

The Arrival, Reception, and Immediate Integration of Holocaust Survivors
in Halifax, 1945 to 1955

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the experiences of Holocaust survivors in Halifax and the role the city played in the reception of survivors from 1945 to 1955. Fundamentally, it argues that the Halifax Jewish community had an important role in the reception of Jewish Holocaust survivors at Pier 21; it also questions why most survivors chose not to settle in Halifax. The first chapter discusses experiences of survivors in the European DP camps after the war and the discrimination they faced when applying to immigrate to Canada. The second chapter documents the experiences of reception of Holocaust survivors and the role of the JIAS at Pier 21. The third chapter reviews experiences of integration amongst Jewish Holocaust survivors with Jewish and non-Jewish communities of Halifax. Integration with Halifax's Jewish community was similar to survivors' experiences in other Canadian cities. Non-Jewish communities in Halifax, however, were likely more receptive than other Canadian cities.

List of Abbreviations Used

CJC	Canadian Jewish Congress
CMMA	Canadian Metal Mining Association
CNCR	Canadian National Committee on Refugees
DP	Displaced Person
IMS	Inspection Medical Service
IRO	International Refugee Organization
JIAS	Jewish Immigrant Aid Society
P.C.	Privy Council Order
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
SHAEF	Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force
UJRA	United Jewish Refugee Agency
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration

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This thesis was influenced by my family history as I am the grandson of four Holocaust survivors. My father's parents survived the Holocaust and decided to remain in Hungary. My mother's parents, however, chose to immigrate to Canada after the Holocaust and made Montréal their new home. Throughout my research, the experiences of my grandparents were in my thoughts. Sadly, my grandparents are no longer with us today, but the lessons they taught me continue to live. For my grandmother, Nana, it was important to understand that "everywhere was good, but home was the best." Canada was her home and it was here where she felt safest. For my grandfather, Papa, school and education were always important. To my loving grandparents, I write this thesis as a proud grandson who hopes that by telling the stories of others that perhaps people can see a piece of what it was like for you to come to this country and establish a new life.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In the 1940s and 1950s, the Holocaust was not part of the Canadian public consciousness. Some survivors were unable to speak about their experiences; others were willing to tell their stories, but Canadian-born Jews, who had attempted to assimilate into Canadian society and distance themselves from the label of “undesired” immigrants, did not want to listen. As a result, the Holocaust was not clearly perceptible for nearly twenty years after the Second World War.¹

In the 1960s and mid 1970s a change occurred whereby “a collective memory of the Holocaust gradually emerged.”² Three events caused this change: antisemitism increased in prominence; the Adolf Eichmann trial; and Arab-Israeli conflicts. In the 1960s, antisemitism resurfaced in the Canadian public domain. Neo-Nazis announced their presence in publications and rallies across the country, most notably in the Allan Gardens Riot in Toronto in August 1965. Holocaust survivors were more militant and aggressive in response to antisemitism as opposed to Canadian-born Jews who traditionally were relatively passive.³ The trial of former Nazi Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961 televised testimonies of Jewish Holocaust survivors and gave Canadians the impression that Nazi war criminals could be among them. Arab-Israeli conflicts in 1967 and 1973 increased the Canadian Jewish community’s sense of vulnerability. The potential destruction of the state of Israel caused fear for many Canadian Jews who felt that

¹Franklin Bialystok, *Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2000), 7-9.

² Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 8.

³ Franklin Bialystok, “Neo-Nazis in Toronto: The Allan Gardens Riot,” *Canadian Jewish Studies* 4-5, (1996-1997): 5-8.

world Jewry would once again be powerless and vulnerable to another Holocaust. These fears were predicated on centuries of Jewish persecution: the state of Israel was to mark an end to that history. As a result, the Holocaust and the state of Israel came to represent together both fear and protection for world Jewry. In this way, the Israeli wars of the 1960s and 1970s brought the Holocaust into the public consciousness of Jewish communities across Canada.⁴

From the mid 1970s to the 1980s, “the legacy of the Holocaust surfaced as a marker of ethnic identification for most Canadian Jews.”⁵ Aggressive responses to antisemitism from Holocaust survivors in Canada led to tensions with Canadian-born Jews. To mitigate these tensions, survivors were given roles in Jewish organizations to express their views and the Holocaust Remembrance Committee was formed in 1973. Survivors who joined Jewish organizations elevated knowledge and education of the Holocaust among Jewish and non-Jewish communities. According to Franklin Bialystok, “By the mid-1980s almost every urban centre [in Canada] had a Holocaust memorial service and at least one monument to the victims in local [Jewish] cemeteries.”⁶ Survivors also pressured the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) and government officials to investigate potential Nazi war criminals and prosecute Holocaust deniers. Moreover, the appropriation of the Holocaust in public media and the release of the miniseries *Holocaust* in 1978 contributed to the Holocaust as a symbol of identity for most Canadian Jews.⁷

⁴ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 8.

⁵ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 9.

⁶ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 9-10.

⁷ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 9-10.

These arguments, which explain the lack of literature in the Canadian historiography of Holocaust studies, were presented by historian Franklin Bialystok, who in turn relied on the work of American historian Peter Novick. Novick was first to make these arguments in 1999 and did so within an American context. He argues that in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War there was a relative silence of Jewish victimhood. Eventually, however, the Holocaust came to identify the uniqueness of Jewish suffering and as a result became central to American Jewish identity.⁸

Bialystok uses the same sorts of examples as Novick, but differs when his analysis focuses on 1980s Canada. In the 1980s, there was a growing realization that the Canadian government was aware of, and had allowed, suspected Nazi war criminals into the country. In 1985, pressure mounted and the federal government initiated the Deschênes Commission to investigate potential Nazi war criminals in Canada and prosecute them. Around the same time, the provincial governments of Ontario and Alberta were pressured by Canadian Jewish communities and organizations to prosecute the spread of hate speech in public schools with the infamous Ernst Zündel (1984) and James Keegstra (1984) cases.⁹

The biggest influence on Canadian understandings of the Holocaust emerged with Harold Troper and Irving Abella's seminal book, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe 1933-1948* (1983). Their analysis

⁸ Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 19-21, 133-134, 148-149, 170-171. For American authors who dispute Novick's claim see: Beth Cohen, *Case Closed: Holocaust Survivors in Postwar America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007); Hasia Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945-1962* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

⁹ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 11.

identifies by name Canadian government officials who purposely prevented the entry of Jewish refugees before, during, and after the Second World War because of explicitly racist and xenophobic attitudes.¹⁰ Their archival research revealed the antisemitic prejudices from high level officials of the federal government that included Frederick Blair (Director of Immigration) and Vincent Massey (High Commissioner in London). Their analysis also revealed that the Canadian public disliked the prospect of Jewish newcomers.

Historians Joseph Kage and Ben Lappin published books in the 1960s that discussed Jewish postwar immigration, but framed Jewish victimhood differently than Troper and Abella. In 1962, Joseph Kage documented two hundred years of Jewish immigration to Canada, yet never once mentions the word Holocaust, instead referring to the murder of six million Jews as “Jews perished during the war years.”¹¹ In 1963, Ben Lappin analyzed the Jewish orphaned survivors from the perspective of the Canadian Jewish community as they were brought from Europe. Like Kage, he does not mention the word Holocaust and instead refers to it as the “Great Catastrophe.”¹²

Troper and Abella’s approach to Holocaust studies from a Canadian immigration lens was in part a continuation of previous literature in the field of Jewish immigration. Historian Simon Belkin documented in 1966 the history of Jewish immigration and general immigrant aid work in Canada from 1840 to

¹⁰ Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933–1948* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), xi-xiv, 7-8, 48-49, 231-232.

¹¹ Joseph Kage, *With Faith and Thanksgiving: The Story of Two Hundred Years of Jewish Immigration and Immigrant Aid Effort in Canada, 1760–1960* (Montreal: Eagle Publishing Co., 1962), 113.

¹² Ben Lappin, *The Redeemed Children: The Story of the Rescue of War Orphans by the Jewish Community of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), 1.

1940. Belkin focused mostly on the three decades that preceded the Second World War, arguing that “this was the most formative period in the growth and development of Canadian Jewry, and also the most trying period from the standpoint of Jewish immigration.” He goes on to conclude that the “interval between the two World Wars, the conditions of entry into Canada, which were difficult for all ethnic groups from the European continent, affected Jewish people most of all.”¹³ Troper and Abella approached the same topic of Jewish immigration, but through the lens of the Holocaust.

While Troper’s and Abella’s book developed from previous literature, it created new fields for historians to pursue. For example, in 1989 Troper and Morton Weinfeld published a book that compared the experiences of arrival and integration of both Jews and Ukrainians in postwar Canada. They conclude that both Ukrainians and Jews saw themselves as victims of hostile forces and that each viewed the other as one of its persecutors.¹⁴ Another example is evident with the publication of Alan Davies and Marilyn Nefsky’s book in 1997 that discussed the responses by Canadian churches during the Holocaust in reaction to Troper’s and Abella’s claim that they were silent. They argue that Canadian churches were not totally silent, but failed to serve their role as a moral compass for their congregants.¹⁵

¹³ Simon Belkin, *Through Narrow Gates: A Review of Jewish Immigration, Colonization and Immigrant Aid Work in Canada 1840-1940* (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress and the Jewish Colonization Association, 1966), vii.

¹⁴ Harold Troper and Martin Weinfeld, *Old Wounds: Jews, Ukrainians, and the Hunt for Nazi War Criminals in Canada* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989)

¹⁵ Alan Davies and Marilyn Nefsky, *How Silent were the Churches? Canadian Protestantism and the Jewish Plight During the Nazi Era* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1997)

Historian Ruth Klein attempts to add to the history presented by Troper and Abella by focusing on why Canada acted the way it did in the 1930s and 1940s. Klein's book, published in 2010, is a collection of essays by Doris Bergen, Harold Troper, Richard Menkis, Amanda Gryzb, Rebecca Margolis, Michael Brown, Norman Ravvin, and James Walker. Bergen analyzes the racial laws of Nazi Germany from 1933 to 1939 through the lens of several Jews who escaped to Canada. She concludes that Canada was a "minor yet typical part of the hostile world that surrounded Jews in the prewar Nazi years. According to contemporary and post war accounts, it rarely featured in the calculations of those seeking haven."¹⁶ Troper and Menkis explain why Canada sent athletes to the 1936 Berlin Olympics after public protest against the 1935 Nuremberg Race Laws. They argue that the Canadian Olympic Committee endorsed their participation, though it was fully aware of the racism and militarism in Nazi Germany that operated behind the façade of the summer Olympic Games.¹⁷ Gryzb reviews one year of Canadian media coverage of Jewish persecution and discovers that there was extensive reporting on the *Kristallnacht* pogrom in November 1938, but that it had decreased dramatically by summertime of the following year. She determines that the "Canadian public and the Canadian press had grown complacent, either hopeful that *Kristallnacht* had been the worst of the violence, or overwhelmed by a sense that Jewish suffering was somehow unsolvable, inevitable, eternal."¹⁸ Margolis analyzes Yiddish media outlets and suggests that the Yiddish press was

¹⁶ Ruth Klein, ed., *Nazi Germany, Canadian Responses: Confronting Antisemitism in the Shadow of War* (Montréal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2012), 36.

¹⁷ Klein, *Nazi Germany, Canadian Responses*, 74.

¹⁸ Klein, *Nazi Germany, Canadian Responses*, 106.

emotionally vested in the stories of European Jewry and presented the suffering in Europe from an “us” perspective.¹⁹ Brown studies Canadian university campuses in the 1930s and concludes that academics were reluctant to “lend their name to a cause involving Jews” and that their stature “among the public was not sufficiently important to make much difference.”²⁰ Ravvin reviews mainstream Canadian literature responses to the war from 1935 to 1945. He concludes that Canadian Jewish writers were “tentatively positioned among English-language Canadian writers” and that “Jewish writers were diffident about developing provocative themes and motifs to examine the war and its victims.”²¹ Lastly, Walker analyzes the Jewish “quest” for equal rights. He argues that the “human rights idiom offered an effective arsenal of new ammunition in the battle for equality and against antisemitism, yet it was often ammunition for the same weapons and the same warriors who had been fighting since 1930.”²²

In the 2000s, Franklin Bialystok introduced new revelations in Canadian historiography of Holocaust studies with a chronological discussion of how the Holocaust became a part of the collective historical memory of the Canadian Jewish community.²³ Bialystok analyzes tense relationships between Canadian

¹⁹ Klein, *Nazi Germany, Canadian Responses*, 139.

²⁰ Klein, *Nazi Germany, Canadian Responses*, 175.

²¹ Klein, *Nazi Germany, Canadian Responses*, 212.

²² Klein, *Nazi Germany, Canadian Responses*, 251.

²³ For more books on Canadian Jewish history see: Irving Abella, *A Coat of Many Colours: Two Centuries of Jewish Life in Canada* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1990); Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Lester Pub., 1992); Robert J. Brym, Morton Weinfeld, and William Shaffir, *The Jews in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1993); Gerald Tulchinsky, *Branching Out: The Transformation of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1998); Gerald Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews a People's Journey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Harold Troper, *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

Jewish communities and Holocaust survivors. Tensions increased as antisemitism became more prominent in the 1960s and 1970s. Fundamentally, Bialystok argues that the Canadian Jewish community both worked hard to help survivors but also showed little interest in their experiences. Unlike histories in the 1970s and 1980s that criticized non-Jewish Canadians for their antisemitism in the 1930s and 1940s,²⁴ Bialystok's analysis criticizes the Canadian Jewish community for its struggle to cope with the influx of Jewish Holocaust survivors in the postwar years.

Bialystok says that, when he began research for his book in 1993, "nothing had been written on the impact of the Holocaust survivors in Canada or the United States in the post-war era."²⁵ Canadian historiography on Holocaust studies in the 1990s expanded from a focus on antisemitism to survivor integration in specific localities. For example, Myra Giberovitch analyzes the experiences of Holocaust survivors in Montréal; Jean Gerber published a foundational analysis of survivors' integration in Vancouver; and Jack Lipinsky situated Holocaust survivors in the Toronto Jewish Community.²⁶ Moreover, in 1996 social worker Fraidie Martz had a book published on the experiences of Jewish child Holocaust survivors who immigrated to Canada through the Jewish War Orphans project. Martz embarked

²⁴ For more books on Canadian antisemitism in the 1930s see: Lita-Rose Betcherman, *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf: Fascist Movements in Canada in the Thirties* (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1975); David Rome, *Clouds in the Thirties: On Antisemitism in Canada, 1929-1939: A Chapter on Canadian Jewish History*. Montreal: 1977-1981; Ira Robinson, *A History of Antisemitism in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2015).

²⁵ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 244.

²⁶ Myra Giberovitch, "The Contributions of Holocaust Survivors to Montréal Jewish Communal Life," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 26, (1994)74-85; Jean Gerber, "Opening the Door: Immigration and Integration of Holocaust Survivors in Vancouver, 1947-1970," *Canadian Jewish Studies* 4-5 (1996-1997), 63-86; Jack Lipinsky, *Imposing their Will: An Organizational History of Toronto, 1933-1948* (Montréal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2011).

on this project from a personal history as the child of Jewish parents and the friend of Jewish survivors who immigrated to Canada through the Jewish War Orphans project. Martz argues that immigration policies reflected the needs of the nation, but that the Canadian Jewish community took advantage of these policies to pursue a humanitarian goal.²⁷

Bialystok's book created new fields for analysis of survivors' experiences in Canada. In the 2010s Canadian historiography of Holocaust studies began to include more analysis of the survivors' settlement and integration from a historical perspective. Adara Goldberg's book published in 2015 argues that "the path to integration and acculturation was rarely smooth and, as we have seen, Holocaust survivors navigated it with varying degrees of success."²⁸ She deconstructs the perception of Holocaust survivors as a homogenous group. Goldberg compares the differences in integration experiences of children and adults, of employed parents and stay-at-home parents, and of atheists, as well as Hasidic and Lebovitch denominations. Another contribution she makes is the recognition of Israeli trans-migrants who immigrated to Canada in the early 1950s and how their integration differed from other Holocaust survivors.

Another book on the experiences of integration amongst survivors was published in 2013 by social worker Myra Giberovitch. This book developed from Giberovitch's 20 years of experience working in the first community-based social service for Holocaust survivors in Canada, which she started. Moreover,

²⁷ Fraidie Martz, *Open Your Hearts: The Story of the Jewish War Orphans in Canada* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1996), 11-13, 178-183.

²⁸ Adara Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada: Exclusion, Inclusion, Transformation, 1947-1955* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 235.

Giberovitch was the daughter of Holocaust survivors. She argues that due to the old age of survivors, they are in need of medical assistance both physically and mentally, and as a result “communities around the world are dealing for the first time with large numbers of survivors.”²⁹ She wrote her book to provide a practice guide for communities and healthcare professionals. She argues that the approach recommended in her book can be applied to trauma victims of other mass atrocities.³⁰

Most important for this thesis is the Canadian historiography of Holocaust studies, but also important is Canadian immigration historiography. This thesis relies on histories of Canadian immigration by significant historians that include Freda Hawkins, Gerald Dirks, Ninette Kelley, Michael Trebilcock, and Donald Avery.³¹ In 1972, Hawkins published a book that reviews 25 years of Canadian immigration policies from the perspective of the federal government. She argues that Canadian immigration was treated poorly, its officers were second-rate and it operated with minimal political support in Ottawa.³² In 1977, Dirks’ analysis of Canadian policies and programs towards refugees over a century attempts to explain why in some circumstances the public and government welcomed refugees and at other times ignored their appeals. Dirks concludes that economic and political factors were most important in the decision to accept diverse refugee

²⁹ Myra Giberovitch, *Recovering from Genocidal Trauma: An Information and Practice Guide for Working with Holocaust Survivors* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2013), 4.

