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"IN THE SPIRIT OF JUDAISM":

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF JEWISH WOMEN OF CANADA

IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

1897-1990

by

NATASHA T. LECOURS, B.A.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

For over a hundred years, the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada (NCJWC) has been engaged in philanthropic works which have assisted both the Jewish and general communities of Canada. Founded in Toronto in 1897, the NCJWC is a volunteer organization which has provided women with a Judaic milieu through which to express themselves as Canadians, one not offered by other dominant women's organizations. Although based on the ideas of the NCJW of the United States, the NCJWC quickly became a distinctly Canadian institution whose focus was facilitating Jewish life in Canada. In fact, the NCJWC stands alone in the world of Jewish women's organizations in its concentration on Canadian concerns. The Council has enabled Jewish women to contribute to society in patriotic ways while preserving their Jewish identity, and has thus fostered the development of Judaism in Canada. This project will establish that the NCJWC is a feminist organization committed to the advancement of Jewish women in all spheres of activity. It will examine the NCJWC from its establishment to the Second World War, followed by a case study of the Council's Ottawa Section from 1944, the year of its founding, until its closing in 1995.

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INTRODUCTION

For over a hundred years, the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada (NCJWC) has been engaged in philanthropic works which have assisted both the Jewish and general communities of Canada. Founded in Toronto in 1897, the NCJWC is a volunteer organization which has attracted a great deal of attention and praise for its charitable endeavours from many sectors of society, be they private individuals, community leaders or government agencies. Based on the precepts of the National Council of Jewish Women of the United States (NCJW) which was founded in Chicago four years earlier in 1893, the Council in Canada was initially identified by its dedication to Jewish immigrant aid in the early twentieth century. However, the NCJWC's mandate has not remained stagnant throughout its century of existence. Rather, the Council has blossomed, establishing programs in geriatrics, early childhood education, psychology and mental health, including the provision of funds for numerous educational scholarships; just a few of the NCJWC's numerous charitable efforts.

Yet it should not be surmised that the entire history of the NCJWC is definable solely as a century of selfless devotion to "good works" on the part of its members. While philanthropy has always been at the heart of the Council, no less so have the issues of women's education, self-awareness, and leadership. Following the tenets of "philanthropy and education" envisioned by Hannah Solomon, founder of the American NCJW, the Council in Canada has always striven to foster an awareness and understanding of the

issues of public affairs, social justice and citizenship responsibilities amongst its membership, and most importantly, done so within a Canadian context.

Nor can it be assumed that the NCJWC is simply the Jewish version of the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC), as one author has implied.[1] The NCJWC has never served as an umbrella organization for other Jewish women's groups. Neither did the Council attempt to amass the profusion of Jewish women's organizations in existence at the turn of the century to foster a common directive. To suggest as much clearly demonstrates the lack of scholarly attention paid to the nature of the NCJWC and its unique program. Indeed, several of the NCJWC's twelve sections have on certain occasions affiliated themselves with the National Council of Women of Canada to assist other women's groups in raising the public's awareness of women's issues.[2] In fact, throughout its history, the NCJWC was known to participate in conjunction with other organizations, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, in drawing attention to causes important to Canadians. First and foremost however, the NCJWC has, and continues to be, a Canadian institution run exclusively by Jewish women which has focused its efforts not only on the Jewish communities of Canada, but for the benefit of all Canadians. The NCJWC's program has been described by its own membership as attracting the "thinking woman": a woman who is, in accordance with the precepts of Judaism, firmly committed to an enrichment of Jewish life in Canada, eager not only to volunteer her time for acts of

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[1]Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community*, (Toronto: Lester Publishing Limited, 1992), 147.

[2]See N.E.S Griffiths, *The Splendid Vision: Centennial History of the National Council of Women of Canada 1893-1993*. (Ottawa: Carleton, University, 1993).

benevolence, but who is also keen to acquire an understanding of the complexities of the world around her.

This research project has two principal objectives. First, it will demonstrate the paucity of secondary literature surrounding the NCJWC, and illustrate how an understanding of the Council will enhance the history of women's organizations in Canada. This will be accomplished in part by examining the Council contextually as part of both the larger Canadian and international women's reform movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and as a continuum to the "second-wave" feminist movement of the late twentieth century.[3] Moreover, it will establish that the NCJWC was, and continues to be, a truly feminist and politically conscious organization, committed to the advancement of Jewish women in all spheres of activity, acting as a bridge between the "private" and the "public" realms of their lives. One aspect crucial to comprehending the actions of the NCJWC is that this Council provided women with a Judaic milieu through which to express themselves as Canadians, one not offered by other dominant women's organizations. Further, emphasis will be placed on illustrating that the Council's program did not remain stagnant throughout the twentieth century, but rather changed to reflect the contemporary political and popular movements occurring in Canadian society.

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[3]Although this analysis of the NCJWC extends beyond the early twentieth century, there is a paucity of secondary literature on women's organizations post-1945. While many of the groups established during the early reform period are still in existence today, accounts tend to focus on their earlier, pre-suffrage to pre-WWII history, rather than investigating their links to the modern feminist movement.

Second, the NCJWC will be placed in the broader framework of the history of Canadian Jewry to highlight its importance within the Jewish community structure. This thesis will show that while based on the "American" ideas of the NCJW, the Council, once in Canada, acquired a distinctly Canadian approach to its program, establishing itself as a vital Canadian social service institution whose focal points were the Jewish and general communities of Canada. It is precisely this Canadian focus that makes it unique among Jewish women's organizations. As many other Jewish women's groups are principally Zionist, their activities being highly centred on those issues pertaining to Jewish settlement in Israel, the NCJWC stands alone in its concentration on Canadian concerns.[4] Furthermore, it will be demonstrated that the NCJWC has always acted, either alone or in conjunction with other organizations, to promote social legislation that has sought to improve living standards and human rights in Canada. In particular, special attention will be given to the Council's Social Action and Public Affairs programs which advocated an acknowledgement of the responsibilities of Canadian citizenship and the importance of preserving democratic values amongst its membership.

This project will also investigate the nature of Jewish women's volunteerism and participation in organizations like the NCJWC. More specifically, the discussion will focus on what compelled Jewish women to engage in philanthropic endeavours on a scale unparalleled by women in other minority cultural groups in Canada. In addition, the

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[4]While this project centres exclusively on the activities of the NCJWC, the differences between this organization and other Canadian Jewish women's groups will be noted. It must be emphasized, however, that in the absence of a definitive work comparing the activities of Canadian Jewish women's groups, the comparisons between the NCJWC and these organizations drawn here will be based on the secondary literature that is currently available and not from primary archival research.

contemporary issues of women's unpaid labour, the changing status of the female "professional" volunteer and the implications for the future of volunteer organizations will be considered.

While this study attempts to examine several aspects of the Council's existence in Canada, it is not intended to be a definitive, all-encompassing history of the NCJWC. The magnitude of that task is outside the scope of this research. Rather, this project will provide a general history of the Council from its establishment to the Second World War, at which time a case study will be presented of the Council's Ottawa Section from 1944, the year of its founding, until its closing in 1995.

The decision to include a case study of the Ottawa Section was based on a diversity of factors. A closer look at the development of the NCJWC in a Jewish community other than those found in Montreal and Toronto provides an alternative view to the histories of Canadian Jewry which tend to focus more closely on the activities of larger centres, rather than smaller Jewish communities. Also, examining the endeavours of an individual Council section is an effective means through which to assess the actions and results of the NCJWC at the local level. It enables an evaluation of the practicality of Council's program; specifically, an analysis of the success of the NCJWC's mandate by moving beyond the directives and rhetoric of its administrative centre.

To accomplish this research, primary source documents were procured from the holdings of two archives. The NCJWC collection held at the Canadian Jewish Congress Archives in Montreal provided the data necessary to compile the general history of the Council. General correspondence, biennial reports, executive meeting minutes and various

NCJWC publications were used for this purpose. The Ottawa Section case study is based on information acquired from the Ottawa Jewish Historical Society's holdings on the NCJWC. This collection contains correspondence files, year books, newsletters, bulletins, publicity files, and minutes of meetings, all necessary to build the history of Ottawa Section. The office of the Toronto Section also furnished documentation in the form of NCJWC anniversary publications, highlighting the Council's years in Canada from 1897 to 1967.

While the information provided within the minutes, yearbooks, bulletins and organizational publications was the most useful in tracing the chronological history of the Council, there was some variation in the calibre of information provided from year to year which made tracing certain important dates and events a somewhat difficult task. Although these sources provided the most complete and concise view of the Council's activities, the most serious drawback were the significant gaps which exist in the collections. Referring to the Ottawa Section in particular, as there was no specific "Council House" in Ottawa, files were passed on throughout the years from member to member, often being stored in basements and attics, where they remain to this day, the member likely unaware that she holds valuable historical documents in her possession. Moreover, while detailed minutes exist for the section's earliest years, there are many names and events for which no historical explanations are presently available from other sources. Furthermore, the content and quality of the minutes was largely dependent upon the skill and competency of the recording secretary. Although these documents contain more minutiae than the yearbooks about the implementation of community projects and other Council activities,

there is little recorded evidence of serious discussion or conflictual debates within section meetings, leaving an almost superficial account of NCJWC's activities.

