wife said:

We didn't observe kashrut (or we weren't *shomer shabbat*) but we got together as a family at my grandfather's for Shabbat every Friday and observed all the holidays. [At] my grandfather's [it] was a traditional *Shabbos* dinner with friends and singing and that kind of stuff.²³

In the early decades Jewish men and women dropped the extra letters in their too Jewish names to fit into North American society; from the 1940s through to the 1960s young Jewish women (and men) shaped their noses in order to fit in.²⁴ Essayist Daphne Merkin noted in an article for *Esquire*, that she had "never met a Jewish girl or woman who did not take it as the highest accolade to hear it observed that she didn't look Jewish."²⁵

Evelyn Kallen, in her discussion on renewed Jewish ethnic pride after the Six-Day War, quotes Rabbi Richard Lehrman, "It may be just a coincidence, but before 1967, I spent a lot of time visiting people in the hospital who were having their noses fixed. I haven't had one of those in four years."²⁶

During this same time period, the late 1960s and early 1970s Jewish women who had taken their Jewish education seriously were told there was no place "in the adult congregational world for the woman skilled in liturgy or sermonizing or Jewish studies."²⁷ While Jewish women in the United States were pushing the "Jewish ritual" envelope and participating in Jewish religious

²² Interview, June 18, 2004.

²³ Interview, December 20, 2004.

²⁴ Sander L. Gilman, "The Jewish Nose: Are Jews White? Or, the History of the Nose Job," in *The Other in Jewish Thought and History: Constructions of Jewish Culture and Identity*, eds. Laurence J. Silberstein and Robert L. Cohn (New York & London: New York University Press, 1994) 391.

²⁵ Daphne Merkin, "Dreaming of Hitler," *Esquire* (April 1989) in *Two Jews, Three Opinions: A Collection of Twentieth-Century American Jewish Quotations*, eds. Sander Brawarsky and Deborah Mark (New York, NY: Perigee Books, 1998) 307.

²⁶ Kallen, *Spanning the Generations*, 118. Quoting Rabbi Richard Lehrman of Atlanta from "The American Jew Today," *Newsweek* (March 1, 1971): 56.

²⁷ Sylvia Barak Fishman, *A Breath of Life: Feminism in the American Jewish Community* (New York/Toronto: The Free Press, 1993) 7.

life, Sheva Medjuk notes that within the Canadian Jewish community, Jewish women continued to bear the blame for low Jewish birth rates, and high assimilation rates.²⁸ Rabbi Stollman, hired in 1949 to be the religious leader of Windsor's Shaar Hashomayim, was instrumental in developing the Shaar's religious school, noting

[D]on't forget that girls are children too! The little girl of today is the young woman of tomorrow with the responsibility of building a home. The education she receives today will determine what kind of Jewish life she will perpetuate in her own home.²⁹

In the early 1980s, Harold Himmelfarb, R. Michael Loar and others addressed what was being called "denominational divergence."³⁰ "Denominational divergence" maintains that the frequencies of Jewish activity among the Orthodox have been growing, or holding steady, while those of the Reform and the unaffiliated have been diminishing.³¹ Steven Cohen examined selected measures of Jewish identification by denomination (lighting Sabbath candles, attendance at services, synagogue affiliation, Jewish organizational membership, Jewish giving) among the Orthodox and noted that for that group all measures of Jewish activity had increased between 1965 and 1975 such that the Orthodox of 1975 were more Jewishly active than their 1965 predecessors.³² In terms of Conservative and Reform identified third-generation Jews were somewhat less observant in 1975 than they were in 1965.³³

²⁸ Sheva Medjuk, "If I Cannot Dance to It, It's Not My Revolution: Jewish Feminism in Canada Today," in *The Jews In Canada*. Eds Robert J. Brym, William Shaffir and Morton Weinfeld (Toronto, ON: Oxford University Press, 1993) 354.

²⁹ Jonathan V. Plaut, *The Jews of Windsor, 1790–1990: A Historical Chronicle* (Toronto, ON: Dundurn Press, 2007) 142. Quoting from Rabbi Stollman in article "New Shaar Hashomayim Religious School to open September 7," in *Jewish Community Council Bulletin* 8(8), July 18, 1949.

³⁰ Jay Y. Brodbar-Nemzer, "Divorce and Group Commitment: The Case of the Jews," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Volume 48, No. 2 (May 1986): 333; also Steven Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity* (New York and London: Tavistock Publications, 1983), and Harold S. Himmelfarb and R. Michael Loar, "National Trends in Jewish Ethnicity: A Test of Polarization Hypothesis," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Volume 23 (2) (1984): 140–154.

³¹ Cohen 70.

³² Cohen 73.

³³ Cohen 71.

Charles Liebman, writing in 1979, commented:

Many first generation American Jews who identified themselves as Orthodox in the past were not observant of Jewish law in their personal lives ... They may have identified themselves as Orthodox out of sympathy with Jewish tradition, for familial or social reasons, ... or for any other number of reasons. That is much less true of second and probably even less true of third generation Orthodox Jews in America. Whereas fewer Jews identify with Orthodoxy today, those who do so are far more committed to its norms.³⁴

Seventeen women are part of the group called Generation X. As will be noted in later discussions, most of the women in this group were raised in homes that strongly identified with Jewish observances and ritual. Of these seventeen, six were born in early 1960, six in the mid to late 60s, and six throughout 1970. Eleven of the women are American born, two were born outside of Canada, one arrived as a young child and went through the Canadian school system, and seven are Canadian born.

Aside from the age range, where they were born also provided some interesting data. In the first cohort, the Silent Generation, five of the women were not raised in the cities where they were born, and in the Boomer Generation, three of the women were not raised in their cities of birth. In the cohort Generation X, six of the women were not raised in their city of birth. Within the Boomer Generation, six of the women were born outside North America, whereas the other two cohorts each had only one not native to either the United States or Canada. In the first cohort, seven of the women were born in New York State – six in New York City and Brooklyn; in the second cohort, only three women were born in New York City and Brooklyn, and in the third cohort, also, three women were born in Brooklyn and New York. Overall, most of the women, twenty-seven, came from the east coast of the United States – New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Connecticut were named as home states, but the majority came from New York State: thirteen were born there, twelve of them from the greater New York City area. From

³⁴ Charles Liebman, "Orthodox Judaism Today," *Midstream* (August/September 1979): 20.

the central and western states three came from Illinois, and one each hailed from California, Texas, Missouri, Minneapolis, Colorado, and West Virginia. Of the eighteen women born, or raised in Canada from a young age, ten were from Montreal, and five from Toronto.

Four women were daughters of rabbis, and three had some family connections with rabbis and in fact this was raised as an indicator that they knew either exactly what was involved in the position and therefore wished to avoid it or they knew exactly what was involved and could cope with it. For example in the former situation, one rabbinical wife commented:

I come from a rabbinic family – not my father but all my uncles and cousins were rabbis, and I did not like the lifestyle. Especially I did not like the lifestyle of the wife. ... I saw my aunts involved in community life unpaid, I saw that their husbands worked long hours, and were not always available for their own children.³⁵

In the latter situation one of the women spoke about how coming from a rabbinical home had helped her to cope with the situation:

I come from a rabbi's home so I was all rigged up for what this was going to be – because I had seen it in my own home with my own mother. I had examples of what you could do, or maybe would plan to be doing. ... for me it was almost familiar.³⁶

The majority of the women, twenty-four, grew up in fully observant *shomer shabbat* homes.³⁷ A number of the women grew up in homes that ranged from no religious practices (five), to a minimally Reform affiliated home (five), active Reform affiliated home (four), traditional but not observant or kosher (six), active and observant Conservative home (eight), and kosher but not religious home (seven).³⁸ In three of the secular homes, the families were staunch Yiddishists, so that there was a strong Jewish cultural base within these homes even if not a religious base. The one common denominator in these homes is that even when the parents were not religious, or were unaffiliated they were very supportive of Zionist related causes. This was

³⁵ Interview, May 10, 2004.

³⁶ Interview, April 25, 2004.

³⁷ *Shomer shabbat* is the standard reference for a religious household: meaning one who observes the Laws of the Sabbath.

³⁸ See Appendix VI for a detailed description of these categories.

not a finding I expected.³⁹ For example one wife commented,

[W]hen we did something or when we went somewhere it was Reform, but there wasn't very much ritual in the house at all. ... Then from 10th grade on – they joined a Reform synagogue and I went to youth group activities. ... They were always Zionists so they were always pro-Israel, and supportive in that way.⁴⁰

Another commented, “[my] parents were never really affiliated in any way ... she bought matzah on Pesach, that was about it. I belonged to Habonim as a teenager, and that was a very important part of my life.”⁴¹ One rabbinical wife noted in amazement, considering her active involvement today in all things Jewish that her “family was not particularly Zionist, did not discuss Israel at the dinner table, nobody went to Israel, Israel was very far away and connections were tenuous at best.” Yet this rabbinical wife had chosen to do one of her university years in Israel.

In the experience of two women who were not from rabbinic families, a favourite family member had taken the time to introduce them to some of the practices and rituals of Judaism. One of the women noted that when an aunt had invited her to spend the High Holidays with her, “seeing a Jewish holiday being celebrated in a way that seemed to meet me spiritually ... really excited me and I remember saying to myself if this is Judaism I want it.”⁴²

While it is more probable than not, that someone who grows up within a supportive religiously observant or culturally observant milieu will be more eager to maintain their Judaism in adulthood what about those women whose main connection with their Judaism was through social rather than familial influences. What were the social influences especially, that enabled women not raised within an observant milieu to be public Jews in a society that encourages the religious to be so in the privacy of one's home?

³⁹ American Jewish history informs its readers that adherents of Reform were not Zionists until after the formation of the State of Israel; likewise within the Orthodox movement Zionism was initially perceived as a political rather than a religious obligation. With these thoughts in mind I had not expected the such strong statements, especially from American born Jews, about their family's Zionist leanings.

⁴⁰ Interview, July 19, 2005.

⁴¹ Interview, June 2, 2004.

⁴² Interview, March 8, 2004.

Table III: *Family of origin practices*

Home Practices	Silent Generation 1925–1944 (13)	Boomer Generation 1945–1960 (29)	Generation X 1961–1981 (17)
Shomer Shabbat	10	6	8
Conservative: active and observant		6	5
Kosher but not religious	3	4	
Reform: Active		2	2
Reform: Minimal		4	
Traditional but not religious		3	1
Yiddishist		2	
Few or no religious practices		2	1

Categories defining family-of-origin home observances:

- 1) Shomer Shabbat: active and observant Orthodox home. The laws of *kashrut* followed within and without home, Shabbat observances and all holidays observed, family attended services. Women usually attended Jewish day schools.
- 2) Active and observant Conservative home: The laws of *kashrut* followed within home (not necessarily outside the home), Shabbat observances and all holidays observed, family attended services. Women attended either Jewish day schools or were fully involved in synagogue's Hebrew school, attended Camp Ramah in summer.
- 3) Kosher but not religious home: Women learned basics of *kashrut*; parents did not affiliate with a synagogue; no Shabbat or holiday observances. Women took it upon themselves to attend services.
- 4) Active Reform affiliated home: Families attended Temple regularly on Shabbat, involved in Temple activities (choir, youth group, Hebrew school). Major holidays observed. *Kashrut* is a non-issue.
- 5) Minimally Reform affiliated home: Religious practice limited to some holiday and Shabbat attendance at Temple.
- 6) Traditional but not observant or kosher: Some knowledge of holidays and Shabbat; no consistent observances. For example there would be a Passover seder and matzohs purchased for the seder but not necessarily for consumption over the holiday. *Kashrut* not observed.
- 7) Yiddishist: Shabbat and holidays, when observed, had no accompanying ritual or prayer; Yiddish spoken in the home. Women attended Yiddish day schools or afternoon schools; belonged to Yiddish youth groups.
- 7) No religious practices: Secular homes with some knowledge of the holidays; no religious practices and no affiliation.

Friendship Circles

Besides asking about the religious practices of their family, several questions addressed their friendship circles. Who were their playmates in elementary school, their peers in high school and to what extent did this change, if it did, once they went to college. In particular were their friends mostly Jewish or not. In the group born between 1925 and 1944 only three of the thirteen mentioned having contact with non-Jews in their formative years (late childhood through adolescence). One of the women attended an Orthodox day school; while her family and personal friends were Jewish her parents sometimes entertained non-Jewish friends.⁴³ One who grew up in Canada noted that she was the only Jewish person in her street and so her playmates were Catholic and Protestant.⁴⁴ As she got older she made friends with Jewish girls and after elementary school her friendships remained within a Jewish milieu. The third woman in this group who was also not raised in a totally Jewish milieu noted that in her early years her two best friends were Catholic and Protestant.⁴⁵ This rabbinical wife also mentioned that “among my Jewish friends, I was curious Jewishly – I wanted a Jewish life,” so that her ability to maintain her non-Jewish friendships did not dissuade her from creating a Jewish lifestyle for herself.⁴⁶ Three of the women drew both close friends and acquaintances from a wholly observant Jewish milieu, the remaining seven women also counted only other Jewish young women as friends but the Jewish practices of these particular friends was quite varied. Seven of the women were active participants in Jewish youth groups.

The second cohort, born between 1945 and 1960 illustrates a very slight shift away from the all Jewish communities in which the previous group on the whole was raised. In this group six of the women spent their early years in a predominantly Jewish milieu – one of the main differences

⁴³ Interview, May 10, 2004.

⁴⁴ Interview, June 8, 2004.

⁴⁵ Interview, June 2, 2004.

⁴⁶ Interview, June 2, 2004.

between this group for example and the previous cohort is that the public practices are more varied. In the previous group one might differ in their home practice but still attend an Orthodox synagogue. In this group, even though the locale could be 90 % Jewish, their Jewish friends could be Yiddishists, secularists, Reform, Conservative or Orthodox. Four of the women counted non-Jews as their friends prior to reaching adolescence. Of the seventeen women raised in the United States, three of the women socialized only within an observant Jewish milieu. Twelve of the women, especially after elementary school, moved within predominantly Jewish milieus, although not necessarily religious ones. Several of the women commented about their parents' support of the public educational system. One wife, raised in a densely Jewishly populated state noted that her parents "were great proponents of free public education so we went to public school."⁴⁷ She also noted that while she had attended an elementary school that was "90 or 95 % Jewish" that due to the demographics of the city in which she lived, by the time she was attending public high school the Jewish population in her school was hovering around 60% of the total school population.⁴⁸ A second wife noted that her parents were also "from the generation [that believed] the 'melting pot,' public school, was some how good for me."⁴⁹ She also noted that her school was 80% Jewish. Six of the women, in the United States, Canada, and South America, lived in mixed neighbourhoods, either in their elementary school years, or later in high school. Several indicated that their closest friends through adolescence were non-Jews. Jewish contacts were often developed during their high school years through the Jewish youth groups available in their communities. Of the 29 women in this cohort, twenty-one participated in summer camps and/or youth groups through either their synagogue, or Hebrew school. Those camps and youth groups attended by more than one interviewee were Young Judea, B'nai Akiva,

⁴⁷ Interview, March 21, 2007.

⁴⁸ Interview, March 21, 2007.

⁴⁹ Interview, December 20, 2004.

Habonim, Camp Ramah and USY groups, NIFTY, and B'nai Brith. In the third group, born between 1961 and 1981, of the seventeen women, nine are from observant homes. Of these nine, except for one who grew up in a small town, four are raised in almost wholly observant Jewish milieus, and three were raised in predominantly Jewish but not necessarily solely observant milieus. Of the eight raised in the United States only one was from a predominantly non-Jewish milieu which changed when she left home for college. The other seven women were raised, even though their parents might have lived in a small town or suburb, within solidly Jewish neighbourhoods. In this group, there is no longer the range of youth groups and/or summer camp experiences that were available to the second cohort. In this group, nine women attended youth group and/or summer camp. The most commonly mentioned being Camp Ramah and USY (4), NCSY (2), and Reform youth groups (2). One wife also mentioned occasional activities within a B'nai Brith group.

For the twenty-seven women not raised in observant homes, many of them emphasized the impact of their youth groups on their present day practices, particularly Camp Ramah, the summer camp sponsored by the Conservative movement took on special meaning often moving the women beyond the practices of their parents. One woman noted,

Well, I guess I can tell you that my life changed when I started going to Conservative camp, and when I started going to Camp Ramah I became more conscious and more involved I would say in my Jewish life. I mean I was always involved, but it became even more involved.⁵⁰

For some, it was possible to carry their experiences at camp into their city life. One wife noted

we were a very tight knit group that had gone to Ramah together. So we all had the same values and we remained friends after camp in the city. And we all met, it was a very social group at the synagogue, that we had all been at camp together, and that just kind of continued back into the synagogue.⁵¹

In looking at the extent to which these women maintained either their childhood friendships,

⁵⁰ Interview, June 7, 2004.

⁵¹ Interview, August 15, 2005.

or at least mingled with those similar to their youthful friendships, the second group, the Boomer cohort, experienced the greatest shift in social circles between youth and adulthood. For the group born between 1925 and 1944, the majority (10) had grown up amongst Jews and counted their major friendships amongst Jews in adulthood. Of the remaining three, who did feel that their friendships had shifted, one noted that her range of friendships had “broadened,” one noted that from having only observant friends, she now included non-Jews in her friendship circle, and the third had moved from being friends mainly with non-Jews as a child, to sustaining only Jewish friendships. For the Boomer group, nine of these 29 women experienced observable shifts in their friendship circles upon reaching adulthood. For most it was a question of leaving behind not only their non-Jewish playmates and friends as they embarked on a dedicated Jewish path, but also, in some cases, those Jewish friends who maintained secular as opposed to Jewish lifestyles. One rabbi’s wife noted

there was radical break from my public school friends that sort of ended ... – because I became strictly kosher, and the group that I was hanging with didn’t really understand my commitment to Judaism or my keeping kosher.⁵²

In the third cohort, only three of the seventeen women experienced any shift between their childhood and adolescence and their adulthood. Both of these women had moved beyond their secular milieus and associated mainly with like-minded friends who were also religiously active. For most of these women, in all three cohorts, the desire to pursue a more observant Jewish lifestyle took place as they moved out of the family home to pursue either their education or undertake further explorations in their Judaism. For example, one wife commented that “during Rosh Hashonah [of her] sophomore year [she] decided [to] become *shomer Shabbos*.”⁵³ Another noted

I became *shomer shabbat* when I was 17, moved out of my father’s house – my mother died when I was about 16, and I moved out of my father’s house when I was

⁵² Interview, July 20, 2005.

⁵³ Interview, August 17, 2005.

about 17. Not for any unhappy reason, I just wanted my own home – and I kept *kashrut* and Shabbat, and became pretty traditional in my practice.⁵⁴

Education

Of the thirteen women born between 1926 and 1944, six attended Jewish elementary day schools, and three of these women then completed their matriculation in public high schools. Although the sample is small, it reflects what Deborah Dash Moore noted as the tendency for “second generation Jews to send their children to predominantly Jewish public schools.”⁵⁵ Most of these women attended public schools where the majority of students and teachers were Jewish. Also depending on where they lived or the moves parents had made one attended a Jewish day school but went to a public high school, whereas another attended a public elementary school and then went to a Jewish all-day high school. Nearly all the women in this group attended Hebrew afternoon schools.

Of the twenty-nine women who are part of the Boomer generation, only two attended Jewish day schools for their elementary and high school education. One wife had attended a public elementary school and then switched to a Jewish high school, while another had attended an elementary Jewish day school and then switched to a public high school. Of the fourteen American women who attended public schools, seven were educated in predominantly Jewish schools; of the six Canadian women in this group who were enrolled in public schools, 4 attended predominantly Jewish populated schools. Of the twenty-two women attending public schools, two attended after school Yiddish classes, and eleven attended after school Hebrew programs; seven had no formal Hebrew school education.

Amongst the seventeen women who are part of the group called “Generation X,” nine of the women received their elementary and high school education in Jewish day schools. One

⁵⁴ Interview, June 2, 2004.

⁵⁵ Moore, “The Emergence of Ethnicity” 289.

rebbetzin, who lived in a small town was home-schooled until she was old enough to attend a Jewish high school away from home. Of the seven women who attended public schools, only two were in schools with large Jewish populations, and six also attended afternoon Hebrew school. Notably of the nine women who attended Jewish day schools, five of them were born and raised in Canada.