³⁰ Giberovitch, *Recovering from Genocidal Trauma*, 4.

³¹ For more books on Canadian immigration history see: Valerie Knowles, *Strangers at our Gates: Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540-2006* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2007).

³² Freda Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration: Public Policy and Public Concern* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988), xi-xiii. And David Corbett, review of *Canada and Immigration: Public Policy and Public Concern*, by Freda Hawkins, *International Journal*, vol. 28, no. 2, (Spring, 1973): 383.

groups. Humanitarian appeals, on the other hand, “may in fact constitute little more than customary platitudes.”³³

In his 1995 study of Canadian responses to immigrant workers from 1896 to 1994, Donald Avery argues that different pressure groups— business, labour, ethnic, political, and bureaucratic— determined the priorities and direction of Canada’s immigration policy. Avery concludes that “class, race, and ethnicity, have been important factors in determining both Canada’s policy toward different groups of immigrant workers and where foreign-born men and women subsequently found employment.”³⁴

In their 1998 publication, Ninette Kelly and Michael Trebilcock agreed with Dirks that economic factors were a dominant influence in immigration policy. They summarize that interests of capital were hugely influential and usually overcame labour interests. They go on to argue that labour interests after the Second World War were increasingly important which led to “labour-market and manpower policy, geared to relieving labour shortages and avoiding surpluses of labour in particular occupations.” As a result, there was the “so called tap-on/tap-off approach to immigration policy whereby relatively short-term manpower forecasting was a key element in the determination of annual immigration numbers.”³⁵

³³ Gerald Dirks, *Canada’s Refugee Policy: Indifference or Opportunism?* (Montréal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1977), 255.

³⁴ Donald Avery, *Reluctant Host: Canada’s Response to Immigrant Workers, 1896–1994*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1995), 17.

³⁵ Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 463.

The combinations of Canadian immigration studies and publications on the experiences of Holocaust survivors in Canada provide the frame from which this project approaches three accounts of individual experience of Holocaust survivors in Halifax. The first and most useful of the three books is a biography of Halifax businessman Simon Spatz, published in 2016 by Michael Cobden. Spatz was a Holocaust survivor who emigrated from the Displaced Person (DP) camps in postwar Europe to Pier 21 and permanently settled in Halifax.³⁶ The biography provides a specific, if singular, understanding of a survivor's experiences of integration in and relationships with the Halifax Jewish community.³⁷

This thesis explores the experiences of Holocaust survivors in Halifax and the role the city played in the reception of survivors from 1946 to 1955. Fundamentally, it argues that the Halifax Jewish community had an important role in the reception of Jewish Holocaust survivors at Pier 21; it also questions why the vast majority of those survivors chose not to settle in Halifax. The first chapter discusses experiences of survivors in the European DP camps after the war and the discrimination they faced when applying to immigrate to Canada. The second chapter documents the experiences of reception of Holocaust survivors at Pier 21 and the crucial role greeters of the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society (JIAS) played as they helped calm confused, fearful, anxious, and paranoid Jewish newcomers. The third chapter reviews experiences of integration amongst Jewish Holocaust

³⁶ Michael Cobden, *Simon Spatz: From Holocaust to Halifax, a Story of Survival and Success* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 2016).

³⁷ Two autobiographies by Holocaust survivors in Halifax are outside of the scope of this thesis because they only settled in the city in the 1970s. See: Philip Riteman, *Millions of Souls: The Philip Riteman Story* (St. John's: Flanker Press, 2010); Helena Jockel, *We Sang in Hushed Voices* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2014).

survivors in the Halifax Jewish community and documents how the community changed. This chapter argues that the integration of Holocaust survivor with the Halifax Jewish community was similar to survivors in other Canadian Jewish communities. Non-Jewish Halifax, however, seems to have been more welcoming to Jewish newcomers than elsewhere in Canada.

This analysis of Jewish Holocaust survivors ends in 1955. Several years later, thousands of Jewish refugees immigrated to Canada in response to the Hungarian Revolution in 1956.³⁸ Although a significant number of the Hungarian Jewish refugees were also Holocaust survivors, this project aims to analyze the experiences of those who immigrated in direct response to the Holocaust, so does not include those who immigrated to Canada after 1955.

This project contributes to the Canadian Holocaust historiography with an approach similar to those of Gerber (Vancouver) and Giberovitch (Montreal) in the 1990s and Lipinsky (Toronto) in the 2010s, in the sense that it explores the arrival of Holocaust survivors in a specific locality. It is most closely associated with the work by Gerber because it focuses on a community of less than 10, 000 Jews. Moreover, as Vancouver had more than 5,000 Jews whereas the Halifax Jewish community numbered about 1,000, Gerber had available various sources that did not exist in Halifax, such as Jewish publications.³⁹

Instead, this thesis relies on three sources of primary material: the Jewish Historical Society Fonds at the Nova Scotia Archives; survivor testimony and interviews from the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21; and collections

³⁸ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 73.

³⁹ Gerber, "Opening the Door," 63-65.

of survivor testimony archived at Concordia University. The Jewish Historical Society Fonds offer an abundance of material on the Maritime Jewish communities from their inception to present day. A significant amount of the archival content is related to the conception, organization, and establishment of the Jewish Historical Society in the Maritime region. The Jewish Historical Society formed in 1975 because of a desire to preserve the history of Jewish communities in Atlantic Canada.

The Jewish Historical Society Fonds at the Nova Scotia Archives contains valuable correspondence that reveals information specific to the conditions of the Halifax Jewish Community in the postwar years. For example, correspondence between the Executive Director of the JIAS, M. A. Solkin, and Regional Director Noa Heinish reveals how information of impending Jewish arrivals was communicated. Included in this correspondence are ship manifestos of Jewish passengers dating from 1947 to the 1950s. Other correspondence reveals communications between Heinish and Executive Director Saul Hayes of the CJC about the Halifax Jewish community generally and about the allocation of donated funds specifically. This information helps clarify both how Jewish newcomers were treated by the JIAS and the relationship between the Halifax and Montréal Jewish community leaders.⁴⁰

Other significant material in the Jewish Historical Society Fonds at the Nova Scotia Archives deals with the construction and completion of Halifax's second synagogue, the Shaar Shalom. This material provides an insight into how

⁴⁰ Correspondence between Saul Hayes and Noa Heinish, MG 20, Volume 1603, Box Number 1, The Jewish Historical Society, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

the conservative congregation split from the orthodox Baron de Hirsch congregation. It also helps reveal the relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish communities in Halifax in the 1950s, and specifically the assistance offered by the non-Jewish community to the conservative congregation, which operated without a synagogue for four years.⁴¹

Another source for primary information came from the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21. Testimony given by Jewish survivors to the museum includes their experiences from the Holocaust to their arrival and settlement in Canada. Another important source is an interview conducted by Cassidy Bankson of the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 with Marianne Ferguson. Ferguson was the daughter of Meta Echt and volunteered with the JIAS to help with the reception of newcomers. The interview provides a singular perspective of the process of reception from the point of view of a volunteer. It also offers another first-hand account of Jewish experience in Halifax in the postwar years.

For more survivor testimony, this thesis relies on collections of survivor memoirs at Concordia University. They have been used selectively, as the focus of the analysis is on the experiences of Holocaust survivors in Halifax. Therefore, only testimonies that explicitly mention Halifax were used. This approach limited the number of applicable testimonies: while many survivors likely immigrated to Canada through Pier 21, their testimonies largely discuss their arrival in the context of the city they lived, not Halifax or Pier 21. Of the approximately 35,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors who immigrated to Canada, nearly half likely

⁴¹ Shaar Shalom Congregation, MG 20, Volume 561, Box Number 42, The Jewish Historical Society Fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

immigrated through Pier 21. The high volume of Jewish newcomers presented challenges for the JIAS regional branch in Halifax, but they managed to provide aid necessary for arrivals to reach their destinations within Canada. The vast majority settled in Montréal, Toronto, and Winnipeg; less than 100 Jewish immigrants settled in Halifax. Nonetheless, the Halifax Jewish community underwent changes in the 1950s as Jewish survivors integrated with the community.

Chapter 2: From the DP Camps to Canada

There was nothing left. I was not human. I was a wild animal. Really. That's how I was taught from thirteen years of age, to steal and rob and kill, whatever I could do, to survive.¹

Holocaust survivor Philip Riteman, a Halifax local, was one of tens of thousands of Jews who survived extraordinarily traumatic experiences and immigrated to Canada.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the experiences of Jewish DPs in the DP camps in Germany and Austria. Since Jewish survivors suffered an extraordinary trauma from their wartime experiences, their conditions in the DP camps were different than others. It was in the DP camps that Jews were first introduced to the potential of Canada as a place for immigration after the war. Jewish DPs had three methods through which they could enter Canada: labour and close-relative sponsorship, as well as the Jewish War Orphans project. In all three methods, and throughout the immigration process, Jewish DPs experienced discrimination but managed to surpass these obstacles.

At the conclusion of the Second World War, a humanitarian crisis ensued with an estimated one million DPs in German territory unable or unwilling to repatriate. Approximately 200,000 Jews from Eastern Europe and Germany refused to return to their home country. Displaced Jews from France, Holland, Belgium, and Greece were easily repatriated, whereas those from Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and the Baltic states, were not because of

¹ Holocaust survivor Philip Riteman quoted in Paula Draper, "Canadian Holocaust Survivors: From Liberation to Rebirth," *Canadian Jewish Studies*, no. 4-5 (1996-1997): 42.

continued antisemitism in their home countries. Antisemitism continued and increased alongside postwar nationalist movements for independence. In the spring of 1945, a right-wing Polish national group proclaimed that it was patriotic to murder Jews. Anti-Jewish riots occurred throughout the country in Cracow, Sosnowiec, Lublin, and, most infamously, Kielce which resulted in the total deaths of approximately 1,500 – 2,000 Jews. Anti-Jewish riots occurred in Czechoslovakia in which Jews continued to be killed in Kosice, Presov, and Prague. In Bucharest, Romanian crowds proclaimed their nationalist support and beat Jewish passersby. These attacks led to the unwillingness of Jews to return to their home countries in Eastern Europe.²

The Jewish DPs can be divided into three groups. First, concentration camp survivors liberated by the Allied armies numbered anywhere between 60,000 and 100,000. Since they had survived largely as slave labourers, they were all between the ages of eighteen and forty-five, with almost no children or elderly among them. Second were Jewish partisans, consisting of young men and women who joined guerrilla military units, and fought against the Nazis on the Eastern front. Third, and the most populous group, were Poles who escaped to the Soviet Union and refused to return to Poland at the end of the war,³ of whom there were at least 130,000.⁴

² Draper, "Canadian Holocaust Survivors," 40. And Mark Wyman, *DP: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945–1951* (Philadelphia: Balch Institute Press, 1988), 143-144.

³ Koppel Pinson, "Jewish Life in Liberated Germany: A Study of Jewish DP's," *Jewish Social Studies* 9 (January 1947): 102-104.

⁴ Wyman, *DP*, 132.

Each of the three groups of Jewish DPs survived the war in varying circumstances that influenced their behaviour in the DP camps. Concentration camp survivors had been subject to torture and degrading humiliation. They were severely malnourished and suffered from psychological trauma which made them difficult to handle for both Allied soldiers and aid workers. American psychologist Paul Friedman had the opportunity to analyze concentration camp survivors in detention quarters in Cyprus and concluded that the self-preservation instincts and feelings that had dominated all other instincts during their concentration camp experiences, subsided in the DP camps. As a result, survivors began to experience the full effects of their psychological trauma in the DP camps. There were numerous cases of depression. Amongst adults, psychosomatic complaints included cardiac symptoms, gastrointestinal and muscular pains. In younger survivors, no organic causes could be found for headaches, dizziness, and abdominal and throat pain. All suffered from mild to acute anxiety states, some of which developed “into ‘real’ panic situations, characterized by complete confusion, disorientation, and hallucinations, which would subside after a few days.”⁵ Survivors broke into tears easily and often panicked at a knock at the door. Some refused to enter ambulances because they were told stories of Nazis using vehicles with Red Cross labels to send victims to the gas chambers.⁶ The extreme psychological trauma for Jewish Holocaust survivors made it difficult for

⁵ Paul Friedman, “Some Aspects of Concentration Camp Psychology,” *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 105, no. 8 (February 1949), 602.

⁶ Wyman, *DP*, 133.

them in the DP camps and created difficulties upon their arrival at Pier 21 and other ports of entry in Canada.

Of the three groups of Jewish DPs, the younger partisans were in the best physical and mental health.⁷ Partisans were more likely to assume leadership roles in the DP camps.⁸ Many Jewish DPs admired partisans for their acts of heroism and defiance. Polish Jews who had escaped to the Soviet Union had maintained a sense of organized community life with cultural institutions, schools, synagogues, and libraries. They took leading roles in the cultural and religious life of the DP camps since they encompassed a majority of the intellectuals.⁹

The entire displaced population, including the Jewish DPs, was first administered by the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) and then by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) followed later by the International Refugee Organization (IRO). DP camps housed anywhere between 200 to more than 15,000 DPs. An average 3,000 person DP camp was administered by thirteen people. According to historian Mark Wyman, teams included a “director and deputy director, clerk-stenographer, supply officer, mess officer, warehouse officer, medical officer, nurse, team cook, two welfare officers, and two drivers.”¹⁰ Camps fell into three main classifications. First were former German or Italian military centres, which consisted of permanent structures that were outfitted for refugees. Second were

⁷ Pinson, “Jewish Life in Liberated Germany,” 102-104.

⁸ Margarete L. Meyers, “Jewish Displaced Persons: Reconstructing Individual and Community in the US Zone of Occupied Germany,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 42 (1997): 312.

⁹ Pinson, “Jewish Life in Liberated Germany,” 104-105.

¹⁰ Wyman, *DP*, 47.

the barracks camps, which were either newly built one-storey wooden buildings or former concentration camps.¹¹ Dachau, Bergen-Belsen, Feldafing, and Landsberg were a few of the concentration camps converted to DP camps.¹² Third were the dwelling-house camps, made up of either a section of or an entire city. DPs typically knew of at least two of the classifications, but there were many more outside of the classifications listed.¹³

DP camps within the American Zones of Occupation were most popular amongst Jewish DPs. As agreed at the Potsdam Conference on 2 August 1945, Germany and Austria were split into four Zones of Occupation between the British, Americans, French, and Soviets. By the end of August, American zones had become the most popular for Jewish DPs because American DP camps offered special privileges and living quarters for Jews. Jewish DPs were given more food rations than other DPs because Jews were categorized as “racial, religious, and political persecutes,”¹⁴ a policy enforced by American General Dwight Eisenhower in response to an assessment of the camps by U.S. representative on the Intergovernmental Commission on Refugees Earl Harrison in August 1945. In mid-November, the British zone segregated Jews within the DP camps although special camps for Jews would not be established. As a result, the British Zone of Germany had one major heavily Jewish camp at Hohne (near Bergen-Belsen) with 9,000 Jews. The US Zone had twelve camps that were entirely Jewish, led by Landsberg and Wolfratshausen with more than 5,000 each

¹¹ Wyman, *DP*, 40, 43-44, 47.

¹² Draper, “Canadian Holocaust Survivors,” 41.

¹³ Wyman, *DP*, 43-44.

¹⁴ Wyman, *DP*, 136.

and Feldafing with 3,700 Jews. American policies led to the arrival of a greater number of Jews in American DP camps.¹⁵

Initial camp activities focused on protecting inmates from immediate dangers, which meant infections and disease. Dysentery and tuberculosis were widespread; other major diseases included diphtheria, typhus, smallpox, syphilis, and tuberculosis. According to historian Mark Wyman, “the UNRRA camp reception process began with registration, then shifted immediately to delousing, medical inspection, the first meal, and finally giving out soap, blankets, and cooking and eating equipment.”¹⁶ Policies of forced cleanliness were all too familiar to Jewish survivors aware of their family, friends, and co-religionists sent to the gas chambers designed as showers.

The DP camps had problems with clothing shortages, despite sporadic arrivals of parcels from Canada, United States, Australia, and New Zealand. DPs used Allied propaganda and information leaflets not to read, but to patch their clothing. They also took army garb wherever they could find it and often looked like odd military soldiers in the various uniforms they had collected. Some survivors remained in their striped concentration camp attire to try and take advantage of any extra rations or care they could expect to receive.¹⁷

After the basics of health, food, and clothing were provided, education systems began to emerge. The events of the war often meant that young survivors had their education disrupted, but could continue their schooling in the DP camps.

¹⁵ Wyman, *DP*, 135-137.

¹⁶ Wyman, *DP*, 49-50.

¹⁷ Wyman, *DP*, 54-55.