In terms of establishing the chronology of major Ottawa Section and Council programs, reference material furnished by yearbooks and bulletins was the most easily extractable, although once again, there was no mention of the actual decision making process or the reasons why certain activities were more successful than others in the Ottawa area. Furthermore, there were tremendous gaps between the years for which yearbooks were available, likely resulting from both misplaced documents and the section's budgetary constraints. Thus, as a result of the lack of substantive information about the Council's motivations for developing certain projects and the fact that personal data about the members themselves was not always evident in the archival documentation, the decision was made to add "lived experience" to the project through personal interviews conducted with former Ottawa Section members. The women were selected based on the extent of their participation in the Council, namely, the length of their membership, the era in which they belonged, and their accomplishments while active with the NCJWC, ie. having attained an executive position in the Ottawa Section. While several women were considered as potential candidates, there was a certain level of difficulty in actually procuring the interviews. Several women declined to be interviewed for this study, most often citing an inability to recollect their years in Council enough to sufficiently respond to questions, along with certain scheduling difficulties. Furthermore, many prominent Council women from the early years were either deceased or had left the Ottawa area. Nevertheless, the interviews that were granted do provide an invaluable

glimpse at the experiences of women within the Ottawa Section. As these oral accounts serve to supplement the factual content of written documents, they provide invaluable commentary and opinions not otherwise present in the more conventional sources and will be used in later chapters.

Theoretical Approaches

There are several theoretical issues which have been considered in previous studies examining women's organizational history in Canada and will be employed here to provide the framework for this analysis of the NCJWC. Two concepts which regularly appear in relation to women's history are 1) the "public sphere" versus "private sphere" dichotomy, and 2) the social construction of gender identities. Both ideas are based on the notion that industrial society is composed of two distinct realms, each reflecting trends in social attitudes and structures. All matters considered "domestic", such as the family, morality and religion, are found in the private sphere, in contrast with the public sphere, which includes the world of politics, business and industry. An even further division is created when each sphere is "gendered" and assigned particular traits reflective of prevailing societal beliefs of the inherent and necessary differences between the sexes. The private sphere is traditionally associated with "femaleness", a sheltered, nurturing environment, free from the corrupting influences of the public sphere, or that which is "male".

A third variable directly linked to those of "separate spheres" and gender is social status, or class. At the turn of the twentieth century, a woman's socio-economic status dictated not only the type of organization she joined, but also the degree of her

involvement within that group. While complex and controversial, class is an important theoretical tool for analyzing women's volunteer organizations. It serves in assessing both the orientation and appeal of certain groups, as well as in formulating a profile of the membership. In certain accounts, the average clubwoman is typified as belonging to society's "leisured" classes, Protestant in denomination, with an overarching preoccupation with the morality of those less economically blessed than herself. Yet, how did class structure the program of women's organizations? Further, was it leisure or, in simple terms, an abundance of spare time itself that created the organizational and reformist fervour amongst late nineteenth century women or did it merely facilitate the realization of their goals?

From these three interpretive concepts emerge questions pertinent to this investigation of the NCJWC that will be used first to contextualize its origins in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and second to discuss the Council's development throughout the twentieth century. In particular, what was deemed appropriate and desirable behaviour for a woman in Canada in different eras and what strictures did society place on a woman's ability to exert control over her surroundings? To what extent did women themselves embrace these beliefs and how did this translate into a desire to organize in order to affect change in society? Even more specifically, was women's participation in collective action toward a common goal considered to be a logical, proper activity or was organizing considered to be an aberration or dangerous to the status quo?

There are, however, certain limitations to the usage of these variables which will shape and define the manner and extent to which they are presented in this thesis. In fact, while gender and class analyses are virtually intrinsic to women's studies, many historians warn of the "misuse" or "misrepresentation" of these concepts in certain circumstances. For instance, in her centennial history of the National Council of Women of Canada, N.E.S. Griffiths presents an outstanding introductory chapter entitled "Unacknowledged Strength", in which she outlines the broad themes essential to an assessment of women's volunteer organizations. Griffiths analyzes the class and gender issues behind the formation of the National Council by challenging the myths and misconceptions associated with the middle-class stature of most early NCWC members. While taking aim at the negative stereotypes that have often come to accompany descriptions of clubwomen in many academic works, Griffiths is adamant that the life of an upper class woman in pre-suffrage Canada was as limited in scope as that of her less-economically advantaged sisters. Women's lives were confined not only by the standards of "propriety" dictated by the rigid class structure, but a woman's success was seen as merely an "unimportant reflection" of her husband's social standing.[5] For Griffiths, the fact that women of the wealthier classes at the turn of the century have been cast in an unflattering light by scholars comes in large part from the refusal to permit these women "...the usual variation of individual human personalities and range of circumstances common to other categories

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[5]N.E.S. Griffiths, *The Splendid Vision: Centennial History of the National Council of Women of Canada 1893-1993*, (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1993), 4.

of people."[6] Furthermore, Griffiths states that the accomplishments these women attained through their work in volunteer organizations have been dismissed or unacknowledged by both contemporary historians and other academics alike as being unimportant or insignificant, resulting in part from the fact that neither were these women financially remunerated, nor were these gains acquired through positions of political power.[7] Thus according to Griffiths, women's unpaid labour has, and continues to be ignored by certain academics as inconsequential.

Likewise, Gail Cuthbert Brandt, in her article, "Postmodern Patchwork", also takes issue with the liberal use of particular investigative methods, namely the tendency to frame women's experiences in terms of spheres or, as stated in her article, the "public-private dualism". Cuthbert Brandt not only cites the limitations of such an approach in explaining women's activities, but she also takes exception with the "overuse" of this dichotomy in scholarly works. A heavy reliance on the private and the public spheres as modes of analysis creates the impression that the average woman's life was shaped by these boundaries and that this is a suitable model upon which to base all studies of women. This, however, would be an inaccurate assumption. According to Cuthbert Brandt, historians are now discovering the highly problematic nature of this interpretation for assessing the lives of "non-élite women", and have thus "...exposed the artificiality of the public-private split...".[8] In other words, a rigid adherence to defining women's lives in

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[6]*ibid.*

[7]*ibid.*

[8]Gail Cuthbert Brandt, "Postmodern Patchwork: Some Recent Trends in the Writing of Women's History in Canada" *Canadian Historical Review* 72/4 (December 1991), 445-6.

terms of spheres is insufficient for describing the lives of those women whose activities were not necessarily confined by these boundaries. Cuthbert Brandt points to new Canadian research on women's organizations which either deconstructs, or at the very least modifies the "separate spheres" model by illustrating its ineffectiveness both in describing the extent of the "public" work which these organizations performed, as well as the opportunities they provided women for social activities outside the home.[9]

Similarly, Eliane Leslau Silverman takes an historiographical "look back" at the nature of historical writings of women in Canada, describing the evolution of certain themes and topics of study since the beginning of women's history as a "serious" subject in 1970. Silverman explores the usage of several variables which are relevant to constructing the history of women's organizations, such as the formation of gender, the existence of a woman's culture separate from the male realm, and women's unpaid labour along with the development of volunteer work. In addition, Silverman looks extensively at the way in which historians of the early women's movement have portrayed the members of women's reform groups by focusing specifically on their treatment of class issues. Silverman questions the use of the term "middle class" to define the composition of these groups, as well as the usage of this label in explaining the attitudes of the movement as a whole. For Silverman, difficulties arise in the presumption of a monolithic middle class, a problem which seems to have resulted from a literal interpretation of the rhetoric of certain groups which often employed such terms as "morality" and "purification". In doing

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[9] *ibid, 452-3.* For a list of sources to which Gail Cuthbert Brandt refers, see footnote number 31 in "Postmodern Patchwork".

so, the author states, an inaccurate assumption is made about the uniformity of the overall movement and rules out the possibilities of an objective examination of individual philosophical differences and background variations between group members.[10]

Moreover, the description of many of the members of women's reform groups as "middle class" is in itself problematic, owing largely to the fact that most historians do not offer a precise definition of who actually composes the middle class. For example, certain academics have defined any woman who does not work in the paid labour force as a member of the leisured classes, a flawed interpretation at the very least. Furthermore, Silverman wonders as to where on the socio-economic scale these scholars would place women who worked prior to marriage and then left the labour force afterward. Given these inherent problems with the concept of a middle class, Silverman urges that suitable interpretations will only be found through an investigation of this concept along with analyses of gender, geographic location within Canada, and urban/rural differences.[11]

In sum, one of the dangers inherent in evaluating women's experiences along class and gender lines is the tendency to rely on generalizations which can not necessarily be universally applied and deny the existence of individual differences. This research will demonstrate the validity of Cuthbert Brandt's critique of the seemingly unrestricted use of the public-private dualism to define women's experience through investigating the lives of Jewish women and how their role within the Jewish community has been historically

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[10]Eliane Leslau Silverman, "Writing Women's History, 1970-1982: An Historiographical Analysis", *Canadian Historical Review* 63/4 (December 1982), 524-5. Silverman refers here primarily to the work of Carol Lee Bacchi in *Liberation Deferred?*.