Most of the women have some form of post secondary training. Of the thirteen women who were born prior to 1945, eleven have their Bachelor degrees, four have their Master degrees, and one has her PhD. Of the twenty-nine women who are part of the Boomer generation (1945–1960), four have PhDs; thirteen have their Master degrees, one trained as a lawyer, twenty four have one BA/BSc or more, five have teacher certification in addition to their Bachelor degree, and four went from secondary level education either into teaching, or some form of administration or entrepreneurial work. Among the seventeen who are part of Generation X, two have PhDs, nine have MAs, three rabbinical wives have two MAs, 14 have their Bachelor degrees, one has a double BA, and one is working on her BA in Education. Two of the women have high school and seminary education. Regarding seminary education, many observant women take one year of intensive Jewish study prior to either marriage or to attending university. In the first cohort, only one of the wives attended seminary and it was in conjunction with attaining her teaching certificate. In the second cohort, three women attended a seminary for one year, and in the third cohort, five women attended seminary. Sixteen of the 59 women were formally engaged in Jewish study at the undergraduate and graduate level.

Table IV: *Education*

Education	Generational Divisions		
	Silent Generation 1925–1944 (13)	Boomer Generation 1945–1960 (29)	Generation X 1961–1981 (17)
Elementary: Jewish	6	4	9
Elementary: Public	7	23	7
Afternoon Hebrew School	7	12	6
High School: Jewish	3	5	10
High School: Public	9	21	7
After-school Hebrew	9	14	5
Diploma/Teaching Certification	1	5	1
Seminary	1	3	5
Bachelors	11	24	14
Masters	4	13	9
PhD/Law/Medicine	2	5	3

Identity formation

As noted earlier, most of the women encountered were raised and educated in the United States. Many attended public schools, and have their degrees from secular universities where they were exposed to the non-Jewish culture. Identity is understood by the majority of identity theorists as being connected to one's social environment.⁵⁶ Eric Erikson, for example, viewed the formation of identity to be the gradual process of personal development and socialization.⁵⁷ Stuart Hall considers identity to represent the convergence of "the resources of history, language and culture" in the construction of an identity.⁵⁸ Even though Erickson and Hall developed universally applicable theories, their concepts adapt easily to discussions concerning Jewish notions of identity. For example, Miriam DeFant, in her thesis on identity issues, builds on these

⁵⁶ Miriam A. DeFant, "Returning to Judaism: Ethnic Identity, Religiosity, and the Sense of Self" (PhD Thesis, University of Massachusetts, 1989) 20.

⁵⁷ Eric H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Co., 1968) 159–161.

⁵⁸ Hall, "Introduction," 4. Stuart Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs Identity?" in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, eds. Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay (London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1996) 4.

theorists, and emphasized that the Jewish individual's identity is the product of the interactive relationship between the individual and his/her contact with the family, social group and culture.⁵⁹ For those women raised in homes consistent in their observances, be they Reform, Conservative or Orthodox, educated through the Jewish day school system, and who socialized within a mostly Jewish milieu, it is not totally unexpected that they would establish public Jewish identities. What is most striking is the women who had none of these factors in evidence in their lives and yet they too took upon themselves visible Jewish identities.

One wife commented

the guys I dated in high school were never Jewish, but I always had a boyfriend in ... in these other cities for [Jewish] youth group. ... the boys I dated at home weren't Jewish, and I tended not to bring them home. Did those two worlds ever mix? No, never, they didn't. And college – *how did I get to where I am now who the heck knows?*⁶⁰

In the first cohort the women were raised by knowledgeable Jewish parents, even though there might have been inconsistencies in some of these homes, Jewish practices were in place and understood. All of these women received some form of Jewish education and all had Jewish social ties. Within the second cohort practices are no longer maintained automatically, even those where parents might have been knowledgeable about their Judaism. There is a much greater variety in this cohort of how one practices their Judaism. Although one wife in describing her home said:

[My] mother grew up in a house that was completely non-religious. {This} would be a positive word – the way she describes it – it was like anti-Jewish ... my father grew up – his parents were [not knowledgeable] he became an affirmative Jew. When he married my mother he said, "I want you to light candles." So my parents took on their Judaism.⁶¹

Also in this group, there is a much greater mixing of Jewish and non-Jewish friendships. As

⁵⁹ DeFant 21.

⁶⁰ Interview, December 16, 2004. Interviewee's emphasis.

⁶¹ Interview, December 20, 2004.

noted thirteen in this group attended public schools where the majority is not Jewish. In the third cohort there is a shift again to where most of the women are being raised by those parents who have chosen to maintain Jewish practices in their home. For example, one rabbinical wife in sharing about her home life, noted:

We used to eat kosher in the home but eat non-kosher out of the home. That ended when probably my older sister, who is two years older than I, was approaching Bat Mitzvah; so when she was about 11 or 12, and I was about 9 or 10, we sort ... we gave up seafood, and then all of a sudden we were dairy kosher out of the house.⁶²

In this cohort also, only one of the women had no formal Jewish education, and her main peer group in her youth was non-Jewish. In the larger discussions of Jewish identity the factors that influence an individual's life too often get overlooked.

For example, an issue that consistently stressed in discussions of Jewish identity is the place of modernity, or emancipation in the construction of a Jewish identity. For example, Laurence Silberstein and others, have noted that discussions of Jewish identity tend to assume a core shared Jewish identity based on a "shared history."⁶³ Historians and scholars rarely explored individual identity formation prior to emancipation, thus lending credence to the notion of a common Jewish identity. For example, Geoffrey Wigoder, in a 1995 conference paper, succinctly commented, "You well know the historical background. Jews had a more or less uniform religio-ethnic identity until the Emancipation."⁶⁴ Douglas Kellner challenges this "before and after" approach to identity development. He notes that "anthropological folklore," has contributed to the prevailing notion that prior to the onset of modernity, identity "was fixed, solid and stable," a "function of predefined social roles" which defined the individual's unquestioned position within

⁶² Interview, July 19, 2005.

⁶³ Laurence J. Silberstein, "Mapping, Not Tracing: Opening Reflections" in *Mapping Jewish Identities*, ed. Laurence J. Silberstein (New York & London: New York University Press, 2000) 2.

⁶⁴ Geoffrey Wigoder, "The Jewish World in Turmoil" in *Papers Delivered at the Second Pan-American Academic Conference in Rio De Janeiro, 1995* (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1995) 39.

his/her kinship system.⁶⁵ Frieda Furman perpetuates this approach to discussions concerning Jewish identity in her dissertation, where she states that prior to modernity “personal identity was constructed and maintained within a *Jewish* frame of reference.”⁶⁶ Kellner argues that while identities are still relatively fixed as identity “comes from a circumscribed set of roles and norms,” modernity has brought with it the option to construct one’s identity from previously unavailable social roles.⁶⁷ Even as one is shifting and altering one’s identity, there are parameters within which specific norms, customs and expectations continue to exist.⁶⁸

It is curious to note the concerns raised by today’s American Jewish identity theorists. In particular David Hollinger, and others, have recognized that with the weakening of religious Judaism as a distinguishing marker of Jewish identity, American Jews today are striving to reassert their racial identity.⁶⁹ Hollinger notes that if one sidesteps traditional definitions of Jewish identity, there is no “vanishing American Jew” but rather large numbers of Jews who identify as Jewish plus other, with other being a non-Jewish racial, ethnic or religious aspect.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Douglas Kellner, “Popular Culture and the Construction of Postmodern Identities,” in *Modernity and Identity*, eds. Scott Lash and Jonathan Friedman (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1992) 141. In terms of identity before emancipation Steven Cohen noted three elements contributed to collective Jewish identity: the public nature of religious identity, the comprehensive character of community life and culture, and the profound sense of distinction in his *American Modernity and Jewish Identity* (New York and London: Tavistock Publications, 1983) 13.

⁶⁶ Frieda Kerner Furman, *Beyond Yiddishkeit: The Struggle for Jewish Identity in a Reform Synagogue* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1987) 12. Her emphasis.

⁶⁷ Kellner 141, 143.

⁶⁸ Kellner 142.

⁶⁹ For recent writings regarding the race, whiteness, and hybridity issues within contemporary Jewish identity, see David Hollinger. “Jewish Identity, Assimilation and Multiculturalism,” in *Creating American Jews: Historical Conversations about Identity*, ed. Karen Mittleman, Brandeis Series in American Jewish History, Culture and Life, National Museum of American Jewish History (Brandeis: University Press of New England, 1998) 52–59; Ann Pellegrini, “Whiteface Performances: ‘Race’, Gender, and Jewish Bodies,” in *Jews and Other Differences: The New Jewish Cultural Studies*, eds. Jonathan Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) 109–149; Ammiel Alcalay, Exploding Identities: Notes on Ethnicity and Literary History,” in *Jews and Other Differences: The New Jewish Cultural Studies*, eds. Jonathan Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) 330–344, and Vincent Brook, ed., *You Should See Yourself: Jewish Identity in Postmodern American Culture* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2006).

⁷⁰ Hollinger 55. His deductions were based on the 1990 National Jewish Population survey, and are reinforced by the more recent 2001 American Jewish Identity Survey. The survey differentiated between *halachic* and non-*halachic* Jews, and included those households with children where one partner was not Jewish. The numbers of Jews who identified as Jewish but not religious were 1,120,000; the number of non-Jews living in professed

None of these factors were part of the Jewish identity issue for the Generation X cohort. Eisen and Cohen, for example, examined in detail the move towards what could be termed “self-selective Judaism” in their publication *The Jew Within*, the concerns raised by their interviewees for community, for “authentic Judaism” were not mirrored in the women I encountered. While the outer trappings of identity can be chosen, it appears at least from the sample presented here, that Jewish identity is very much influenced by one’s family, friends and educational experiences.

Entering the rabbinical world

As indicated previously, education is very much a factor in shaping Jewish identity. It is also a factor in determining one’s path in life as eight of the women met their future husbands, either attending the same high school, or in the same youth groups while still in high school.

The women indicated that they saw their role as an extension of their already intense commitment to Judaism. One rebbetzin stated,

It is my life and I love Judaism, and I love promoting it. I’m not attached to this role. [Its] ... Judaism I care about but not ... like oh I’m gonna marry a rabbi – like that wasn’t – I was marrying someone who loves being part of Judaism, and was active in it, and who could teach me so much and the world and that was attractive.⁷¹

The very term rebbetzin is fraught with notions arising from previous eras. In the Eastern European shtetls, the rebbetzin often provided for the financial well-being of the household, working as a vendor, a merchant or a pedlar.⁷² There were instances where the rebbetzin, due to the limited financial support provided her husband, was given the monopoly (via her husband)

Jewish households: was 2,165,000, and the number of Jews professing other religious was 1,465,000. See Egon Mayer, Barry Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, *AJIS Report: American Jewish Identity Survey 2001: An Exploration in the Demography and Outlook of a People* (American Jewish Identity Survey 2001.pdf., June 30, 2003). Research originally published in 2001 by The Graduate Center of the City University of New York, Reissued in 2003 by The Center for Cultural Judaism. [12/5/2006].

⁷¹ Interview, December 20, 2004.

⁷² Rabinowicz 207.

for selling *shabbos* candles and yeast by many communities.⁷³ In fact this issue of the lack of financial support came up in several interviews. One of the women recalled that when she told her grandfather her husband to be was a rabbi he was quite dismayed as “he really felt that I wouldn’t have a life...in his day rabbis made a living with their hand-out – and you basically just got donations from people for particular tasks that you did.”⁷⁴ Another wife recounted that her mother’s concept of a rabbi (drawn from her parents)

was somebody who wasn’t dressed well, was really poor, [and] had to beg for everything they had to eat.... Once she saw actually that we lived ok, that we were going to have an income, and live alright she calmed down about it.... I think that was her biggest opposition to [my marrying a rabbi].⁷⁵

Several of the wives mentioned concerns around appearance and dress. In his short novella, “The Rebbetzin,” Chaim Grade describes Perele, upon whom

these old fashioned clothes only enhanced her noble bearing ... this was the way a rebbetzin should dress. Her dark-red dress had long tight sleeves, a tightly drawn waist, and padding on the hips – a style that had long since seen its day. The sleeves barely revealed the tips of her fingers, and the skirt only the tips of her high-heeled shoes.⁷⁶

One rabbinical wife, whose license plate is Rebbetzin, commented that

the rebbetzins I know are always wearing long skirts, very conservatively dressed, not a lot of make-up, not a lot of jewelry, and I guess their personalities are more staid: they blend in a crowd...[laughter]. I’m just trying to think of the women I know who are in that and I’ve even only been to rabbinical assemblies in the US where there are spouses and stuff – yeh it’s the stereotypical look that I don’t think I (and I’ve been told I don’t) [have].⁷⁷

Another young rebbetzin, from Generation X, commented that she preferred to be called a rabbi’s wife “as the term rebbetzin in my mind is like someone you know like curly in their hair,

⁷³ Menahem M. Brayer, *The Jewish Woman in Rabbinical Literature: A Psychohistorical Perspective*, 2 vols (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1986) 57.

⁷⁴ Interview, July 7, 2006.

⁷⁵ Interview, June 2, 2004.

⁷⁶ Chaim Grade, “The Rebbetzin,” in *Rabbis and Wives*, trans. From the Yiddish by Harold Rabinowitz and Inna Hecker Grade (New York: Vintage Books, 1982) 22.

⁷⁷ Interview, August 16, 2005.

and in their 60s and 70s.”⁷⁸ A second rebbetzin, also from the third cohort, had commented that her role model for a rabbi’s wife was her rabbi’s wife as she was growing up, and that

the person that I saw all the time really didn’t fit that old – image of a rabbi’s wife that you think of – I guess most people think of right away – always by the rabbi’s side and having people over all the time, their house always open and you know cooking all the time and you know just being a rock for the rabbi.⁷⁹

This rebbetzin, a professional in her own right, was most emphatic about how she brings a new understanding to the role because she works and is not (in her perception) overly involved with the congregation; at the same time she indicated:

But you know I feel like being a rabbi’s wife and being in a rabbi’s family it’s not just a job it’s your lifestyle.... I just wanted to be that rabbi’s wife who invited people over, I’m much more open,... my house is much more open than I ever thought it would be.⁸⁰

Aside from issues around livelihood, entertainment, and dress, the ease with which the idealization of women’s domestic leanings, rooted in the secular ideology of the Victorian Period, meshed with the expectations of the domestic role of Jewish women, reverberated well into the middle of the twentieth century. The understanding seemed to be that the main role of a Jewish woman was to be found in the conduct of her own household.⁸¹ In the Conservative movement for example, the role of rebbetzin “was primarily that of Jewish wife and mother, [providing] a home rich in tradition and Jewish experience.”⁸² While on one level these are images and descriptions from another place and another time, the social meanings carried by the term rebbetzin continue to be present and influence perceptions of a rabbinical wife’s role. To tap into their ideas of what it means to be a rebbetzin the following question was posed: Do you

⁷⁸ Interview, May 13, 2004.

⁷⁹ Interview, July 21, 2005.

⁸⁰ Interview, July 21, 2005.

⁸¹ Norma Fain Pratt, “Transitions in Judaism: The Jewish American Woman through the 1930s,” in *Women in American Religion*, ed. Janet W. James (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980) 214. Fain quotes Rose B. Goldstein.

⁸² Lynne Heller, “The Pulpit Rebbetzin: Para-Professional? Wife Support System? Career Woman?” *Women’s League Outlook* 50 (Spring 1980): 12.

recall any image conjured up by the phrase “rabbi’s wife” or “rebbetzin”? At the time when most of these women were marrying, the role of the rabbinical wife seemed to be one of complete involvement in congregational life or very infrequent involvement. Curiously the focus on appearances and image are only evident in the Boomer Generation, and Generation X. The cohort of women born between 1925 and 1944 either shrugged and indicated that they could not recall any image associated with the phrase “rabbi’s wife” or “rebbetzin,” or the memory was recalled of the involvement or not of the rabbi’s wife of their parents’ synagogue, or of the involvement of relatives married to rabbis. The responses of this group seemed to be untouched by the generalizations and mythical perceptions that affected the other two cohorts. One of the wives from the first cohort commented that “the word rebbetzin is very prevalent now – at my time it wasn’t – ... the word Rabbi’s wife is ok but they did not use the word rebbetzin.”⁸³

The second two cohorts, while believing the “image” attached to the rebbetzins of previous years, perceived themselves as challenging that image or not feeling beholden to perpetuate it. One rabbinical wife, from the second cohort, commented that when she and her husband were in his first pulpit, as assistant rabbi, that the senior rabbi’s wife and herself demonstrated what she called two models of involvement in the congregation.

So there was actually like two models: there was the senior rabbi’s wife, she wasn’t that old but she was the older rebbetzin who, you know, did the *hashgacha* for the *shul*, and you know – and all the different things that went on; and then there was me. [I] worked full-time and had my first son, [he] was born two years after we got there. But it was the other model, someone that was involved as much as I could be involved, but also was working outside the home, whatever. So it was kind of, I think, nice cause people saw that there was two different ways of doing it.⁸⁴

As addressed in the previous chapter, the role of the rabbi has changed significantly. The rabbi’s role is perceived by many as a career opportunity and not necessarily a calling. This in turn influences how his wife and the congregation may perceive her role. In contrast to the notion

⁸³ Interview, August 1, 2004.

⁸⁴ Interview, July 14, 2005.

of rabbi as professional, Rabbi Bloom's articles describe the pedestal aspect of the rabbi's role. This tendency to view the rabbi and his wife as the "rabbi and the rebbetzin," "no matter how close you are to people" was an issue for a number of the women. For example, one rebbetzin noted that growing up in her parents' home (within a *shomer shabbat* milieu), she would spend Shabbat always going to other people's houses,

but here – I had nobody practically of my own kind, you know the Shabbat: Friday night Saturday you know I didn't have anybody ... and that was a very very big adjustment for me to make I managed.... I still miss it to this day.⁸⁵

Social distance is created not only by differences in religious practices between the rabbinic couple and members of the congregation, there is also the question of friendship in general terms.

One wife raised the question:

[W]here do you draw the line in terms of friendships – it's difficult to make friends.... Are they members of the congregation first and then your friends? Or is it the other way around?... And what about [political differences on religious issues], it made us feel friendships are a very difficult thing within the *shul* community.⁸⁶

Another wife shared having

feelings of disappointment – [that] people – did not realize I'm not just the rabbi's wife – I'm a person with feelings – we'd been devastated.... [With] all the stuff that's going on how could they not call me and say "How ... are you doing? Are you ok?"... So that really hurt.⁸⁷

More of these concerns will be addressed in the sections discussing expectations and obligations and personal growth.

It might seem odd that so few of the women interviewed initially welcomed being married to a congregational rabbi. As noted already, to marry someone learned in Jewish texts and living a Jewish life was viewed as exciting; to marry someone who would be providing religious leadership to a congregation was not.

⁸⁵ Interview, April 26, 2004.

⁸⁶ Interview, August 17, 2005. Note that the same date attached to an interview is not an indicator that the material is drawn from the same interview. It was not unusual to do two and three interviews on the same day.

⁸⁷ Interview, August 17, 2005.

One rebbetzin shared her frustration and dislike of congregational life, noting that she had never cared for it:

It's funny that, you know, I stayed in it so long, but there's nothing about it that appealed to me, I don't think. I'm trying to think – no I don't know what to tell you – I can't be a cheer leader for it. I would never – I wouldn't do it again – I wouldn't advise anyone to do it – it is so isolating – for you and for the family. I don't see there is anything in it to that price is worth it – I just wanted to be Jewish, I didn't want to *make* anyone Jewish⁸⁸

This rabbinical wife is one of the seventeen who met their husbands while they were studying for their *s'micha*. One wife for example, was engaged to her husband while he attended medical school but by the time they married he had switched to a *s'micha* program. Five of the women married men who either were working in fields other than rabbinic, or on educational paths other than rabbinic at the time of their marriage. Thirty-seven of the women commented that they knew they were marrying rabbis. Six of the women met their husbands when they were employed in a rabbinical capacity by their parents' congregations. Of this thirty-seven, sixteen of the rabbis had *s'micha* but were working either in Jewish education, or some other aspect of Jewish communal service. Only one of the women had married her husband after he had already received his *s'micha*, but prior to his obtaining a congregational placement. One of the women was engaged to her husband while he was studying, and by the time they married (one year later) he had received his *s'micha*, and been placed in a position. Of the twenty women marrying rabbis with congregations, seventeen were as one wife recalled, "blissfully ignorant" of what life with a rabbi entailed and had no idea (unless they had rabbis in the family), what was involved. One rebbetzin, now in her 37th year of marriage, shared that when her husband to be asked her to marry him, she

panicked and said, "I can't marry you you're going to be a rabbi." After a really stressful weekend he sat me down and he said, "You're marrying me, not the rabbinate," and I fell for it. [laughter] ...Many years later he quoted to me from the

⁸⁸ Interview, June 2, 2004. My emphasis.