Schools were set up on national lines most often because of language barriers.¹⁸

Schools grew in importance in the DP camps as they taught students from a variety of backgrounds about their national histories. They also provided opportunities for DPs to learn about prospective countries for immigration, develop skills in various trades through vocational schools, and learn English to improve their prospects for emigration.¹⁹

Jewish DPs were viewed with pity and revulsion. Experienced British aid worker and activist Francesca Wilson found it very difficult to look at camp inmates without pity. She wrote about survivors of Auschwitz,

They were wearing the convicts' striped blue and white pyjamas, and had the shaven heads and the number tattooed on the left arm which were the marks of Auschwitz. Some were walking skeletons, most had hollow cheeks, and large, black, expressionless eyes, which stared and stared and saw nothing. They had the furtive look and gestures of hunted animals.²⁰

There seemed to be a view of the survivors as not being human because of their decrepit state. Ben Shephard writes in *The Long Road Home* (2010) that “many of the liberators initially recoiled from the ‘smell of the monkey house’ and the ‘strange simian throng’ that greeted them in the camps.”²¹

Young welfare worker Susan Pettiss recalls her experiences with Jewish DPs in a letter:

They have been demanding, arrogant, have played upon their concentration camp experience to obtain ends. I saw rooms in our camp after they left – filthy, dirty, furniture broken, such a mess as no other group left. They are divided into factions amongst themselves. One of our camps has to have six synagogues to keep the

¹⁸ Wyman, *DP*, 99- 101.

¹⁹ Draper, “Canadian Holocaust Survivors,” 43.

²⁰ Francesca Wilson quoted in Ben Shephard, *The Long Road Home: The Aftermath of the Second World War* (London: Bodley Head, 2010), 101.

²¹ Shephard, *The Long Road Home*, 101.

peace. They refuse to do any work, have had to be forced by gun to go out and cut wood to heat their own camps. American soldiers have developed bitter attitudes in many cases.²²

The demands and level of attention made the Jewish DPs a nuisance for aid workers to deal with.

Jewish DPs who sought admission to Canada found themselves under the purview of Canadian immigration laws and regulations. In the two preceding decades, Canada had severely restricted the admission of newcomers. But by 1947, reversed policies made tens of thousands of DPs eligible for admission. The strength of the Canadian economy in the aftermath of the war was predicated on “large-scale private investments in the natural resources and manufacturing sectors, and government investments in physical infrastructure and educational facilities, combined with pent-up consumer demand from the Great Depression and war years.”²³ A combination of economic growth and significant decreases in the national birth rate in the 1920s and 1930s meant there was a need for labour from immigrants after the Second World War.²⁴

In 1946, arguments were made in parliament that mass immigration would benefit the country by filling labour needs in “mining, lumbering, railway maintenance, heavy construction, iron fabrication, textiles, and domestic service,” according to historian Gerald Dirks.²⁵ Another way increases in the population would help the economy was through an increase in the number of consumers which would lead to more mass production and would decrease the cost of goods

²² Susan Pettiss quoted in Shephard, *The Long Road Home*, 8.

²³ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 316.

²⁴ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 316.

²⁵ Dirks, *Canada's Refugee Policy*, 152.

produced. A larger population also meant an increase in the number of taxpayers, which would add to the amount of money the government could use for public spending.²⁶ These arguments made a compelling case for wide-scale immigration from Europe.

Despite the strong arguments in favour of immigration, Canadians were not entirely open to the prospects of newcomers, especially Jews. In a Gallup poll from 24 April 1946, 61 percent of Canadians opposed the migration of a large number of immigrants from Europe. When asked which nationalities Canadians wanted to keep out of the country, in a poll from 30 October 1946, 49 percent said Jews should be kept out.²⁷ An Ottawa representative of the UNRRA, T.J. Keenan, reported that Canadian pollsters showed “.... pretty grim returns when they investigated the welcome Jewish DP’s might expect in Canada.”²⁸

While Jews were not viewed favourably by a large proportion of the public, attitudes began to change with regards to immigration more generally as a result of humanitarian appeals from the federal government, elected officials, the Canadian National Committee on Refugees (CNCR), and various ethnic organizations.²⁹ By 2 August 1947, Gallup polls showed that 51 percent of Canadians said that the country needed immigrants.³⁰

The prospects for Jewish newcomers were severely limited because of the attitudes of immigration officials towards various nationalities and ethnicities as

²⁶ Dirks, *Canada’s Refugee Policy*, 122-123, 152.

²⁷ Nancy Tienhaara, *Canadian Views on Immigration and Population: An Analysis of Post-War Gallup Polls* (Ottawa: Manpower and Immigration, 1974), 59.

²⁸ Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many*, 245-246.

²⁹ Avery, *Reluctant Host*, 150-153.

³⁰ Tienhaara, *Canadian Views on Immigration and Population*, 60.

prospective immigrants were placed into categories, as either desirable or undesirable. Desirable newcomers were those born and naturalized in Great Britain, the United States, and, by 1948, France.³¹ Undesirable immigrants included Jews and people of Asian descent, which severely limited prospects for admission to Canada.³²

On 1 May 1947, Prime Minister Mackenzie King gave a speech that signalled to the public that Canada's population would grow through selective immigration. King began the speech with a short but important policy statement:

The policy of the government is to foster the growth of the population of Canada by the encouragement of immigration. The government will seek by legislation, regulation and vigorous administration, to ensure the careful selection and permanent settlement of such numbers of immigrants as can advantageously be absorbed in our national economy.³³

The speech assured Canadians that although immigration would be used to foster the growth of the population, it would be determined by domestic "absorptive capacity."³⁴

Changes in immigration policy were inhibited by the limitations of the Immigration Branch that operated within the Department of Mines and Resources from 1936 to 1950. As part of a large department, immigration competed with thirty boards, agencies, and sections for the attention and resources of the deputy minister and minister. By the late 1940s, the establishment of overseas immigration offices and immigration teams sent to the DP camps led to

³¹ Dominion Bureau of Statistics, "The Canada Year Book, 1950," under "Department of Trade and Commerce, Canada," https://www66.statcan.gc.ca/eng/acyb_c1950-eng.aspx (accessed March 2017), 181.

³² Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many*, 199.

³³ Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 91.

³⁴ Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 92-93.

significant staff shortages.³⁵ To alleviate the shortcomings of the Immigration Branch, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration was formed on 18 January 1950.

The Department of Citizenship and Immigration was equipped with a skeleton organization in Canada and a small emergency organization overseas. On 9 June 1950, Privy Council Order (P.C.) 2856 enlarged admissible categories of newcomers and broadened the discretionary powers of the minister of the department. The order-in-council envisaged a newcomer “who satisfies the Minister that he is a suitable immigrant having regard to the climatic, the social, educational, industrial, labour or other conditions or other requirements of Canada.”³⁶ The Immigration Act of 1952 reaffirmed the wide discretionary powers of the minister and codified existing practices within the department. The admission of newcomers could be limited based on “nationality, citizenship, ethnicity, occupation, class or geographical area of origin, peculiar customs, habits, modes of life or methods of holding property.”³⁷

Although immigration was given more attention and resources, prospective Jewish newcomers faced many obstacles to immigrate to Canada. Discrimination by Canadian immigration officials resulted in disproportionately few Jewish arrivals. From 1947 to 1953, Canada admitted approximately 165,000 DPs from Europe. Of these, the largest group consisted of Poles (23%), followed by Ukrainians (16%), Germans and Austrians (11%), Jews (10%), Lithuanians

³⁵ Dirks, *Canada's Refugee Policy*, 149-150.

³⁶ Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 99.

³⁷ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 330.

(6%), Latvians (6%), Hungarians (5%) Czechs (3%), Dutch (3%) and Russians (3%).³⁸ That only 10 percent of admissions were Jews strongly suggests discrimination because Jewish DPs represented about 20 percent of the DP camp population under IRO jurisdiction in 1947.³⁹ This discrimination can be seen in all stages of the immigration process.

Jewish survivors in the DP camps could apply for admission to Canada through labour schemes, close relative schemes, and the Jewish War Orphans project. Interdepartmental immigration teams sent to Europe to inspect DPs as prospective newcomers worked mostly out of the US and British Zones of Occupation.⁴⁰ DPs were required to pass medical inspections conducted by the Canadian Inspection Medical Service (IMS) and security screenings by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).⁴¹ Applicants sponsored as labourers often had to pass a job test to ensure they were qualified for a skilled trade. Once approved, the applicant was granted a visa for admission to Canada. The IRO then paid to transport the prospective newcomer to a transit camp at which ocean transport was arranged.⁴² Medical and security screenings were repeated at one of the ports of entry in Canada, and if approved the prospective newcomer was granted legal permission for entry.⁴³

³⁸ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 318.

³⁹ Michael Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 343.

⁴⁰ Dirks, *Canada's Refugee Policy*, 157-159.

⁴¹ Steven Schwinghamer, "A Freight Shed which has been Constructed for Freight Purposes: Placing the Canadian Immigration Department at Halifax's Pier 21," *Journal of Immigration Studies* 2 no. 3 (December 2016): 19. And in Gerald Dirks, *Canada's Refugee Policy*, 145-146.

⁴² Dirks, *Canada's Refugee Policy*, 157-159.

⁴³ Schwinghamer, "A Freight Shed," 19-20.

The most popular labour sponsorships for Jewish DPs were in occupations that included tailors, milliners, domestic workers, cabinet makers, and dressmakers. An estimated 60 percent of newcomers who immigrated through these sponsorships were Jewish.⁴⁴ Although the tailor and furrier labour schemes were not limited to Jews, it was known by the Canadian Jewish community that Jewish DPs were more likely to immigrate to Canada through these sponsorships. In 1947, 1,866 Jews entered Canada; in the following year the number jumped to 9,386. Of these, 3,332 came as tailors and furriers as well as an additional 250 milliners. The employers who offered the sponsorships were predominantly located in Montréal and Toronto, which led to the settlement of these Jewish newcomers in those cities.⁴⁵

An example of Jewish Holocaust survivors having settled in the city of their employed sponsors is evident with Sol Nayman's experience. Nayman is also evidence of the extent to which some survivors had to rely on ingenuity and an ability to skirt the rules to ensure their admission to Canada. Nayman arrived in Canada through Pier 21 in 1948 as a tailor and was sponsored in the city of Montréal, which meant that upon his arrival, he traveled immediately to his place of work. Nayman's father also applied as a tailor. He had difficulty passing the required "tailor test" for his admissibility, so the husband of a cousin disguised himself as Sol's father, took the test, and passed. The Nayman family is evidence of Jewish DPs' attempts to overcome obstacles and ensure their admission to Canada. They also represent the thousands of Jews who experienced Halifax as a

⁴⁴ Kage, *With Faith and Thanksgiving*, 126.

⁴⁵ Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 49.

first point of entry, but later settled in one of the three major Canadian Jewish communities of Montréal, Toronto, and Winnipeg.⁴⁶

The garment industry disproportionately favoured Jewish DPs, whereas many rural industries discriminated against them. The Canadian Metal Mining Association (CMMA) selection team sent to the camps, for example, tended to be most concerned about the skill and strength of the DP. According to an IRO camp director's account:

On Friday afternoon on 24th September 1947, Mr. Sharrer (representative of the Dept. of Labour and Mr. Bennet from the CMMA) arrived at Trofaiach Camp Steiermark to pre-select Metal Miners for Canada. The persons to be interviewed had been waiting for some considerable time and were standing around in small groups talking and smoking. . . . Mr. Sharrer told them to line up on the open road in open file . . . then walked down the centre looking persons up and down and in some cases feeling their muscles and finally selected three persons out of a total of twenty-eight applicants.⁴⁷

Group leaders from the camp complained about the CMMA representatives and inquired if it was necessary that they be treated like cattle. IRO headquarters forwarded the complaint to the Department of Labour.⁴⁸ Jews' prospects for admission as manual labourers were minimal because they appeared to be in worse physical condition when compared to other DP camp populations.

Historian Donald Avery argues in *Reluctant Host: Canada's Response to Immigrant Workers* (1995), that the discrimination towards Jews occurred because of their poor physical conditions when presented to immigration officials. To make this point, Avery relies on Michael Marrus's study, *The Unwanted*;

⁴⁶ Sol Nayman, "The Immigration Story of Sol Nayman," Canadian Museum of Immigration, <http://www.pier21.ca/content/the-immigration-story-of-sol-nayman-polish-immigrant> (accessed April 22, 2017).

⁴⁷ Avery, *Reluctant Host*, 155.

⁴⁸ Avery, *Reluctant Host*, 155.

European Refugees in the Twentieth Century (1985). Marrus says Jewish DPs lacked good health and sufficient physical stamina, which also meant they were particularly vulnerable to medical screenings:

In reality, the experiences of these Jews made it impossible for them to think and behave like other displaced persons. A vast gulf of agony and humiliation yawned between them and the rest of humanity. Prematurely aged, weak, and suffering from extreme malnutrition, many presented ghastly appearances.⁴⁹

Occupations in mining, along with lumbering, heavy construction, and agricultural work, were the most needed jobs in Canada when labour sponsorships were first issued in 1947.⁵⁰ The physical appearance of Jewish DPs made them poor prospects for employers. Added to this were classifications by the federal government of Jews as non-preferred immigrants.

Once newcomers were approved for the labour schemes, the industry employers involved had three main responsibilities. First, they had to provide at least one full year of employment for the DP accepted. Second, they had to pay the prevailing wage rate for the type of labour concerned. Third, they had to provide housing for the DPs on arrival.⁵¹ The federal and provincial governments shared the responsibility of medical care costs, hospitalization, and temporary welfare when necessary for the first twelve months upon arrival.⁵² Entry permits were issued after employment contracts were signed and after the CJC provided guarantees for the long-term maintenance of the Jewish refugee worker. Upon the

⁴⁹ Marrus, *The Unwanted*, 332.

⁵⁰ Dirks, *Canada's Refugee Policy*, 146.

⁵¹ Dominion Bureau of Statistics, "The Canada Year Book, 1950," under "Department of Trade and Commerce, Canada," https://www66.statcan.gc.ca/eng/acyb_c1950-eng.aspx (accessed March 2017), 183.

⁵² Dominion Bureau of Statistics, "The Canada Year Book, 1957-1958," under "Immigration and Citizenship," https://www66.statcan.gc.ca/eng/acyb_c1957-58-eng.aspx?opt=/eng/1957-58/195702070175_p.%20175.pdf (accessed March 2017), 175.

newcomers' arrival, Jewish organizations such as the CJC, United Jewish Refugee Agency (UJRA), and the JIAS, helped them find homes and employment when not provided and guaranteed assistance when necessary.⁵³

Jewish survivors could also come to Canada through close relative sponsorships. In May 1946, through P.C. 2071, and again in January 1947, through P.C. 371, admissible categories of relatives who could be sponsored by Canadian residents expanded to include the wives, unmarried sons, daughters, brothers or sisters, fathers or mothers, widowed daughters or sisters (with or without unmarried children under eighteen years of age), and orphaned nephews or nieces under eighteen years of age, of any Canadian permanent resident able to receive and care for them. Added to this category were fiancés and fiancées.⁵⁴

At first, Canadian Jews believed the close relative scheme to be discriminatory because their relatives did not meet the categories of relatives listed. However, when survivors immigrated through labour sponsorships, they were then able to acquire permanent resident status, which entitled them to sponsor close relatives. In this way, Jewish survivors who immigrated through labour contracts were able to sponsor close relatives, which resulted in an increased number of Jewish arrivals. While at first this policy was perceived as discriminatory it later became a useful tool for Jewish survivors to gain admission to Canada.⁵⁵

⁵³ Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 50.

⁵⁴ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 326.

⁵⁵ Kage, *With Faith and Thanksgiving*, 115, 127-128.

The close relative schemes also made it possible for Jewish survivors to settle in cities that otherwise offered few employment sponsorships. For example, Simon Spatz, along with his wife and son, settled in the city of Halifax in January 1950 because his wife, Riva, had a sister who sponsored them. Riva's sister arrived in Canada with her husband, Morris Koehler, in October 1948. After becoming permanent residents, they were entitled to sponsor close relatives. Without a labour sponsor, it was imperative for Simon to find a job quickly, which he did as a grocer for a Ukrainian store owner, for one month, and then as a butcher, for a few more months, before he invested in his own grocery store. Many Jewish survivors who came to Halifax worked as grocers,⁵⁶ unlike Montréal or Toronto where thousands of Jewish survivors worked as tailors, furriers, dressmakers, milliners, and domestics, because of their sponsorship by employers in those industries.⁵⁷

Another way Jewish survivors could enter Canada was through the Jewish War Orphans project, which eventually allowed for the admission of 1,116 Jewish orphans. The CJC took sole responsibility for the finances and management of the orphans' immigration to Canada.⁵⁸ The CJC representatives sent to Europe helped the children with the usual immigration screenings and interviews, but experienced many problems. The first of which was finding enough children who qualified for the project with regards to age and religion. The CJC expected that with all the devastation to human life and destruction in Europe, surely there

⁵⁶ Cobden, *Simon Spatz*, 130-135.

⁵⁷ Kage, *With Faith and Thanksgiving*, 126-127.

⁵⁸ Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 141.

would be many Jewish orphans to choose from, but when Manfred Saalheimer, the first of four CJC field workers set out to track down admissible orphans he found, to his surprise, that it was far more difficult than expected.⁵⁹ Saalheimer and others were unaware that children had been special targets of the Nazis: like the elderly and sick, they could not be used as labourers and were therefore quickly marked for killing. Very few children survived the camps. For example, of the 210,000 children sent between 1942 and 1945 to Auschwitz-Birkenau, which functioned as both a labour and extermination camp, less than 2,500 survived the initial selections.⁶⁰ In Sobibor, Treblinka and Belzec, camps that were almost completely dedicated to murdering humans, “there was no chance for children at all.”⁶¹ Children in rural areas were also targeted and killed by Nazi mobile killing units for the same reason: they were too young to be efficient slave labourers.⁶² The extent to which postwar Europe lacked Jewish children survivors surprised the Canadian Jewish community which, like most others, had yet to understand the full extent of the annihilation of European Jewry.