[11]*ibid, 525.*

mutable. Further, while this thesis will use economic class as one means through which to describe the Council's membership, this characterization is merely intended to provide a social context for their actions. Given the problems associated with class structures as mentioned by Silverman, namely their permeability and lack of clearly definable limits, social status will not form the major focal point of this study.

One solution to overcoming the difficulties inherent in traditional applications of class and gender is to evaluate which concepts will lead to a more profound insight into the complexities of women's lives. When looking at the NCJWC, for instance, it is insufficient to look simply at gender and class constructs without exploring the extent to which ethnicity and religion affected Jewish women's experiences. As this thesis examines the activities of a Jewish women's organization, particular attention will be given to assessing ethnicity in a Canadian context as a mode of analysis, a component essential to an appreciation of the intricacies of Jewish women's lives. In fact, the inclusion of ethnicity and race as variables can often significantly limit assumptions about gender constructs derived from studies in which the impact of these factors was not evaluated. The cultural traditions of its members are integral to analyzing women's organizations as they necessitate a further consideration of what motivated individual groups of women to enter the realm of volunteer activity.

Just as ethnic group identification could influence a woman's attitude toward entering organizational activity, religious beliefs acted as a powerful determinant in both the nature and the extent of her participation in associations outside the home. Until recently, studies which have regarded religion as a reason for motivating women to

organize have tended to focus primarily on women from the major Christian denominations of evangelical Protestantism, Anglicanism, and, to a lesser extent, Roman Catholicism. Non-Christian women's groups, on the other hand, have received little scholarly attention in Canada. Yet religious principles are as great an inducement to charitable endeavours for those outside of Christianity, most notably Jewish women, as they are for Christians. Traditionally, Canada's non-dominant religions have not been the focus of studies either in the historiography of Canadian women's organizations, or in the broader spectrum of Canadian women's history itself. Despite the omission elsewhere, this thesis will evaluate Judaism and its impact upon the decision to found the NCJWC.

Together, the variables of ethnicity and religion provoke similar thematic questions central to this study of the NCJWC. As Jews in Canada are considered part of both an ethnic and a religious group, these concepts will be considered jointly. The status of women within both individual ethnic groups and religions are pivotal to comprehending a woman's self-perception and what contribution she feels compelled to make in society. For instance, what is deemed acceptable female conduct in the Jewish community and how do group attitudes toward women regulate their behaviour? Furthermore, it is necessary to consider how dominant Canadian cultures and religions influence Jewish women's activities. More generally, are there certain restrictions placed on minority women in the form of racial prejudice or religious intolerance which may hinder these women's abilities to join mainstream women's organizations? Is there a possibility of reprisals for female participation in certain "public" activities from either the dominant culture or a woman's own ethnic or religious group? An examination of these points in reference to Jewish

women will assist in evaluating and contextualizing the experiences of women from ethnic and religious minorities in the "first-wave" feminist movement and beyond.

Moreover, when class is considered in conjunction with ethnicity and religion, themes are generated which extend beyond mere socio-economic status but are essential to understanding women's organizational behaviour. To what extent are traditional depictions of the "clubwoman" reflective of the experiences of Jewish women within the National Council? How significant were the class divisions within Jewish community; specifically, how did this affect the relationship between these women and members of their own ethnic group?

Veronica Strong-Boag's examination of the origins of women's organizational activity and the National Council of Women of Canada addresses many of the essential theoretical issues in women's organizational history. In both her article, "'Setting the Stage': National Organization and the Women's Movement in the Late 19th Century", and her book *The Parliament of Women*, Strong-Boag states that by the 1890s, the women's reform movement, once a scattered group of local councils and affiliations of every variety had reached a level of maturity whereby a move toward combining forces within a national association seemed a logical step in combatting society's "ills". In fact, the entire women's movement, which began as early as the 1870s, had become by the late nineteenth century, "...a Dominion-wide campaign for national unity and moral uplift."[12], resulting in the creation of the NCWC. As religious divisions were, according to Strong-Boag, a major

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[12]Veronica Strong-Boag, "'Setting the Stage: National Organization and the Women's Movement in the Late 19th Century", in, *The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History*, Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice, eds., 87-103, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977).

impediment to women's collective action, the National Council's greatest accomplishment was its ability to unite women to a common purpose: the preservation of the family and the state, under a non-sectarian banner.[13] Concern for preserving the "home" provided the requisite cohesion to a women's movement fraught with divergence. As "mothers" of the nation, Canadian women had a special responsibility to safeguard the virtue of society, sheltering it from the harmful, corrupting "male" influences of materialism, industrialization and urbanization. It was this mission that united women, despite other differences. Strong-Boag highlights the commitment on the part of the NCWC's early leadership to overcoming the religious divergence of the membership to consolidate a national program for reform.

The impact of gender constructs and religion on the national women's reform movement are key elements of Strong-Boag's analysis. She points to the fact that church associations were often the first outlet through which women came together outside the home. It was this close identification with religion and the church that gave the early reform movement its strong moral tone. Strong-Boag's approach of acknowledging religion and its impact upon the movement is significant, despite the fact that she does not extend her focus toward the contributions of Jewish women. While Strong-Boag does refer to the NCJWC, she limits her comments to a statement on its "official" detachment from the NCWC, although pointing to the affiliation that certain individual sections did

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[13] *ibid*, 99-101.

make with the larger movement.[14] However, no evidence is given in support of this statement, rendering it somewhat ambiguous. It is impossible to discern whether the leaders of the NCJWC were genuinely withdrawn from the National Council, or if this conclusion resulted from a faulty perception on the part of the NCWC.

The authors of *Canadian Women: A History,* in their chapter "The 'woman movement'", have also examined several key aspects of women's organizational activity near the turn of the twentieth century using several analytical concepts in their investigation. Focusing on gender constructs, class, ethnicity and religion, Alison Prentice and her colleagues provide a substantial overview of the movement itself, while presenting some specific information on various clubs and organizations in existence at that time. Most importantly, the authors emphasize the role which ethnicity and race played in a woman's decision to become a member of a volunteer organization. In general, it is stated, middle-class, Anglo-Saxon, evangelical Protestant women were unreceptive and unwilling to embrace women outside of their own class and cultural milieu within their organizations.[15] As most non-Anglo-Saxon women were unable to join these dominant reform groups, they began to create their own culturally and religiously specific organizations. While these communal organizations often reflected the feminine values of groups from which they were excluded, there was a stronger emphasis placed on

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[14]Veronica Strong-Boag, *The Parliament of Women: the National Council of Women of Canada 1893-1929,* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man Mercury Series, National Museums of Canada, 1976), 101-2.

[15]Alison Prentice et al., *Canadian Women: A History,* (Toronto: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1988), 185.

immigrant aid, the preservation of an ethnic identity in Canada, as well as maintaining strong overseas ties.[16]

The necessity of utilizing as many analytical variables as possible is illustrated by Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde in the "Introduction" to their collective *Gender Conflicts.* Presenting an important work for historians of women's organizations by raising theoretical questions about how history is written, these historians urge other academics not to overlook concepts crucial to writing the history of women which have been neglected in the past. Iacovetta and Valverde are adamant that accounts of women's experiences should no longer be written in exclusion of analyses of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or political orientation, these variables being the bare minimum. Nor should these factors be evaluated in isolation from each other, but rather, historians should explore the impact of the interaction between all of these issues in shaping women's lives. Iacovetta and Valverde state that historians should resist portraying women as heroines, insisting that adhering to this characterization diminishes the academic's ability to investigate the complexities of women's experience.[17] By suggesting the "expansion" of investigative methods, Iacovetta and Valverde present a solid framework through which women's organizational history may be observed.

What becomes clear through an investigation of the writing of women's history in Canada is that, to a large degree, academic consensus holds that the more themes and

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[16]*ibid,* 269.

[17]See Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde eds., "Introduction" in *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History, xi-xxvii* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), xvii.

variables that are examined, the fuller and more historically complete the research will be. This study of the NCJWC will use the broad categories of gender, ethnicity, religion and class to analyze the nature of the Council including its membership, its program and mandate, and this organization's function both within the Canadian Jewish and general communities, and the larger women's reform movement. Through analyzing each of these aspects of the NCJWC, an answer to the following questions will be formulated: Why was there a council of **Jewish** women and what factors compelled Jewish women to form their own organization apart from other women's groups?

While not an analytical variable *per se*, this study will use the term "feminist" to describe the NCJWC. While feminism has been given as many interpretations as the word class, it is through using the approach offered by Karen Offen in her article "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach", that the activities of this organization will be evaluated. Although initially the Council was not a staunch advocate of women's "individual" rights, they indeed recognized the need for women's collective activity, expressed dissatisfaction with male-dominated social institutions and effectively worked to formulate their own. Offen suggests that by viewing feminism from the perspective that sees only rights-based actions which "propos[e] the standard of male adulthood as the norm." as feminist, the experiences of women whose ideas celebrate the "uniqueness of womanhood", and emphasize the differences between the sexes" have been largely dismissed. Instead, a more comprehensive and inclusive definition of feminism must be found to explain the full spectrum of women's activities.[18] Although her positioning of

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[18]Karen Offen, "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach", *Signs* 14/1 (1988), 119-129.