Birkat Ha-Mazon: *na'ar hayiti gam zakanti* – “I was a youth and I have aged.” We were young and I think neither of us knew what we were getting into – so.⁸⁹

One rebbetzin emphasized that when she married her husband was a rabbi, but

was not going to be a pulpit rabbi – he decided after two years ... to make a career switch and I nearly divorced him. It wasn't in the *ketuba*. I wasn't supposed to be a rebbetzin, so. But I had a very good friend who is a pulpit rabbi's wife ... and she said, “It's going to be ok, people are nice.”... I always remind her that she told me it would be ok.⁹⁰

When I asked her to explain further her concerns with being a rabbi's wife, she responded,

I guess I was afraid of what it was going to be like, and whether people would be demanding and whether it would be ok – and [historically] there was always this – these rebbetzins that were practically employed by the synagogue – they had their – they were being hired as well as their husbands – so when you think back to a million years ago you know have this image that it enveloped your life.⁹¹

Another wife noted that while she was thrilled by the thought of marrying a rabbi, initially the fact that her husband had been trained at the Reconstructionist College concerned her:

[T]he fact that he was going to be a rabbi I thought was very cool ... because it was someone who I assumed would desire the same lifestyle that I wanted... – a kosher home, some level of Shabbat observance, the same values to my kids, a commitment to day school all of that ... but ... when I found out when he was going to be a Reconstructionist rabbi – very different from what I grew up in – I was traumatized and ... ready to stop dating him at that point.⁹²

For the women who had not planned on marrying rabbis, but thought they were marrying teachers, lawyers, chaplains, most adapted to their new situation. There are some significant differences between the three groups.

In the first group, eleven of the thirteen women met their husbands either while they were studying for their *s'micha* (five women), or once they had been placed with a congregation (six women). In one situation, the husband been on a different education path at the time of their meeting but by the time they married he was attending rabbinical school. In the second situation

⁸⁹ Interview, December 17, 2004.

⁹⁰ Interview, July 14, 2005.

⁹¹ Interview, July 14, 2005.

⁹² Interview, July 19, 2005.

the husband had *s'micha* but was working as an educator in a non-Jewish milieu. In the second group, eight of the women married men who were active congregational rabbis. As mentioned previously one of the women met her husband shortly after he received his ordination when he had not yet been placed. Eighteen women met their husbands when they were engaged in studying for their *s'micha*, eleven of whom were planning to be congregational rabbis. Three of the women married when their husbands were either already working or studying in a wholly non-rabbinic field and the decision for him to switch careers was jointly made. In the third group only five of the women married men who were active congregational rabbis at the time of marriage. However, in this group only one woman's husband was working and studying outside of the rabbinical field at the time of marriage. Of the remaining women, three married their husbands while they were in the process of obtaining their *s'micha* to become congregational rabbis, and seven married men who had their *s'micha* but were working or studying in other fields. Differences between the groups in terms of their overall satisfaction with congregational life and how this affected their perceptions of their rabbinical role will be addressed in the last section of this chapter.

As mentioned previously, the rabbi has attained a unique status in contemporary North American Jewish society.⁹³ According to Bloom the fact that a rabbi is perceived as a "symbolic exemplar" by his congregation means the rabbi is a) treated and expected to act as a stand-in for God, and b) is a walking, talking symbol of all that Jewish tradition represents, and I would add according to the congregants' understanding of their tradition.⁹⁴ Bloom also noted that more often than not the congregation looks upon his wife (and children) in a similar vein.⁹⁵ One of the

⁹³ Chaim Waxman, "The Role and Authority of the Rabbi in American Society," in *Rabbinic and Lay Communal Authority*, ed. Suzanne Last Stone, The Orthodox Forum Series, Series editor, Robert S. Hirt (Jersey City, NJ: Ktav Publishers, 2007)

⁹⁴ Jack H. Bloom, *The Rabbi as Symbolic Exemplar: By the Power Vested in Me: For Rabbis, Other Clergy, and the Laity Who Care About Them and Their Sacred Work* (New York: Haworth Press, 2002) 135; 140.

⁹⁵ Bloom 136–137.

ways some congregants show their regard (or not) toward the rabbi's wife is often by calling her rebbetzin. A number of reasons were given for those not wanting to use the term – aside from concerns that they preferred to be called by their names and not an honorific. One rabbinical wife stated that she

would probably describe [herself] as being the old fashioned kind of rebbetzin, where we – I do a lot of entertaining, was very active in sisterhood. When we first moved here, I wasn't working yet because I – we hadn't gotten our papers; and I had to wait and then find a job, so I became active in sisterhood. We started having all the *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* families over for a brunch or lunch once a month, on Sunday.... We would have USY over for *Shabbos* dinner, we did a lot of that – and just active.⁹⁶

As will be seen, even those who do not view themselves as “rebbetzins” entertain guests and open their homes. Also, for many of the women Sisterhood activities especially, as well as “hands-on” program involvement, were often tied to being able to obtain working papers.

Another rebbetzin, whose husband has been a pulpit rabbi for almost 30 years noted “I'm only the rebbetzin because I sleep with the rabbi....there are a lot of projections and expectations that come with this life and I wanted to make sure they didn't have any stuff they were laying on me as rebbetzin.”⁹⁷ She indicated that “there's a difference between being supportive and being the old world rebbetzin” and she demonstrated this difference by describing Henrietta Klein, the wife of the late Isaac Klein, author of the compendium on Conservative *Jewish Religious Practice*.⁹⁸ The Kleins had a pulpit in Buffalo, and Henrietta it seems,

was the kind of rebbetzin that would give you a hard time if you wore sassy red shoes, but if somebody was sick she would go over and bring them food and do visitations; if somebody died she'd go in and cook them dinner right in their kitchen. She was like an assistant rabbi, and there's that European model of rabbi's wife being totally involved in the community in that way.⁹⁹

This rabbi's wife asserted that this type of involvement was not who she is. This notion in

⁹⁶ Interview, August 15, 2005.

⁹⁷ Interview, July 19, 2005.

⁹⁸ Isaac Klein, *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1979).

⁹⁹ Interview, July 19, 2005.

particular that a rebbetzin, rabanit, or rubissa, is someone who is learned and/or involved in her community was prevalent in my interviews. Many of the women felt that the title is indeed one that has to be earned. One of the women related to Shlomo Carlebach, mentioned an exchange with her aunt, Carlebach's mother, a rebbetzin of note in her husband's community:

[S]he said, "Never think ... that being a rebbetzin isn't an earned title," and I observed her and it was indeed an earned title. She was very much an active participant in the community's life – in the congregation her husband ran on the upper west side of Manhattan, she collected *tzedaka*, she took care of homeless people, she led women in *davenning* sessions, or taught people when they wanted to study very unofficially but it never took away from her sense that this was an earned title, and that impacted on me tremendously – I've never forgotten that.¹⁰⁰

For example, one rabbinical wife was most emphatic about embracing her role:

I'm proud to be the rebbetzin. I feel that the rebbetzin definitely has a role.... I never had any kind of expectations of being married to a rabbi, so I had no expectation of what it would be like – but I understood and I was knowledgeable in the fact of what [role] the rebbetzin played.... The rebbetzins that I have come in contact with in my days I would be only so proud to say I'm a rebbetzin like they were.... Just like when somebody accepts an award, they accept the award based on: "There are so many better people out there," or "There are so many equally to collect this award than I. How dare I be to able fill that shoe?" That's how I feel.... I might be called a rebbetzin but I feel that there are real rebbetzins out there. Am I really with that group? I feel proud to be with that group, very proud.¹⁰¹

She shared that when her husband undertook his new position she wrote a letter to the Board and in the first line of her letter she noted that she wrote "I would like to introduce myself to you I am your new rebbetzin."¹⁰² Another noted that

I never really felt like a rabbi's wife – I felt like my husband was the rabbi, and I was his wife – but I wasn't the rebbetzin per se. I certainly wasn't qualified to answer questions, or to counsel people, or to give talks on any subject. I wasn't educated in that way, and I don't know if people expected it.¹⁰³

Another wife also made a similar comment only attributing her resistance to the term to her age:

I shy away from the title rebbetzin – I see myself as being in a little bit of a different situation because I am younger than most of the people in the congregation, and I

¹⁰⁰ Interview, June 2, 2004.

¹⁰¹ Interview, March 1, 2004.

¹⁰² Interview, March 1, 2004.

¹⁰³ Interview, April 21, 2004.

think that the congregation is very much aware of that. So, the image – this image of being a rabbi's wife – doesn't conjure up much the title of [what] "rebbetzin" does, and that's why I shy away from it. So, I don't know. I enjoy being involved in the congregation, but I think that it's hard a little bit age wise – cause not everybody – I think some people are a little bit uncomfortable you know as far as friendship goes and socially – because of the age gap¹⁰⁴

For example, a Reform rabbinical wife commented that recently (before my interview with her) she and her husband had been attending a community function, and someone had approached her saying,

"You are the only real rebbetzin in this town." And that was when they were going through ... they didn't have the Orthodox rabbi yet. They were getting changed. And I couldn't figure out what they meant by that. And I think it's just that I go to everything, and I think that's a big part in a small town. And I enjoy it and that's just me.¹⁰⁵

One rebbetzin noted that having her mother as her role model made her realize

that I could make it whatever I put into it and if I chose to I could sit back and be, I don't know, just be a figurehead or whatever you want to call it, or I could actively get involved – and I knew it was up to me.¹⁰⁶

Another expressed her unease about having

to put on a very public face and I did. At that synagogue it's rather formal ... and I didn't relish that because I'm quite a shy person and I was not – I was anticipating something rather quite frightening – but then, you know, as the months kind of wore on I saw I didn't really have an official role at all.... I had the sense that all eyes were on me, you know, and that never really let up.¹⁰⁷

This feeling of always being watched or being scrutinized was not limited to within the walls of the synagogue. One rebbetzin, whose husband had left the pulpit, commented

I would laugh at the fish bowl analogy and it's really true the things people would say to me about "they saw this" or whatever – the fascination of people with us I found funny I guess but I still get – even though my husband is no longer there people make comments to me or have expectations of me that are because he's a rabbi not necessarily who I am or who I was before.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Interview, June 2, 2004.

¹⁰⁵ Interview, May 31, 2005.

¹⁰⁶ Interview, April 25, 2004.

¹⁰⁷ Interview, August 17, 2005.

¹⁰⁸ Interview, August 18, 2005.

Even though the perceptions of a congregation toward the rabbi's wife are rarely verbalized they can affect how the rabbi's wife interacts with her husband's congregation. It became evident in my interviews that even though unpaid, the rabbi's wife continues to be held to a similar standard of involvement as her husband, the paid rabbi. The ease or lack of ease with which some of the women were able to ignore congregational expectations will be addressed in the next section and in the section dealing with congregational satisfaction.

Congregational activities: Expectations and obligations

A number of questions were designed to elicit the various types of things the rabbinical wife perceives herself as doing – either bidden or unbidden – within the congregation. Often what did not get discussed with one type of question would be revealed through a variation of the question. The first questions that openly addressed their role asked “What kinds of things do you do as a rabbi's wife within the congregation, within the larger community?” In addition I asked “What expectations do you feel the synagogue has from you?”, and “Have you experienced implicit obligations in the position?” The latter question also had a secondary question which queried the husband's attitude towards his wife's involvement in the congregation as well as the congregational response to her activities. I also asked directed questions concerning the wife's attendance at services and congregational events. These questions were “How often do you attend congregational events/services?”, and “How often do you attend life cycle events?” These questions were not asked in direct sequence one to the other so that questions discussing other aspects of rabbinical life were interwoven with these. The result is that more often than not the questions concerning congregational activities elicited contrary responses, especially in those cases where a wife had indicated only moderate involvement in the congregation and her later responses proved otherwise. In order to explore the responses in-depth, each question will be dealt with separately.

In response to the question “what kinds of things do you do as a rabbi’s wife within the congregation, within the larger community?” one of the women interviewed provided a succinct five point overview of her activities as a rabbi’s wife:

First and foremost is an expectation of attendance at synagogue whether I want to or not. Second of all, there’s an expectation of presence at Bar Mitzvahs or certain functions: weddings, dressed appropriately, all kinds of tasks associated. There are social tasks, demands upon me – remembering people’s names, which I find very difficult, greeting people and knowing about them, knowing about their lives, and being social, which is all part of being the spouse. Above and beyond that, there is another expectation: that I will contribute to the quality of the synagogue life.... And ... there’s an expectation that I will entertain for the rabbi when a guest speaker comes and other people.... And I do entertainment on that level – which places certain burdens, as you well know, in terms of entertaining, and – for example, at the sisterhood I was expected always to speak or give a *d’var Torah*.¹⁰⁹

Another wife, also commented that she mostly does hostessing due to the location of their synagogue:

Hostessing is not just like a Friday dinner – people have to – because we’re on B. – now my sons are the Torah *leyners* so their friends will come but they have to sleep over somewhere so almost every weekend somebody has to sleep over but nobody [in the congregation] is frum – like very few – and billeting no – so the youth director lived with us every Shabbos for 3 years; so that was like every Shabbos you know, that means – we liked the youth director so that was a very good thing, one year we didn’t so that wasn’t...., yeh ... I’m very casual about having people come over and sleep, but that was like a requirement ... how many beds can we pull out for this place ... how many beds can we set up to have people sleep over so we – the hostessing is not just inviting a family every other week or once a month something like that ... but it would be one, two people sometimes, up to three people sometimes so ... these high school kids or post high school kids I like them a lot,... but you still have to make sure – you’re still on.¹¹⁰

This expectation of entertaining, or hosting was uppermost for over half the women interviewed.

For example one rebbetzin, used to the availability of kosher goods in her home town, as well as their lower cost, lamented,

Food is very expensive here and getting it is a whole week’s [work]. You have to go to four or five stores to get your basics ... from where I came, it’s five times the effort and five times the price. And I just had no idea. And I didn’t cook that much before I came here – I worked, I worked until the moment Shabbos started – ... if

¹⁰⁹ Interview, May 10, 2004.

¹¹⁰ Interview, August 17, 2005.

anything then I left it prepared so my husband could put it in the oven during the day and it was the most basic foods. We did not entertain a lot, we went to lots of people's homes, ... everyone there kept kosher there was no issue about anyone's kashrut ... here you can't eat at people's homes in general because there's too many gradations; can't start discriminating – everyone has to come to us.¹¹¹

Another rebbetzin also noted the issues involved with hosting holiday dinners for the congregation, for example,

because of kashrut I have to do a lot of the cooking – people could bring in cold salads and buy drinks ... again even ... Friday night dinner I'll make the main course – but something warm – cause people will buy – they can buy kosher homous they can buy lots of things but they really can't do that [the cooking of a meal]¹¹²

The West coast community was the only one where entertaining and finances cropped up in almost every interview. The congregations expect the rabbis and their wives to host but do not always provide the rabbi with extra funds specifically for this purpose – these funds come out of the family budget. The issues around the costs of hosting were often raised when discussion turned to their expressions of frustration around visas and working papers which will be addressed later in this chapter. In the Eastern cities, the issues around hosting were connected to having the time and energy rather than a concern about funds.

One rebbetzin commented that they may expect it (being hosted and entertained) but they (the congregation) do not necessarily get it.

They expect the rebbetzin to invite people over, but that we do whenever we want to – if we're exhausted we don't invite ... we're happy to have people over, but expectations like that – we hear it from other rebbetzins that they're expected all the time and it's quite expensive if you have a lot of people no one is funding it so it's out of pocket there's nobody cooking except for you – there's no one cleaning, no one serving, no one doing anything except for you – there's only one person doing it.¹¹³

The second question asked the interviewee to consider the synagogue's expectations of her involvement and was a directive question: "what expectations do you feel the synagogue has

¹¹¹ Interview, December 22, 2004.

¹¹² Interview, December 20, 2004.

¹¹³ Interview, September 1, 2004.

from you?” One rebbetzin noted that she and her husband had a congregational interview where “anyone in the *shul* could come and ask us questions.” She noted that she

was asked two questions – 1) is what would I be doing for the community and bringing to the community, and would I be willing to host meals, and have people over for meals and things like that so that was like those were two things that were important to them and I said yes to both.¹¹⁴

Opening one’s home to the congregational community was the *sine non qua* for being a rebbetzin, as another rabbinical wife also noted:

I think the main expectation was probably to entertain and to have an open house which we’ve done over the years. I have to say the truth is that we’ve cut it down a lot because of the fact that the family is growing and I was working. And it’s much more intensive when I’m working, and also financially it became ... as the family grows you have more financial ... obligations – so we had to cut down a bit. But I think that’s what they really expected of me the most. I don’t think, you know we’re involved in the sisterhood. I was involved in the sisterhood of the synagogue as well I don’t think they expected me to be in charge of the sisterhood it was never mentioned to me anyway but definitely what I know for sure is the entertainment part and I think that I’ve done a pretty good job on that one.¹¹⁵

One young rebbetzin shared that her husband

has heard both directly and indirectly primarily from the older members of the synagogue “Oh,” you know, “your wife should take on a project now.” ... Or, “Your wife is the first rebbetzin to not have a project in the *shul*.” ... So, it’s sort of this nebulous she should do – the same as they all say without sort of defining what it means but there are clearly there is clearly the idea that they expect me to do something whatever that is.¹¹⁶

Most of the women were clearly able to describe what they perceived as congregational expectations. One rabbinical wife, a week after her arrival, was told that “the *shul*’s *sukkah* gets put up in our backyard,” and understood that certain expectations are attached to the *sukkah* being in the rabbi’s backyard. This rabbinical wife expressed her frustration not so much with the hosting itself as with the way it was handled:

It’s just an expectation – I got here actually just before Yom Kippur and somebody said “Oh, by the way the *sukkah* is in your backyard and you have the *kiddushes*.”

¹¹⁴ Follow-up Interview, December 23, 2004.

¹¹⁵ Interview, December 21, 2004.

¹¹⁶ Interview, July 19, 2005.

Literally this is what they told me go out and get some cookies or something for *kiddush* – I was here a week–¹¹⁷

Another issue raised was the expectation that the rebbetzin “will contribute to the quality of the synagogue life” either through participation in Sisterhood, or through programming for the congregation.¹¹⁸ One very involved and active rebbetzin put forward her definition of a rebbetzin’s role as

[being ready] to do whatever has to be done to promote communal living and feeling a sense of community and also education like I said I think as women that’s our main goal; I’ve always given classes to the women; I always like *Shabbos*, *Yontif* invite company so they see what a *Shabbos* and *Yontif* is – hands-on type of thing – we like make a very big *Sukkos* dinner we have a 150 people in our sukka – I guess that our *shul* doesn’t have an official job for the rebbetzin I think more comes from what I think the rebbetzin should do and what I want to do and I’m able to do more or less whatever I’d like to do.¹¹⁹

While this rebbetzin is heavily involved in her Orthodox congregation, her understanding of her role as one where she can decide what she wants to do and how much was echoed across the country. Very few women would have challenged the need to be able to decide where they “fit” in their husband’s congregation, an issue I will address in depth when discussing levels of satisfaction with congregational life. One of the women commented that she felt her congregation

would like me to be more involved in Sisterhood, and you know I have two kids and I’m married to a guy who’s rarely available in the evenings to go places and take them so that’s on my shoulders and if I’m doing that I can’t be at the Sisterhood meetings and the other thing too is I have pretty much stuck to that idea of doing what I would do as a committed Jew. so yes I’m willing to try out Sisterhood but when you go and the programming doesn’t appeal to you and the women who go are not part of the women who you envision as being part of your peer group so yes I do support them and go to a couple of things every year but am I you know super actively involved – no.¹²⁰

Very few women identified themselves as being consistently active in the Sisterhood of their

¹¹⁷ Interview, March 21, 2007.