When Saalheimer arrived at the camps, the extent to which Jewish European children had been dispersed became apparent as he worked to track down the few survivors. In some cases, parents had given their children to non-Jewish homes for protection. In other circumstances, children survived by pretending to be older and were therefore selected for work in the camps. Of these

⁵⁹ Martz, *Open Your Hearts*, 83-84.

⁶⁰ Nikolaus Wachsmann, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps* (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2015), 308-310.

⁶¹ Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe, 1933–1945* (New York: Aaron Asher Books, 1992), 148.

⁶² Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders*, 148.

children, some escaped and lived in hiding, surviving “on their wits and good fortune,” according to historian Adara Goldberg.⁶³ Added to the reasons for few children in the Western DP camps were the many Zionist organizations who actively recruited youngsters to better solidify their cause for the creation of a Jewish homeland.⁶⁴

It became so difficult to find children under fifteen years of age that the age limit needed to be raised from fifteen to eighteen.⁶⁵ Out of the 1,116 Jewish War Orphans to arrive, only 271 were under the age of sixteen, 50 were under the age of ten, and none were under the age of five.⁶⁶ The working age for slave labourers in the Nazi camps was 18 to 45.

Each process of admission for Jewish refugees had its difficulties. In the case of the Jewish War Orphans project, the Jewish children had to prove their age, orphan-hood, and religious identity. In the chaos and destruction of postwar Europe, this was often impossible.⁶⁷ To prove orphan-hood many children relied upon fellow survivors who testified to having witnessed their parents’ murder. In some cases, witnesses were also able to testify to the age of a male orphan as they had been present at his Bris.⁶⁸

⁶³ Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 77.

⁶⁴ Martz, *Open Your Hearts*, 84.

⁶⁵ Martz, *Open Your Hearts*, 83-85.

⁶⁶ Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 47.

⁶⁷ Martz, *Open Your Hearts*, 76-77.

⁶⁸ Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 79. A Bris refers to a Jewish ceremony in which the foreskin of a newborn is removed as part of a covenant between the infant and God. Customarily, this ritual is performed eight days after the birth of the child and would therefore prove its age. For girls, it is possible that witnesses could have testified to being a part of a Mikveh ceremony, although this is not explicitly mentioned by Goldberg. The Mikveh ceremony refers to a ritual bath of purification, typically for women, after childbirth and menstrual periods.

Jewish survivors had difficulty obtaining documentation such as birth certificates because of the chaos of postwar Europe and their statelessness. Holocaust survivor David Jacobs, who immigrated through Pier 21, had difficulty acquiring his birth certificate to present to immigration officials. His sister-in-law, however, had a copy of her birth certificate but required an official translation, which Jacobs provided. Jacobs noticed the officer who issued the certification had not looked at the original copy. As a result, Jacobs returned multiple times with his sister-in-law's birth certificate, but used different names in the translated copy and had them approved. In this way, Jacobs provided an official birth certificate for himself, his family, and friends. This showed that although it was difficult to obtain official documentation, the chaos of postwar Europe could also offer opportunities to procure the necessary paperwork through creative and sometimes illegal means.⁶⁹

For Jewish War Orphans, difficulties emerged with the age requirement as many had lied about their age to improve their conditions in the DP camps. For example, some claimed to be older in order to receive cigarette rations, which in turn could be used in the black markets of the camps. Cigarettes had a high value and could be bartered for various goods. In these cases, field workers needed to convince Canadian officials that the orphan's age was falsified and that they indeed qualified for the program. Other children lied about their age to be younger so they could qualify for the project.⁷⁰ Leslie Spiro claimed to be three years

⁶⁹ David Jacobs, "Remember your Heritage," Concordia University Chair in Canadian Jewish Studies. <http://migs.concordia.ca/memoirs.html> (June 20, 2017), Chapter 11.

⁷⁰ Martz, *Open Your Hearts*, 99.

younger because he knew that although his chances of immigrating to Canada as an adult were minimal they were much better as an orphan. In an interview, decades later, Spiro said:

I just couldn't wait any longer to immigrate.... I had no chance to go to the United States, so when I heard that Canada was letting in war orphans I just made myself three years younger. I had no original papers and dead parents, so they couldn't prove I wasn't eighteen.⁷¹

Jewish children's wartime experience of falsifying their age to survive simply continued in the bureaucratic process of immigration to Canada after the war.

Jewish survivors selected for the labour and close relative schemes or the Jewish War Orphans Project had to pass medical inspections and security screenings before they could acquire a visa for admission to Canada. Preliminary examination of immigrants from Continental Europe was done before they left for Canada to determine their admissibility and avoid the hardship of being rejected at the port of entry and subsequent deportation. DPs were assembled and given preliminary medical examinations by the IRO and then afterwards examined by the immigration teams at assembly points.⁷²

CJC field workers Lottie Levinson and Ethel Ostry condemned the medical screening process for being discriminatory against Jews. The medical screenings consisted mostly of X-rays, blood tests, and Wasserman tests for syphilis. A CJC field worker sent to Europe as part of the War Orphans project,

⁷¹ Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 80.

⁷² Dominion Bureau of Statistics, "The Canada Year Book, 1951," under "Immigration and Citizenship," https://www66.statcan.gc.ca/eng/acyb_c1951-eng.aspx?opt=/eng/1951/195101920140_p.%20140.pdf (accessed March 2017), 140.

Levinson, who had previously worked in the Jewish Community Centre in Vancouver, remarked about the arbitrariness of the medical process:

The examining doctors were a constant stumbling block. They always managed to find something wrong. It was either a spot on the X-ray indicating TB or signs of glaucoma. And sometimes it was an imaginary speck. I learned quickly how to read X-rays.⁷³

Another employee of the CJC, and representative of the War Orphans project, Ostry, experienced some of the stumbling blocks with medical screenings as Levinson. Ostry dealt with children who were rejected because ten of them had x-rays that were outdated by two months and their Wasserman tests were duplicates rather than the originals. Ostry remarks that field workers needed to be persuasive and persistent to convince immigration and government officials to give their approval. Every step of the process often required persuasion of officials.⁷⁴

Levinson recalls that:

The doctors were even known to diagnose “illiteracy” in the youth who had spent their childhoods in concentration camps—as a medical reason for ineligibility to immigrate to Canada.⁷⁵

“Diagnoses” of illiteracy were often made based on concentration camp experiences and could deny the guarantee of a visa for a prospective newcomer. Jewish children had different educational backgrounds based on their wartime experiences. The interruptions in Jewish student life would have been directly linked to the progression of the Second World War – for example, when the

⁷³ Martz, *Open Your Hearts*, 91.

⁷⁴ Martz, *Open Your Hearts*, 94-99.

⁷⁵ Lottie Levinson quoted in Martz, *Open Your Hearts*, 91.

Germans invaded Poland in 1939, and Hungary in 1944. A Jewish student from Poland was more likely to have spent several years in a concentration camp whereas a Jewish student from Hungary may have only spent one year in a concentration camp. Therefore, it seems to be an overgeneralization to suggest that the Hungarian student who missed only one year of education was the same as a Polish student who lost several years of education.⁷⁶ Added to this was the fact that many of the DP camps had functioning schools that ranged from elementary to university-level in some cases.⁷⁷

Overgeneralization and prejudices such as these worried Jewish survivors who applied for admission to Canada as they feared their applications would be rejected by antisemites. When Holocaust survivor David Jacobs prepared to immigrate to Canada he was told that the physician at the Canadian consulate office was antisemitic, extraordinarily strict, and would reject Jewish applicants for the slightest reason. Jacobs worried that despite the possibility of having a clean bill of health, he could be denied entry to Canada. To his surprise, Jacobs recalls that the medical inspection only took fifteen minutes for his wife, child, and himself and after a series of routine questions their visas for admission to Canada were approved.⁷⁸

Jewish DPs also used illegal means to get around obstacles the required medical examinations presented. Sol Nayman's mother's poor health prevented her admission initially, but after a Canadian official was bribed with a Russian

⁷⁶ Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 116.

⁷⁷ Wyman, *DP*, 101-102.

⁷⁸ David Jacobs, "Remember your Heritage," Concordia University Chair in Canadian Jewish Studies. <http://migs.concordia.ca/memoirs.html> (June 20, 2017), Chapter 11.

gold coin, she was accepted and immigrated with her family through Pier 21.⁷⁹ Elfrieda Davis had contracted tuberculosis and spent a year in a sanatorium. It was recommended that she immigrate somewhere with a cold climate, so she purchased healthy looking chest x-rays and forged documents to pass her medical examinations and immigrated to Canada, through Pier 21.⁸⁰ Both are examples of the extent to which Jewish DPs might go to ensure their admission to Canada.

Along with medical inspections, prospective newcomers were also required to undergo security screenings. The RCMP could deny admission if any potential threats were assessed based on the applicants' political affinities and participations in various organizations. As the Cold War began, security assessments focused on detecting communist sympathies or activities, which if found could prevent those supporters from immigrating to Canada. From 1946 to 1958, 29,000 prospective newcomers were rejected as security threats and an additional 8,572 were deported for the same reason.⁸¹

Suspicious of communism inhibited Jews' ability to come to Canada. Many Jewish newcomers were born in countries within the Soviet Bloc and it was suspected that they could be manipulated by the Soviets, most especially if their families continued to reside in Soviet occupied territory.⁸² Equally important, were practices of settlement in the DP camps and in the State of Israel. In the

⁷⁹ Sol Nayman, "The Immigration Story of Sol Nayman," Canadian Museum of Immigration, <http://www.pier21.ca/content/the-immigration-story-of-sol-nayman-polish-immigrant> (accessed April 22, 2017).

⁸⁰ "The Immigration Story of Elfrieda Davis," Canadian Museum of Immigration, <http://www.pier21.ca/content/the-immigration-story-of-elfrieda-davis-austrian-immigrant> (accessed April 22, 2017).

⁸¹ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 319.

⁸² Reginald Whitaker, *Double Standard: The Secret History of Canadian Immigration* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1987), 63.

kibbutzim, property, work responsibilities, and profits were shared equally amongst the community.⁸³ Prospective newcomers from *kibbutzim* could expect to be denied entry in accordance with the Immigration Act of 1952, because of their “methods of holding property.”⁸⁴

Even when security screenings, medical inspections, and sponsorships led to a visa, prospective immigrants could still be denied entry to Canada. Jewish DPs began an approximate two-week journey from the DP camps to their port of debarkation, across the Atlantic Ocean, and then arrived at a port of entry. At the port of entry, the prospective newcomer was required to go through another series of medical inspections and security screenings. Only with final approval in Canada was the prospective newcomer granted legal permission for entry.

Jewish Holocaust survivors immigrated to Canada, despite discrimination and various obstacles, through labour and close relative schemes as well as the Jewish War Orphan Project. Prospective Jewish newcomers faced discrimination because they were considered non-preferred compared to other European nationalities by immigration officials who believed that jobs in manual labour industries situated in rural areas made Jewish survivors poor candidates for those occupations. Prospective Jewish newcomers also encountered obstacles with the medical examinations, security screenings, and the procurement of essential documents. Jewish DPs overcame these obstacles through aggressive persistence, and in some cases committed forgery and bribery to gain their admission to Canada.

⁸³ Pinson, “Jewish Life in Liberated Germany,” 113.

⁸⁴ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 330.

Chapter 3: Arrival and Reception in Halifax

When I arrived in Canada, I kissed the ground. I knew I was a free man, a free person, and that opportunity was there. Whatever happened, at least I was safe.¹

Halifax was an important first point of entry for many Jewish Holocaust survivors who arrived in Canada. This chapter will discuss the experiences of Jewish arrivals at Pier 21 and include their first impressions of Canada. Added to this is the crucial role the Halifax Jewish community and JIAS played as they mitigated problems of confusion, paranoia, and anxiety amongst the Jewish Holocaust survivors upon their arrival at Pier 21.

The ocean journey for Jewish Holocaust survivors from the DP camps to Canada was challenging both financially, because it was costly, and physically since many experienced sea sickness. Travel across the Atlantic was expensive, Jewish survivors often took advantage of government programs such as the Assisted Loan Passage scheme, which provided a two-year loan for the journey, to be paid back in full.² The trip took anywhere from one to two weeks and many experienced sea sickness throughout their journey.³

Accounts of arrival from Jewish survivors show a combination of elation to be free from Europe and fear of the unknown prospects of a new country. Marianne Ferguson and Leslie Mezei recall positive experiences of their journeys to Canada. Ferguson, for example, travelled with her family in 1939 in the tourist class, which meant she had a more luxurious journey in which she attended

¹ Holocaust survivor Joseph Riesenbach quoted in Adara Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada: Exclusion, Inclusion, Transformation, 1947-1955* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 68.

² Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 328.

³ Pietro Corsi, *Halifax: The Other Door to America* (Toronto: Guernica, 2012), 76.

parties and enjoyed good food and music.⁴ Mezei's positive view of her voyage came from very different circumstances. She arrived in Canada with no family or resources since she immigrated as part of the Jewish War Orphans project. Mezei wrote down her experiences in a journal:

The big ship is ready to leave the harbour of Bremen. The ropes are slowly drawn up, the big muddy anchor is pulled up with a great roar. The ship slowly pulls away from the shore and everyone makes a big sigh. As I look about I see many faces shining and they all tell a unique story. The boy on my right looks as if he never knew what food was, the girl beside him is wearing torn rags. The ship is something like heaven to us, the eleven days of travel went by fast. They were the dawn of our new life.⁵

Others were struck with fear upon their arrival. Joseph Rothbart, a sixteen-year-old survivor of a Romanian concentration camp, recalls negative experiences upon arrival:

The S.S. *Aquitania* reached the harbour as dark was falling, or maybe it was the thick fog that made me think it was evening. From the ship anchor I saw on the shore what looked like misshapen sphere of light so blinding it paralyzed me with fear. The broken flashes of light coming away from it and darting in all directions from—as I learned later—the moving cars made the scene more terrifying. Remember, in war-torn Europe we had no electricity, and certainly no cars, so that the nights were black and no buildings lit. I was too scared to leave the ship. I was convinced that I would be absorbed by this glaring enormity. I hid as far away as I could get—deep down in the ship's boiler room. I heard Canadian officials and members of the Canadian Jewish community take my fellow passengers to shore and the confusion that broke out after they discovered they were one person short.

When they returned aboard with two RCMP officers in uniform to look for the missing person I was convinced they had come to execute me. With the captain's help they eventually found me. The grotesque lights of the city, my inability to speak the language, the worry about how I would earn my living,

⁴ Marianne Ferguson, interview by Cassidy Bankson, April 15, 2009, Canadian Museum of Immigration.

⁵ Holocaust survivor Leslie Mezei quoted in Fraidie Martz, *Open Your Hearts*, 24-25.

turned me into a helpless knot of rope like the coils I saw lying inert on the wooden deck. I was paralyzed with fear.⁶

Concentration camp survivors were more prone to experience psychological ailments, which was exhibited by Rothbart.

The highest total of newcomers who entered Canada through Pier 21 in any year between 1947 and 1955, was 93,758 arrivals in 1951, which amounted to approximately 48 percent of all Canadian immigrants in that year. Throughout the 1950s, Pier 21 averaged 45,000 immigrants annually.⁷ It was Canada's busiest port of entry and has been referred to as Canada's "front door."⁸ The city of Halifax was the first point of contact with Canada for the tens of thousands of annual newcomers and thousands of Jewish Holocaust survivors.

The process of arrival began when passengers entered Pier 21 on a lightweight gangway from the deck of the passenger ship to the interior of a shed which led directly into the second floor of the main building. Newcomers passed through the gangway into the assembly area where they underwent a series of inspections to verify the authenticity of their documents and obtain official status as immigrants. The first part of the examination process was managed by the federal Health Department, which conducted medical screenings on site. Individual medical examinations were often quick because of the extensive overseas pre-screening. A medical examination could be failed if the newcomer

⁶ Joseph Rothbart quoted in Martz, *Open Your Hearts*, 25.

⁷ "Immigration to Canada, 1928-1971," Canadian Museum of Immigration, https://www.pier21.ca/wp-content/uploads/files/research_1928to1971_immigration_statistics.pdf (January 2016).

⁸ Trudy D. Mitic and J. P. LeBlanc, *Pier 21: The Gateway that Changed Canada* (Hantsport: Lancelot Press, 1988), 156.

had one of the prohibited diseases such as tuberculosis or a criminal record.⁹ For Jewish survivors this was particularly worrisome if they either had forged medical documents in Europe or if illnesses manifested during their voyage.

Civil inspection followed the medical examinations and determined passengers' entry into the country. Screening authorities included security or police agents, shipping line officials (shipping lines were responsible for paying the fees for those deported upon arrival), and visa officers. The vast majority of newcomers were granted permission to enter Canada; there were few cases of deportation. This is not to say the immigration officers at Pier 21 simply rubber stamped the approval of all arrivals, but that they did rely on an extensive network of pre-screening.¹⁰

Once passengers cleared the civil inspection they went to the adjacent Annex building via an overhead walkway, called the Ramp, where officers of the customs department inspected hand baggage. Passengers then made their way to the customs examinations and Waiting Room in the Annex. The Annex served to provide further customs examinations, railway ticketing, catering, and housed offices for social service organizations. Additions to the Annex in the early 1950s nearly doubled its size to accommodate the various social service agencies that had an important role helping newcomers. From the Annex building, immigrants departed by train from a platform attached to the Pier 21 building, to destinations across the country.¹¹

⁹ Schwinghamer, "A Freight Shed which has been Constructed for Freight Purposes," 16-20.