"individualist feminism" and "relational feminism" as two opposing concepts is problematic, given that difference is not necessarily the opposite of equality, the overall significance of Offen's work to this study is that she stresses the need for a "redefinition" of feminism to allow for a broader range of experiences to fit within its limits.[19]

This thesis will thus be divided into four chapters. The first chapter will present an historiographical analysis of the literature on the Jewish community in Canada, the purpose of which is twofold: to assess the extent to which the NCJWC has been treated in existing writings, while broadly contextualizing the Council within the Canadian Jewish community. Although this is not the only historiographical context into which the Council may be placed, the secondary literature on Canadian Jewry is the most suitable point of analysis for this project, as it is here that the NCJWC has received the most academic attention. Each text will be evaluated for its treatment of the Council in terms of how the author has placed the NCJWC within the larger framework of the Jewish community, as well as the degree to which the Council's program has been critically examined in these accounts.

The second chapter will be comprised of a general history of the NCJWC, from its establishment to the Second World War period. This historical overview will provide a contexualization of the Council within both the women's reform movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the Canadian Jewish community. To accomplish this, an historical survey of both the Canadian Jewish community and the

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[19] *ibid*, 50-57.

women's "club" movement will be included, in order to appropriately situate the Council's origins and early activities within Canadian history.

Chapter three will contain a case study of the Council's Ottawa Section, from its foundation in 1944, until its folding in 1995. The Ottawa Section will act as a microcosm through which to view the program of the larger body, as well as enabling an evaluation of the success of the NCJWC's activities at the local level. Further, as the Ottawa Section was often dubbed as the Council's "legislative observer" resulting from its geographic location in Canada's capital city, an assessment of the section's particular role within the NCJWC and its activities in public affairs and social legislation will be included.

The fourth chapter will be comprised of a discussion on Jewish women's volunteerism, women's unpaid labour and how this relates to the NCJWC. A theoretical analysis of women's motivations for becoming members of volunteer organizations will be included, as well as how the constructs of gender, ethnicity, class and religion all impacted upon that decision. This chapter will examine these themes, from both a late nineteenth, early twentieth century perspective, as well as a more contemporary analysis of these issues which will include a look at the future of Jewish women's volunteering in Canada.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CANADIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY: AN HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW

An historiographical examination of scholarly works on the Jews of Canada reveals that, to date, there has been no comprehensive study undertaken of the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada. In fact, there is a notable paucity of writings which analyze the specific experiences of Jewish women in Canada, and in particular, their membership and activity in women's groups and volunteer organizations. For the purpose of this research project, the secondary literature on the Canadian Jewish community has been divided into two categories: the first is comprised of texts that can be labelled as "general" histories of the community, providing contextual information concerning Canadian Jewish history and development. The second category of works that will be reviewed deals specifically with women's history in the community and addresses issues that are unique to Jewish women in Canada. All sources will be assessed not only for the purpose of evaluating the state of the literature on the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada, but also in terms of the broader themes that each author raises regarding the writing of Jewish women's history which are pertinent to this analysis.

Presently, there are several well-documented histories of Canadian Jewry available which, taken collectively, are valuable both in setting out community history and placing it in the broader framework of Canadian history. Yet these books are not uniform in their depictions of women's contribution to communal life. While certain authors have made

genuine attempts at including women in their writing, there are other works whose authors simply have not. To varying degrees, the latter contain little more than what amounts to token references to Jewish women in Canada.

Ironically, it is the earliest written history of Canadian Jewry which contains more factual information on Jewish women, and indeed the NCJWC, than any other work of its kind in Canada. Despite having been written prior to the emergence of both ethnic and women's history as streams of academic enquiry, *The Jew in Canada*, written in 1926 and edited by Arthur Daniel Hart, contains a comparatively large section entitled "Activities of Canadian Jewish Women" which extensively details the involvement of women in Jewish immigrant aid associations, chronicling the earliest history of many women's groups which are still in existence today.[1] Hart holds the many accomplishments of Jewish women in high esteem and summarizes their importance and indispensability when he states that, "[t]he range of women's activities cover all branches of communal endeavour, and in whatever field of work they have entered, no section of the population has showed a more devoted interest than the Jewish women."[2] Thus, Hart not only actively praises the ventures that women have undertaken in the name of the community, but also demonstrates a decided interest in their affairs by his inclusion of a separate section on women's specific activities.

Included in this section is the history of the NCJWC up to 1926, with separate entries for each established Council section across Canada. Significant names, dates and

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[1]Arthur Daniel Hart ed., *The Jew in Canada*, (Toronto?: Jewish Publications Ltd, 1926), 240-?.

[2]*ibid*, 240.

facts are provided and an account of the Council's founding and earliest role in Canada is given. All of this is of immense importance to the researcher, as it contains empirical data on the Council which is difficult to retrieve elsewhere. Moreover, the NCJWC is portrayed as an organization which has and continues to play an indispensable role within the Jewish and general communities not only by its members' selfless devotion to communal aid, but in the Council's ability to "...take its full share of the responsibility of citizenship, and to co-operate in all that pertains to the welfare of the city [in this instance, Montreal] the Provinces and the Dominion.[3]

As the very first book to recount the history of the Jewish community, *The Jew in Canada* is a noteworthy contribution to the historiography on Canadian Jews. Yet there are several areas which limit the usage of this text for research in women's history. Apart from the sheer datedness of the text, the most evident shortcoming is that this book provides little in the way of analysis of women's experience, merely glorifying the accomplishments of Jewish women without adequately contextualizing their experiences either on the community level or within the broader framework of Canadian women's organizations. In large part, the portrait of Jewish life described in *The Jew in Canada* is compatible with what Harold Palmer has described as the "self-congratulatory" history that characterized much of the writing of ethnic history in Canada prior to the 1960s. In other words, those works whose authors were more intent on demonstrating the "contributions" of particular ethnic communities, rather than using the necessary methods

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[3]*ibid,* 257.

of academic inquiry in order to situate these groups within a broader Canadian framework.[4]

Written several decades later, Stuart E. Rosenberg's two-volume work, *The Jewish Community in Canada* is a tremendous resource guide for research into virtually all facets of Canadian Jewry. Volume one, entitled "A History" traces the development of the Jewish community from its origins in Canada up to 1970, the date of publication. The second volume "In the Midst of Freedom" not only contains an exposé of famous Jews in all aspects of Canadian life, but investigates the modern political, religious and socio-economic issues that affect the Canadian Jewish community as a whole.

In general, the strength of Rosenberg's work is the extent of its examination of Jewish life in Canada. The National Council of Jewish Women of Canada is given treatment in a section with the heading, "Community-Minded Women: A North American Invention." Along with a few other women's groups, Rosenberg briefly discusses the origins of the NCJWC and surmises that this organization "...was probably more responsible than many others for the development of an independent, creative and progressive women's movement in the Jewish community of North America."[5] This statement, coupled by the fact that the author has allotted more space to a description of the Council than to any other women's group demonstrates the influence that he feels the NCJWC has had in the Canadian Jewish community.

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[4]Howard Palmer, "Canadian Immigration and Ethnic History in the 1970s and 1980s", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1, (Spring 1982), 36.

[5]Stuart E. Rosenberg, *The Jewish Community in Canada: Volume 2, In the Midst of Freedom*, (Montreal: McClelland and Steward Ltd., 1971), 77.

Yet, in spite of the accolades Rosenberg bestows upon the NCJWC, his description of Council history is weak in two ways. First, the author describes only the years from its founding in Canada until 1934. Second, while there are a few randomly placed references to the Council within the history located in the first volume, situating the organization within the community, there is little else in the way of an actual evaluation of its specific activities. Furthermore, Rosenberg's inclusion of women within the entirety of the two volumes is scanty. The occasional reference to a women's organization, or the names of a few prominent women within the community do appear, but in general, the author does not depict these women as having held genuine leadership roles. Rosenberg tries to explain this phenomenon in a general discussion on religious trends within the community. He states that, unlike the American example, the reason that there are so few women within the Jewish community in Canada who sit on synagogue boards "in their own right", or hold decision-making positions, results from the fact that Canadian women "...generally are more conservative..."than their American counterparts.[6]

However, not only does Rosenberg fail to provide any evidence to substantiate his claim of the inherent conservative nature of Canadian women, but he does not take into account any structural factors that have limited and continue to limit women's full participation in the synagogue throughout North America. Thus, while *The Jewish Community in Canada* has some limited use in helping to situate the NCJWC within the larger community, its shortcomings in describing women's experiences diminishes its pertinence to this research project.

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[6]*ibid, 57.*

Such is also the case for the book on Toronto Jewry by Stephen Speisman. Written almost a decade later than Rosenberg's work, *The Jews of Toronto* chronicles the development of the community in Canada's largest city, from the arrival of the earliest Jewish settlers in 1817, up to the pre-World War II era. Speisman's work is a significant contribution to the historiography of Canadian Jewry as, not only does it remain the sole existing text that deals exclusively with the history and evolution of the Toronto Jewish community during the Establishment years, but it also demonstrates the distinctive, less conservative character of the Toronto community, as opposed to that of Montreal. More importantly, however, this source aids in establishing the backdrop for the development of the Council; the atmosphere and circumstances which set the stage for the ideas of the NCJW to take hold and flourish in Canada.