¹¹⁸ Interview, May 10, 2004.

¹¹⁹ Interview, March 16, 2004.

¹²⁰ Interview, July 19, 2005.

congregation. One, now retired rebbetzin shared how she “started something in town called the Sisterhood Academy where the three schools participated for a long time together in adult education for women through the sisterhoods.”¹²¹ Needless to say once women were able to advance into the marketplace and/or enrol in academic Jewish Study courses the popularity of this program waned. Several others indicated that they were often called upon by the Sisterhood to give a short *d’var* or make the blessing at the luncheon. Another mentioned that she had “become moderately involved in Women’s League which is the sisterhood of the congregation.”¹²² Four of the women of the fifty-nine, who described themselves as consistently active are over sixty years of age. In the first cohort, six of the women indicated that they had some participation in their Sisterhood. In the second cohort, six of the 29 women were either actively involved or had been actively involved at one time. Thirteen of the congregations in this group did not have Sisterhoods, and of these three of the rabbinical wives noted that they had introduced a Rosh Chodesh group or a women’s prayer group as an alternative to Sisterhood. Two of the women noted that they had been very involved in their first years with the congregation, but once able to work or study within Canada, their participation dropped radically. Of the other two women, in this cohort, presently involved in sisterhood, both are fairly new to Canada and their communities. One wife indicated that she had been very active in her previous congregation and had commented that

I was actually Sisterhood President which was kind of interesting ‘cause not usually a rabbi’s wife will be a president but we thought we could turn it around and rejuvenate the group but after a few years it got kind of difficult¹²³

While it is not uncommon for the wives of rabbis to be active “behind the scenes” of the Sisterhood, as indicated by the interviewee, it is very unusual for the wife to take a leadership

¹²¹ Interview, July 12, 2005.

¹²² Interview, December 17, 2004.

¹²³ Interview, December 20, 2004.

role in the Sisterhood, but in this situation the Sisterhood in question was in danger of ceasing totally and at the time she felt she had the energy and time to try to halt its demise. In her present congregation she also sees herself as undertaking “some role in Sisterhood.”¹²⁴ The second wife viewed her involvement as moderate and as a way of getting involved in a new community.¹²⁵ One wife who considered herself to be very involved in the Women’s League of her congregation noted,

I usually took on a portfolio within Women’s League every rabbi’s wife is an honorary member of women’s League, but there are only three rebbetzins in town who would go – ... and it was the three of us, but those two rebbetzins were considerably older than me – there was nobody from my generation that used to come out to the programs.¹²⁶

Amongst the women who are part of the Generation X cohort only one woman considered herself active in her congregation’s sisterhood, and this was on account of a request made by the previous rebbetzin of the synagogue:

So before I came the other rabbi’s wife asked me to be the head of – they had just started a sisterhood but it wasn’t like a sisterhood as they have generally in the States – they were usually the older kind of women whose kids weren’t so young any more – who were a part of the sisterhood. And here, the last rabbi’s wife who was a relatively young woman, who had started it and kind of got it going again, and so she wanted me to take that over. So I started off as president of this sisterhood, but I don’t think the *shul* – that was more she asked me to do that for her I think and, you know, not as a *shul* official responsibility.¹²⁷

Several of the women would have been in agreement with the words of this young rebbetzin, who indicated that

it was never even said – but ... I ... felt an expectation from the *shul* [to] participate in the sisterhood which was a long standing group in the *shul* serving mostly older women in the community. I think it served a very important role to the people it serves although it really didn’t have a draw for me.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Interview, December 20, 2004.

¹²⁵ Interview, December 17, 2004.

¹²⁶ Interview, July 20, 2005. Within the Conservative Movement, Women’s League and Sisterhood are interchangeable. The Women’s League for Conservative Judaism, founded by Mathilde Schechter in 1918, is the international organization to which all Conservative sisterhood affiliates belong.

¹²⁷ Interview, December 22, 2004.

¹²⁸ Interview, August 18, 2005.

Rather than become part of a long-standing Sisterhood, several (3) of these women, like the previous cohort, formed women's discussion groups, women's prayer groups or a Rosh Chodesh group as a way of becoming involved with the women in their congregations. Quite a few of the women saw their role as providing classes for the women in their community. For some it was helping the women learn to read Hebrew; for others it was providing a place where the women could come together to learn, and for others it was "providing a model" for Jewish learning. The classes were varied and attendance in these classes was in all likelihood because the rabbi's wife was conducting or organizing the class. For example, one rebbetzin noted that she had instituted a women's *shiur*, and:

I would ask different speakers to come and speak about either the parashah or the time of year it was whether it was a holiday or whatever topic they felt they'd like to discuss – and that was for about a half hour – like before we went home for lunch and we also had a calling committee where we called other people in the community to join cause it wasn't just for our synagogue – let anybody come we would be more than happy. so we already developed like a bit of a list and team of people who were calling and inviting other people to come and other people did come – so it wasn't huge but we had anywhere between 20 and 35 people depending on the weather and various other factors.¹²⁹

This rebbetzin noted that about a year and a half after beginning this program she began to work full-time and the class "just somehow fizzled."¹³⁰ Another rebbetzin commented that

within the congregation I decided to take on the role of helping with a women's *tefilah* program. I've attended many in my career, and I've been attending the one that they've had and decided that this was an area I would love to be involved with.¹³¹

Another rebbetzin noted that her husband had asked her if she was interested in teaching a class on Torah to women, and she teaches a class called "Torah Through Female Eyes" for about 20 women.¹³² She commented,

¹²⁹ Interview, April 25, 2004.

¹³⁰ Interview, April 25, 2004.

¹³¹ Interview, July 21, 2005.

¹³² Interview, July 13, 2005.

I don't know that I would have done that if I hadn't been in the position that I was in. I don't know that I would have been doing something else and I don't know that I would have gone to a *shul* and say I want to teach a class.¹³³

One of the senior rebbetzins whom I interviewed agreed that the position has a certain authority attached to it that allows those who wish to, to undertake projects of their choice:

A rebbetzin somehow with that title and with that position can do anything she wants, somethings that you don't want particularly. But anything you feel you would like to participate in is wide open, and it isn't an issue of you know this one is – oh no, she's this or she's that whatever – I'm not articulating what I am trying to say – or she's that or whatever – that is the position affords a certain amount of involvement that another person equally competent without the title may find it more difficult to break into¹³⁴

Conducting a class, even participating in some places, in each other's class was considered a part of their "duties" as rebbetzins. Especially in the smaller communities, Orthodox rebbetzins also felt compelled to attend the classes given by other rebbetzins in their milieu. One noted "there are some other rebbetzins who give classes and I will always go to support them, so I will attend their classes."¹³⁵ The majority of wives were not involved in activities outside their communities, other than to accompany their husbands to community events. One woman noted that "as [his] wife, we attend a lot of community events. He feels it's very important to be supportive of community activities; and so we go to most of the major dinners, and fundraisers."¹³⁶ Another commented that she "didn't realize that it would involve being involved in so many different organizations, and having to be present at so many different dinners and functions and things like that."¹³⁷

A corollary to the question of overt expectations was a question that addressed their feeling of being obligated not only from the congregation, but also from their husbands. The question stated "Have you experienced implicit obligations in the position?" The question was first asked

¹³³ Interview, July 13, 2005.

¹³⁴ Interview, July 12, 2005.

¹³⁵ Interview, December 21, 2004.

¹³⁶ Interview, December 17, 2004.

¹³⁷ Interview, December 21, 2004.

with reference to the congregation to see if the responses differed in any way from the one asking about expectations, and it was then repeated with reference to her husband. I will be addressing the question of her feelings of responsibility for his career, and the issue of teamwork at a later point, and in that section I will also discuss the question of implicit obligations generated by the husband. The question concerning implicit obligations emphasized the “shoulds” that the women might have experienced. Quite a few of the women commented that “they smiled a lot.” One rebbetzin noted that she tries “to make a point of smiling and not offending people” and sees herself as an “ambassador in that way.”¹³⁸ Being attentive to congregants was consistently mentioned as being an “implicit obligation” and was experienced with mixed feelings by each generation of rabbinical wives. One of the women, whose husband is now retired, recalled that

sometimes I have to be attentive to people that I may not normally happen, I wouldn't particularly seek those people out but because of my position I have to be attentive to those people and I have to go places where I may not even know the people very well and even *shivas* where I really don't have much to do with the people but because of who we are that I feel obligations.¹³⁹

One of the women who is in the third cohort, Generation X, also commented:

I feel obligated to be pleasant even when I don't want to be; I feel obligated to be gracious even when I don't want to be; that's it that's how I feel obligated to be happy and gracious and friendly.¹⁴⁰

Even though this rebbetzin is highly involved in her community in a teaching capacity, she, and a number of the women, felt stressed by the necessity of “meeting and greeting” during *kiddush*, and engaging in the “social tasks ... remembering people's names, [which some found difficult], greeting people and knowing about them, [and] knowing about their lives.”¹⁴¹ One of the wives commented that this feeling of being “on” is akin to wearing “some amount of mask” and that it

¹³⁸ Interview, December 16, 2004.

¹³⁹ Interview, July 12, 2005. It is customary to visit those who are “*sitting shiva*”, observing a seven day (three in some liberal congregations) period of mourning for a loved one who has died.

¹⁴⁰ Interview, March 1, 2004.

¹⁴¹ Interview, May 10, 2004.

was important to be

aware that there still is a role and so distinguishing between what is an honest authentic connection person to person and what's person to role – I think that's been the most challenging – I'm learning that still.¹⁴²

Another one of the younger rabbinical wives further commented,

I'm not getting paid but there is a dual role that goes along with this. So I do feel that there are expectations. Really when it comes down to it yes, I do feel that there are expectations for me to do things, to be involved to make myself seen, known, heard, be there as a support for people, yes.¹⁴³

Besides being friendly, one rabbi's wife noted that in one of their first congregations, a small congregation,

it was expected that I leave services a few minutes early to help set up the *kiddush* table; it was just a *given* that the rabbi's wife goes and helps – I don't think I minded but it was a *given* – come we're going to go set up come and do it – so I did it and it became a regular thing so they let me know that that was expected but that's a minor thing. yeh I think it was expected that maybe I would teach junior congregation or run a junior congregation.¹⁴⁴

The third set of questions dealt with congregational expectations of attendance at synagogue.

This was an activity that nearly all the women did, even when they had their own personal doubts concerning the services, or the congregation. Many felt an obligation to be at Shabbat services, unless they had very young children, and even this was not always seen as a reason for missing services or the *kiddush* after. A number of the younger wives indicated that it was very important for them to be seen at the *kiddush* after Shabbat services. One wife with young children noted that

unless it is freezing freezing cold I make sure that we get to *shul* – I mean it might take us – so we're not there at a quarter to ten we're there at 10:15 or 10:20 but we're in *shul* every *Shabbos*.¹⁴⁵

Another young rebbetzin commented who is living in a community without an *eruv*, noted

¹⁴² Interview, March 24, 2004.

¹⁴³ Interview, March 8, 2004.

¹⁴⁴ Interview, July 13, 2005. Emphasis mine.

¹⁴⁵ Interview, March 15, 2007.

occasionally I get a babysitter then I go on my own but I don't like doing it every week to leave everybody especially on *Shabbos* you know when we get to go as a family I think it's nice for the whole community my husband always mentions that when I do get a babysitter you see like people – the women are staying around longer after *kiddush* – it's just like, oh, there's a woman figure here – but even though I don't have a position but it just – it is – it adds to the sense of community from the women's [perspective].¹⁴⁶

One of the young rabbinical wives also agreed about the importance of being at services

when we first moved here there wasn't any *eruv* so I would attend services once a month – cause I'd have to get a babysitter for the baby. But now that there's an *eruv* ... now I go every Shabbat.... Of course if I'm not feeling well then I stay home but I feel my attendance is really strong. I think it's important for the women to see me there.¹⁴⁷

The question was also asked about both life-cycle events and congregational events. There was also the expectation that life-cycle events would be attended. This differed according to how long the rabbinical couple had been with the synagogue as well as the size of the congregation and whether or not it was in a small town or a larger city. There were rebbetzins who acknowledged not only did they go to every function in their congregation but to life-cycle events in other congregations also, as a way of showing support. In response to the question about attendance at life-cycle events one rabbinical wife commented that

even if we have to get up at 6 in the morning – every funeral in this community, not just my *shul* – my *shul* Thank God is a young *shul* I do the whole city – the funeral, the *shiva* I bake *challas* for every *shiva*.¹⁴⁸

A number of women said that over the years they had learned to be selective about the events they attend and in fact outside of the smaller communities, it was the more experienced rebbetzins who defined the events to which they would go whereas the younger women indicated that they would attend all the “*simchas*” to which they had been invited. Stated one rabbinical wife,

¹⁴⁶ Interview, June 2, 2004.

¹⁴⁷ Interview, December 21, 2004.

¹⁴⁸ Interview, September 1, 2004.

We will attend if they're having a luncheon, say in *shul* right after the service – we've also set up a parameter for ourselves that we will only attend if our children are invited. You know, it's *Shabbos* afternoon it's supposed to be a family time, like I'm not gonna get a babysitter for my kids on *Shabbos*, so we do that; and then beyond that weddings – you know affairs outside – we go for Board members, which you know we have a relationship with; and to other *simchas* where we feel that there's a connection and a relationship; and, you know, there are many invitations where my husband will go and officiate and we don't go to the *simcha*.¹⁴⁹

Another commented that

I've always attended a lot of congregational events. Yes, there's a few things now that are expected. There's the young families make a Friday night dinner. It's expected that we're there. The Bar Mitzvah families make a Friday night dinner – it's expected that we're there; various things it's expected that we go to certain congregational things.¹⁵⁰

Taking responsibility and sharing the load

In my interviews the terminology that consistently was used was “we're a team, we rely on each other, I'm his sounding board. I make suggestions.” Even those women who had made a determined effort not to be involved in the congregation – they felt that the position required them to conduct themselves in a certain way, and they indicated that for the most part anything they undertook was done in order to support their husband. Twenty-six of the women interviewed are currently married to husbands who are pulpit rabbis with non-Orthodox congregations.

As a consequence of her research on the rebbetzin in the United States, Schwartz concluded that

the wives of rabbis serving liberal communities no longer have the interest or desire to commit themselves to a congregation on a full-time basis, and that the latest representations of the “old-world rebbetzin” were to be found mainly among the Hasidic women who are part of Chabad's husband-and-wife emissary teams.¹⁵¹

In addressing levels of involvement, attendance at services is considered basic, and among these

¹⁴⁹ Interview, July 20, 2005.

¹⁵⁰ Interview, July 13, 2005.

¹⁵¹ S.R. Schwartz, *The Rabbi's Wife* 215.

26 women, only one did not consider herself obligated to attend services. The other four women who at the time of interviewing had low levels of involvement were either wholly new to the position and involved with work obligations, or had personal issues that consumed much of their time at this period in their lives. Seven of the liberal wives of rabbis are working almost full-time for their husbands' congregations, either engaged with programming, or scheduling of events, or hosting beyond Shabbat and holidays. Of these seven, four work outside the home. Twelve of the women participate in their husbands' congregations through specific programs or events that they help produce. Seven of these women work outside the home. Seven of the women overall are employed full-time. Many of these women had their own careers and were pursuing their own professional development and yet they were involved – and they considered themselves involved with their husband's career. One young woman, trained as an educator while her husband was at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) commented:

I feel like it's a new brand of rabbi's wife – some of us that graduated all together or in the last few years. I feel like it's a new brand of person: some of us, many of us, are much more involved in our husband's work and career and life than in the past. And so I think I, I think it shows women who are going to be a rabbi's wife that you don't have to be tied to the synagogue, that you can have your own life and still enjoy the synagogue.¹⁵²

Eighteen women are married to men currently serving Orthodox congregations. Amongst these women none serve in their husbands' congregations full-time, and only one was wholly uninvolved, again to the point of not attending services. Of the nine women heavily involved in their husbands' congregations, only one worked full-time outside the home, and seven of the women were raised in Hasidic, Lubavitch, or Litvak-ish homes. Nine of the women, as in the liberal congregations, are involved in differing intensities in their congregations and saw their involvement as part and parcel of being married to a rabbi. One wife, highly placed in her profession prior to the acceptance of a Canadian pulpit, commented:

¹⁵² Interview, July 21, 2005.

Before we left I said to him this is our first year give me a year and I really did – I gave him a year and I’m giving him another year right now ... because I mean there’s no way to factor out what I left behind professionally and that was a big sacrifice ... it definitely affects my personal adjustment I think it’s very much a joint effort – I think his success is very much a joint effort.¹⁵³

Another rabbinical wife in a liberal congregation, in discussing one of her activities within the synagogue noted

that I saw the importance of the program because not only was it a fund-raiser to support Israel but it was a major fund-raiser to support the synagogue which translates to supporting my husband’s career so I took it upon myself to be involved in the planning and implementing of that program of that one time program.¹⁵⁴

One rebbetzin, whose husband passed away several months after we had met for the interview, (March 2006), stated categorically, “I think the wife is a crucial component of a rabbi’s career without question,” despite the fact that she rarely attended services, she remained actively involved with the programming and social aspects of congregational life.¹⁵⁵

On the other hand there were several women who felt “[my] goal wasn’t to ruin his job at the same time I didn’t want to get eaten up by it.”¹⁵⁶ In this regard one of the questions posed to the women was “have there been times when you felt a responsibility for your husband’s career?”

One wife noted,

I think that I constantly feel that I am a part of his career, but I don’t feel that I’m responsible for his career, you know. I do feel that – that I – I’m a part of what has to be in his career but he makes or breaks his career, you know as a rabbi it’s not – I don’t do his job he does his job and he gets judged on his job but you know I think to have the support is what people want to see.¹⁵⁷

Another young wife commented that

as far as what path his career is going to take I think I’ve been very responsible because he’s clearly made the choice to come back to [this community] for me.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵³ Interview, December 22, 2004.

¹⁵⁴ Interview, July 19, 2005.

¹⁵⁵ Interview, July 18, 2005.

¹⁵⁶ Interview, September 1, 2005.

¹⁵⁷ Interview, June 7, 2004.

¹⁵⁸ Interview, July 19, 2005.

Another rebbetzin, who had just moved into a new positions, spoke about her concerns if she had not been able to locate this new position:

Ok if I don't find a job in ... I have to go back to the States.... But it took me a long time to realize that. And I think a part of it was that – he knew he had this great job, and he's in the middle of a contract, and I don't [have a great job], and his response is, "But I would go where ever – we have to both be happy – and I'll find something somewhere else." And I think it took me a very long time to come to understand that, you know, "If I don't find anything I'll just stay there [in her old job] and deal with it until it's a good time for us to move." And he was very much, like, "No." So I was taking responsibility for us as a family and his career; and I would have stayed [at that job] and I'm glad I didn't have to – but I would have stayed, I think, in a job that I just didn't like because I didn't want to, you know, move us again and probably change his career, leaving in the middle of a contract. So, yeh, that was the one time that I felt [responsible for his career].¹⁵⁹

A number of the women shrugged off the notion of being responsible for their husband's career, but felt that they were an important factor in his success. One wife, now retired, commented,

I think that to a certain extent there is a team effort. Of course, the onus is on him a lot of times; but most of the time I think it is a team effort. Yeh, I think he was able to do a lot of the stuff he did because I was home, and there were a lot of things he didn't have to worry about.¹⁶⁰

One rebbetzin, new to her congregation commented,

I feel that I am part of it. I am not all of it, but I feel like I influence his career if people are happy with me. We're sort of a unit. He definitely has his job, his role. It's funny, as I am talking, I think I was in denial about this a little bit, saying, "People don't notice, they don't care"; but I think they really do, they look at us as a unit. I think people want me to be involved, and want me to be a part of things. I think that potentially I can have some influence on my husband's career. I don't think all of the influence, but some.¹⁶¹

I have noted that one of the questions posed queried what sort of "implicit obligations" she felt from her husband in terms of his expectations of her activities within the synagogue. In response to this question one rebbetzin noted that

there's a funeral, and I was just at a couple of funerals, and I say, "This is a funeral I'm passing, I'm not going." And he'll say, "I really think you should be there" or "I'm making a shiva visit do you want to come?" And I'll say, "I'm gonna pass," and

¹⁵⁹ Interview, July 21, 2005.