¹⁰ Schwinghamer, "A Freight Shed which has been Constructed for Freight Purposes," 21.

¹¹ Schwinghamer, "A Freight Shed which has been Constructed for Freight Purposes," 24-25.

Jewish Holocaust survivors suffered from paranoia, anxiety, and were easily confused upon their arrival in Canada at Pier 21. In part, this was due to their vulnerable position because they had not yet been approved for entry into Canada. Insightful work by American psychologist Paul Friedman helps to explain the concentration camp survivors' state of mind after the extreme daily trauma they suffered during the Holocaust. Although Friedman analyzed survivors at a detention camp in Cyprus, which was used to house DPs who immigrated illegally to Israel, Jewish arrivals in Halifax faced the possibility of detainment or deportation, so it is reasonable to suggest that the experiences of survivors in Cyprus were similar to but more extreme than Pier 21. Friedman concludes that emotional and mental trauma experienced in the Nazi concentration camps resurfaced in places where the presence of barbed wire was visible and when movement was restricted. In Nazi camps, self-preservation instincts and the fear of death suppressed any indications of illness, but the more relaxed psyche, after the war, led to an eruption of symptoms which is why Jewish arrivals showed signs of worry, uneasiness, panic, and paranoia upon their arrival.¹²

Certain aspects of and procedures at Pier 21 caused an emotional reaction in Jewish Holocaust survivors upon their arrival. Some visible aspects of Pier 21 that triggered an emotional response were the wires around the pier, barred windows, and iron cages at the back of the assembly hall. Wires around the pier reminded survivors of the camps, while inside the unpleasant smell and general

¹² Friedman, "Some Aspects of Concentration Camp Psychology," 603.

uncleanliness made a poor first impression.¹³ Iron cages at the back of the assembly hall separated passengers from their luggage and increased the speed with which arrivals could be processed. Survivors were struck with fear at the sight of cages because they were stark reminders of wartime experiences when their property was seized. Survivors feared that what happened to them in Europe would happen again in Canada.¹⁴

Issues for survivors emerged at various stages of the immigration process. For example, wartime experiences often meant they feared being confronted by officials with questions about them. When asked by immigration officials how much money they had, they panicked. Jewish survivors worried that the little funds they had would be needed for bribes to gain permission to enter the country. Their fears, however justified by their experiences, were misguided. Immigration officials were primarily concerned to know whether newcomers had funds sufficient to pay for necessities for their initial settlement.¹⁵

One of the procedures of the JIAS also caused anxiety for Jewish survivors upon their arrival at Pier 21. JIAS representatives called out names of Jewish passengers from the ship's manifest. When survivors heard their names called, they panicked because past experiences of being singled out in the Nazi camps often meant punishment or death.¹⁶ While JIAS representatives were aware of the extreme sensitivities of Jewish survivors, they nonetheless continued this practice because it was necessary to identify and gather the newcomers to help

¹³ Marianne Ferguson, interview by Cassidy Bankson, April 15, 2009.

¹⁴ Mitic and Leblanc, *Pier 21*, 3, 6-7.

¹⁵ Mitic and Leblanc, *Pier 21*, 63.

¹⁶ Mitic and Leblanc, *Pier 21*, 80.

with their immigration processing. The emotional state of Jewish arrivals changed from an initial fear to joy when they realized it was the JIAS and fellow Jews who singled them out.¹⁷

Another example of assistance that was met with confusion and fear by Jewish arrivals occurred with Holocaust survivor Helen Rodak-Iszo, who recalls her experiences of paranoia and panic at Pier 21 when she arrived with her husband and seven-month-old baby in the fall of 1949. They had passed the customs and immigration process and waited for their train to arrive when two women approached them with a stroller. Rodak-Iszo was confused and thought the two women wanted to take her child away. The women explained their good intentions and gave Rodak-Iszo the stroller, but she relaxed only after boarding the train to Toronto. Rodak-Iszo recalls this experience saying, “those ladies were wonderful and I think of them with my heartfelt thanks, but my fear was also justifiable. Looking back after so many years this experience sounds funny, but it was not at the time.”¹⁸ After two weeks of travel from the DP camps to Canada, with hardly any sleep, Rodak-Iszo, her husband and child made it to Toronto where they were greeted by family.¹⁹ Rodak-Iszo’s initial confusion and fear were common amongst Jewish Holocaust survivors upon their arrival at Pier 21.²⁰

The language barrier between JIAS representatives and Jewish arrivals was one of many obstacles when survivors of various nationalities disembarked at

¹⁷ Marianne Ferguson, interview by Cassidy Bankson, April 15, 2009.

¹⁸ Helen Rodak-Iszo, “The Last Chance to Remember,” Concordia University Chair in Canadian Jewish Studies. http://migs.concordia.ca/memoirs/rodak-izso/rodak_ap.html (June 20, 2017), Appendix.

¹⁹ Rodak-Iszo, “The Last Chance to Remember,” Appendix.

²⁰ Marianne Ferguson, interview by Cassidy Bankson, April 15, 2009.

Pier 21. Among Jewish arrivals, the most common languages were Yiddish, German, and Polish; few spoke any English. JIAS representative Marianne Ferguson spoke German and Yiddish, which was helpful, but communication barriers emerged when Jewish survivors spoke languages she did not know. In those circumstances, Ferguson used body gestures and spoke with her hands to convey her message. She recalls that “somehow or another we always managed.”²¹

Jewish survivors arrived in hand-me-down clothing, tried to look neat to present themselves favourably, but appeared undernourished, unhappy, and confused as to what would happen to them. The journey from Europe to Canada, via ocean travel, sometimes led to seasickness and frequent vomiting which, for survivors who suffered from malnutrition for more than a half decade, took a serious toll on their physical well-being. JIAS representatives knew when Jewish arrivals were sick either because they appeared as such or communicated their complaints. There were times when arrivals had to stay in detention quarters in order to recover sufficiently to pass the medical inspection at the pier and be granted legal entry into Canada.²²

The JIAS and volunteers of the Halifax Jewish community tried to help minimize confusion as they provided translations, reassurance, and guidance. The JIAS, under the regional leadership of Noa Heinich, a local Halifax Jewish merchant, was especially active at Pier 21. According to historians Trudy Mitic and J.P. LeBlanc, “JIAS members were always present at Pier 21 to offer

²¹ Marianne Ferguson, interview by Cassidy Bankson, April 15, 2009.

²² Marianne Ferguson, interview by Cassidy Bankson, April 15, 2009.

welcome and assurance, assist with the immigration and customs process, supply food and interim funds, and tend to the general needs”²³ of the survivors upon their arrival. JIAS workers spoke a variety of languages and greeted Jewish newcomers in their mother tongue. This gesture sent a strong message that survivors were welcome in Canada.²⁴

The JIAS was important in the reception of Jewish newcomers, but in the immediate postwar years had few dollars to spend on the employment of social service workers. Instead, the agency relied on volunteer unskilled workers to help absorb the first wave of refugees. Rather than spending money on professionals, they allocated funds towards food and clothing.²⁵

Key figures of the JIAS Halifax chapter were Sadie Fineberg, Meta Echt, and Ferguson. Fineberg, a well-known philanthropist and representative of the JIAS at Pier 21, was once an immigrant herself. Her duty at Pier 21 “was to welcome and assist the Jewish immigrants arriving from all parts of Central and Eastern Europe.”²⁶ Her kind-heartedness and ability to speak seven languages made her an ideal JIAS representative. She was a “one-women welcoming committee” whose work became so well known that in 1948, Halifax mayor John E. Ahern commissioned her “to officially represent the City of Halifax at the Immigration Piers in the capacity of greeter and counsellor.”²⁷ Fineberg was at Pier 21 in 1939 to greet the Echt family and was still there on the eve of the pier’s

²³ Mitic and Leblanc, *Pier 21*, 69.

²⁴ Mitic and Leblanc, *Pier 21*, 68-69.

²⁵ Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 51.

²⁶ Mitic and Leblanc, *Pier 21*, 76.

²⁷ Mitic and Leblanc, *Pier 21*, 77.

closing in 1971. She helped people of all backgrounds, from their arrival in the “assembly hall to the waiting room for the outbound trains.”²⁸

When Fineberg became the representative of Halifax as the official greeter in 1948, Echt took over her duties as a volunteer at Pier 21. Nathan Green, a leader of Halifax’s Conservative Jewish congregation, recommended to JIAS headquarters in Montréal for Echt to become an official employee. The reason for this was to help with the organization and communication of information with regards to ship arrivals, Jewish passenger manifests, and the various needs that differed amongst each of the arrivals. Green wrote saying of Echt that she “has a great sense of appreciation of the problems facing the immigrant, his fears and the thoughts running through his mind when he arrives at our shores.”²⁹ Green concluded that a permanent employee was needed at Pier 21.

By 1951, Echt had become a paid employee of the JIAS. Echt, a refugee herself, had arrived in 1939 from Poland with her family. Working at Pier 21 with her daughter, Ferguson, Echt put in long shifts welcoming refugees in Yiddish and German. She was responsible for guaranteeing that community representatives were present. Upon the arrival of Jewish refugees, Echt ensured they received assistance during their processing by immigration and custom officials. She was also in charge of handling misplaced or lost baggage as well as unexpected costs such as enforced tariffs, which refugees often could not afford to pay. When ships arrived immediately before or during a high holiday,

²⁸ Mitic and Leblanc, *Pier 21*, 78.

²⁹ Letter from Nathan Green to JIAS headquarters in Montréal, 26 February 1951, MG 20, Volume 1603, Box Number 18, Jewish Historical Society Fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

accommodations were arranged, such as a room in a hotel or rabbi's home, and space was made in the local synagogue for survivors to attend services.³⁰ In fact, the first Jewish newcomers from the DP camps arrived on 9 April 1947, which was also the high holiday of Passover and therefore accommodations were made by the Halifax Jewish community so that the newcomers could enjoy the ceremonial meal and prayer services.³¹

Ferguson and Echt were motivated to help Jewish survivors at Pier 21 because the mother-daughter team felt lucky to have avoided the worst of the Nazi brutalities. The Echt family immigrated to Canada after the family business was destroyed by Nazi supporters in the aftermath of the Kristallnacht pogrom. In an interview with the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, Ferguson describes how she and her sisters witnessed the destruction of the family pharmaceutical storefront attached to their home as looters shattered windows, stole goods, and vandalized the property.³²

As a result of the attack on the family business, Ferguson's father, Otto, decided that for the family's safety, they needed to emigrate. Otto applied to Canada as a farmer because of the enhanced prospects for admission since Canadian immigration laws restricted newcomers to those who were British, American, or agriculturalists with sufficient means to support themselves.³³ He was granted admission and brought the family with him as dependents. The

³⁰ Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 51.

³¹ Letter from JIAS Montréal headquarters to Noa Heinisch, 1 April 1947, MG 20, Volume 1603, Box Number 2, The Jewish Historical Society Fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

³² Marianne Ferguson, interview by Cassidy Bankson, April 15, 2009.

³³ Irving Abella and Harold Troper, "The Line must be Drawn Somewhere: Canada Jewish Refugees, 1933-9," *The Canadian Historical Review* 60, no. 2 (June 1979): 183.

family travelled in secret to Gdynia, sailed to Liverpool and then to Canada through Pier 21. Ferguson's family escaped the worst of the Nazi brutalities and felt very lucky as a result.³⁴

The mother-daughter team provided foods, changes of diapers for children, and other necessities. Jewish arrivals were accompanied to the train platform attached to Pier 21, where they left for their final destinations, most typically Montréal, Toronto, or Winnipeg. Echt and Ferguson liberally spent funds for meals, accommodations, and inland transportation for newcomers, but if no JIAS funds were available, they paid out of their own pockets. When Jewish newcomers were held in the detention centres the mother-daughter team brought kosher foods for them.³⁵

According to a letter sent from the JIAS headquarters in Montréal to Noa Heinich on 1 April 1947, the reception committee was supposed "to give them [Jewish arrivals] a brotherly reception [sic] and make them feel that their dark days in Hitler's Egypt are over and that they can hope to find happiness and peace in the Promised Land of Canada."³⁶ It is interesting to note that the JIAS seemed less concerned with the allocation of funds for the first Jewish arrivals on 9 April 1947. JIAS worker Arthur Funt was instructed to provide food for all the passengers for their journey to Montréal.

When a ship arrived at Pier 21, Heinich received notice from the Executive Director of the JIAS in Montréal, M. A. Solkin. Heinich was given a

³⁴ Marianne Ferguson, interview by Cassidy Bankson, April 15, 2009.

³⁵ Mitic and Leblanc, *Pier 21*, 77-79.

³⁶ Letter from JIAS Montréal headquarters to Noa Heinich, 1 April 1947, MG 20, Volume 1603, Box Number 2, The Jewish Historical Society Fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

list of all the Jewish passengers, sponsors, and funds needed. Heinisch was then responsible to hand that information over to Echt. Echt's responsibilities were described in a memo from Solkin in 1951. Prior to the arrival of Jewish newcomers, Echt was supposed to review the list of passengers. One of the main responsibilities for the JIAS was to provide inland transportation, but only to certain newcomers, which was determined by their type of sponsorship. Jewish arrivals who were sponsored by close relatives had to pay for their meals and inland transportation, or the sponsors could pay at one of the JIAS headquarters in Montréal, Toronto, or Winnipeg. If the arrivals could not afford this sum then they were accommodated at the on-site immigration office for a fee while their sponsors were informed of the situation. In these cases, the JIAS was only supposed to help pay if it was absolutely necessary, but otherwise could not hand over any money. Newcomers who arrived as labourers had their meals and inland transportation paid for by their Canadian employer. If the fees were not paid, then the newcomer was given an agreement form to sign, which allowed for the deduction in salary to be automatically paid to the JIAS. Newcomers sponsored by Canadian Jewish businesses had the costs for inland transportation and meals paid for by the JIAS.³⁷ The JIAS, however, refused to pay any amount for Jewish arrivals from Israel.³⁸

The JIAS watched carefully how its funds were spent. Solkin was annoyed when he learned of instances in which Echt handed over money to newcomers

³⁷ Memo from M. Solkin to Mrs. Otto Echt, 19 April 1951, MG 20, Volume 1603, Box Number 18, The Jewish Historical Society Fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

³⁸ Letter from M. Solkin to Noa Heinisch, 8 October 1951, MG 20, Volume 1603, Box Number 18, The Jewish Historical Society Fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

when she was not supposed to. Each passenger list had notes that mentioned whether newcomers had their inland transportation paid for or would be required to pay the cost upon their arrival. Echt seemed to often ignore these complaints and gave the funds to newcomers when requested, much to the annoyance of Solkin.³⁹

The welcome of Jewish refugees by local Halifax Jews along with their charitable donations had a profound significance for the survivors upon their arrival. Nathan Wasser, a teenage survivor from Sandomierz, Poland, came with his father as part of a furrier labour scheme in 1948. Wasser left for Canada with only a few dollars, which he acquired through barter on the black market in one of the German DP camps, but lost these funds on his voyage. Without any money in a strange country, he was overwhelmed:

Everything began to swirl in his mind when two women helped him up to a counter at Pier 21, began feeding him candy, and told him that now, in Canada, everything was going to be all right.... One of the women gave him twenty dollars. He could not accept such generosity, how could he ever pay it back? Her words, "We trust you, we have faith in you, you are going to be a good Canadian citizen," hit him like a ton of bricks.⁴⁰

Echt's and Ferguson's kindness towards the newcomers helped establish a positive relationship between the Jewish arrivals and those who greeted them. As the greeters blew kisses and waved goodbye, Wasser boarded the train connected to the platform for his trip further west. He remembered the kindness shown upon

³⁹ Letter from M. Solkin to Mrs. Otto Echt, 31 March 1951, MG 20, Volume 1603, Box Number 2, The Jewish Historical Society Fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

⁴⁰ Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 51.

his arrival, returned to Pier 21 more than fifty years later, thanked Ferguson, and paid back more than what he was given.⁴¹

The significance of the reception and welcome likely had a more profound impact on the arrivals than on those who received them. In an interview with the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, Ferguson tried to recollect her interactions with Wasser when he arrived, but struggled to do so. The continuous arrival of thousands of newcomers made it too difficult for her to remember everyone. She recalls saying to many newcomers (and likely Wasser as well), “Don’t worry you will work hard you will become a good citizen of Canada you will make something of yourself.”⁴² Ferguson only learned of the impact of her welcome years later when Wasser sent her flowers and made donations in her honour.

Representatives of the JIAS had the opportunity to hear first-hand accounts of Holocaust experiences or learn if family in Europe had survived. Ferguson recalls in her interview with the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 that when survivors wanted to discuss their experiences, they did so in detail.⁴³ In this way, representatives of the JIAS were able to learn of individual stories of survival in the Holocaust and became aware of the destruction of European Jewry. Others tried to learn if family in Europe survived. Arthur Funt, for example, had been in Canada since 1934, and was eager to know if his Polish family had survived. Although he never learned about what happened to his loved

⁴¹ Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 53.

⁴² Marianne Ferguson, interview by Cassidy Bankson, April 15, 2009.