Unfortunately, Speisman's description of women's activities during this period is meagre, and his brief reference to the Council lacks insight into its importance within the overall community. Within the entirety of *The Jews of Toronto,* a book which totals 380 pages, women's lives constitute little more than a few pages of text. Moreover, the observations which Speisman offers are not original. For example, while commenting on matters relating to philanthropy and communal aid, the author merely echoes the opinions of both Hart and Rosenberg when he states that "...it was the women of the congregation who took the initiative." in organizing immediate relief for newcomers.[7] Furthermore, Speisman's paragraph on the NCJWC offers no fresh information on the Council and

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[7]Stephen A. Speisman, *The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), 56.

relies solely on sources that could not adequately expound upon its role in Canada.[8] *The Jews of Toronto* does not provide an acceptable explanation as to why the first Canadian section of the Council was founded in the city of Toronto in the first instance and is thus incapable of fully expanding upon the importance of the NCJWC within the larger community.

The two most recent offerings in the historiography of Canadian Jewry both aspire to formulate comprehensive accounts of Jewish history in Canada in their own right. *A Coat of Many Colours: Two Centuries of Jewish Life in Canada* by Irving Abella and Gerald Tulchinsky's *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community* attempt to provide "the whole picture" of the Canadian Jewish experience. Yet, there are several notable dissimilarities between these two works. Abella's book traces Jewish history in Canada from its origins until contemporary times, and tends to be more of a "popular" history, with extensive pictorial evidence, and little in terms of a critical examination of the community's activities. By contrast, Tulchinsky's book is superior in terms of depth of analysis of the issues and events described within, although it covers only the period from the origins of the Jewish community until 1920.

What is similar between these books is that they are both more inclusive of women than many earlier works, strictly by virtue of the way that each text is written. Unlike earlier authors, both Abella and Tulchinsky weave women's lives and experiences right into the general text, instead of analyzing their contributions in separate sections as an

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[8] *ibid, 66.* Speisman relies on the information provided in a document on the NCJW of the United States, one personal interview and a small article in the Jewish Times in order to explain the Council's history in Canada. Unfortunately, these sources are not sound enough to given sufficient treatment to the NCJWC.

afterthought. While this is a marked improvement over earlier accounts, there remain certain difficulties. Over and above the fact that there are few references made to the NCJWC, those that are present in these books, do not reflect the findings of any recent, or indeed, original research on the part of either author. For example, Abella states that Jewish women in Canada "...were far ahead of their male counterparts in the field of philanthropy, and they were the real pioneers in this area among Canadian women."[9] However, this assertion has been made several times over by Jewish historians before him. Also, whether or not Abella has actual proof to test the validity of this assumption has not been indicated, and seems highly speculative, especially when viewed in light of the benevolent work performed by other groups of women, such as the early settlers of New France. The description of the NCJWC that the author presents is brief, vague and does not extend past either its earliest years or function within the Jewish community.[10]

Likewise, Tulchinsky's version of Council history is unsatisfactory. It is astonishing that in a book as dedicated to detail and precision as *Taking Root*, the one substantial mention of the NCJWC that it contains is ambiguous and uninformative. The only possible explanation for this is the weakness of the sources that Tulchinsky uses; namely, that he cites Stephen Speisman's wholly inadequate reference to the organization in *The Jews of Toronto* as his principal source of information on the NCJWC, instead of relying on independent research using primary Council documents. Further, Tulchinsky

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[9]Irving Abella, *A Coat of Many Colours: Two Centuries of Jewish Life in Canada*, (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys Limited, 1990), 118.

[10]*ibid*

makes the assumption that the Council's appearance in Canada was as a direct result of the "...distinctly Christian undertones..." of the National Council of Women, founded a few years earlier.[11] The problem with this statement is not only the lack of supporting evidence that Tulchinsky provides for it, but even more fundamentally, it is incorrect to assume that the NCJWC was the merely the NCWC in a Jewish form. It is assumptions such as this one that will be challenged within this research project.

The evolution of immigration and communal aid efforts within the Jewish community is the subject of two books which, by extension, also function as historical guides to Canadian Jewry. Simon Belkin's *Through Narrow Gates*[12] and Joseph Kage's *With Faith and Thanksgiving*[13] each trace the development of the Jewish communal infrastructures implemented to assist immigrants upon arrival in Canada. These two accounts warrant mention in this historiographical survey as they reflect most vividly the lack of attention granted to the NCJWC in historical writings. The Council's first and, at least initially, most important function in Canada was to assist in the successful integration of newcomers into Canadian society, and in particular, to ensure that the special needs of women and children be addressed throughout the immigration process. It is curious, however, that there is absolutely no mention of the efforts of the NCJWC whatsoever in either text. It is inconceivable that an accurate assessment of Jewish immigrant aid efforts

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[11]Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community*, (Toronto: Lester Publishing Ltd, 1992), 147.

[12]Simon Belkin, *Through Narrow Gates: A Review of Jewish Immigration, Colonization and Immigrant Aid Work in Canada (1840-1940)*, (Montreal: Eagle Publishing Co., Ltd, 1966).

[13]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., Ltd, 1962).

could be achieved by a complete omission of the NCJWC, particularly its importance in Canada during the height of Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe in the late nineteenth, early twentieth centuries.

Moreover, women's immigrant aid groups are seldom mentioned in either tome. The few associations that are deemed worthy of mention by these authors are not examined individually for their unique merits or achievements, but merely identified as having been linked with a particular event, completely devoid of any special attention to the history or development of any one these organizations. It is not unreasonable to expect that descriptions of these groups be included in works which purport to recount the development of Jewish immigrant aid. Unfortunately, the simplistic, obscure view of women's activities which is presented dramatically limits the practical uses of both *With Faith and Thanksgiving* and *Through Narrow Gates* for the purpose of investigating the evolution of women's charitable organizations.

By and large, it appears that even the most recent histories of the Jewish community in Canada do not elevate women's status beyond that of a secondary or "supporting" role in Jewish life. The inclusion of women's experiences, achievements, sacrifices and merits do not yet figure prominently in self-proclaimed "comprehensive" accounts of Canadian Jewish history. Women are seldom considered to be community leaders, if at all. The NCJWC has and continues to perform indispensable tasks within the Jewish community, yet in most of the works reviewed, the Council barely rates more than a mere mention.

This is not to suggest, however, that the texts reviewed are of absolutely no value to the writing of Council history. On the contrary, what is omitted from each of these accounts prompts an investigation of some broader issues. Does a mere fleeting reference to women's organizations suggest that important communal activities are only those performed by men? Is community leadership exclusively a male preserve? Why have Canadian academics paid so little attention to the Council, and is this absence in any way indicative of how the activities of the NCJWC have been perceived historically by the general community?

In examining specifically the history of women within the Canadian Jewish community, historians, as well as sociologists, have confronted such issues as communal power relations, the social constructs of gender, race and ethnicity, structural barriers to women's advancement and have dealt chiefly with questions that have not been posed by the authors of more "mainstream" histories. Not surprisingly, women's historians have assessed the role of the Jewish woman within her community in strikingly different ways than other scholars. A survey of the writing relating exclusively to Jewish women's history in Canada produces some preliminary observations. First, that work devoted specifically to Canadian Jewish women is often difficult to procure, given that there is both a sparsity of literature in this area, and that there has been no textbook-style reference guide chronicling Jewish women's history published in Canada. Presently, there is one collective available, containing several articles that will be used in this project. *Canadian Jewish Women of Today: Who's Who of Canadian Jewish Women 1983*, is currently the only

publication of its kind in Canada[14]. While the articles contained within this collective are highly valuable to researching topics in women's history, the book is limited primarily by its date of publication, as it does not reflect more recent scholarship on Jewish women in Canada.

Further observation of this literature reveals that there is still very little in the way of an extensive, critical review of the NCJWC's place within the Jewish community. Despite being focused on women's experiences, historians who have written about Canadian Jewish women have tended to overlook the Council, largely in favour of analyzing either other volunteer organizations, or other aspects of gender and how they pertain to internal community relations. Most important, however, is the fact that even those scholars who have examined the NCJWC, do not extend their analyses beyond the period of the Second World War, dramatically limiting the applicability of these works for studies on later periods.

In her article, "Changing Roles of Jewish Women", the sociologist Rachel Schlesinger provides an overview of the role and status of women within the Jewish community, discussing the evolution of their roles as wives, mothers and career professionals in North America. Schlesinger insists that, as Judaism is "...a family-based religion...", Jewish women must be examined in light of their role within the family unit.[15] Making the correlation between Jewish women and the family is necessary, the author

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[14]Edmond Y. Lipsitz ed., *Canadian Jewish Women of Today: Who's Who of Canadian Jewish Women 1983*, (Downsview: Webcom Limited, Toronto Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1983).

[15]Rachel Schlesinger, "Changing Roles of Jewish Women", In *Canadian Jewry Today: Who's Who in Canadian Jewry*, Edmond Lipsitz, ed. (Downsview: Webcom Limited, 1989), 61.

states, as it is the crucial link to explaining the extent of their participation in volunteer organizations, and indeed the nature of Jewish volunteerism in Western society.[16] Schlesinger analyzes both the origins of volunteer participation, as well as the immediate familial and societal implications for women who actively belong to charitable organizations.