¹⁶⁰ Interview, August 31, 2004.

¹⁶¹ Interview, March 8, 2004.

he'll say, "Well, you know, this was a such and such a person, I really think that this would be a very good idea if you're there," and then I go. Yes, that kind of thing, on a personal ... – to make a presence show up at certain things. Yes, there are expectations.¹⁶²

One wife could not think of any specific requests that her husband had made when prompted with this question. But later in the interview, when I asked her if she attended events outside of congregational services she said that she would attend "a lecture or something – if it's something I'm interested in I'll go, if it's something that my husband says I should go to, I'll go."¹⁶³ Another wife also insisted that her husband makes no requirements, and has no expectations, implicit or otherwise of her involvement:

Not from my husband; and before you came my daughter checked it out – she said, "Are you suffering from Ima's lack of involvement?" He said, "No. Don't forget I told them she didn't come with the deal." But no, he's cool with my life.¹⁶⁴

This same rebbetzin indicated however that when her husband was going through the hiring process two members of the interview committee flew down both to observe her husband in the pulpit and to get a sense of her support for his position before making their final decision to offer him the pulpit. So while she did not come "with the deal," as will be seen in the discussion on spiritual and personal growth certain obligations come with the position even when not seen as such.

Most of the women saw their role as accompanying their husbands to shivas, or participating in the congregation on some level. One young wife noted that

[I] accompany him at different times – [a] death in the community, ok. Sometimes I think it makes a difference if I make a phone call if people are sick. If I wasn't his wife.... I mean, last week I was making a phone call to a woman I've never met, and I think it meant something to her because I was the rabbi's wife. And I did it because I was the rabbi's wife, and it was a nice thing to do. So there are – it's interesting because it does carry some of that weight with it.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Interview, July 13, 2005.

¹⁶³ Interview, July 14, 2005.

¹⁶⁴ Interview, July 19, 2005.

¹⁶⁵ Interview, December 16, 2004.

One rabbi's wife, noted that "what [her husband] really wanted was for me to be coming to synagogue on a regular basis, and attending *simchas* on a regular basis."¹⁶⁶ Involvement in the community was also part of the relationship between husband and wife. Aside from being involved out of their own interests, a number of women indicated that "the doing" in the congregation could not always be separated from "doing" because of the marital relationship, and the pleasure a wife's involvement seemed to give her husband. As one rebbetzin noted, "I think he would like me to get involved; ... he likes it when I get involved."¹⁶⁷ Another rebbetzin, now widowed, noted

One of the strongest things I do and I do it as the rabbi's wife, is I will go to *shiva* visits with my husband, and my husband often will say each time and every time I have made the visit easier for him 'cause I just have this ability to draw people out at a *shiva* visit or when – there's intermarriage and I can talk to people then – so I guess, yeh, I guess I have been as the rabbi's wife also in those kinds of personal relationships.¹⁶⁸

Another rebbetzin in a small community noted that it was difficult to separate out at times being a rabbi's wife and just being a wife in terms of doing things in the synagogue:

I try to separate being a rabbi's wife from what I'm doing – so, has one affected the other? I don't know.... There's things like that, that I do ... more for my husband than ... for anybody else, or anything else.¹⁶⁹

Four of the women noted that, having married at a young age, and having married a rabbi, it was difficult to separate their identity from that of being married to their husband the rabbi, as the singular experiences attached to that position had in effect shaped their responses to current situations.¹⁷⁰ Another question asked was related, in some part, to the woman's own ease of being in a room where there was a strong possibility of being observed by others, and in some part to her confidence in her husband's position in the synagogue. Once all the questions concerning

¹⁶⁶ Interview, July 20, 2005.

¹⁶⁷ Interview, March 8, 2004.

¹⁶⁸ Interview, July 18, 2005.

¹⁶⁹ Interview, March 21, 2007.

¹⁷⁰ Interview, May 10, 2004.

attendance at services and congregational events had been answered this question was then posed: "Are you able to relax at services or do you tend to 'sweep' the room to see how people are responding to your husband?" This question elicited an "aha" and laughter from a number of the women. Several women noted that they had made a decision to sit near the front, or off in a corner so they would not be distracted from their own need to pray. One rebbetzin, the daughter of a rabbi, shared that

first of all my mother sat in the front. So the first Shabbos that I came in as the rebbetzin, I just sat myself down in the front, well not the front like the first seat, you know, 2 seats over. I remember my heart was pit-a-pattering, cause I remember feeling like "whoa!" – ... and frankly no I'm concentrating on my *davenning* and yeh I mean I listen to what's going on, and I remember the comments later to share with my husband, but I'm certainly not involved with what's going on around me.¹⁷¹

Several women commented that it was not necessary to "sweep" the room; that often when they walked into the sanctuary or hall space they could "sense" how people were responding to their husbands. Terminology such as "sensing the energy", or "raising one's antennae" or being "in tune" was used to describe this experience of "feeling" the responses towards their husbands.

One young rebbetzin remarked

I guess I definitely did have a sense always – like people responded to me how they felt towards him, yeh, that I guess was true and I could feel it – I don't know if I consciously tried to have a sense of that but yeh it always hit me basically as I walked into the building.¹⁷²

Quite a few women laughed at the question before commenting that yes they are always watching. A number of women mentioned that they sweep the room not so much to check people's responses to their husbands but to see who is in *shul* that Shabbat. One rabbi's wife responded

I do sweep the room just to see whose there whose not there cause one needs to pay attention to that my husband might not notice if somebody's not there for awhile and

¹⁷¹ Interview, April 25, 2004.

¹⁷² Interview, August 18, 2005.

you have to key into that and also pay attention if there is somebody new in *shul* and make sure to go over to welcome them.¹⁷³

Some women mentioned how their husbands like them to sit near the front so that they can have eye contact with each other – to exchange signals is how one wife described it.

Aside from how marital life could unwittingly influence the wife's participation there was also the question of her own career adjustments, as well as her needs to achieve a certain comfort level for her own personal and spiritual growth. As mentioned initially these women ended up marrying rabbis because they wanted Jewish involvement and to more deeply live out their Judaism – the limitations of living in a community that had certain expectations of “how Jewish” their rabbi and his family could be or the type of Jewish involvement one could pursue was one of the issues the women had to cope with.

Creating space for personal and spiritual growth

Sandwiched between the questions as to their activities in the congregation as a rabbi's wife and congregational expectations, is the question “Do you feel the role of rabbi's wife has helped or hindered your personal development?” Often this question was not answered directly but was later raised by the women themselves as part of another discussion.

A number of women were very positive about how the role had given them a greater opportunity for learning, for example, one rebbetzin noted

Given the fact that I came from a non-observant background and uneducated background Jewishly speaking and that my whole career and my whole adult life has been in Jewish education I'd say that it gave me the opportunity to enhance it.¹⁷⁴

A younger rebbetzin, with young children and in the pulpit for 12 years said,

I think it's helped my personal development – I can say that 100% that it has. It's helped me to, umm – I really didn't do that much public speaking beforehand, so [now] I've done some.... I've given classes and had to work on, you know, my Judaic knowledge. It's helped me. And it's helped me to, you know, work on my

¹⁷³ Interview, July 13, 2005.

¹⁷⁴ Interview, July 13, 2005.

speaking skills. I think it's helped me develop in terms of just dealing with people also ... dealing with people in their time of need. Sometimes you, as a rabbi's wife, you still put yourself second (laughter), you know, or third. So obviously my kids' needs come first and my husband's needs come in terms of his job. So, you know, in that way, sometimes your own learning, your own ... ability to actually go and sort of do your own thing [has] been put on the back burner. But I think that is also just a function of you know where I [am] in my life, with having children and things like that too.¹⁷⁵

Another rebbetzin also noted that it had enhanced her personal growth, and that her own professional growth had not suffered:

I think it probably helped. I would say that because we started school together, you know he went into the rabbinical school [and] I went into the Master's Program in Jewish Education. And I worked all through [the time] we were in school, so I feel like I was taking on my own professional way. But, you know, I feel like being a rabbi's wife and being in a rabbi's family, it's not just a job, it's your lifestyle. So I feel like we grew in it together. And yes, being in that role has made me think more about how we live and what we do. But I think that I've kind of got to my professional being on my own.¹⁷⁶

Another young rebbetzin felt that being in the position both had hindered her and helped her:

Probably, probably both. I don't know that there's any clear concrete answer to that – it's been – it's helped in – how has it helped? I don't know. Like, I'm in a flood of things I'm supposed to be doing right now, so it's hard to imagine how is it helping. I'm over-committing myself around the clock. It makes me look at myself. I mean I am having to constantly sit back and say, "Do you really want to be doing this – is this important?" I mean it ... it really ... it helps and hinders because I enjoy doing these things, but at the same time I think that I do have a tendency to over-commit.¹⁷⁷

A number of women were much less positive, and it is interesting to note that most of the women disillusioned by their lack of opportunities to develop themselves are drawn from the Boomer Generation. Although one rebbetzin, now retired, and part of the first cohort (1925–1945), noted how she took on full responsibility for the home and children, enabling her husband to concentrate solely on congregation:

I often wonder what I would have done had I not married a rabbi. I'm sure that it hindered it, most likely. I've sort of lost myself in the shuffle, but I think one of the reasons why ... was so successful here, quite honestly, is because I helped him be

¹⁷⁵ Interview, June 7, 2004.

¹⁷⁶ Interview, July 21, 2005.

¹⁷⁷ Interview, December 15, 2004.

successful; because, I mean, some men can do ... [caan] take care of themselves in the house and the cooking and stuff like that, but he's not that kind of guy.¹⁷⁸

Aside from her, nearly all the women in this first cohort (69% or 9 out of the 13) felt that the position had been an entirely enhancing experience. Another rebbetzin, in the second cohort, also noted that family commitments (carpooling, availability for children) as well as the placement of their particular congregation (distant from Jewish schools, shopping, children's friends) made it difficult for her to consider career development:

At this point in my life, my personal development – it's hindered [whispered]: because of other opportunities, [which] I haven't taken advantage [of], [that] I know ... I would be capable of doing.... But by not having the support – I do know that my bottom line priority is taking care of this family – so by not having the other support, I've needed to give up other opportunities, professional opportunities I think that I probably would have pursued, that just were no longer options for me. Like really working 9 to 5 would be impossible, but usually those were the kinds of professional opportunities.... So professionally that's what I gave up¹⁷⁹

In fact this second group, the Boomer Generation, had the widest range of response to this question of whether being a rabbi's wife had helped or hindered their personal and professional development. In this group only 48% of the women, thirteen of the twenty-seven interviewed, felt that the position had helped them. In this group five felt hindered by what they felt were the limitations of the role. Of the third cohort, Generation X, 75% of the women, twelve out of sixteen, felt that being in the role had helped them in a variety of ways. A number of the women responded to the question by discussing their own spiritual needs.

For example, one rebbetzin who had experienced two congregations between our first interview and the follow-up initially stated "when I go I try to really be in my own experience during the services."¹⁸⁰ This had been doable for her in the larger congregation, but her husband's second congregation was much smaller, and this created new challenges for her need to

¹⁷⁸ Interview, August 31, 2004.

¹⁷⁹ Interview, August 17, 2005.

¹⁸⁰ Interview, March 8, 2004.

experience quiet time within the sanctuary:

It is more difficult here. I find that I'll come in and people want to talk. This is, like, a really challenging thing: [to] get my own little space ... to do my own thing and be in my own experience.¹⁸¹

One of the women was very emphatic about how she felt her husband's position had limited her opportunities at least for her own personal exploration of Judaism:

My own personal exploration of Judaism and my style in terms of ritual, or even where I might want to *daven*, is totally hampered by the fact that I have one place I can go to. I'm not going to hop in a car and go to some other *shul*, not going to hop in a car, not going to go to another *shul*. And there's politics.... And also what preceded our stay.... The previous rabbi's wife was not supportive at all, and she would go jogging, she never wanted her husband to have a pulpit. He was going to be in education, so she was pissed off when he came here. But of all the places one could jog, and there are plenty here,... she would go right past [the *shul*]. So when people are pulling in for services Saturday morning, there she'd be, jogging by. When they interviewed us, they went out of their way (we didn't know it at first, what was behind it) ... to make sure that I was supportive. And they even visited us in California ... to see us in our own environment. They wanted to make sure I was behind him 100%. So, in some way, there is no way I could theoretically forge my own direction, Judaically, without there being a political brouhaha of some sort.¹⁸²

Another wife shared that in terms of where she would choose to pray she noted that while her husband's synagogue is a very vibrant Jewish community, for her Shabbat services are very formal as the synagogue has both a cantor and a choir. She noted,

I mean for me personally Shabbat services are very formal ... and I would be much more drawn to a more kind of family oriented davenning more kind of synagogue participatory, congregational participatory kind of thing.¹⁸³

One rebbetzin, now divorced, felt that on the one hand, being a rabbi's wife had provided her with new learning experiences and opportunities, but on the other hand, she had not been "free" to practice what she had learned:

I'm not sure if it would have been as easy to find my way to the kind of commitment that I have to Jewish life; but in fact, I kind of went even farther than my husband in

¹⁸¹ Follow-up Interview, December 23, 2004.

¹⁸² Interview, July 19, 2005.

¹⁸³ Interview, July 20, 2005.

a lot of ways, because there are certain things in terms of *Shabbos* observance that I would have liked to have done as a family that he wasn't into.¹⁸⁴

Issues around participation, one's own personal/spiritual development at first glance seemed to be attached to the size of the congregation and size of community – while it is a fact that attending another synagogue could create problems for her husband, for those women who are in larger cities there are often other opportunities to fulfill their own personal needs outside of the congregational setting without undermining her husband's position. For example, several Toronto rebbetzins mentioned their involvement with the *Kolel*; also, as a consequence of their careers and or professional knowledge and skills, opportunities were available for a number of them to teach various advanced adult classes. Nurturing one's own growth often requires quiet or down time – time that one carves out of one's day for oneself. Nurturing one's family and marital relationship also requires some quiet time: carving out some quiet time, especially with their husbands, seemed to be an ongoing challenge.

Lack of privacy is one of the side effects of living a "public" life. Nearly all the women indicated that holidays are often taken at great distances from where they live or in places such as camp grounds where there is the least likelihood of being disturbed. Nearly all the women with whom I spoke noted they had resigned themselves to interrupted vacations. Stated one rebbetzin,

In terms of having private, you know, private time together, or having family time – you never know when a funeral is going to happen; when somebody's going to die; or somebody is going to need you. When you go places – we [were at] a resort one time,... we'd gone swimming,... my hair was sticking up one foot, and then, all of a sudden: "Hi, Rabbi" – and of course one of our congregants was at this resort also. You never know when they are going to show up. It does to a certain extent affect your private life. Your time is not always your own, which is why we like to go camping: because that time is our own, we're away they can't get hold of us. Umm, during vacations you have to go away. You can't stay in the city [though] sometimes you would like to. So it affects you that way – if you are on vacation you have to leave.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Interview, July 21, 2005.

¹⁸⁵ Interview, August 15, 2005.

Although there is one apocryphal tale, often told, of how one rabbinical family thought by going on a camping trip they could “escape” their congregation when, on the second day, an RCMP officer entered their campsite and asked “Rabbi?”

Aside from the impact of interrupted vacations there is what one rabbi’s wife called the ongoing interruptions into one’s private life that take place daily: “People call day and night people make incredible expectations – it’s invaded; he works seven days a week; he’s on call 24/7.”¹⁸⁶ This constant “need” for a Board member or congregant to be able to contact her husband “instantly” frustrated many of the wives. To some extent this particular invasion of privacy overlapped with their feelings of responsibility towards their husband’s career. Several of the women referred to themselves as assistants to the secretary or the executive:

I’m the one who [is] mostly at home, so, for some reason everyone calls at home instead of calling his office – I’m secretary Number 2.... I always [know] where he is [and] ... what he’s teaching. So if someone calls and they need him right away, I know where to call him, [to] get him – [and] to make sure he goes there afterwards or whatever. I keep the entire social schedule, so I [am] very responsible for his career.¹⁸⁷

Another rebbetzin also labelled herself the “rabbi’s secretary’s assistant,” as she commented that it seemed to be her job to

locate him when he was missing in action, [and] locate pieces of paper when they were missing. because they [the office staff or Board] could always come to me to help figure things out if he needed to be in an appointment, and nobody could find him. I was very involved.¹⁸⁸

What was often curious with statements like these, is that the actions were not necessarily viewed as impacting on the wife’s privacy but rather were mentioned as part of the un verbalized expectations and obligations on them from both the congregation and their husbands. A number of women resolved this situation for themselves by insisting that the congregation install a

¹⁸⁶ Interview, May 10, 2004.

¹⁸⁷ Interview, December 21, 2004.

¹⁸⁸ Interview, July 21, 2005.

business line in their home. This did not necessarily stop the drop-ins that could also infringe on the wife. One rebbetzin shared:

[When we first arrived] a lot of people would just drop by no matter.... And I could be in my nightgown early in the morning and a congregant is coming over to drop something off for my husband. So ... we [spoke] to the board. And since then, it's really improved.... Unless it's an emergency, people don't usually call the house past 10:30 at night, which is when we would expect phone calls to drop. Emergencies can happen, so you know those are excluded. As long as you set your boundaries and you make it clear that there are some *Shabbatot* that we want to be alone with our kids and just have a quiet Shabbat ... people respect that.¹⁸⁹

Another also shared that she felt pressure when people came by their home unannounced:

The pressure ... I felt most about privacy was people dropping by. For example, ... if somebody had a report, or a service, or something they needed to drop by for [my husband], and I wasn't warned they were coming, I was really quite distressed if I had to open the door to a congregant and my front hall was a mess. Or, you know, open the front door, my front hall's a mess, and someone has to use the bathroom while they're there, you know, like 'cause I'm not a great housekeeper. So I felt a lot of pressure.¹⁹⁰

Another wife laughed and questioned whether her husband had realized when they met that she

has lower levels [privacy needs] than a lot of people; so that's convenient, ... I don't need a lot of space like that – I don't have that kind of need so I don't have a large private self in general.¹⁹¹

This rabbinical family has maintained an open door policy for a number of years, which could not have happened if she had privacy issues. Several addressed the need to put some distance between the synagogue and their home or even to monitor where and when they shopped. For example, one wife spoke not so much of herself but her husband who preferred that they shop at a distance from the Jewish community in order to avoid congregants peering into their shopping cart.¹⁹² Another wife noted that

we do live in a glass bowl – in [a] fish bowl and people do know our lives and –

¹⁸⁹ Interview, December 21, 2004.

¹⁹⁰ Interview, July 21, 2005.

¹⁹¹ Interview, December 20, 2004.

¹⁹² Interview, July 20, 2005.

there've been times when I wanted to put a curtain around that – but most of the time I think I've succeeded fairly well in rolling with the punches.¹⁹³

On the one hand, many of the women casually addressed the fact they “knew” they were being watched, and that congregants were sometimes curious about their lives. On the other, there was this sense of shock – when actually confronted with the extent to which personal habits and dress were scrutinized. One rebbetzin noted that in the early years she “coped by wearing a hat – I could look up or I could stay under the hat – I could tilt it whichever way I want – it also [worked as] a diversionary tactic.”¹⁹⁴

Several described their dismay on learning about the importance congregants placed on their appearance. One rebbetzin shared,

[A] couple of years ago – ... there were these women ... at minyan on Sunday morning, and I got a call saying “So sorry I missed you on Shabbos ... I understand you looked exquisite” and I went “Why are you talking about what I was wearing to *shul*?” ... I don't pay any attention to that, now I realize that. I mean, I guess I realized it, but I didn't realize they actually went and talked about it. It was a topic of conversation of where I got my clothes.¹⁹⁵

Another also noted that

it's more of a fish bowl than I originally realized. I was in the washroom putting eye-makeup ... and a woman walked in and saw me and was surprised. An older woman, and she said to me, “Oh we always think of you as ‘au natural.’” I was very surprised by that comment, and I repeated it to [my husband], and his jaw dropped: “You mean they're talking about you as far as make-up is concerned?” I said I was considered “au natural” and now I've destroyed the image because I'm putting mascara on or whatever it was.¹⁹⁶

Issues of privacy, feelings of being watched, issues with their own personal growth and issues of isolation, already addressed, to some extent, are exacerbated when the rabbinical family or couple live in a small town or city. When asked about privacy issues, one rabbinical wife noted that it very much depends on where you live, and explained,

¹⁹³ Interview, December 17, 2004.