⁴³ Marianne Ferguson, interview by Cassidy Bankson, April 15, 2009.

ones, his desire to learn motivated him to work as an official representative of the JIAS.⁴⁴

Some JIAS representatives and Jewish volunteers struggled with their role in the reception of newcomers. The National Executive Vice-President of the JIAS, Joseph Kage, recounts decades later his experiences when in 1947 he welcomed the Jewish War Orphans for the first time at Pier 21:

In Halifax I met with the local reception committee headed by the stalwart Noah [sic] Heinich. As I proceeded to the boat to meet the children my anxiety mounted. Many thoughts flooded through my mind—the sacrifice of Isaac; Tisha B’Av; Torquemada; the massacres of Tach V’tat; the pogroms of Czarist Russia; and a vision of a mountain of two million shoes, shoes that belonged to the million Jewish children killed by the Nazis.

Here I was to face a group of children who had lost everything and everybody, who had been hunted physically, were emotionally deprived, incarcerated and tortured—children of the Holocaust. What should be my first greeting? What should I tell them? The Halifax reception committee was ready to welcome them with comforts, but this would not solve the basic problem of “breaking the ice.” I tried to recollect the various social work interviewing techniques and approaches, but they all seemed empty, cold and inappropriate.

As I boarded the boat something welled up in me and all of a sudden I knew the less said the better. The only valid greeting was the age-long basic precept of Jewish tradition. As I reached the group of youngsters who were waiting for me I introduced myself, shook each one’s hand and simply said

⁴⁴ Mitic and Leblanc, *Pier 21*, 80.

“Sholom Aleicham, Baruch Habah” (peace unto you, bless your arrival). I knew they understood me and I knew that they knew what I meant.⁴⁵

JIAS representative and volunteers were challenged with their role in the reception of newcomers because they were aware of the general catastrophe of the Holocaust, but struggled to acknowledge or relate to the suffering of individuals who arrived at Pier 21.

The exact number of Jewish arrivals who came through Halifax is unknown because immigration statistics do not differentiate between specific ports of entry when cataloguing arrivals based on religion and ethnicity. What is known is the number of Jews who arrived by ocean ports in general. Using a percentage of the number of all immigrants who arrived through Halifax, and applying that percentage to Jews who arrived by ocean port, the estimated number of Jewish immigrants who arrived in Halifax can be supposed. The number of Jewish arrivals via all ocean ports from 1946 to 1955 was 36,429.⁴⁶ During these same years, approximately 40 percent of all immigrants entered Canada through

⁴⁵ Joseph Kage quoted in Martz, *Open Hearts*, 22-24. The quote seems to reflect a more contemporary understanding of the Holocaust as Kage recalls a, “vision of a mountain of two million shoes.” This vision is likely based on the exhibit of shoes that belonged to Jewish children featured at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum. While parts of the current museum at Auschwitz opened in June 1947, it is unlikely that Kage had a chance to visit the site before the first Jewish children arrived in Canada. It is equally unlikely that this specific exhibit was on display in June 1947. Therefore, it seems more likely than not, that Kage uses a contemporary understanding of the Holocaust in his remarks about his past. This is a common difficulty for historians who study the Holocaust and conduct interviews decades afterwards. For many, their recollections have been shaped and influenced by contemporary understandings and a collective memory. “The First Years of the Memorial,” Memorial and Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau: Former German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp, <http://auschwitz.org/en/museum/history-of-the-memorial/the-first-years-of-the-memorial/> (accessed January 1, 2017); Franklin Bialystok, *Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2000), 11-13.

⁴⁶ Annual Increase of Jewish Population of Canada by Immigration and Natural Increase, 1901-1958, MG 30, C199, Volume 31, Louis Rosenberg Fonds, National Archives Canada.

Halifax.⁴⁷ Therefore approximately 14,000 to 15,000 Jews immigrated through Halifax between 1946 and 1955.

Despite thousands of Jewish survivors immigrating to Canada through Pier 21, few settled in Halifax. According to the 1961 Canadian census, only 61 Jewish immigrants settled in Halifax between 1946 and 1955. A total of 102 Jewish immigrants settled in Nova Scotia during those years, which meant that Halifax received the most Jewish immigrants in the province, though they amounted to less than one percent of all Jews who came through the port.⁴⁸

One of the reasons for limited settlement in Halifax was due to the decline in the Nova Scotian economy in the postwar years. Nova Scotia suffered from a continual economic decline from the end of the war until the mid 1950s,⁴⁹ which likely explains why its Jewish community shrank from 2,285 in 1941 to 2,201 in 1951.⁵⁰ Over the same period however, the Halifax Jewish community increased. In 1941, there were 741 Jews in Halifax; by 1951 that number had increased to 1,012; and by 1961 to 1,186.⁵¹ The increase is likely the result of a combination of factors that includes a small number of immigrants, natural increases, and the migration of Jews from rural communities to the city. Jewish migration from rural communities to urban areas occurred most often with young families who sought

⁴⁷ Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, "Immigration to Canada, 1928-1971," Canadian Museum of Immigration, https://www.pier21.ca/wp-content/uploads/files/research_1928to1971_immigration_statistics.pdf (January 2016).

⁴⁸ Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Characteristics of the immigrant population by period of immigration and sex, for census metropolitan areas, 1961*, 127-5,6, Population: General Characteristics, 1961.

⁴⁹ Judith Fingard, Janet V. Guildford, and David A. Sutherland, *Halifax: The First 250 Years* (Halifax: Formac Pub., 1999), 161-163.

⁵⁰ Kage, *With Faith and Thanksgiving*, 261.

⁵¹ Shari Brotman and James Torczyner, *The Changing Portrait of Jewish Life in Halifax* (Montréal: McGill Consortium for Ethnicity & Strategic Planning, 1997), 14.

to maintain a Jewish identity for their children, which in rural communities was not possible because of a lack of religious resources.⁵²

The number of Jewish arrivals who settled in Halifax was also limited because entry of so many Jewish newcomers depended either on labour and relative sponsorships or on the Jewish War Orphans project. Approximately 66 percent of occupations of all immigrants between 1946 and 1960, Jewish and non-Jewish, was in agriculture, manufacturing, and unskilled labour.⁵³ The most common jobs in Nova Scotia in the postwar years were in agriculture and transportation.⁵⁴ Heavy manual labour and agricultural work were considered by immigration officials and representatives of the industry better suited for Ukrainians, for example, than for Jews.⁵⁵ Jews were most often sponsored as tailors, dressmakers, furriers, milliners, and cabinet makers, but Nova Scotia offered few available jobs in these occupations for immigrants.⁵⁶ From 1947 to 1954, only thirty-four immigrants worked as tailors, twenty as dressmakers, twenty-two as cabinet makers, four as furriers, and none as milliners in Nova Scotia.⁵⁷ Moreover, occupations within the Halifax Jewish community were predominantly in business and some professions. There were only two Jews who worked with small manufacturing companies and there were no Jews employed in

⁵² Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 138.

⁵³ Anthony Richmond, *Post-war Immigrants in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 51.

⁵⁴ Dominion Bureau of Statistics, "The Canada Year Book, 1948-58," under "Department of Trade and Commerce, Canada," https://www66.statcan.gc.ca/acyb_000-eng.htm (accessed March 2017).

⁵⁵ Troper and Weinfeld, *Old Wounds*, 65.

⁵⁶ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 50-52.

⁵⁷ Dominion Bureau of Statistics, "The Canada Year Book, 1948-58," under "Department of Trade and Commerce, Canada," https://www66.statcan.gc.ca/acyb_000-eng.htm (accessed March 2017). It is important to note that excluded from this collection of statistics are records from 1950. For an unknown reason, every year of immigrant occupation is recorded except for 1950.

trades.⁵⁸ The limited number of labourers working in typically Jewish occupations amongst immigrants demonstrates how few opportunities existed for Jews to settle in Halifax.

An occupational breakdown of the Halifax Jewish community in 1949 shows that they worked in occupations that were largely unable to sponsor labourers. There were 232 merchants, 60 clerks and stenographers, 42 professionals (13 in medicine, 8 lawyers, 7 dentists, 5 accountants, 3 teachers, 2 nurses, 2 engineers, 1 rabbi, and 1 social worker), 31 students over 18 years-of-age, 4 scientists, and 2 artists.⁵⁹ As a result, few members of the Halifax Jewish community could sponsor Jewish DPs.

Jewish survivors were most often sponsored as labourers in the needle trades in other Canadian cities, not Halifax. For example, Bernard Shane sponsored Jewish DPs as a representative of the Montréal General Council of the Cloak and Suit Makers' Union and the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. Other industry representatives included Sam Herbst, a labour leader from Winnipeg, as well as manufacturers David Solomon from Ottawa and Max Enkin and Samuel Posluns from Toronto. These Jewish individuals went to Europe to select Jewish DPs as skilled workers in the needle trades.⁶⁰ The Jewish DPs sponsored for labour in these occupations settled in those cities and not in Halifax.

⁵⁸ Maritime Section Canadian Jewish Congress Questionnaire, 30 October 1945, MG 20, Volume 1604, Box Number 37, The Jewish Historical Society Fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

⁵⁹ The Council Reports, 1948-1949, MG 20, Volume 565, Box Number 6, The Jewish Historical Society Fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

⁶⁰ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 51-53.

Halifax's small Jewish community also limited the possibility of close relative sponsorships. There were 1,012 Jews living in Halifax in 1951,⁶¹ which severely limited the number of close relatives who could be sponsored compared to cities like Toronto, Montréal, and Winnipeg, each with over 10,000 Jews. In addition, since 1931, Halifax's Jewish community had been more than 50 percent Canadian-born, with fewer direct connections to families in Europe.⁶²

In terms of the Jewish War Orphans project, more children settled in Sydney than in Halifax. Only six Jewish War Orphans were settled in Halifax thanks to efforts made by the local Jewish communities to foster the children. Montréal and Toronto were the only cities to have reception centres for Jewish Orphans. Other Canadian cities in which orphans settled had Jewish homes who fostered them. However, since so few of the Jewish orphans were under ten years of age, many Canadian Jews did not want to foster them. The majority then settled in the reception centres in Montréal and Toronto. The orphans also had some choice in the matter. Some were adamant about being placed with friends from within the project, which again most often meant Montréal and Toronto.⁶³

The Jewish Holocaust survivors who left Pier 21 via the train were offered a chance to see their new homeland. Jewish War Orphan Leslie Mezei recalls her experience of arrival and then transportation by train to Montréal:

After a brief check at the immigration office we were given a big reception. Smiling women greet us and overwhelm us with everything we desire. They tell us how good it will be for us. After a couple of hours we are on a train. We feel a

⁶¹ Brotman and Torczyner, *The Changing Portrait of Jewish Life in Halifax*, 14.

⁶² Louis Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s* (Montréal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1993), 75.

⁶³ Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 37, 69-70.

big freedom— nobody asks us for identification and we get everything we want. A day later we reach Montreal. The city looks alive because everything is lit with cars and people moving on the street. This is not anything like the dead city, Munchen. After a grand reception we are given rooms in our temporary home at the Reception Centre. There we have a good, peaceful rest.⁶⁴

Holocaust survivor Meyer Kron had a more negative view of his new country. He recorded his experiences on board a train headed to Montréal after he arrived at Pier 21, on 11 March 1951, with his wife Gita and two daughters. The excitement of a new country waned quickly as he saw forests and hilly landscapes covered in snow. The towns looked small and there seemed to be an endless amount of empty space, which differed from the crowded cities of Europe. To Kron, Canada looked like an uninhabited country.⁶⁵

For others, the train ride was the taxing last leg of an exhausting journey that lasted weeks. Holocaust survivor Myra Gutman arrived at Pier 21 with her husband and seven-year-old son on 3 December 1948, after an eleven-day sea voyage. The family passed inspections and boarded their train for Montreal, but their child became severely ill along the way. They stopped in Moncton, New Brunswick, where an ambulance rushed the boy to the hospital. Gutman and her husband were given a room in a nearby hotel, which was paid for by the Moncton Jewish community. They had only three dollars with them, but the Moncton Jewish community provided money and accommodations for the week they spent there as their son recuperated. The child recovered and the family completed its

⁶⁴ Leslie Mezei quoted in Martz, *Open Your Hearts*, 24-25.

⁶⁵ Meyer Kron, "Through the Eye of the Needle," Concordia University Chair in Canadian Jewish Studies. http://migs.concordia.ca/memoirs/kron/chpt_11.html (June 20, 2017), Chapter Eleven.

journey to Montréal.⁶⁶ The story of the Gutmans demonstrates the dependency and vulnerability of Jewish Holocaust survivors upon their arrival in Canada.

Jewish Holocaust survivors' arrival in Canada was challenging because of fears, paranoia, and confusion, rooted in their wartime experiences, but was mitigated by the help of the local Jewish communities and the JIAS. Survivors were helped throughout each step of the final immigration processes as well as on their train ride to their destinations in Canada. Thousands of Jews arrived in Halifax, but the vast majority did not settle in the city, instead moving on to Montréal, Toronto, and Winnipeg. Few labour opportunities in typically "Jewish" jobs limited the number of Jewish arrivals who could settle in Halifax. Close relative sponsorships were also limited by the small Jewish community that was predominantly Canadian-born and too far removed from family in Europe to qualify for the program. Lastly, few Jewish War Orphans settled in Halifax because of the limited number of foster homes available. As a result of these factors, few Jews settled in Halifax from 1946 to 1955.

⁶⁶ Myra Gutman, "Vivid Recollections of a Survivor," Concordia University Chair in Canadian Jewish Studies. http://migs.concordia.ca/memoirs/m_gutman/m_gutman.html (June 20, 2017), Part II.

Chapter 4: Immediate Integration in Halifax

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the immediate integration of Jewish Holocaust survivors in Halifax. This chapter will first argue that the small size of Halifax and its Jewish community was not ideal for the settlement of Jewish Holocaust survivors. Second, financial insecurities, language barriers, and social adjustment were all exacerbated by the extraordinary trauma Jewish Holocaust survivors experienced. Third, this chapter will argue that integration was easier in Halifax because there were fewer instances of antisemitism when compared to other Canadian cities. Lastly, this chapter will argue that because few Jewish survivors settled in Halifax, the Jewish community encountered less resistance as the congregation changed to form a new conservative congregation.

The integration of Holocaust survivors in Canada was influenced by the various sizes of Canadian Jewish communities. In 1961, the total Canadian Jewish population of 254,368¹ was centered in Montréal, with a population of 103,000, and Toronto, with a population of 87,000. Winnipeg was the third largest Jewish community, with 19,000 Jews, followed by Vancouver and Ottawa, each with a Jewish population of between 5,000, and 10,000. Halifax was among six Canadian cities with a Jewish population greater than 1,000 but less than 5,000. Finally, 33 towns or small cities had Jewish populations greater than 100 but less than 1000.² The Halifax Jewish community was therefore small and as a result,

¹ Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Population by Religious Denominations, Canada 1901 to 1961*, 41-1, Population: General Characteristics, 1961.

² Harold Troper, *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 26.

less desirable for Jewish Holocaust survivors because of its more limited communal resources.

Halifax had a small Jewish community, but it was also the largest in the Maritimes. Halifax was, and continues to be, home to various Jewish organizations and regional offices that are represented through the Atlantic Jewish Council, which has acted as a coordinating body for the small dispersed Jewish populations in the Maritimes. Jews from small communities in the Maritimes have migrated to Halifax over the decades because it was and is the largest Jewish community east of Montréal. As a result, the Halifax Jewish community has grown largely because of relocation of Jews within the region, not international immigration.³

An important factor in the place of settlement for Jews in Canada was the population size of cities. In 1961, 95 percent of all Jews in Canada lived in cities with a population greater than 100,000.⁴ In that same year, Halifax's population was 92,511, not an ideal city size for Jewish settlement. The Halifax Jewish community in 1961 amounted to 1,188 Jews – less than half of one percent of the total Canadian Jewish population, though still the tenth largest Jewish community in Canada.⁵ The reason for this discrepancy is due to the fact that nearly 75 percent of Jews in Canada resided in Montréal and Toronto. According to Harold Troper, Jewish survivors settled in Montréal and Toronto because of the “urban

³ Brotman and Torczyner, *The Changing Portrait of Jewish Life in Halifax*, 11-12.

⁴ Harold Troper, *The Defining Decade*, 26.

⁵ Brotman and Torczyner, *The Changing Portrait of Jewish Life in Halifax*, 14-15.

lifestyle, expanding educational and employment opportunities, and an ethno-religious comfort zone” provided by the larger Jewish communities.⁶

In *Holocaust Survivors in Canada: Exclusion, Inclusion, Transformation, 1947-1955* (2015), Adara Goldberg discusses three basic challenges all immigrants faced, all of them exacerbated amongst Holocaust survivors because of their extraordinary trauma. First, survivors struggled with financial insecurities since employment was necessary and affordable housing was scarce. Second, survivors had setbacks with the English language as many found it hard to learn and adapt. Experiences with language differed between working men, stay-at-home mothers and children in schools. Third, social adjustment was a challenge for survivors as they clashed with the Canadian Jewish communities they settled in.⁷

Financial insecurities arose for Jews who settled in Halifax because the Maritimes did not experience the same prosperity as other parts of Canada in the immediate aftermath of the war. In Halifax, a scarcity of affordable housing resulted from the return of veterans who came back to the city with wives and children. Moreover, civilians who migrated to Halifax during the war because of wartime jobs and high wages had continued to live in the city in hope that their work would continue, which it did not.⁸ By 1947, the Halifax population had increased by 40 percent in just six years and there was not enough housing

⁶ Troper, *The Defining Decade*, 27.