The limitations of this source stem from the fact that the author attempts to address far too many issues in one brief article, coupled with an abundance of generalizations for which little solid supporting evidence is provided. For instance, while discussing women's charitable organizations, Schlesinger refers to the existence of an overarching "volunteer structure"[17]. In other words, regardless of the individual orientation or philosophy of each group there are many issues facing members that transcend organizational boundaries. While the author does identify several women's groups in her study, the NCJWC is notably absent, despite the fact that it is one of the largest, and indeed the oldest Jewish women's organization in Canada. Perhaps the Council does not correspond exactly to Schlesinger's assessment of volunteer organizations, and was thus excluded. In fact, Schlesinger does not seem concerned with elaborating on the history of any one of the women's groups referred to within her article and this leads directly to an appearance of over-simplification on the subject.

Another sociologist, Yael Gordon-Brym, examines the upward mobility of women and the socio-economic inequalities between the sexes that exist within the Jewish

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[16] *ibid, 67.*

[17] *ibid.*

community, in her article "The Changing Role of Canadian Jewish Women". In addition to a brief historical overview of women's history within the Jewish community, Gordon-Brym investigates the various societal forces that have influenced the status of women over time. The author points to volunteerism as one area of commonality in Jewish women's lives and discusses how the volunteer experience had virtually no impact on their ability to attain political power within the community.[18] In fact, the author states most women have been traditionally barred from community power and have continued to belong to "...relatively uninfluential voluntary organisations."[19], through which they have virtually no opportunity to acquire positions as communal decision makers.

Unfortunately, the limitations of this source are similar to those found in Rachel Schlesinger's work. While Gordon-Brym is slightly more specific in identifying women's groups than is Schlesinger, her omission of the NCJWC from this article is peculiar, given that she has characterized Hadassah as an "exception" in the world of women's organizations. Gordon-Brym discusses the evolution of Canadian Hadassah from a group devoted primarily to fund raising projects into an organization which supports human rights and freedoms in Israel.[20] The absence of the NCJWC is all the more striking here as, to use Gordon-Brym's criteria, the Council should be classified as great an exception to

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[18]Yael Gordon-Brym, "The Changing Role of Canadian Jewish Women", In *Canadian Jewish Women of Today: Who's Who of Canadian Jewish Women 1983*, Edmond Lipsitz ed. (Downsview: Webcom Limited, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1983), 13.

[19]*ibid,* 15.

[20]ibid. The author provides a brief description of Canadian Hadassah-WIZO on this page.

the rule as Hadassah for several reasons, not the least of which being that the NCJWC supports many similar causes as Canadian Hadassah.[21]

In sum, the principal criticisms of both of these similarly-titled articles are that they have each depicted volunteer and charitable organizations as corresponding to a common framework, while neither author has critically examined these groups for actual similarities in order to justify this generalization. Furthermore, no mention has been made of the NCJWC in either text, thus not only limiting the value of these articles as secondary sources for research on the Council, but in turn, narrowing the applicability of this work for inquiry into other women's organizations.

Nevertheless, the works of Rachel Schlesinger and Yael Gordon-Brym are significant contributions to the historiography of Jews in Canada, resulting in part from the fact that these are two of the precious few articles in existence which survey the history of Canadian Jewish women and, in addition, that these works address the issues particular to Jewish women, by tracing and detailing the changes regarding their situation within the Jewish community that have occurred throughout the twentieth century. For instance, by exploring the questions behind women's paid and unpaid labour, changes in family structure, social mobility, gender inequality, and ultimately, power relations within the Jewish community in all aspects of Jewish life, these authors have sought to define the private/political dichotomy as it pertains to the Canadian Jewish community and explain how this has affected the nature of women's role within the community itself.

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[21]Both the Council's platform on social issues and the "exceptional" nature of this organization form the basis of this research project, and will thus be elaborated on in later chapters.

Despite the absence of the NCJWC from certain works on Canadian Jewish women, one significant exception is the work of historian Eliane Leslau Silverman, who has conducted noteworthy research on the origins of the NCJWC in Canada, the impact of the Council's program and philosophy on its members lives and the Council's function in the broader community. In her article, "The National Council of Jewish Women: Private Lives, Public People," Silverman insists that in order to understand women's membership and participation in volunteer organizations, it is crucial that the usual analytical dichotomies of male/female and public/private not remain impermeable and mutually exclusive. In other words, as women participate in both the public and the private realm by belonging to groups such as the NCJWC, "...a description of polarities...is not an adequate means of analyzing women's activities in organizations."[22] Rather, Silverman asserts that the nature of the NCJWC is such that the Council has traditionally performed a "dual" function in the lives of its members, both as a public forum to express political concerns and as a personal shelter through which to socialize and retain a sense of the traditional Jewish female role. Silverman thus stipulates that the Council "...must be understood at once as a political institution with public concerns and as a vehicle for expressing a domestic identity, a private self, or female self."[23]

Although Silverman states that many former members of the Council would most likely not have identified their role within the Council or indeed the Council itself as

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[22]Eliane Leslau Silverman, "The National Council of Jewish Women: Private Lives, Public People", In *Canadian Woman Studies*, 7, no. 4 (Winter 1986), 49.

[23]*ibid.*

political, she declares that despite this reluctance on their part, the reality was that the NCJWC did provide an opportunity for these women to meet with other married women in a more "public" forum, to discuss their concerns about Canadian life, acquire leadership skills which would assist them in their charitable endeavours, and by extension, cross into the "male" realm of making financial decisions based on their own fundraising activities.[24]

The importance of Eliane Leslau Silverman's piece is that it is currently the only study in Canada which is focused squarely on the NCJWC. As such, there are several elements of Silverman's approach that are of great value to an investigation of this women's organization. This research project will elaborate upon and test certain themes and issues that have been raised by Silverman's work. Most significantly, it will examine Silverman's use of the term "political", by looking more specifically at how members viewed themselves within the NCJWC and investigating the impact of the Social Legislation and Public Affairs components of the Council's program.

Yet, despite the fact that this article is unique historiographically as the only serious work available on the NCJWC, the research is neither exhaustive nor universally applicable to Council members. One difficulty is that the period to which Silverman is referring is not easily discernable. While the article begins by giving the impression that the focus will be a broad survey of the twentieth century, this becomes increasingly unclear by the final page. There is a small discussion about the Vancouver section, but this ends in the 1940s. The reason why this is problematic stems from the fact that certain conclusions that Silverman makes are not borne out by the events of later decades. For example, Silverman

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[24] *ibid.*, 50.

states that several members, when asked whether or not they felt that they were doing political work, categorically responded "'Oh, no! Politics is for men.'"[25], and thus concludes that this is indicative of member sentiment. This statement, however, certainly contradicts the evidence, given that there was in general a greater acceptance within the NCJWC of the need to engage in political work in the years following the Second World War than in the years immediately preceding it. Furthermore, the Council's Social Legislation and Parliamentary "Listening-Post" programs were established in the 1950s, both of which continued for decades afterward. Even prior to the 1950s, the fact that in 1934 the NCJWC broke away from its parent organization, the NCJW of the United States, to become an independent Council, was a clear display of the political consciousness of a distinctly Canadian Council program prevalent amongst the membership.

Methodologically speaking, while Silverman does not specifically mention whom she has interviewed for this study, and from which Sections in particular, the responses given beg the question as to whether or not Silverman was actually interviewing current, active members of Council, or rather those who belonged to Council in pre-World War II Canada. Moreover, as her case in point, Silverman focuses on the activities of Council's Vancouver Section. While this is indeed an original contribution to Council history, the description of this Section is far too brief and provides little in terms of usable empirical data. Nevertheless, as the only existing work on the NCJWC, Silverman's article helps in defining the parameters for further research on the Council.

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[25] *ibid.*, 51.

By contrast, the work of Paula J. Draper in both "The Role of Canadian Jewish Women in Historical Perspective" and together with Janice B. Karlinsky in "Abraham's Daughters: Women, Charity and Power in the Canadian Jewish Community", presents a superficial and at times, inaccurate view of the NCJWC which is at odds with Silverman's portrayal of Council's program and philosophy. Each work provides a brief history of Canadian Jewish women, echoing similar themes and conclusions and providing some general observations about Jewish women in Canada. In addition, specific sections are devoted to an analysis of the major Jewish women's volunteer organizations in Canada and their roles within the community, thereby raising questions and issues for further research on these groups.