¹⁹⁴ Interview, July 19, 2005.

¹⁹⁵ Interview, August 15, 2005.

¹⁹⁶ Interview, July 13, 2005.

Chicago, [for example], a big city, can be very anonymous, here, it's much more difficult to be anonymous here but actually I am more anonymous than other people. I think, in my position in this city – I think you can make yourself less known; I think it's a problem to some extent – it's been [a] ... problem here because this is the least cosmopolitan place I've ever lived.¹⁹⁷

For this rebbetzin, privacy in her community had become isolation and exclusion. Issues surrounding privacy affected all three age groups, and was not differentially experienced by one denomination over another. Although it must be noted regarding the first two groups, the Silent Generation and the Boomer Generation, each were almost equally split between a wife feeling that there were no issues concerning the maintenance of family privacy, and a wife having issues with maintaining family privacy. In the Silent Generation, eight women expressed that the lack of privacy was part of the role and that they had learned how to maintain a balance between home and synagogue. The remaining five women agreed that while it was part of being married to a rabbi, they resented the phone intrusions and the impact on the family when vacation plans had to be delayed or changed. Amongst the Boomer Generation, sixteen women felt that they had adapted to the lack of privacy that the position entailed, whereas twelve of the women expressed discomfort over their visibility, and some found it difficult to overcome their feelings of “always being watched.” The women who are part of Generation X responded quite differently. In this group thirteen of the seventeen women accepted the fact that they were “public” figures, and did not consider this an issue. Only six of the women expressed some concerns around the lack of privacy that seemed to accompany the position, and several of these had taken steps to minimize unwanted visitors or drop-ins.

If a wife was concerned to maintain privacy, she was then rarely asked to participate. Some congregations had issues balancing their expectations of the wife's participation. Many of the wives noted that learning to say “I can do this but not that” was often difficult to say. Again like

¹⁹⁷ Interview, June 2, 2004.

the privacy issue, participation, or the separating of communal activities between those done because one wants to support one's husband, and those done because one is a part of that community was especially problematic for the women who did not live in areas with a high concentration of Jews. To some extent locale also overlaps with satisfaction which is dealt with at the end of this chapter.

Life in the small and not so small communities

Initially as the first interviews (which were from the larger cities) were transcribed, it did not appear that the size of the congregation or of the overall community had a noticeable effect on the involvement of these women in their communities. The issue of acceptance of role and the expectations accompanying that role seemed to be tied to age, years of experience in the role, ages of children, and their own career orientation. As aforementioned the age range of the women interviewed is quite disparate and this seemed to be influential as to the kinds of participation rather than the fact of participation. However as more of the interviews were transcribed (especially from the smaller communities) another picture emerged and it brought to mind the stories of the early Christian ministers and their wives in Canada and how "these women were left behind with their children in isolated settlements far from family and friends while their husbands travelled their circuits."¹⁹⁸

While telephones and email are available to today's rebbetzin, for those who are in small communities, or in small-thinking communities, the isolation is evident. Who can they talk to? The issue of friendships with congregants, of being the representative Jewish voice in the community, and of being the 'professional' Jew were just some of the points raised by my asking about the expectations of congregations in small communities. A further aspect besides the size

¹⁹⁸ Marilyn Färdig Whiteley, *Canadian Methodist Women, 1766–1925: Marys, Marthas, Mothers in Israel*, Studies in Women and Religion, Volume 10 (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2005) 41–51.

of community, was the fact as mentioned earlier, that a number of these women coming into Canada from the United States are initially unable to work in a professional capacity. One of the most frequently mentioned issues was the long wait for working papers and the issues around finding satisfying employment.

Several of the women found their first years in Canada challenging as even when they thought their papers were in order obstructions seem to occur. One rebbetzin noted that prior to their arrival to Canada, her husband had met with an immigration lawyer in the city to which they were moving, and “had come out with a file of everything that was needed” and in the end it was two years before she was able to use her education and skills professionally.¹⁹⁹

We were told it would take a year before I got papers to work.... So we just kind of assumed that the first year we would deal with my getting us settled and meeting people and just making us comfortable here, and which is sort of what happened.... We realized fairly quickly that I was going to have to go to work.... And I unfortunately had a negative experience with the lawyer we were given, and that really coloured my first two years. So my acclamation probably would have been a lot smoother had he done what he was supposed to do.²⁰⁰

Another rebbetzin shared that

I took my paperwork into the dept of education and had it evaluated before I applied for a work permit – cause I said it was stupid to apply for a work permit if I couldn’t teach – and – it took probably 7–8 months for the paperwork, for the work permit to come back.²⁰¹

She further noted that her experience was “lucky – that they were very nice at the immigration office here.”²⁰² She shared that she was able to use her experience applying for a work permit with a rabbinical wife in Edmonton who had emailed her that she was having a lot of trouble getting the work permit.²⁰³

Another wife had also felt both obstructed by the system, and unsupported by her

¹⁹⁹ Interview, December 17, 2004.

²⁰⁰ Interview, December 17, 2004.

²⁰¹ Interview, March 21, 2007.

²⁰² Interview, March 21, 2007.

²⁰³ Interview, March 21, 2007.

community:

I got here and I got stuck in immigration bureaucracy. First of all my papers were filed wrong for some reason, and or they were lost – so I had to start from scratch after being here for several months. And I wasn't allowed to work and I wasn't allowed to go to school. I didn't want to start getting a student visa to go study culture, 'cause I didn't want to slow down my immigrant application. And here the synagogue said, "Don't worry it won't take long." Well it took over a year. I think it was one of the worst years of my life: moving here and having nothing to do and feeling like my career was lost.... It was before people were internet-wise, so I literally had nothing to do and it was very very tense, so it took a long time to get established here.²⁰⁴

One young rebbetzin, who returned to Israel with her husband this past summer, had been able to maintain her career and hold her position in an Israeli law firm on account of having internet access. She noted that

the whole time we've been here I've also done various things for them as well but because he's – I'm now like his main worker so I've been doing more intellectual property law than family law but I still have my hand in family law.²⁰⁵

While a number of women expressed that the notion of the rabbi "being on a pedestal" was rapidly fading, there seemed to be agreement that in Canada the rabbi retained his aura of mystery within the Canadian milieu. One rabbinical wife whose husband had previously been in an American pulpit commented

I think that there is a different level of respect in Canada – I don't know Canada, I know [this community] – I think [that] was an unusual community and in the year that my husband's job was not renewed ... there were three rabbis at the same time that were let go. [That community has] – a lack of respect I think for rabbis ... [This community] is a place where they never ask the rabbi to do something that they shouldn't do – I mean to go shopping or to shovel the sidewalk --²⁰⁶

Another wife, who found her Canadian community less than welcoming, noted:

[This city] is a very funny place you can't compare it to other places – you can't – well I actually don't know about that in Canada, 'cause it's the only place I know in Canada – so I don't know what the rest of Canada is like – you can't compare it to other places in the Unites States, because in the United States people move so much. They are used to knowing what it is like to be a stranger in a strange land – [people

²⁰⁴ Interview, March 17, 2004.

²⁰⁵ Interview, March 15, 2007.

²⁰⁶ Interview, July 14, 2005.

living in this community] don't know that. So in a way you are invisible on their radar because they have their whole lives here and on some unconscious level they assume you have your whole life.²⁰⁷

The rebbetzin who has since returned to Israel also commented on the isolation inherent in being a rabbinical couple, and wife in a small community:

I'd say the sad part of being in small community you feel that isolation – even if there's couples that are in your same age group, same social group you have the same kids the same age there'll still be that barrier that you're the rabbi – and all your friends aren't here but thankfully there's this wonderful tool called the internet nowadays and it really makes a big difference – it really keeps you away from that isolation – I mean you just click on the computer and you're with your friends, so that makes a big difference.²⁰⁸

Others also commented on how they felt their role had changed substantially as a result of their move to Canada. One rebbetzin in a fairly large congregation in a mid-size community, commented

I think it depends – it's such a difference depending on where you are the rabbi's wife. But, you know, where I was then and what it would have been like being the rabbi's wife there is very different than what it is here.²⁰⁹

This particular rebbetzin immersed herself in the congregation and her young and growing family; she had shared that her community was passive in terms of its Judaism, and that she felt that the “people here [are] ... more afraid to show that they are Jews ... they don't want to do anything to show overtly that they are Jewish yet everybody knows who the Jews are in town ... the Jewish community here is they don't want don't rock the boat.”²¹⁰ This rebbetzin had experienced antisemitic behaviour in her capacity as an educator. In her interview she shared that “I had a girl start to give me a Nazi salute and then two others picked up and then they put their fingers over their lips to imitate Hitler's moustache.”²¹¹ The fact that several teens could conspire to behave this way in her presence she attributed to the Jewish community's “don't rock the

²⁰⁷ Interview, June 2, 2004.

²⁰⁸ Interview, March 15, 2007.

²⁰⁹ Interview, December 22, 2004.

²¹⁰ Interview, March 21, 2007.

²¹¹ Interview, March 21, 2007.

boat” attitude. One of her ways of coping with what she described as the community’s apathy, and her feelings of isolation was to pay frequent visits to family and friends in the United States.

She also shared that

coming from an American mind-set when you hear city, seat of government, two universities, I certainly expected a much more intellectual cosmopolitan thriving community than what I found.²¹²

As illustrated in the chapter on rabbis, in Canada, unlike the United States, outreach to the non-Jewish community is not high on the list of qualities sought in a pulpit rabbi. Yet for those living in small communities, they want their rabbi (and his wife) to be able to interact and socialize with the non-Jewish community. Part of this interaction often means bringing information about being Jewish to the non-Jewish community. For example in one of the small West Coast communities one wife noted that she was

involved with my kids’ school and some of that has to do with being Jewish as well like right now I’m – I’m trying to set stuff up with the intercultural association to try to have some balance in the schools. Christmas ... in ... is really difficult for Jewish children, and teachers don’t get it and principals don’t get it so somehow we need to be starting from the top to trickle down to either get a balanced curriculum and give teachers access to other religious material: Diwali, Hanukkah, Ramadan, there’s all these different festivals out there but Christmas is part and parcel of the core curriculum for December.²¹³

What about whom they can speak to? How does this work itself out in a small community? In the Toronto communities for example, several of the women acknowledged meeting with rabbinical colleagues and their wives socially. This type of socialization was limited in that the congregations to which these couples belonged were similar in religious orientation, and size. In several of the small communities where there were more than three synagogues, the rabbinical wives themselves had tried to get together to meet and discuss shared issues. One rebbetzin described how

²¹² Interview, March 21, 2007.

²¹³ Interview, December 16, 2004.

for awhile there, there were three of us who did an evening what's it like to be a rabbi's wife and that was kind of fun and we were making boxes for the shelter because we wanted to have a rabbi's wife project but we haven't been able to do that since ... because one is separated or divorced now and the other one is very busy having children.²¹⁴

In another mid-sized city, one of the women stated that she felt it was really important for rebbetzins to meet and discuss common issues:

I started calling meetings with the rebbetzins and said we have to stay together for support and we met and we did things together – we had *mikveh* meetings to promote *tahara mishpacha*, – we still meet whenever there's things to discuss – I got a chance to meet a lot of good people, *frum* people from the other *shuls* – it was because of my position as rebbetzin I got to meet them.²¹⁵

Others commented on the difficulty they had especially in a small community monitoring their friendships. The young rebbetzin who had moved between two communities shared that the smaller community was challenging in terms of separating herself from the community:

[It] is a little bit challenging ... that I'm becoming friends with all these people, and I have to be careful about what I say about certain things. Like, I was with somebody yesterday, taking a walk, who is in the shul, and I was finding myself starting to vent about – [how] we were finding it challenging making the transition ... then I thought "Should I be discussing this with congregants?" You know, then it's like, well you know, "Who do I discuss this with and who's my peer group here?" And so, in some ways, it's a little bit more challenging, because here I'm finding it's more intermeshed.²¹⁶

Most of the women agreed with the comments of the rebbetzin from a small community that, in

some ways, you can't have friends. Not really, not the same way as you can if you are not in a public position. You can't have friends where they are still ultimately responsible for your salary or your husband's salary – it's a different relationship.²¹⁷

Even with those women who seemed to be able to maintain friendships within their congregations there were issues of social isolation. The feelings of being excluded or isolated from the community do not derive solely from being the wife of a rabbi. For example, one rebbetzin shared that she played mahjong, and used this skill to develop friendships for herself:

²¹⁴ Interview, May 31, 2005.

²¹⁵ Interview, August 10, 2005.

²¹⁶ Interview, December 23, 2004.

²¹⁷ Interview, March 21, 2007.

I taught mahjong at the synagogue when we first came here, so that I would have some friends to play mahjong with, so I kind of selfishly did that and got a mahjong group together and so I have a couple of friends through there.²¹⁸

Another noted that “we chose a house near a park, and I just planted myself in the park, and shook hands with everybody I met who had a kid.”²¹⁹ While many of the women were outgoing and open to meeting new people, the stress of leaving behind friendships and wondering if new friendships will be formed was a contributing factor to feelings of isolation. This was further aggravated by the number of moves the family or couple had made. Invariably when asking about the number of congregations with which a wife had been involved it was often with great pride that the words “just this one,” or “only three, we’ve been lucky” are uttered. One rebbetzin, when asked how many congregations she had been in, laughed, saying, “Be in the rabbinate, see the country.”²²⁰ This family was now with its fifth congregation, and had been with it for over ten years. Sometimes it takes several years before the right “fit” can be found between congregation and rabbi. Another rabbinical wife commented on how difficult it was to integrate without children to provide an entree into the community. She was especially disillusioned by the fact that in previous communities

I was called by every Jewish organization to welcome me and to invite me to come to a meeting and nobody called me here, and I was pretty surprised by that. I had ... filled out the form or whatever [indicating we were new in town] and I thought if I’m not being called what is happening to all these young families moving in.²²¹

One might think that the amount of time spent in a community would influence how one is able to interact with one’s congregants. One of the women in the first cohort was commenting about the “distance” that exists between the rabbinical couple and their congregants. She then shared how her daughter’s in-laws are best friends with a retired rabbi; she noted that despite the fact

²¹⁸ Interview, July 14, 2005.

²¹⁹ Interview, August 31, 2004.

²²⁰ Interview, August 15, 2005.

²²¹ Interview, December 17, 2004.

that her son-in-law's father attended Yeshiva University with this now retired rabbi, the in-laws continue to call him rabbi.²²² In another situation a rabbinical wife, from the second cohort, recalled her parents' friendship with their congregational rabbi and his wife. She noted that in her estimation there was no "distance" between these friends, commenting that

my parents were best friends with my rabbi and his wife, and still are incredibly close with them long after everyone's retired and moved to different cities.... I think they've always been close friends; it was never just about "this is the rabbi," that didn't interrupt the social relationship at all.²²³

She further commented that if she had paid attention to what they were being told while her husband attended seminary, that they should only have clergy friends, living as they do in a small community, would have isolated her even further. Instead she noted that "some of my very close friends who I no longer think of as congregants I think of as my friends who are congregants I met because of *shul*."²²⁴

Overall satisfaction with congregational life

The last question of the interview asked the interviewee to rate her satisfaction quotient with congregational life: "On a scale of 1–10 how would you rate your satisfaction quotient with congregational life?" The rating was between 1 and 10, and given the responses of some of the women their ratings surprised me – considering the extent of their involvement – I had expected their satisfaction ratings to correlate somewhat with their level of involvement. That is, I thought that the more involved a woman was in her congregation, the higher she would rate her level of satisfaction with congregational life. This was not necessarily so: several women were involved in a variety of activities within the congregation, which they had chosen to undertake, and yet their rating of satisfaction with their congregation was quite low.

²²² Interview, July 12, 2005.

²²³ Interview, August 31, 2004.

²²⁴ Interview, August 31, 2004.

When queried about the tension between their activities and their rating, several indicated their difficulty with the “shoulds” of congregational life, as well as the stresses to which their families, and especially their husbands were subjected. For most of the women the key aspect for a satisfactory rating aside from the type and extent of involvement in the congregation, was how the congregation treated her husband. For example, one rebbetzin commented she could not move beyond rating her congregation an 8 on account of her “[being] sensitive to the issues my husband was going through.” She further commented that “it couldn’t be a 10 because there’s all these Jewish politics that gets in the way of it being a ten.”²²⁵ Aside from whether or not her husband was given his due, was the manner in which the women themselves chose to be involved: was it choice or was it imposed by the congregation. For example, as mentioned previously, one wife was informed shortly after her arrival to the community that she was responsible for preparing the *kiddushes* to be hosted in the sukkah that had been built in their backyard. The extent to which it was possible to be involved in the congregation on one’s own terms as opposed to being either ignored and uninvolved or over-involved influenced one’s general satisfaction with congregational life.

Fortunately for congregational life in Canada most of the women I interviewed were satisfied with their congregations and rated their experience 7 and higher. Three women of the 59 declined to comment on this question, and seven provided their congregation a satisfaction rating that was below 5. The women with the highest levels of satisfaction were those situations where a) either they had been with the same congregation a long time and felt their situation was secure, or b) there were several women whose husbands maintained a position alongside that of the congregation so that the family were not dependent on the congregation for their financial security. As one rabbi’s wife explained,

²²⁵ Interview, July 20, 2005.

My husband did not depend upon this for his living – this was always the cream on the sundae; he does it because he enjoys doing it not for the financial rewards, and that makes a very very big difference to the congregation whether or not they realize [it].²²⁶

Notably this rebbetzin, who is in the first cohort, felt very strongly that

Congregants have every right to call here any time of the day or night. If it's dinnertime and it's convenient for them to call then, that's part of the job, so and we have always made this clear, if we go away we leave a phone number where we could be reached, because he should be accessible all the time – that's the nature of the job.²²⁷

High satisfaction ratings were also prominent amongst a number of rabbinical wives who were new to both the communities and the lifestyle.

There were several congregations where the woman said not only was there no expectation of her involvement by the congregation, but that these women felt ignored and dismissed by their husband's congregation. For example, one rabbi's wife commented that she felt "invisible on their radar, and was convinced that the congregation had little interest in her other than in the passive support she provided her husband."²²⁸ Another rebbetzin also noted she "had been away for a meeting, and nobody has said anything; I was just gone for 5 weeks and nobody said anything."²²⁹ She had also shared that when her working papers finally came through, no one in the congregation considered what it meant to her to be able to work in her field, but rather expressed "Oh good, now she has a job she won't take our rabbi away."²³⁰

Those women who felt that the synagogue did have some specific expectation seemed to experience a higher level of satisfaction with congregational life than those women who felt the synagogues had un verbalized expectations or no expectations. Both of these women were in small communities, the former spent very little time in the congregation, rarely attending

²²⁶ Interview, July 18, 2005.

²²⁷ Interview, July 18, 2005.

²²⁸ Interview, June 2, 2004.

²²⁹ Interview, March 21, 2007.

²³⁰ Interview, March 21, 2007.

synagogue, whilst the latter, attended when in town, and also hosted in their home – things she said she did for her husband rather than for the community.²³¹

Most of the women in these congregations took their roles very seriously and many perceived themselves as guides to other individuals, particularly young adults and women, in their journey towards Jewish selfhood. One wife saw her “difference” as a form of role modelling

for being able to be not pegged and be *shomer mitzvot* that is the piece that I see myself as a role model that I don’t have fit in, be like, look like, sound like, act like, do like, I can take my role and extrapolate, adapt, I can do *shomer mitzvahs* – ... for people who are converting – [and they feel] I don’t know if I can do that – you can be who you are and just need to be true to Torah but it can be done.²³²

Another also felt strongly that she was a role model within her community:

The fact that I mix my parenting and my *shul* presence I think has affected some people that I don’t keep those roles totally distinct the mere fact that I nurse in *shul* I think some people really don’t like it and some people see that as a role model and I would hope and I think the fact that I’m not a Jewish professional and even highly Jewishly educated yet very involved in Jewish learning maybe give some people courage you know I’m not scholar and yet I can get deeply into learning.²³³

While another felt that her

dress – certainly there are moments when I might be tempted to buy a shorter skirt, I wouldn’t even consider it – I think it’s important for people to realize that we’re just no grey you have to do black and white so that if they see it there is just one way.²³⁴

One of the younger rebbetzins (also, recent to the role) responded that

[laughter] I see myself as a role model in a different ... way. A role model of ... not having a lot of Jewish background [yet] being a role model inspiring people to be involved Jewishly and not feel mortified about their lack of knowledge. So in that way, I feel like I am a role model. ... I’m a role model in being able to admit my limitations, being ... a role model of honesty.²³⁵

The interviews revealed, often by chance, what can only be called the schizophrenic aspects of the position. This was not necessarily affected by the size of the congregation, or whether or

²³¹ Interview, March 21, 2007.