⁷ Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 54.

⁸ Thomas Raddall, *Halifax: Warden of the North* (Halifax: Nimbus, 1993), 312.

available.⁹ Moreover, postwar inflation and the removal of federally regulated price controls raised the price of food. The cost of living in Halifax was high in the late 1940s and early 1950s.¹⁰

When Morris Kohler and Simon Spatz arrived with their families in Halifax in 1948 and 1950 respectively, they needed to find immediate work. Kohler went into the grocery business; when Simon Spatz arrived, he did the same. Kohler's success led to his ability to purchase a home in which the Spatzes were given a room when they arrived. Spatz recalls years later that so many of the Jewish immigrants who settled in Halifax went into the grocer business that Canadian-born Jews used pejorative labels, such as *greena*, for the newcomers and their businesses.¹¹ The high price of food created an opportune market in which Jewish survivors could work as grocers in Halifax.

Some Jewish survivors were unable to find affordable housing or employment in Halifax and as a result migrated elsewhere. On 1 June 1948, a letter was sent to Noa Heinish from a social worker, Miss S. Martin, and was also signed by Joseph Kage, which stated that the Bercovitches, a Jewish immigrant family, had moved from Halifax to Montréal. The family had been sponsored by a close relative in Halifax and was supposed to live there. However, Mr. Bercovitch was unable to find suitable employment and housing in Halifax. The purpose of

⁹ Paul A. Erickson, *Halifax's North End: An Anthropologist Looks at the City* (Hantsport: Lancelot Press, 1986), 76.

¹⁰ Fingard, Guildford, and Sutherland, *Halifax*, 163.

¹¹ Cobden, *Simon Spatz*, 178-179.

the letter was to procure financial aid from the close relative in Halifax to help the Bercovitch family in Montréal.¹²

Financial insecurities were a burden for Jewish arrivals, but so too were difficulties with the local language because most Jewish survivors spoke limited English, if any. Employed Jewish Holocaust survivors learned English either in the workforce or in evening classes. Since the small Jewish communities in the Maritimes did not receive JIAS assistance for evening classes, the Nova Scotian school board helped finance and staff classes in English as a second language and citizenship for Jewish newcomers. In conjunction with the provincial school board, local Jewish community members donated supplies, space, and volunteer teachers.¹³

Employed men had the opportunity to learn English on the job, whereas unemployed women had to learn through other means. According to Adara Goldberg, young mothers had the most difficulty with English because without supportive groups or much family to help, “motherhood emerged as a lonely period for these young women.” Due to a lack of affordable childcare, young mothers “were less likely to be able to attend English and citizenship classes or social events,”¹⁴ which made their integration process longer and more difficult.

As for children, an example of the ability to learn languages quickly was the case with Mark Nusbaum, a child survivor born in 1935 who lived through Buchenwald and Ravensbrück. On 15 May 1948, Nusbaum arrived at Pier 21 with

¹² Letter from S. Martin and Joseph Kage to Noa Heinisch, 1 June 1948, MG 20, Volume 1603, Box Number 2, The Jewish Historical Society Fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

¹³ Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 85-86.

¹⁴ Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 212.

his family and immediately travelled to Toronto. He, like many others, experienced mocking and bullying, particularly for his thick foreign accent. But Nusbaum was defended by a cousin who boasted of his ability to speak five languages. Within one year, Nusbaum became fluent in English, a level of language acquisition common amongst child survivors who were immersed in the language in school environments.¹⁵

When Marianne Ferguson immigrated to Halifax with her family in 1939, she too learned English in a school environment. Ferguson and her family stayed at Mrs. Shofar's boarding house where a prominent member of the Halifax Jewish community, Mrs. Sarah Heinisch, had arranged for Ferguson and her sisters to attend the Morris Street School. There were no expectations for Ferguson and her sisters to participate in the classroom, nor complete any homework or assignments. Instead, they were to learn through observation and have a chance to meet non-Jewish children their age. Ferguson recalls that she made her first friends in Canada at this school where she began to learn English.¹⁶

Many of the survivors struggled to adapt to their new environment because of their inability to communicate with locals. Eva Hoffman, a daughter of Holocaust survivors, writes in *Wanderers by Choice* (2000), that to be unable to communicate with others

...is to slide into an inarticulate darkness where we become alien to ourselves; to lose the ability to describe the world is render the world a bit less vivid. It takes

¹⁵ Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 113.

¹⁶ Marianne Ferguson, interview by Cassidy Bankson, April 15, 2009, Canadian Museum of Immigration.

time before a new language begins to inhabit us deeply, to enter the fabric of our psyches and express who we are.¹⁷

About a month after Simon Spatz arrived in Canada he got lost. Without knowing where to go, and unable to communicate with locals, Spatz was flustered. He decided to take a familiar trolley to the Simpson's department store and from there walked home. Spatz's predicament could have been easily solved had he been able to ask directions from the locals. Instead, he had to take a long route simply to find his way home.¹⁸

Social adjustment with the Halifax Jewish community was another challenge for Holocaust survivors, but was likely similar to survivor experiences in other Canadian cities. There were three main reasons for poor relations between survivors and local Canadian Jewish communities. First, Canadian Jews and Jewish survivors immigrated to Canada in different circumstances, and struggled to relate to one another as a result. Second, Canadian-born Jews shared a fundamental misunderstanding, even ignorance, of Jewish survivors' experiences in the Holocaust. Third, Jewish survivors felt Canadian Jews did little to help them upon their arrival. These experiences were not unique to any one Jewish community, but occurred across Canada.¹⁹

Jewish Holocaust survivors immigrated to Canada from circumstances completely different than previous waves of Jewish migration. Franklin Bialystok refers to Jewish Holocaust survivors as "true refugees" because many came with

¹⁷ Eva Hoffman, "Wanderers by Choice," *The Utne Reader* 100 (July/August 2000): 46-47.

¹⁸ Cobden, *Simon Spatz*, 133-134.

¹⁹ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 77-90.

no family, had few immediate relatives in Canada, no money, and relied heavily on support from their sponsors, local Jewish federations, and the municipal, provincial, and federal governments.²⁰

Previous Jewish migrants to Canada differed in that they immigrated from rural communities, as family units, and with money for their settlement. Large waves of Jewish migration to Canada came at the turn of the twentieth century when Russian and Ukrainian Jews fled in response to pogroms. Russian Jews had worked primarily in rural communities in the agriculture industry, which differed from postwar Jewish newcomers who arrived from predominantly urban areas.²¹

Earlier waves of Jewish migration to Canada led to prejudices that made integration more frustrating for Holocaust survivors in the postwar years. Since prewar Jewish immigrants came from rural areas, they wrongfully assumed that the postwar immigrants came from similar backgrounds, and were unaccustomed to urban living and amenities that included in-house washrooms and electricity. Holocaust survivor Krisha Starker, who arrived in Canada in 1951 and settled in Montréal, recalls her Jewish landlord demonstrating how to use the light switches, flush the toilet, and dial a telephone. Starker was offended that she was seen as a backwards rural dweller who was not already aware of these simplicities. Holocaust survivor Lou Zablow recalls similar experiences of being shown how to flush a toilet and use toilet paper despite having lived in Lodz, a Polish city the

²⁰ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 44.

²¹ Robert J. Brym, Morton Weinfeld, and William Shaffir, *The Jews in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1993), 15-17.

size of Montréal. The prejudices and bias of prewar Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe led to misunderstandings with postwar Jewish arrivals.²²

Differences between Jewish survivors and previous waves of Jewish immigration to Canada were exacerbated by the inability of either group to cope with the trauma of the Holocaust. Canadian Jews insensitively inquired why Jewish arrivals survived when millions of others had perished. Many did not understand how millions of Jews could be killed and disliked the “victim” label attached to world Jewry in the aftermath of the war.²³ For the survivors, it was as if they had to justify their existence. Starker recalled:

I think the worst experience was when the Canadian Jews asked how come six million were murdered, how come you survived? I had to justify my survival ... The other notion that came through clearly was “you must have been a collaborator that they let you live.” They almost resented our survival.²⁴

Lou Zablow remarks that his experiences in the camps remained his secret because of the general misconceptions of the time. He felt that if his camp experience became known, others would have interacted differently with him.²⁵

Bialystok argues that the most difficult problem survivors faced in the 1950s was dealing with their memories. The inability to share experiences and stories of survival with the Canadian-born Jewish communities led to the creation of social groups among survivors in which they could discuss amongst themselves what happened to them without fear of judgement. In Toronto and Montréal, survivors from the same city or region joined “*landsmanshaften*,”²⁶ social groups

²² Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 82.

²³ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 7.

²⁴ Krishna Starker quoted in Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 81-82.

²⁵ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 82.

²⁶ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 88.

based on nationality where survivors could discuss their experiences and memories. According to Adara Goldberg, “many of the survivors experienced what they interpreted as rejection when they tried to share stories of their pasts with agency workers and Canadian Jews, and found solace among other newcomers in survivor enclaves who had shared similar pasts.”²⁷

Survivors lacked trust in the organized Jewish communal institutions that were responsible for providing professional guidance and information. Instead, survivors sought support through “survivor-based networks.”²⁸ Despite being unofficial, the associations nonetheless provided advice about employment opportunities, cheap stores, prospective housing, and helped needy newcomers obtain loans to purchase household goods.²⁹

Holocaust survivors in Halifax resented the local Jewish community’s minimal assistance in the early years of their arrival, which was similar to the experiences of survivors in other Canadian cities. When interviewed in 1997 for the Shoah Foundation collection of testimonies of Holocaust survivors, Simon Spatz was asked about his reception by the Halifax Jewish community. Spatz said that he was unhappy and harboured resentful memories of how little the established Jewish community did for his family when they arrived. For example, when Spatz wanted to go to synagogue in his first year of arrival he was told he needed to pay thirty dollars for a membership in order to enter, a sum of money that was too burdensome for him at the time. This experience was significant

²⁷ Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 64.

²⁸ Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 64.

²⁹ Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 64.

enough for him to still remember it nearly fifty years later. Spatz's son, Jim, said that his parents socialized only with other survivors because they felt more comfortable with them than with Canadian-born Jews.³⁰

Despite Spatz's negative views of the Halifax Jewish community, he did have a local Jewish friend in former Dartmouth mayor Joe Zatzman. Zatzman provides a different explanation for the tensions between Jewish survivors and the Halifax Jewish community, concluding that it was not because of the unique experiences of the Holocaust, but instead was predicated on inherent frictions between locals and newcomers:

In all races and creeds. There has always been tension between people who are already settled in a country and people just arriving. The established Irish community in North America didn't really look with great favour on the new Irish people coming over. They regarded them as sort of second-class citizens. The same thing goes through all racial and national groups, and the established Jewish community here in Halifax looked on the newcomers as *greena*. I don't know that we had a great deal of sympathy [for the Jews of Europe] during the war. Actually, we didn't know too much about what was happening there until later on in the war. We weren't really organized as a group to welcome them and resettle them.³¹

Survivors also felt resentment towards Canadian Jews because they had lived comfortably at safe distance from the cruelty and devastation in Europe. Survivors claimed to Zatzman that had they lived in prosperous, comfortable Canada, they would be millionaires. The survivors did not fully understand the harsh economic times in the 1930s and only knew of Canada as a place with an abundance of freedom and economic opportunity.³²

³⁰ Cobden, *Simon Spatz*, 183.

³¹ Joe Zatzman quoted in Cobden, *Simon Spatz*, 179.

³² Cobden, *Simon Spatz*, 179.

Some members of the Halifax Jewish community felt that they too had endured tough times in the Great Depression, which survivors did not account for. Former president of the Beth Israel Synagogue, Earle Bowman, while acknowledging that survivors had “suffered for all the Jews in the world,” said of his own experiences coming to Canada, “I’m a survivor too. I came through the Depression. You couldn’t come through it without appreciating what the Holocaust survivors had come through.”³³ Bowman’s attempt to equate the Great Depression and the Holocaust helps to explain the gap of understanding between the newcomers and the Halifax Jewish community.

Marianne Ferguson disagreed with Spatz’s and Zatzman’s characterizations of the reception of Jews in Halifax. Ferguson remembered, “The community was very receptive. Money-wise we didn’t need anything, but moral support – we made many, many friends, and my parents couldn’t complain about the community at all.”³⁴ Ferguson recalls how her mother socialized and was friendly with Holocaust survivors who immigrated to the city:

I remember that my parents used to play cards with them every week. They liked them very much and they were very friendly with them. I don’t know why Simon would say that he wasn’t well received unless he’s had experience with certain people. You know, not everybody is going to be receptive of everyone.³⁵

Ferguson’s recollections differ from Spatz’s predominantly because she arrived before the war. Her family were immigrants who arrived in 1939, so they had more than a half-decade to integrate. Spatz, on the other hand, was a Jewish

³³ Cobden, *Simon Spatz*, 183.

³⁴ Marianne Ferguson quoted in Cobden, *Simon Spatz*, 183.

³⁵ Marianne Ferguson quoted in Cobden, *Simon Spatz*, 183.

Holocaust survivor who emigrated from the DP camps and felt he was treated poorly because of his past.

Tensions not only existed between Holocaust survivors and the Halifax Jewish community but also between community leaders. Noa Heinish and National Executive Director of the CJC in Montréal, Saul Hayes had disagreements about the allocation of donated funds. Hayes complained to Heinish that Jewish Haligonians had donated too much money to Zionist organizations and not enough towards agencies that supported Jewish refugees and DPs.³⁶ It is likely that the unusually high amount of donations to Zionist organizations was the result of few survivors in the Halifax Jewish community.

Despite the criticisms of Saul Hayes, the Halifax Jewish community made efforts to help Jews in the European DP camps. For example, a women's volunteer group called the Sisterhood of the Robie Street Synagogue sent a shipment of hundreds of clothing articles that included nightgowns, shirts, sweaters, suits, baby and children's wear, and more. The items were often hand knitted and the packages also included other supplies such as medicines and sewing needles. The supplies sent to the European DP camps' Jewish population from the Halifax Jewish community shows the kinds of efforts made to help Jewish Holocaust survivors.³⁷

³⁶ Letter from Saul Hayes to Noa Heinish, 6 January 1950, MG 20, Volume 1601, Box Number 39, The Jewish Historical Society Fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia; Letter from Noa Heinish to Saul Hayes, 11 January 1950, MG 20, Volume 1601, Box Number 90, The Jewish Historical Society Fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia; Letter from Saul Hayes to Noa Heinish, 12 January 1950, MG 20, Volume 1601, Box Number 91, The Jewish Historical Society Fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

³⁷ Letter from Noa Heinish to President of the Sisterhood of the Robie Street Synagogue Mrs. Newman, 15 August 1947, MG 20, Volume 558, Box Number 74, The Jewish Historical Society Fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

The Halifax community was likely more receptive than other Canadian communities to Jewish newcomers because of its limited history of antisemitism compared to other parts of Canada. In Toronto, increasing antisemitism in the 1930s culminated in the infamous Christie Pitts riot in August 1933; in Montréal, antisemitic publisher Adrien Arcand was a popular figure. Arcand's attempts to create an antisemitic movement in Halifax were unsuccessful,³⁸ likely because Halifax was home to such a small Jewish community that antisemitism had no foothold as it did elsewhere in Canada.

Halifax demonstrated disproportionate support for the Jewish community in response to the Nazis' *Kristallnacht* pogrom in November 1938. On 20 November, rallies were held across Canada to condemn the actions of the Nazi state and show support for the Jews of Germany. The largest number of attendees was in Toronto, but Halifax was second, with more attendees than Montréal, Winnipeg, and Vancouver, each with larger Jewish communities. In addition, a prominent local newspaper, the *Halifax Herald*, published a series of articles and an editorial that denounced the pogrom and showed support for German Jews.³⁹ Canadian antisemitism overall increased in the 1930s, but in Halifax there was disproportionate support for Jews.

³⁸ Lita-Rose Betcherman, *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf: Fascist Movements in Canada in the Thirties* (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1975), 141.

³⁹ Editorial, *Halifax Herald*, November 15, 1938; "Halifax Mass Meeting Calls for Cessation of Cruelties in Germany," *Halifax Herald*, November 21, 1938; "Theatres Filled by Citizens," *Halifax Herald*, November 21, 1938; For a secondary source see: Jonathan Durance and Kyle Jantzen, "Our Jewish Brethren: Christian Responses to Kristallnacht in Canadian Mass Media," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 46:4 (Fall 2011): 540-541, 543. Durance and Jantzen provide articles from a Toronto and national context, see: "Jews Sob in Sorrow, 20,000 Torontonians Protest Persecution," *Toronto Daily Star*, 21 November 1938; *The Globe and Mail*, November 21, 1938.

Educational institutions in Halifax are another example of more favourable attitudes towards Jews when compared to other parts of Canada. For instance, Dalhousie University accepted more Jews in the field of medicine than other Canadian educational institutions, most of which instituted a Jewish quota.⁴⁰ McGill Medical School's quota started in the 1920s and limited Jewish enrollments to 10 percent of all students.⁴¹ In 1932, the University of Manitoba Medical School also implemented a quota, decreasing the number of Jewish medical students to an average of about seven students per year, or 13 percent of the medical student body.⁴² In 1939, Dalhousie University was an exception as 14 of 36 medical school graduates were Jewish. Moreover, in 1930, 1935, and 1939 nearly 80 percent of all American students at Dalhousie were Jewish. The presence of American Jewish students was significant because of quotas on the number of Jewish students among American universities. In fact, in 1935, nearly 20 percent of all students at Dalhousie were Jewish, although historian Paul Axelrod admits this was unusually high. Nonetheless, Dalhousie appears to have been a welcoming educational institution for Jewish students.⁴³

Antisemitism in Canada increased again in the 1960s, most infamously in Toronto with the Allan Garden riots of May 1965. In Montréal, antisemitic publications again increased in popularity after having been dormant for nearly

⁴⁰ Ira Robinson, *A History of Antisemitism in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2015), 73.