Commencing with some guidelines for understanding Jewish women and their level of participation in philanthropy, Draper, in her independent article postulates that the role of Jewish women within Canadian society is inextricably linked to their "dual" minority status of being both Jewish and female.[26] Draper contends that when attempting to place Jewish women within a broader historical context, a comprehensive evaluation of their situation can only be achieved by using gender constructs in addition to ethnicity as modes of analysis. In their joint venture, Draper along with Karlinsky state that the origins of women's philanthropy in the Jewish community are tied directly to the general feminization of religion that was taking place on a broad scale in Canadian society and was thus, socially constructed. These authors insist that women, by "[a]bsorbing male-imposed

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[26]Paula J. Draper, "The Role of Canadian Jewish Women in Historical Perspective", In *Canadian Jewish Women of Today: Who's Who of Canadian Jewish Women 1983*, Edmond Y. Lipsitz ed., (Downsview: Webcom Limited, Toronto Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1983), 4.

stereotypes, ... accepted the notion that their nurturing qualities made them uniquely qualified to relieve suffering."[27] Hence, the Jewish tradition of *tzedakah* or charity, came to symbolize an extension of their domestic duties in the eyes of these women.[28] The work of Draper and Karlinsky is valuable insofar as it provides the researcher of Canadian Jewish women with an even greater historiographical foundation on which to base certain inquiries. Yet despite the appearance of comprehensiveness in their work, the tendency of these authors to be dismissive of the NCJWC, in favour of glorifying other organizations is disturbing. Factually speaking, both articles are riddled with generalizations and assumptions that are incorrect, not solely in terms of the Council, but pertaining to other events as well.

On the origins of women's philanthropic and immigrant aid organizations, Draper and Karlinsky state that prior to 1920, the women of Establishment Jewry who performed charity work were "...fuelled by a desire to Canadianize..." eastern European immigrants, but they "...failed in their attempts to make these new Canadian Jews over in their own image." resulting from the fact that by 1920, Antisemitism had increased in Canada, forcing the Jewish community to become closed and inwardly focused.[29] While their version of the reaction of the Jewish community to encroaching Antisemitism is dubious in its own right, Draper and Karlinsky's evaluation of the behaviour of Jewish women

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[27]Paula J. Draper and Janice B. Karlinsky, "Abraham's Daughters: Women Charity and Power in the Canadian Jewish Community", In *Looking Into My Sister's Eyes*, (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1986), 77

[28]*ibid.*

[29]*ibid.*

toward new immigrants is also highly suspect. Not only is direct evidence not provided for these assumptions, but the authors' maligning of Jewish upper-class women with mere speculation belies their bias against these women, as demonstrated by the condescending tone of their examination of the NCJWC.

In the next paragraph, Draper and Karlinsky state that as a result of the increasing inwardness of the Canadian Jewish community, women became "essential participants" in newly created communal organizations and established many female-run groups such as the "...Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Societies."(*sic*)[30] The problem here is that, while it is true that certain women's organizations were founded after 1920, the overwhelming majority were not, with several dating well back into the late nineteenth century. In fact, the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society to which Draper and Karlinsky refer was established in 1877, and **not** after 1920.

This is by no means the only area in which Draper and Karlinsky make contradictory statements and factual errors. Draper, for example states in her own article that the NCJWC, when founded in 1897 by upper-class British and German Jewish women was Canada's "...most progressive women's organization."[31] While no definition is given for this interpretation of the word "progressive", it is immediately followed by the statement that while the Council in the United States was focused on the advancement of women, this was not the case in Canada where "...feminist aspirations were muted."[32] It is

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[30]*ibid.*

[31]Draper, "The Role of Canadian Jewish Women in Historical Perspective", 6.

[32]*ibid.*

difficult to ascertain how the NCJWC could be at once, progressive and, yet on the other hand, unsupportive of feminist causes. Perhaps the lack of a proper, contextual definition of "feminist" is what detracts the most from the credibility of this observation.

In essence, Draper and Karlinsky have taken a dismissive approach to the NCJWC, declaring it non-feminist, and non-political, in order to contrast it with the Pioneer Women's Organization (PWO). As stated, it is not the intention of this research project to make generalizations about organizations other than the NCJWC, as Draper and Karlinsky have done. However, as these authors have made provocative statements against the NCJWC, an examination into what they have concluded about PWO is a necessary inclusion.

The PWO is portrayed as a group which, according to Draper and Karlinsky, is the very essence of the terms feminist and political. The authors state unequivocally that "...Pioneer Women pursued a truly feminist goal: becoming the first Jewish women's group, outside Palestine, to focus on the **role of women**.".[33] (emphasis added). Further into the text, Draper and Karlinsky insist that the PWO, unlike other women's organizations, had always emphasized the need for women to be both politically and social aware of the world around them.[34] That the statements within this work regarding the PWO's program and philosophy are correct are not in doubt. However, all of these observations also apply whole-heartedly to the NCJWC. It is inaccurate, therefore, to

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[33]Draper and Karlinsky, "Abraham's Daughters", 81.

[34]*ibid., 83.*

portray the NCJWC as a group which shunned feminism in favour of snobbery, and which was never fully accessible to all women within the Canadian Jewish community.[35]

In sum, there are two readily identifiable problems with Draper and Karlinsky's assessment of the NCJWC. The first is the confusion stemming from the failure of these authors to define their concepts sufficiently, namely those of feminism and political, rendering their assessment of the Council ambiguous and its comparison with the PWO unfair. Secondly, as their one bibliographic resource on the NCJWC, Draper and Karlinsky have relied on the information contained in the rather weak *History of the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada* by Ethel Vineberg, an "in-house" publication presenting a chronological history of the Council's numerous activities. This pamphlet provides little in the way of serious analysis of Council's program, and primarily illustrates the exemplary nature of the NCJWC[36]. Nowhere in Draper and Karlinsky's article or bibliography does it indicate that these authors have used any archival data or personal interviews with Council members to substantiate their claims. Thus, other than providing some minor factual details, these works are severely limited in terms of practical use for this project.

Despite their shortcomings, however, the studies of Canadian Jewish women and the general Jewish community that have been reviewed here are important for several reasons, not the least of which is the fact that these are among the rare works available on

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[35]*ibid., 79-80.*

[36]Ethel Vineberg, *The History of the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada*, (Montreal: National Council of Jewish Women, 1967).

Canadian Jewry. More explicitly, however, these texts demonstrate the necessity for further research to be conducted on the history of Canada's Jewish communities. In fact, nowhere is this need more evident than when observing the unfortunate, and often unavoidable, reliance of Canadian historians on American resources for information. Researchers investigating Canadian Jewry and in particular, those who focus on Canadian Jewish women, are burdened, more often than not, with the painstaking task of finding Canadian-based secondary studies upon which to support their research. Not surprisingly, then, the bibliographies of the articles critiqued in this chapter expose the fact that work conducted on Jewish women in Canada is often based excessively on American data.

The difficulties with using American sources for Canadian-centred studies are manifold. Indeed, there is an enormous body of literature on the American Jewish community to which researchers may turn and the temptation to use them liberally is significant. However, it would be a mistake to assume that American data can be readily applied to explain the Canadian situation. There are many dissimilarities between both the history and the character of the Jewish peoples of Canada and the United States. While it is outside the scope of this research to engage in a full-fledged inquiry into the differences between the two communities, it must be noted that certain scholars have documented the disparity between the two and these must be considered when using American sources for Canadian research. For instance, Gerald Tulchinsky, in defining "The Contours of Canadian Jewish History" states that while there are many points of comparison in the history of the two communities that must be recognized, by no means can it be inferred that the American and Canadian Jewish communities have had a parallel experience in

North America.[37] Rather, there were several historical and geo-political elements present in the Canadian context that determined the distinct character of Canadian Jewry. Of these elements, the most significant was what Tulchinsky calls the "...duality of Canada's national personality..."[38], or simply put, the reality that historically a near majority of Canadian Jews have resided in the province of Quebec, clashing directly with the character of the French-Canadian nationalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In addition, Tulchinsky points to the fact that, demographically, Canada had fewer Jews of German origin and thus the influence of Reform Judaism and the Enlightenment, which were so widespread in the United States, were virtually absent here. This, he says, is what accounts for the more conservative and Orthodox nature of Canadian Jews, and helps in explaining why the community has embraced Zionism on a scale unparalleled in the United States.[39]

Other scholars, such as Morton Weinfeld and William Shaffir have made similar observations in their comparative studies of the two communities. Weinfeld, for instance in his "Note On Comparing Canadian and American Jewry" has observed that Canadian Jews have a greater sense of "community" than American Jews, directly attributable to the fact that 1) the Canadian community is one generation younger in terms of immigration than in the United States, and 2) Canada's "multicultural" policy is more tolerant of ethnic

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[37]Gerald Tulchinsky, "The Contours of Canadian Jewish History" in Robert J. Brym et al. ed., *The Jews in Canada* "(Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1993), 5-6.

[38]*ibid.,6.*

[39]*ibid., 14-15.*

identity than the American "melting-pot" model.[40] William Shaffir, in "Canadian Jewry: Some Sociological Observations" explains the difference between Jews in Canada and the United States by stating that the Canadians are more geographically centred in a few large urban centres, and receive a more Jewish, re: Orthodox, education than do their American counterparts, who are quite geographically scattered throughout the United States and are more Reform religiously.[41]

Hence, it would be unwise to suggest that the Canadian and American Jewish communities are one and the same. While there are certain similarities between them, the history of these two groups has been shaped by a variety of distinct catalysts. Further complicating matters is the fact that there is an abundance of excellent sources available on American Jewish subjects, in contrast to Canadian Jewish historiography, which is by no means exhaustive. In view of this, the purpose of examining the contrasts between Canadian and American Jewry becomes essential. The lack of relevant Canadian literature poses a problem for researchers, as American references do not always translate literally into the Canadian context. Thus, the historian must proceed with caution when attempting to use these sources at face value for studies on similar topics in Canada.