²³² Interview, August 17, 2005.

²³³ Interview, August 31, 2004.

²³⁴ Interview, December 22, 2004.

²³⁵ Interview, March 8, 2004.

not it was in a small town or major city. The role requires that the rabbi's wife remain supportive, cheerful and available to his congregation, and that she at all times not comment or take a stand on anything that is taking place in the synagogue community. Some women were able to cope with these aspects of the role, some were not.

As noted in the section "Taking responsibility" most of the women saw themselves as participants in their husband's careers. Even though one rebbetzin, for example, had dismissed the title of rebbetzin noting that she herself was a lawyer but her husband was not, and therefore he could not be called "lawyer" so why would she, who is not a rabbi be called rebbetzin.²³⁶ Despite the discussion around naming, this "rebbetzin" also noted that she was her husband's sounding board: "He'd say I'm the nudge who drives him crazy all the time with ideas and things that go on – so I give him ideas all the times of what he should be doing or shouldn't be doing."²³⁷

One of the questions asked in the interview was "as greater numbers of women go into the rabbinate do you feel this will affect how your position or role is viewed?" As noted previously no Conservative congregation in Canada has a female rabbi, and very few Conservative congregations are fully egalitarian. Six of the women, from both the Conservative and Orthodox movements declined to respond to this question excusing themselves by noting that either such an event was highly improbable on their husband's "watch" (Conservative) or that it just was not going to happen (Orthodox).

For those women who did respond – regardless of denomination it was interesting to note that none felt that their role would change but rather that in some respects it would make the wife's role more challenging. One rabbinical wife commented:

²³⁶ Interview March 15, 2007.

²³⁷ Interview, March 15, 2007.

It will force rebbetzins from all denominations to be more intellectual, to study more, it will change the role of just being the advisor and being the ... taking care of the tradition with the brides and the new families to [a] much more teaching oriented position – I think that it will bring a level of more intellectual complexity into the role.²³⁸

Another wife also shared that

as women become rabbis I think the harder part [will] not [be] for the rabbi's wife but for the rabbi's husband [as in] ... defining what that role means completely; but I don't think women becoming rabbi will take away from the traditional rabbi's wife role.²³⁹

While Bloom, as already discussed, wrote about the rabbinical position in terms of its iconic status, ongoing research indicates that, as one rabbi's wife noted,

the rabbi and his family aren't as high up on the pedestal ... that has come down both for good and for bad in that we're seen more as human beings.²⁴⁰

Another noticed that a New York congregation now had “three interns and two rabbis” and that “some of them are female and some of them are male” and that this provides

[a] variety of opportunities [for] people to interact with the rabbi, with the rabbi as counselor, with the rabbi as teacher, with the rabbi as advisor, [and that the rabbinical role is] less [a] parental patriarchal role and more egalitarian I think the rabbinate is becoming more receptive, more porous, more transparent to the needs of the people and I think that's a great change.²⁴¹

This rebbetzin also saw the liberalization of the pulpit (through the ordination of women) as “demystify the rabbinate” or as others have noted humanizing the rabbinate so that the rabbi “will not necessarily be other.” Certainly if the rabbi is truly seen not as other but as friend, there might be a parallel move to sensitize congregations and their Boards so that when issues arise they are handled with respect rather than recriminations.

²³⁸ Interview, June 18, 2004.

²³⁹ Interview, July 21, 2005.

²⁴⁰ Interview, December 17, 2004.

²⁴¹ Interview, June 2, 2004.

Table V: *Satisfaction quotient with congregation*

Generational Divisions	Satisfaction Quotient									
	1-5	5-6	6-7	7	7-8	8	8-9	9	10	no resp.
Silent Generation 1925-1944 (13)	1		2		1	2	3	2	2	
Boomer Generation 1945-1960 (29)	4	1	1		4	5	4	5	3	2
Generation X 1961-1981 (17)	2	1	1	2	3	3	1		3	1

This table represents the numerical responses to the question “On a scale of 1-10 how would you rate your satisfaction quotient with congregational life?”; where 10 represents extremely satisfied with congregational life and 1 represents extreme dissatisfaction with congregational life.

Summary

After completing 59 interviews had a clear picture evolved concerning the place of the rabbi's wife in Canadian Jewish communities or had I in fact gathered 59 descriptions each wholly unique with little in common? Oddly enough I felt both that my research had met my initial research goals, as will be discussed in greater detail in the concluding chapter, and that I had had the privilege of meeting 59 women who initially had one aspect in common: they were married to Canadian rabbis who could be hired or fired from their congregational positions.

Most of the women I encountered had a strong commitment to their Jewish learning. One wife noted there's “not barely a day that I'm not reading some Jewish text or doing something [Jewish].”²⁴² At the same time, a number of women experienced frustration that the congregants did not have the same desire for learning. For example, one young rebbetzin commented that

I have heard compliments that say ... the things you know – it's amazing and I said but you can know that too if you would just get the knowledge level ... and go and learn, go and learn, the only way to change things is by learning and unfortunately – the congregant level does not have the drive to seek out the learning and the knowledge, and yes while it's wonderful on the leadership level they're willing to attain such knowledge levels the congregants aren't.²⁴³

²⁴² Interview, December 20, 2004.

²⁴³ Interview, March 15, 2007.

For some, the lack of interest on the part of the congregants was a positive challenge, for others it was too discouraging and contributed to their drawing away from congregational life. In terms of the biographical data that had been collected, the most salient aspect was the advanced educational levels of most of the women. Since historical writings reveal that many of the women married to known rabbis were themselves scholars of some note, the educational accomplishments of my interviewees should not have been unexpected. Nevertheless, I was struck by this “passion for learning” attribute shared by most of the women regardless of age or denomination. In terms of familial influences, as mentioned previously, most of the women hailed from homes that were strongly Zionist. This attribute had led many of the women to actively involve themselves in Jewish youth groups that in effect countered or minimised any influences from their non-Jewish peers, especially in high school. One rebbetzin noted that she “learned what I needed in high school but my whole life was really youth group.”²⁴⁴ Another also noted that while she had attended a public high school with over five hundred students in her graduating class, she had “the Jewish youth group so I didn’t really miss whatever it was that might have been happening in that way.”²⁴⁵ A third wife also shared that she had a few friends in her high school but that “it wasn’t the focus of my social life.”²⁴⁶

The six areas that I chose to address: Entering the Rabbinical World; Congregational Activities: Expectations, and Obligations; Taking Responsibility and Sharing the Load; Creating Space for Personal and Spiritual Growth; Life in the Small and not so Small Communities, and Overall Satisfaction with Congregational Life were partially accounted for by the questions I asked but not solely. As I transcribed the interviews these specific concerns arose most frequently. Most of the women felt that they had come to some sort of accommodation with their

²⁴⁴ Interview, July 21, 2005.

²⁴⁵ Interview, July 14, 2005.

²⁴⁶ Interview, March 24, 2004.

husband's choice of career. For example, one rabbinical wife shared that her husband had been a rabbi for almost thirty years and that

probably for a good 23 or 25 of them I really wasn't happy that he was in a pulpit. I gave that up – he's really good at what he does so I don't need to make remarks anymore you know so when are you getting out of this ... I can't say I love it but if he's gonna be in a congregation doing things that he's good at this is a great place to do it.²⁴⁷

As mentioned briefly in the section on satisfaction levels, congregational support for their husbands was an important factor for the woman's feelings of satisfaction with congregational life. Most of the women recognized that their husband's derived a great deal of satisfaction from being in a congregation. One woman, whose husband has since left the pulpit, recalled that "when [she] went to *shul* Rosh Hashona and heard him speak," she commented, "I was really upset – because I could tell that was his calling and ... it was too bad so then he started taking pulpits."²⁴⁸ Another noted that her husband had been an educator, and that she thought "he always should have been a pulpit rabbi – so was quite pleased that he wanted to do that" and made the decision to go into the rabbinate.²⁴⁹ More often than not one of the significant factors underlying congregational satisfaction which was not part of my questionnaire was the relationship between the rabbi and his Board and especially the extent to which this spilled over to the wife. This was not my focus, and in presenting myself as a researcher interested in the public role of the rabbi's wife, fielding questions around rabbi and his Board would have been viewed as invasive. It does need to be noted that several women did raise this as an issue. One rabbi's wife commented:

I think it's hard on a large *shul* run by a Board of Directors; I think that always it's inherent in the rabbinical position that it doesn't matter who is paying your salary, the real boss is up there, so you have to do things that are, if this is what your religion tells you to do, this is what your conscience tells you to do, they're paying your

²⁴⁷ Interview, July 19, 2005.

²⁴⁸ Interview, September 1, 2004.

²⁴⁹ Interview, May 31, 2005.

salary, but that's the conflict, you are not doing what a Board of Directors asks you to do.²⁵⁰

These tensions inherent in serving two masters, God and the Board, contributed to their feelings of dissatisfaction at times with their congregations. For example, one rebbetzin shared that their Board had discussed

whether [it] could end Yom Kippor at the correct time, and the resolution was, no we end at 7 o'clock, like it was a controversy – do they accommodate [the rabbi] or do what they have always done.²⁵¹

Board issues aside, most of the women shared that through their role within the congregation they had encountered and been privileged to be

exposed to families, and [the] different ways that people's lives, family life – highs, lows, crises I would say in that sense it's a very very privileged position coming extremely close into people's personal lives.²⁵²

These women challenged the stereotypical rebbetzin "image" by being professionals in their own right. Considering the types of activities they have chosen to undertake, and their level of involvement with their husbands' congregations, "the rebbetzin," at least amongst Canadian Jewry, has not been consigned to history but is very much a significant role that substantially influences contemporary Canadian Jewish religious leadership.

²⁵⁰ Interview, August 1, 2004.

²⁵¹ Interview, August 31, 2004.

²⁵² Interview, March 24, 2004.

CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION

In the conclusion to my Master's thesis I challenged Shuly Rubin Schwartz' finding that at that time the "special calling of the rebbetzin" was in decline.¹ Having completed interviews with rebbetzins from all denominations, whose husbands serve in small, medium, and large congregations in small, medium and large Canadian Jewish communities my response then, and my response now is that this role is in transformation. It is not, at least in Canada, as Schwartz has noted in discussing the American rebbetzin, "only among the Orthodox [that] the rebbetzin role thrives today."²

Historical background

Although the historical Canadian rebbetzin was not my focus, she is out there in the archives, in diaries, journals and letters. Archivists often do not have the luxury of time to check and cross-check the materials they oversee. My experience writing about Montreal's early rabbinical wives in the early stages of my research demonstrated that active hands-on research of archival files is required to bring these various scraps of information together. In my explorations of the historical place of rabbinical wives and of Jewish women generally in Canada, it became evident that there is much that has yet to be comprehensively researched. The interaction between gender and Jewish culture has been addressed in the United States through literature and art, as well as scholarly works. There has not been a parallel examination of gender and Jewish culture in Canada. There have been a number of articles that pertain to the historic and contemporary role of Jewish women within the Jewish and larger community, but the factors influencing Canadian Jewish gender identification have yet to be culled.

The research of Levitt, Milstone and Tenenbaum that resulted in their books on Canadian

¹ "We Married What We Wanted to Be," 246.

² *The Rabbi's Wife*, 213.

synagogues is now almost 30 years old. The research addresses the architectural rather than the human aspects of synagogue life. It is time for a similar study to be conducted so that another “snapshot in time” of Canadian Jewish religious institutions can be made available for future researchers and scholars of not only Canadian Jewish history, but also Canadian religious history generally. As noted in my chapter on synagogues, on those occasions when I was able to call a rabbi directly I had greater success at completing the questionnaire, indicating that this aspect of my research truly warranted its own thesis and research time. The material gathered here is a suitable foundation for embarking on the synagogue research suggested.

The “Canadian” rebbetzin

In response to the rebbetzin who was so certain that the experiences of East Coast women would provide a different slant to my findings – wherever you may be – you were wrong. The concerns of Canadian Jewish women married to pulpit rabbis remain constant – only the names and locations change. I noted in the “Methodology” that I expected to find “patterns of practice,” that is similar activities, statements, even social relations, in the personal narratives of the rabbinical wives, regardless of denomination or background. The interviews revealed that affiliation had no influence over patterns of practice. The hosting, relationships with congregants, types of classes conducted, the similarity of statements around privacy, friendships and congregational concerns were solely a function of this position which is unique to the wife of a congregational rabbi and to her role within the congregation and community.

At the outset, I stated that there are five key areas of contention inherent in this position regardless of the women’s congregational affiliations: its intrusiveness; the use of their homes for religious and social activities; the degree to which they could openly express themselves on certain issues due to their husband’s role; the implicit obligations in the position, and, how these obligations would insinuate themselves into the wives’ overall activities. These key areas were of

equal concerns for the women involved with non-Orthodox congregations as with Orthodox congregations.

When bringing factors such as age, young family versus couple with grown children, or small congregation versus large congregation, again the patterns of practice did not significantly alter, but the quality and frequency of involvement did. For example, it is interesting to note that in terms of the three cohorts, very few women in the first cohort (the Silent Generation), instantly mentioned hosting as part of their congregational activities – among this group “always hav[ing] people over Friday night Saturday lunch” was mentioned almost as an afterthought. Whereas in both the second cohort and the third, issues around congregational expectations of hosting and entertainment arose early in the interviews.

Another notable difference between the cohorts was the way in which each group responded to the question of privacy.³ Both the first and third cohorts did not consider this to be an issue on the basis that “it was part of the role.” In the second cohort, of those women who also did not consider it an issue, only one mentioned that she saw it as part of the role. The majority of the women who were not concerned with privacy in the Boomer Generation mentioned either the location of the house or the respect of the congregation for boundaries as part of their response as to how they were able to maintain their privacy. With the first cohort, the notion that this was part of the role is not too surprising as most of these women came of age prior to the impact of the feminist movement. As Sylvia Barak Fishman notes, the changes wrought by the movement had not yet been absorbed into the public life of mainstream North American Jewry.⁴ The third cohort however comes of age after these changes have become part of the woof and warp of public life both in Canada and the United States. Eight of the seventeen women in Generation X

³ Given the number of interviews and the range of responses my comments are somewhat speculative which is why I chose to discuss them in this chapter rather than in the previous chapter which deals directly with the hard data from the interviews.

⁴ Fishman, “The Impact of Feminism on American Jewish Life,” 3.

were raised in either Hasidic or Orthodox (not modern Orthodox) homes. Opening one's home to strangers, being involved in acts of *gemilut hasidim*, acts of kindness, were for many of these women part of their upbringing, and therefore in marrying a congregational rabbi they were able to engage in familiar and (for them) rewarding activities. In this respect as Schwartz has noted many of the women raised in Orthodox homes "embrace the rebbetzin role."⁵

My research shows that many of the women in non-Orthodox congregations also embrace the role. For example, one non-Orthodox rebbetzin shared that she had been given the opportunity to undergo *tahara* training, and commented that

because I was the rabbi's wife, I felt I shouldn't miss this volunteer opportunity this is something I can do, therefore should do, I pushed myself a little, and the training [was] fascinating and the one *tahara* experience ... but to have felt what I felt, and learned what I learned through doing one *tahara* is dazzling.⁶

The women I encountered in the non-Orthodox congregations perceive themselves as participating in activities often ascribed to historical rebbetzins: they give classes, open their homes, and accompany their husbands as the occasion demands. Like many other Canadian Jewish women today, they are also professionals with their own careers and expectations for themselves; juggling family, work, social, and spiritual needs. As one rebbetzin noted, "I'm not obligated – I go to *shiva* homes of people who I really like – there's never been a 'oh your wife never came to my *shiva*' like there's never been that so I do my best."⁷ This was a very common addendum to some of the questions, "I try," "I do my best," "I have to balance." These comments indicate that even where there was not a lot of involvement the women had not abandoned what they saw as their role in the congregation but were trying to "fit" in a way that made sense for their lives. The

⁵ S.R. Schwartz, *The Rabbi's Wife*, 213; Schwartz is quoting from Sally Charnow's article "Seasons of the Soul: Context and Meaning in an Orthodox Girls High School," in *Active Voices: Women in Jewish Culture*, ed. Maurie Sacks (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995) 174.

⁶ Interview, August 31, 2004. *Tahara* is the washing of the body prior to its internment. Men wash men and women wash women, and there is a prescribed procedure for how this is done.

⁷ Interview, July 21, 2005.

majority of the rabbinical wives expressed their satisfaction and emphasized how being available to help or assist in a variety of ways had challenged and changed their perceptions.

Schwartz emphasized that in the anecdotal evidence she gathered, “liberal rabbis’ wives [did not] view themselves working in partnership with their husbands.”⁸ In my interviews it was not the wives from liberal milieus that distanced themselves from the congregation, but rather women whose husbands were employed by Orthodox or Conservative congregations. Even then, there was an awareness that maintaining one’s distance from the congregation, did not necessarily mean a total lack of involvement. In speaking with one recalcitrant rebbetzin (no longer in the rabbinate) she shared,

[While] I can’t be *ezer kenegdo* I can’t just be his helpmate in this stuff, and it also puts a terrible stress on your relationship to your husband.... I was careful because I know a wife can help her husband lose his job.⁹

When asked to elaborate on how she saw her role, she indicated that in the first year or two of being in the congregation she was active as time and children permitted: “I actually tried to do some things and we got some congregants involved and we cooked Shabbat dinner together on like Thursday night and it was very nice.”¹⁰ Then she shared that the instability of the congregation made her feel insecure and once this happened she could no longer justify her involvement when she still had a young family and had also begun working.¹¹

Several of the women emphasized that when their husbands had taken the position it had been clearly outlined that there were to be no expectations on their wives. Of the wives who were noticeably uninvolved with their husband’s congregation, the decision not to be involved was premised to some extent on the congregation’s attitude and response. As indicated in the section, “Overall satisfaction with congregational life,” there were six women who were quite dissatisfied

⁸ S.R. Schwartz, *The Rabbi’s Wife*, 212–213.

⁹ Interview, September 1, 2004.

¹⁰ Interview, September 1, 2004.

¹¹ Interview, September 1, 2004.

with congregational life and of these, four indicated that a large part of their discomfort was a response to the congregation's attitude. As one rebbetzin commented,

[T]hey never asked about me in the interview ... I guess I would go if I thought it would impede on his job – ... – I think – I'm pretty sure they never cared. they never asked about me in the interview (I think), I think that synagogues in general would be thrilled if the spouse would want to do all this extra stuff, who wouldn't.¹²

There was insufficient time for this project to include interviews with congregants to ask how they perceived the role of their rabbi's wife. It is evident that the negativity experienced by these women lessened their commitment to be active in any type of synagogue related program, at the same time it is also evident that whatever personal feelings existed towards the congregation, if a husband's position were in jeopardy due to a wife's absence, steps would be taken to alleviate the synagogue's concerns. Several women who had rated their congregations a 6 or higher, indicated that if I had queried their level of satisfaction at the time of contract negotiations I would have received a very different response. Again as shown in chapter five, a congregations' lack of regard for their rabbi was very much a factor in these ratings. One wife, whose husband is no longer a pulpit rabbi, commented that she "found that very very hard ... when the people would double talk right in your presence and the power game played which I know it exists in every single synagogue but for me to witness it ... I'm still just recovering from it now."¹³

Had I really used too broad a definition of who should or could be a rebbetzin, as one rebbetzin had implied? Whenever I indicated in discussion that my research was non-denominational, the Orthodox-affiliated women were very curious as to the role of a wife in a non-Orthodox congregation. Certainly several of the Orthodox women with whom I spoke would have agreed fully with Schwartz' statement that liberal rebbetzins are no longer interested in "devoting their time and efforts to the spiritual and cultural needs of the congregation."¹⁴ There

¹² Interview, June 2, 2004.