⁴¹ Valérie Beauchemin, translated by Helge Dascher, "McGill University Quota," Museum of Jewish Montréal, <http://imjm.ca/location/1565> (July 2017).

⁴² Bernie Bellan, "A History of the Quota System at the University of Manitoba Medical School," *The Jewish Post & News*, <http://www.jewishpostandnews.ca/features/2213-a-history-of-the-quota-system-at-the-university-of-manitoba-medical-school> (July 2017).

⁴³ Paul Axelrod, *Making a Middle Class: Student Life in English Canada During the Thirties* (Montréal, McGill-Queens University Press, 1990), 32.

two decades. Antisemitism in Halifax, however, appears to have been of the private, “genteel” variety, as when Marianne Ferguson applied for a job and was rejected because she was Jewish. Ferguson recalls that her application and interview were successful until she was asked to reveal her religion. She wrote that she was Jewish and afterwards never heard back from the prospective employer. This was the only instance of antisemitism Ferguson recalls in postwar Halifax.⁴⁴

The Halifax Jewish community had good public relations with the non-Jewish community in 1945, which likely made integration easier for the few Holocaust survivors who settled in Halifax. A questionnaire sent to the CJC by its Maritime Section on 30 October 1945 claims that the Jewish Servicemen’s Centre on Quinpool Road was the main reason for the positive relations between the Jewish and non-Jewish communities in Halifax. The Centre operated as a hostel for soldiers where they could enjoy free meals and partake in evening dance parties. It was staffed with more than 100 volunteers and welcomed all servicemen regardless of religion or race.⁴⁵

Holocaust survivors likely found it easier to integrate in Halifax because of positive relations between the Jewish and non-Jewish communities in the postwar years.⁴⁶ The positive relations were evident in the help provided for the new Jewish conservative congregation. In a speech on 5 October 1954 to an

⁴⁴ Marianne Ferguson, interview by Cassidy Bankson, April 15, 2009.

⁴⁵ Maritime Section Canadian Jewish Congress Questionnaire, 30 October 1945, MG 20, Volume 1604, Box Number 37, The Jewish Historical Society Fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

⁴⁶ It is important to note that not all minorities in Halifax were treated the same. Black Haligonians seemed to be treated worse than Jews, most notably in the destruction of Africville in the 1960s. Raddall, *Halifax*, 327-328.

audience that included Lieutenant Governor Alistair Fraser, Premier of Nova Scotia Angus L. Macdonald, and Halifax Mayor Richard Alphonsus Donahoe, Noa Heinisch praised the city of Halifax for the help it provided to the new conservative congregation. The conservative congregation formed in 1953 but did not have a synagogue until 1957. In the meantime, the newly formed congregation relied on Reverend Charles Anderson who granted them permission to conduct services at the St. Andrews United Church Hall on Coburg Road. At the time of the speech, the conservative congregation was also given permission to celebrate the high holiday services in the auditorium of the Arts Building of Dalhousie University. Moreover, Dr. R. E. Marshall and the school board allowed for the conservative congregation to temporarily use classrooms at one of the public schools.⁴⁷ The conservative congregation relied on the help of the non-Jewish Halifax community until the Shaar Shalom synagogue was completed in October 1957 and located at the corner of Oxford and Pepperell Streets.

Non-Jewish communities in Halifax had a history of positive relations with the Jewish community as evidenced by funds given for the construction of the city's first synagogue. In 1891, the Baron de Hirsch orthodox congregation formed in Halifax and wanted to build a synagogue to provide a Jewish education for its young members. The Baron de Hirsch community in Montréal refused aid. Non-Jewish communities in Halifax provided the necessary funds to help the orthodox Jewish congregation build a synagogue. In 1898, the Starr Street

⁴⁷ Noa Heinisch speech, 5 October 1954, MG 20, Volume 561, Box Number 42, The Jewish Historical Society Fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

synagogue was completed and remained until its destruction in the Halifax explosion in 1917, after which it was rebuilt on Robie street.⁴⁸

Yet, social adjustment was undoubtedly difficult for Jewish Holocaust survivors. Holocaust survivor Jacob Gutman, who immigrated to Canada through Pier 21, struggled to cope with the psychological trauma he experienced. Gutman was a survivor of the Radom Ghetto and Auschwitz concentration camp where he witnessed horrific events. In Canada, Gutman worked as a cabinet maker fitting drawers into cabinets. The menial work of his job allowed his mind to wander as he recalls that “mentally, however, I re-lived all the past events, incidents, happenings in the ghetto and in the camps, day after day. At night I had nightmares which was a continuation of the mind's activity during the day.”⁴⁹ Gutman mitigated the mental trauma by finding a new occupation that would require his full attention so as not to allow his mind to wander. Experiences like Gutman’s were common amongst many of the survivors.⁵⁰

Child survivors also struggled, behaving with delicate caution as they showed unwavering obedience to parents or guardians while seeking to acclimatize to their new environments. An unwritten rule was never to speak about the Holocaust and their wartime experiences, even to fellow survivors. Historian Adara Goldberg writes that “out of fear of negative response, discomfort with traumatic encounters, and the inability to confront one’s past,”⁵¹

⁴⁸ Jan Goeb, *The Maritime Jewish Community*, MG 20, Volume 565, Number, 37, The Jewish Historical Society Fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

⁴⁹ Jacob, Gutman, “A Survivor’s Memoir,” Concordia University Chair in Canadian Jewish Studies. <http://migs.concordia.ca/memoirs/jgutman/jgutman.html> (June 20, 2017), Canada.

⁵⁰ Draper, “Canadian Holocaust Survivors,” 59.

⁵¹ Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 106.

children suffered in silence. Child survivors entered schools and social encounters without the same social and emotional maturity of their Canadian-born peers. On one hand, the child survivors were more mature because they had seen more of the world and had a firm sense of how hard life could be. On the other hand, child survivors had not matured in social contexts because they missed out on basics of childhood such as carefree play or roughhousing. Life under Nazi-occupied Europe meant fighting or roughhousing could lead to death, a sneeze could expose them, and playing with non-Jews was certainly forbidden.⁵² For many child survivors it was hard to learn to adapt and socialize with their Canadian-born peers.

Nova Scotian Jewish communities in Sydney and Glace Bay prioritized social interaction for the fifteen Jewish orphans who settled there. Each Jewish orphan was contacted by a local girl and boy, typically around the same age, who arranged to spend an hour or two a week to help them with their English proficiency. This served two purposes: first, it supplemented their formal education and second, it provided social contacts. Jewish community leaders expressed confidence that these programs would acculturate the newcomers to their eastern foster homes. However, most orphans placed in the Maritimes soon migrated further west, typically to Montréal or Toronto. The Jewish orphans felt stifled by the limited opportunities for growth in the small isolated communities. Adara Goldberg attributes their unwillingness to remain permanently to the small size of the Nova Scotian Jewish communities.⁵³

⁵² Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 104-107.

⁵³ Goldberg, *Holocaust Survivors in Canada*, 85-86.

Canadian Jewish communities began to change with the influx of Jewish survivors as smaller communities erected new schools and synagogues.⁵⁴ When the war ended, Halifax had one Jewish congregation, Baron de Hirsch, and one synagogue, Beth Israel, located on Robie Street. However, in the 1950s the community changed: a new conservative congregation formed, a new synagogue was built, and the orthodox Beth Israel synagogue relocated from Robie Street to the corner of Oxford Street and Coburg Road.

It is likely that since so few Holocaust survivors settled in Halifax that the Halifax Jewish community faced less resistance in the formation of a second, more secular, congregation in 1953. Led by Noa Heinisch, Bob Kanisberg, and Nathan Green, the newly formed conservative congregation changed prayer services to include more English and allow for men and women to be seated together. Conservative Judaism believes that religious law comes from a divine source, but that it should be subject to human interpretation and adaptation to cultural circumstances. Members of Orthodox Jewish on the other hand, believe that adherence to religious laws is rigid.⁵⁵ In 1953, the Halifax Jewish community split between those who subscribed to the conservative ideology and those who were orthodox.

It is likely that the new conservative Jewish congregation was the result of a high number of Canadian-born Jews in the Halifax community. In 1931, more than half of the Jews in Halifax and Nova Scotia were Canadian-born.⁵⁶ In

⁵⁴ Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, 74-75.

⁵⁵ "Jewish Religion: Reform, Conservative and Orthodox," *Haaretz* Daily Newspaper. http://www.haaretz.com/jewish/.premium-1.533097?=&ts=_1501207075713 (June 2017).

⁵⁶ Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews*, 75.

postwar Halifax, this trend continued and was not impeded by the arrival of orthodox newcomers because few Jews settled in the city after the war. As a result, the number of Canadian-born members of the Halifax Jewish community increased over the years and culminated in a congregation that represented a more “Canadianized” adherence to religious laws.

The Robie Street synagogue remained until 1957 when it relocated to the corner of Oxford Street and Coburg Road in October, the same month the conservative congregation completed its synagogue. Representing the Orthodox congregation, the Beth Israel synagogue was equipped with an education wing, youth lounge, library, and a social hall with a stage and gym. Women in the Halifax Jewish community volunteered as teachers for the primary and grade school classrooms. The new classrooms allowed for the former Servicemen’s Centre to be sold as it had functioned as the Talmud Torah school until new space was available at the Beth Israel synagogue.⁵⁷

The two synagogues in Halifax operated as religious, educational, and recreational centres for Jewish life in Halifax. Building chairman of the Shaar Shalom synagogue Max Pascal said in a speech on 5 October 1954 that Premier Macdonald would be “pleased to know that this combined Centre will contain not only a Religious Sanctuary but also Educational and Recreational Facilities for the Jewish Youth of our City...”⁵⁸ This was especially important for the significant number of children and teenagers within the Halifax Jewish

⁵⁷ Brotman and Torczyner, *The Changing Portrait of Jewish Life in Halifax*, 11-12.

⁵⁸ Remarks made by the Building Chairman Max Pascal at the Turning of the SOD Ceremony, 5 October 1954, MG 20, Volume 561, Box Number 38, The Jewish Historical Society Fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

community. According to Louis Rosenberg, in 1961 there were 207 members of the Halifax Jewish community who were between 5 and 12 years-old. In addition, there were 133 teenagers in the Halifax Jewish community.⁵⁹ This meant that there was a need for religious educational institutions because approximately 30 percent of the Halifax Jewish community was under the age of 18, which the synagogues provided.

Community lists from 1956 and 1965 show that members of the Halifax Jewish community wanted to live near the synagogues and could afford more housing options by the 1960s. In 1956, there were a significant number of homes near Oxford street, where both synagogues were located. There also were homes located in Spryfield, Dartmouth, and around Beechville. Jewish homes tended to be relatively scattered.⁶⁰ In 1965, Jewish homes formed in clusters, most particularly in Halifax's South End. While the majority of Jews lived near the synagogues on Oxford Street, almost no Jews lived downtown, in Dartmouth, Spryfield, or the Beechville area; few lived in the North End except for a group of homes in the Clayton Park area. Most Jewish homes were clustered in the vicinities of MacDonald Street, Chebucto Road, Robie Street, and Coburg Road. Another cluster of Jewish homes was located between Robie Street and Beaufort Avenue. Jews also lived between South Street and Point Pleasant Park, with a cluster just outside of the park between Francklyn Street and the water.⁶¹ The

⁵⁹ Research Papers from the Bureau of Social and Economic Research at the Canadian Jewish Congress, 1 August 1966, MG 20, Volume 561, Box Number 17, The Jewish Historical Society Fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

⁶⁰ Halifax Jewish Community List, 1956, MG 20, Volume 564, Box Number 6, The Jewish Historical Society Fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

⁶¹ Halifax Jewish Community List, 1965, MG 20, Volume 561, Box Number 60, The Jewish Historical Society Fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

clustering of Jewish homes, and high number of individuals who had moved since 1956, suggest that there were more affordable housing opportunities in Halifax.⁶² It also shows the importance of synagogues in Halifax as the number of homes near the two religious institutions grew. However, these community lists do not provide insight as to whether the location Jewish homes in Halifax were influenced by Jewish Holocaust survivors.

Few Jewish Holocaust survivors settled in Halifax immediately after the war. For those who did, experiences with financial insecurities, struggles with English, and hardships with social adjustment were exacerbated by the extraordinary trauma amongst Jewish Holocaust survivors. There was less antisemitism in Halifax than in other Canadian cities, ostensibly because of the small size of its Jewish community, which – perhaps paradoxically -- also made it a less than ideal place for Jewish settlement. Nonetheless, the Halifax Jewish community underwent changes in the 1950s when a new conservative congregation was founded and new synagogues were erected.

⁶² Halifax Jewish Community List, 1965, MG 20, Volume 561, Box Number 60, The Jewish Historical Society Fonds, Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Survivors first arrived at Pier 21 from the DP camps in Europe, where they had applied to immigrate to Canada. There were three ways Jewish DPs could gain admission to Canada: labour sponsorships; close relative sponsorships; and the Jewish War Orphans project. Each scheme required that Jews be sponsored by Canadians. Jewish DPs who immigrated to Canada as labourers were sponsored by various Canadian employers, most predominantly the garment industry. Many survivors who immigrated to Canada as labourers sponsored other survivors through close relative schemes. Canadian-born Jews also sponsored close relatives, but many families were too far removed from relatives in Europe and therefore did not qualify. Lastly, arrivals through the Jewish War Orphans project were sponsored by the CJC, who paid for their transportation and immediate settlement.

Sponsorships were not the only requirement for Jewish DPs to immigrate to Canada; medical inspections and security screenings were required. Medical inspections consisted of x-rays, blood tests, and Wasserman tests and were conducted by the Canadian Inspection Medical Service. RCMP officers conducted security screenings that analyzed the authenticity of documents such as birth certificates and screened for potentially threatening political affinities and participation in various organizations. Jewish DPs worried that discriminatory officials would deny their admission to Canada based on antisemitic prejudices and attitudes. Some Jewish DPs ensured their admission to Canada through illegal means such as forgery and bribery.

If approved, prospective Jewish newcomers endured an approximate two-week journey to Canada. Thousands of Jewish survivors immigrated to Canada through Pier 21 and were met by local Jewish Haligonians. JIAS workers in Halifax played an important role in the reception of Jewish Holocaust arrivals at Pier 21, helping survivors who experienced fear, panic, confusion, and paranoia when they saw barred windows, wires, and iron cages for luggage. JIAS workers at Pier 21 were crucially important as they welcomed Jewish arrivals in their mother tongue, provided food, and helped with the final stages of the immigration process.

Halifax was important as the first point of entry for Holocaust survivors, but not as a place of settlement. In the decade after the Second World War, only 61 Jewish immigrants settled in Halifax because of few labour and close relative sponsorship opportunities. Moreover, limited foster home availability in Halifax meant that only six survivors settled in the city through the Jewish War Orphans project. The minimal number of Jewish immigrants who settled in Halifax meant the city was not a place of significant integration for Jewish Holocaust survivors in Canada.

Like most immigrants, those survivors who did settle in Halifax struggled with financial insecurities, language training, and social adjustment. In the immediate postwar years, Halifax had a shortage of affordable housing and the removal of federal price controls raised the cost of foods. For Jewish newcomers, the high cost of living and limited employment opportunities led to their migration to Montréal or Toronto in most cases. Language training was likely

easiest for children in school environments, but employed adults had to learn on the job, and stay-at-home parents were more likely to struggle. Lastly, social adjustment was problematic for at least one Jewish survivor in Halifax who resented what he considered the poor treatment he received from the Halifax Jewish community.

Social adjustment in Halifax was likely easier than in Montréal or Toronto because of the history of positive relations between the Jewish and non-Jewish communities. Halifax had minimal instances of antisemitism compared to Montréal, Toronto, and Winnipeg, all of which experienced significant antisemitism in the 1930s. Local Christian leaders and editors of the *Halifax Herald* expressed remarkable support for Jews in Europe in the 1930s. In the 1930s Dalhousie University was home to a significant number of Jewish students and did not institute a Jewish quota in its professional schools.

In the postwar years, the Halifax non-Jewish community offered support when the Jewish community split and a new conservative congregation was founded in 1953. During the construction of a conservative synagogue, reverend Charles Anderson supplied space for Jewish services at the Saint Andrews United Church, Dalhousie University provided the Arts Building for high holiday services, and Dr. R. E. Marshall and the school board offered temporary use of classrooms at one of the public schools. This shows strong support for Jews amongst the Halifax non-Jewish community.

In the 1950s, the Halifax Jewish community changed as a new congregation formed. The new conservative congregation represented a new

modernized interpretation of Judaism whereby services included more English and the audience was no longer split based on gender. The Halifax Jewish community had a high number of Canadian-born Jews, which meant that it is understandable that a more secular interpretation of Judaism emerged. In Montréal the high volume of Jewish survivors led to new groups who adhered to orthodox denominations of Hasidism and Lebovitch congregations. Had more survivors settled in Halifax, it is likely that the conservative movement would have faced more resistance.

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