¹³ Interview, March 16, 2007.

¹⁴ S. R. Schwartz 141; Schwartz is quoting from an article in her personal files. Zev K. Nelson, "Special

were exclamations of surprise (even skepticism) that the wives of rabbis in non-Orthodox congregations would be engaged in teaching, or hosting or other forms of programming. My response was to restate that one of my main reasons for engaging in the research was to demonstrate that the role was not particular to Orthodox congregations, and that in Canada the role of the rabbinical wife had retained its “traditional” character.

Again unlike the women Schwatz met, who were in liberal congregations, Canadian Jewish rebbetzins on the whole have proactively created a place for themselves within their congregations. The majority noted that their role would not be undermined by the presence of a female rabbi, but as most also acknowledged, that would not be an issue in their husband’s congregation. One of the wives commented about the lack of female rabbis in Canada:

Canada has not been very swift in employing women, and I think that it’s much more common in the States than in Canada at this point, and even within the Conservative movement on the East Coast for the most part [it is] still non-egalitarian which I think is an embarrassment – but yes, slowly slowly [referring to change in the Canadian Conservative movement].¹⁵

There is an inherent tension in this impression that Canada “lags behind” its southern neighbour, but will eventually “catch up.” On the one hand, why should not entry into religious leadership positions in Canada’s non-Orthodox congregations be accessible to female rabbis. On the other hand, the expectation that Canadian institutions should behave like their American counterparts to some extent disregards Canadian Jewish religious history, the historical and political climate in Canada, the geographical distances between cities and towns, and the efforts of Canada’s Jewish religious communities to maintain their more traditional stance. Is this a “lag”? Are Canadian Jewish communities to be identified as “less developed” because they have been less receptive to the changes taking place in the non-Orthodox congregations south of the 49th

Problems of the Rabbi’s Wife and Children,” paper delivered at “On Being a Rabbi” conference, JTS, Winter 1963, 1–2.

¹⁵ Interview, December 16, 2004.

parallel? As noted in “Chapter Three: Jewish Religious Institutional Development in Canada,” Stuart Rosenberg was convinced that Canadian Jews would in his words, “follow the leader,” as Canadian congregational practices would begin to reflect those of their American counterparts in the various movements.¹⁶ The years that Rosenberg was gathering his material until the publication of his book in 1970, were also the birth years of Generation X. As already noted, the rabbinical wives in this cohort demonstrated a greater orientation towards tradition than the previous generation.

As for the rabbis who have elected to work in Canada, it appears that they tend to favour a more traditional approach to the conduct of services, to home observances, and to the fact that as yet the few female rabbis in Canada are to be found solely within the Reform, Reconstructionist and Jewish Renewal movements. This tendency to consider Canadian Jewry “behind” or “slow” is repeated by Morton Weinfeld in his book *Like Everyone Else ... But Different*, where he states (as did Stuart Rosenberg in his day) that “the Canadian Jewish response is usually influenced by developments in American rabbinical seminaries, but with a time lag.”¹⁷ Changes are taking place within the Canadian Jewish religious milieu but whether or not these changes will demonstrate a “catching-up” with the United States or a clearer statement of what constitutes Canadian Jewish religious identity remains an open question.

As indicated in the section “Creating space for personal and spiritual growth” a number of the women, especially in the second cohort, found themselves making adjustments in order to fulfill their own spiritual needs. Even though their husbands are religiously traditional, the assumption cannot be made that this applies to other areas of their life. Nearly all the women,

¹⁶ Rosenberg, *The Jewish Community in Canada*, Volume 2, 66.

¹⁷ Morton Weinfeld, *Like Everyone Else ... But Different* (Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 2001) 316. Weinfeld is quoting from Norma Baumel Joseph, “Personal Reflections on Jewish Feminism,” in *The Canadian Jewish Mosaic*, eds., M. Weinfeld, W. Shaffir, and I. Cotler (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 1981) 205–219; Sheva Medjuck, “If I Cannot Dance to It,” in *The Jews in Canada*, eds., R. Brym, W. Shaffir, and M. Weinfeld (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 1993) 328–343.

excepting those who were retired, had their own careers. Even women raising young children were working part-time either in a teaching capacity or as entrepreneurs. As demonstrated in the section on education, almost half of the interviewees have more than one university degree. There is little noticeable difference in educational levels between the women born and educated in Canada and those born and educated in the United States, suggesting that the educational gap that once existed between Canadian Jewish women and American Jewish women is no longer significant.¹⁸ As in the above discussion on perceptions of privacy, there were nuanced differences between women raised in the Hasidic or Orthodox homes (not Modern Orthodox). Three of the women in the third cohort had seminary training but no university training. Two of the women with seminary training also had university degrees. Did those with university training have a broader perspective on some of the questions I raised? Not noticeably. Again the third cohort seemed to respond, like the first, in a more traditional manner to the question, for example, on women in the rabbinate, and I attribute this to their family experiences. For those women who had obtained a Bachelor's degree and higher, the areas in which they chose to specialize presents slightly differently in each cohort which, on top of family influence, might clarify why there appears to be a more traditional stance in the third cohort. The group born between 1925 and 1944, with 3 exceptions, almost entirely took a Bachelor's degree in education, specializing in either Hebrew language or Jewish Studies, occupational therapy or psychometrics. The three exceptions were a lawyer, a PhD in Religion, and an MA in Cross-Cultural Studies. In the second group born between 1945 and 1960, the twenty-three Bachelor's degrees are in education, social work, early childhood studies, dance therapy, science, and environmental studies. Advanced degrees are in law, education, communications, Jewish Studies,

¹⁸ Medjuck, "If I Cannot Dance to It," 328–330. Writing in 1993, Medjuck had noted then that there were significant differences between Canadian Jewish women's aspirations for higher education and American Jewish women.

literature, therapy, and computer technologies. Of the 14 Bachelor degrees held by women in the group born between 1961 and 1981, the areas of study are speech therapy, psychology, education, nursing, and business, and Jewish Studies. The advanced degrees are in law, speech pathology, occupational therapy, social work, nutrition, neuropsychology, health policy, and Jewish education. The emphasis in the third group, when contrasted to the other two groups, is that the learning seems to have been acquired for its practical application. In other words, whereas the second cohort saw advanced education as a means to expanding their world view and making themselves more open to outside influences, the women in the third cohort, on the whole, entered university with specific career goals in mind that would not conflict with their religious world view, and would stand them in good stead once married and with a family.

The next step

As noted in “Chapter One: Methodology” lacking the cultural context and the linguistic ability, I was unable to access either the Toronto or Montreal Sephardic communities. Both these communities are blossoming: an in-depth study of congregational expectations of the rabbanit would add immeasurably to the histories of these Canadian Jewish communities.

A number of the interviewees queried whether I had interviewed the male spouses of rabbis. As noted this was not possible in Canada at this time, and this would certainly be a useful investigation in terms of how the rabbinical couple are perceived for the next generation of synagogue seekers and participants.

Regarding the rebbetzins who were widowed, it bears commenting that several of them no longer participate in the congregations that had been their husband’s life work. One rebbetzin with whom I spoke remains actively involved with her husband’s congregation, assisting with classes, and tutoring, but has no interaction with the new rabbi.¹⁹ The situation for the divorced

¹⁹ Telephone conversation, December 29, 2007, and email January 1, 2008.

rebbetzin is somewhat different, as in these situations the husband often remains in his role as rabbi of the congregation and the now ex-wife finds herself having to seek a new place to meet her social and spiritual needs. In the larger communities this is less problematic; in the smaller communities this can be devastating.

What then is the role for the rabbinical wife today within Canadian Jewish congregations? Is she part of what one wife referred to as the Mom & Pop of the community? Is it her place to be the congregation's ambassador, program planner, kiddush co-ordinator? Do those synagogues that have an active rabbinical wife experience more participation on the part of their congregants? Do women turn out more to programs and services when they know the rabbi's wife will also be there? Or is it a nice extra that does not really affect the life of the synagogue? In one such situation a congregant commented, "We really liked her but we couldn't keep him on just because we liked his wife – we tried."²⁰ While consideration had been given early in the project to attending rabbinical conferences and meeting with the wives in a group situation, aside from confidentiality issues, these conferences draw rabbis and their wives from across North America so the result would not have permitted close focus on the Canadian experience. One of my interviewees, in a follow-up conversation, shared that she had attended a "mini-conference" of Conservative rabbis in her geographical region, and on being told no plans had been made for the wives, pulled out an article I had written based on my Master's research, using it to facilitate discussion.²¹

Did one particular factor emerge that would allow me to state categorically *this* is a defining factor in the role of the rabbinical wife? Did I find a confluence of factors that would consistently contribute to both the effectiveness of a rabbinical wife and her overall satisfaction?

²⁰ Personal Conversation, March 2003.

²¹ Shortly after our interview I had emailed her my article "Whither the Rebbetzin in the Twenty-First Century?" *Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal* (Winter/Spring 2000) <<http://www.utoronto.ca/wjudaism>>

Geography certainly made it more difficult for many of the women living in the smaller cities and towns, at the same time there were women living in these places who derived a great deal of satisfaction from their position within the community. Those with young families, as one rabbinical wife noted, had an easier entree into a community. Couples with no children, or much older children, seemed to require a longer period of time to adjust to their new community. Certainly length of time with a given congregation was high on the list of factors that contributed to a wife's satisfaction with the congregation. From listening to the women relate their experiences, particularly those concerning congregational tensions, it seemed that once a rabbi and his wife had reached ten years plus with their community a "status quo" in the relationship had been reached. This is not meant to imply that there were not issues between the rabbi and the congregation, only that when issues did arise, the rabbinical couple no longer saw the disagreements as challenges or threats to their continued presence. For those wholly new to congregational life, and the women were from diverse age groups, their responses indicated that they had not yet passed beyond the "honeymoon" stage with their congregations. The only further difference between the second and third cohort is that the second cohort held what I would term a more realistic view of their position in the congregation. Most of the rabbinical wives of the third cohort had experienced moves, and certainly family and health challenges, but few had yet directly experienced rejection of their husbands and themselves by a congregation. Since starting the interviews the religious leadership has changed in several congregations – some rabbis have moved on to other communities and the congregations have gone through the process of yet again trying to find a rabbi (and his wife) that will meet their needs.

In the first footnote of this thesis I pointed out the role of men in naming, particularly as it applied to women. Something has changed. Amongst the women I interviewed, use of the title "rebbetzin" has shifted. Unlike their congregants, the women themselves do not indiscriminately

apply the title either to themselves or to rabbis' wives of their acquaintance. Rather, none of the women claimed the title or applied the title, unless she (or the woman of whom she spoke) was actively engaged in educating the women of her husband's congregation in Jewish knowledge: liturgy, Torah, and practices; regardless of her other congregational activities.²² While the notion of "the rebbetzin" sometimes still invokes mockery, amongst most of these women it is perceived as a title that is earned. In Canada at least, the "rebbetzin" is not viewed simply as an extension of her husband, "the rabbi"; the title is given with respect and worn with pride as a consequence of a particular woman's particular Jewish learning.

²² There are rabbis' wives who are actively engaged in teaching and imparting Jewish knowledge who do not take the title rebbetzin for themselves.

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Questionnaire

- 1) What is the official name of the synagogue?
- 2) In what year was the synagogue established.?
- 3) In what year did it acquire a building?
- 4) Is the synagogue located at its first address?
 - 4a) If not, how many times has the synagogue relocated?
 - 4b) If yes, has the building been renovated? State how many times and how extensive the renovation(s) was (were).
- 5a) Does the synagogue have a school for elementary Jewish education? What is its enrolment?
- 5b) For secondary Jewish education? What is its enrolment?
- 5c) Does the synagogue have a curriculum in place for bar- or bat mitzvah students? How many students completed the program in (I) its most active year and (ii) in the past 12 months?
- 5d) Has the school been a part of the synagogue since the beginning?
- 6) What other facilities are housed in the synagogue – mikvah, library (how many?), kosher kitchens (how many?), social halls (how many?), meeting rooms (how many?).
- 7) Does the synagogue have a Sisterhood? 7a) How many members?
- 7b) How frequently does it meet? 7c) What works does it under take (I) for the synagogue community, (ii) on behalf of Israel generally, (iii) on behalf of allied Israeli religious communities, (iv) on behalf of the general, non-Jewish community?
- 8) What was the affiliation of the synagogue at its founding?
 - 8a) Has the affiliation changed? 8b) If so, what is the affiliation now?
When did the change take place?
 - 8c) Was affiliation included in the By-Laws? (Y) (N) If so were the By-Laws amended to reflect the change in affiliation, if any? (Y) (N)
- 9) Has the synagogue always had a rabbi?(Y) (N)
 - 9a) If yes, how many rabbis have been with the synagogue since its inception?
 - 9b) If no, when did the synagogue first hire a rabbi?
 - 9c) To whom does the Rabbi report?
 - 9d) Does the Rabbi render authoritative decisions of halakha on behalf of the Congregation?
 - 9e) Is there a Ritual Committee? (Y) (N) What are its functions?
- 10) How long have you been with the synagogue?
- 11) Assign a percentage to the following age groups in your synagogue:
 - 11a) birth–18
 - 11b) 19–30
 - 11c) 31–50
 - 11d) 50–64
 - 11e) 65+
- 12) How is your membership counted – by families or by individuals?
 - 12a) How is membership defined – by participation, by payment of dues, or both?
 - 12b) What is the total membership?
- 13) Does the synagogue have daily services for
 - 13a) Shachar? it

13b) Mincha

13d) Daily learning activities associated with the prayer services? (Y) (N)

13e) Does the synagogue have routine difficulty in obtaining a minyan? (Y) (N)

13f) Does the synagogue permit women to be counted in the minyan?

14) Does the synagogue have Shabbat and Holy Day services?

15) What are the synagogue's most well-attended programs? Least well-attended programs?

16) What would you define as the main issue of the synagogue today?

Mail to:

Susan Landau-Chark, c/o Department of Religion
Concordia University, 1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. W.
Montreal, QC, H3G 1M8

APPENDIX V:

Interview Questions

Biographical Data

Place of Birth:

Family Size:

Own:

Parents and Siblings:

Do you still have family there?

Describe the religious practices of your parents:

Synagogue affiliation:

Attendance:

In the home – Holidays

Shabbat

Kashrut

Were your friends from a similar or from a different religious background?

Were the practices of your Jewish friends similar or different to yours?

How would you describe your involvement in Jewish religious and/or other type of Jewish communal activities prior to marriage?

Did you belong to any Jewish organizations?

Were your Jewish ties the same or different from those of your friends?

Describe your secular education:

Describe your Jewish education:

What are your professional interests: Are you presently employed outside the home?

Personal interests? Membership in Jewish organizations/Secular organizations?

Married Life

Wasa rabbi at the time of your marriage? Or did he become a rabbi after you married?

Did you ever think you would be married to a rabbi?

Do you recall any image conjured up by the phrase “rabbi’s wife” or “rebbitzen”?

How long have you been married?

How many congregations have you been involved with?

How long have you been with this congregation?

What was the size of your previous congregation?

(Were you aware of the history of the synagogue before your move – what were some of your concerns coming into this *shul*?)

How often have you and your family moved?

How were these moves for you?

For your children?

How do you feel your children have responded to congregational attention?

Describe your “settling-in” process”:

Are you presently living in the parsonage or do you have your own home?

Does this affect how you interact with the congregation?

What kinds of things do you do as a rabbi’s wife within the congregation, within the larger community?

What opportunities do you think have come your way because you are a rabbi’s wife?

Personal Development:

Do you feel the role of rabbi's wife has helped or hindered your personal development?

What expectations do you feel the synagogue has from you?

Have you experienced implicit obligations in the position?

From the congregation – describe

From your husband – describe

How often do you attend congregational events/services?

How often do you attend life cycle events?

Are you able to relax at services or do you tend to “sweep” the room to see how people are responding?

Have there been times when you felt a responsibility for your husband's career?

Do you find yourself worrying about how the congregation views you?

Views your children?

How do you feel this has impacted on your child-rearing?

Do you find this has changed over time?

How available are you to the congregation in general?

How were your previous congregational experiences?

What controversies have you experienced?

Have you experienced any in this synagogue?

Do you feel that your position requires you to behave differently?

How has this affected your sense of privacy?

Eg. Has your cooking, dress, other ... changed as a result of your position?

What did you do to accommodate?

Do you feel you are in control of how you live?

How does your family view the rabbinate?

parents

siblings

children

Do you have contact with other rabbinical families?

Describe the relationships you have with other women in your congregation?

As greater numbers of women go into the rabbinate do you feel this will affect how your position or role is viewed? ...by the congregation?

By the general public?

By your husband?

What have you found to be the area of greatest change?

Do you see yourself as a role model?

Who is your role model?

The Rabbi goes to his teacher, his mentor, who do you go to?

On a scale of 1–10 how would you rate your satisfaction quotient with congregational life?

APPENDIX VI: List of Interviewees

(All interviews were taped by the author. At the time of submission 16 of the interviewees had not yet responded to my request to include their names in the following list.)

Carmela Aigen, Congregation Dorshei Emet, Hampstead, Quebec
Patti Allen, Beth Tikvah, Toronto, Ontario
Shoshana Assayag, Sephardic Kehila Centre, Thornhill, Ontario
Ari Averette, Etz Chaim, Winnipeg, Manitoba
Elly Bauman, Beth Emeth Bais Yehuda, Toronto, Ontario
Marylyn Berman, Shaar Shalom Synagogue, Thornhill, Ontario
RaeAnn Brechner, Congregation Emanu-El, Victoria, British Columbia
Elizabeth Bright, Shaare Zedek Congregation, Montreal, Quebec
Karen Cahana, Congregation Beth-El, Town of Mount Royal, Quebec
Chanie Carlebach, House of Israel, Ste Agathe, Quebec
Miriam Ben Ezra Denburg, Shomrim Laboker Beth Yehuda, Montreal, Quebec
Joan Dolgin, Temple Sinai, Toronto, Ontario
Josette Frydman-Kohl, Beth Tzedec, Toronto, Ontario
Tali Grunstein, Beth Israel, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Basie Gurkow, Congregation Beth Tefilah, London, Ontario
Rose Ellis, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Jane Enkin, Congregation Iyr Ha-Melech, Kingston, Ontario
Chevy Fine, Agudath Israel, Ottawa, Ontario
Rivka Finkelstein, Beth Shalom West, Ottawa, Ontario
Krayna Feinberg, Beth Israel, Vancouver, British Columbia
Norma Joseph, Spanish & Portuguese Congregation, Montreal, Quebec
Suzie Kaiser-Blueth, Beth Tikvah, Richmond, British Columbia
Beth Komito-Gottlieb, Temple Kol Ami, Thornhill, Ontario
Susan Lander, Or Shalom, London, Ontario
Freda Leffel, Shaare Zedek Congregation, Montreal, Quebec
Loren Lerner, Temple Emanu-El Beth Shalom, Montreal, Quebec
Michal Mivasair, Ahavat Olam, Vancouver, British Columbia
Eileen Penn, Shomrim Laboker, Montreal, Quebec
Joyce Rappaport, Shaare Zion, Montreal, Quebec
Carol Rose, Rosh Pina, Winnipeg, Manitoba
Fran Saltzman, Adath Israel, Toronto, Ontario
Lori Seed, Adath Israel, Toronto, Ontario
Laura Schild, Adath Israel, Toronto, Ontario
Miriam Shuchat, Shaar Hashomayim, Montreal, Quebec
Gloria Silverman, Beth Jacob, Hamilton, Ontario
Lisa Steinmetz, Tifereth Beth David Jerusalem, Montreal, Quebec
Sarah Stern, Shaarei Tefilah, Toronto, Ontario
Loretta Tanenbaum, Beth Tzedec, Toronto, Ontario
Elaine Tanenzapf, Beit Rayim, Thornhill, Ontario
Sara Urowitz, Lodzer Centre Congregation, Toronto, Ontario
Ailene Wittstein, Temle Israel, London, Ontario
Charlotte Zeitz, Beth Tikvah, Dollard des Ormeaux, Quebec
Shelley Zisook, Sgoolai Israel, Fredericton, New Brunswick