The shortage of applicable sources presents some specific problems for conducting research on the NCJWC. Although the NCJW originated in the United States, upon arrival in Canada, the Council took on a distinct identity, its members performing a different

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[40]Morton Weinfeld, "A Note On Comparing Canadian and American Jewry", *The Journal of Ethnic Studies*, Vol 5, no. 1, 95. Although the reference to Canada's multicultural policy is applicable only to the years after 1960 and not to the earlier Establishment period.

[41]William Shaffir, "Canadian Jewry: Some Sociological Observations." in *Canadian Jewry Today: Who's Who in Canadian Jewry*, Edmond Lipsitz ed. (Downsview: Webcom Limited, 1989), 3.

function within the community than their American sisters. However, because of the profusion of literature on the American NCJW, and the lack of solid sources on the NCJWC, the temptation to base a study of the Canadian Council on these works is genuine. While certain documents which help to establish the backdrop to the founding of the NCJWC and the nature of early Council precepts will be consulted in this project, these sources will be used in a comparative framework to point out the divergent philosophy of the two organizations.

Although numerous texts have been written on the NCJW, the ones that are particularly useful to this research project provide insightful information regarding the origins of the NCJW, its place within the larger Jewish women's club movement, and what motivated women to join this organization. These sources also discuss Jewish women's role in the American maternal feminist movement and suffrage campaigns of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and more broadly, the position of women within both the Jewish community and American society as a whole.[42] While important, these sources are limited by the fact that there is absolutely no reference to either the founding of the NCJWC or Canadian women contained in any of them, a rather curious omission given the proximity of the dates of the founding of both Councils and the many ties these

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[42]The sources that will be utilized in this project are: Linda Gordon Kuzmack, *Woman's Cause: The Jewish Woman's Movement in England and the United States, 1881-1933*, (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1990); Faith Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: the National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993); June Sochen "Some Observations on the Role of American Jewish women as Communal Volunteers", *American Jewish History*, vol. 70, no. 1 (Sept 1990), 23-34; Beth S. Wenger, "Jewish women and Voluntarism: Beyond the Myth of Enablers", *American Jewish History*, vol. 79, no. 1, (Sept 1989), 16-36.

communities had to each other at that time, a point which will be elaborated further in a later chapter.

Yet moving beyond content, these texts emphasize the reality that no scholarly works exist in Canada which are comparable to any of the work that has been done on Jewish women in the United States. Canadian academics have not investigated the possibility of Jewish women's involvement in the suffrage movement in Canada, or conducted a comprehensive analysis of the Canadian Jewish women's club movement. Further, these sources illustrate unequivocally that the history of the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada needs to be written.

In sum, a study of the historiography of Canadian Jewry clearly demonstrates the need for further research in many areas of women's experiences. It firmly establishes the purpose of this project, by illustrating the scarcity of literature on the NCJWC and the general lack of attention paid to Jewish women's organizations in Canada. Furthermore, it draws reference to the fact that historians need to begin "filling in the gaps" of Canadian Jewish history, relying less on previously formed generalizations and instead exploring the potential in creating a richer Canadian research base through increased writings. Ultimately, it is essential that a more complete portrayal of Canadian Jewish women's role within society be attempted, as this will only serve to enrich our understanding of the history of the Canadian Jewish community as a whole.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ORIGINS OF THE NCJWC: A CONTEXTUALIZATION

The NCJWC has served a complexity of purposes in the lives of its members. As this organization is historically significant in several ways, it must be contextualized through examining several different historical frameworks. This chapter will discuss the early history of the NCJWC by placing the Council in its three appropriate contextual categories. First, a discussion will be provided of the NCJWC's relationship to the Canadian women's movement and by extension, the international women's movement. Second will be an overview of the American NCJW and the factors which influenced the development of a Council in Canada. Thirdly, the Council's importance for the Canadian Jewish community will be examined, namely its initial role as an immigrant aid organization.

Not only did the Council unite interested Jewish women to a common cause, but it acted as a link between the Jewish community and the general communities of Canada through its assistance of members of the general population. By embracing those outside of their immediate realm, the NCJWC provided Jewish women with an avenue for their further acculturation and acceptance into Canada. Although based on the ideas of the Council in the United States, the NCJWC became a distinctly Canadian institution whose focus was on the issues that affected Jewish life in Canada. Moreover, just as the Council enabled women to contribute to society in patriotic ways, it permitted them to do so while

preserving their identity as Jews and thus enabled the furthering of Jewish religion and culture in Canada. Furthermore, not only did the NCJWC mark Jewish women's entry into the club movement, its formation served as women's unique contribution to Jewish community life by allowing them to dispense charity in a distinctive way, through emphasizing the particular emotional, intellectual and material support needed by women to facilitate their role as mothers.

Jewish Women and the "First-Wave" Feminist Movement

Canadian women began organizing for change in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Between 1870 and 1920, many clubs, associations and sisterhoods were founded, bringing together women from a variety of backgrounds, all endowed with an urgency to address a diversity of social concerns. The majority of organizations formed during this period concentrated on matters pertaining to the particular situation of women and their role within the family. While there were indeed certain groups formed during this period dedicated more specifically to an appreciation of literature and fine arts, more prevalent were those devoted to the moral reform of society, philanthropy, immigrant aid, equality in education, and the problem of women's legal and political powerlessness. The women who participated in this mass-scale movement successfully created all-female institutions whereby women could freely socialize and form important and necessary friendships, which often ended women's geographic and domestic isolation. Moreover, these groups provided women with a forum for openly discussing and protesting the current state of society in an industrializing Canada.

Coinciding with the impetus to organize generated by the various men's associations which formed during this period[1], many Canadian women at the turn of the twentieth century were compelled to social action by recognizing that the plight of society's 'disadvantaged' negatively impacted upon all citizens. Others concentrated their efforts on rallying for political power from what was perceived as a corrupt system of government that denied women the right to voice their opinions on an official level. The differentiation between the organizational activities of men and women was largely the result of the prevailing self-perceptions of each gender. The catalyst motivating women to wide-spread activity, creating the urgency to remedy what they perceived as the evils pervading both politics and the general population, was the belief among certain elements of society in the moral superiority of the feminine spirit and the innate ability of women to heal the wounds of society. Whereas men were viewed as the defenders of industry, capital and government, it was expected that women's primary concern should be to safeguard the home and family. Furthermore, this theory held, women had both special nurturing qualities and a purity of being which made them uniquely suited to the task of caring for kith and kin, an attribute which men purportedly did not possess. Early feminists believed that by broadening the definition of family to include all Canadians, a feminine influence extended outside the home could have positive effects on a society suffering from the negative effects of urbanization, industrialization, and large scale immigration. It was the incorporation of these beliefs into their work that has caused this wave of female

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[1]Strong-Boag, "'Setting the Stage'", 87. Here, Strong-Boag provides a brief summary of the nature of men's organizational activities, such as labour and trade unions, religious and professional associations and how this may have impacted upon women's desire to organize.

activism to be characterized by late twentieth century scholars as the "maternal" or "social" feminist movement.[2]

In fact, women in Canada were echoing events occurring in other Western industrialized nations as part of a growing international women's movement for societal and governmental reform[3]. One possible explanation for the successful proliferation of the maternal feminist movement both within Canada and internationally is that by embracing accepted stereotypes of the inherent goodness of femininity, women were able to engage in campaigns for substantial changes to social legislation in ways that were considered appropriate for them, in proper, non-threatening venues such as church basements and private homes. In other words, by not overtly challenging what was considered desirable behaviour for a woman, it is likely that a much larger support base was garnered for many causes that would have been deemed as too threatening to the status quo if not phrased within a domestic discourse. Wendy Mitchinson has demonstrated that early members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union did not reject the dominant 'domestic goddess' ideology, insisting instead that it was exactly the ways in which men and women differed that required an active female presence outside the home. It was only in conceding to the reality that women needed the vote in order to effectively influence government in favour of strict temperance laws that the WCTU began to embrace suffrage, albeit reluctantly, as

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[2]Prentice et al., *Canadian Women: A History, 169.*

[3]The fact that many influential women's groups such as the Dominion Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC), the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the NCJWC were Canadian divisions of larger international organizations, as well as the existence of the International Council of Women (ICW) and the International Council of Jewish Women (ICJW) attests to this phenomenon. See Alison Prentice et al. *Canadian Women: A History.*

a cause. Yet even in doing so the WCTU maintained that it was not amenable to female enfranchisement in order to champion women's individual rights, but rather sought a vote that would enhance the power of women as mothers of the nation to assist in promoting its temperance convictions.[4] Hence, the fight for suffrage was not seen as a means by which to explode gender stereotypes, but to virtually entrench them legally to further a particular cause.

The attachment to a feminine standard was a strong unifying force behind the National Council of Women of Canada. In *Parliament of Women*, Veronica Strong-Boag suggests that justice and equitable treatment for women in all facets of life were at the heart of this national organization. Female suffrage, equality in the justice system, improved access to education, and fair wages for women were among the many campaigns proposed and supported by the NCWC. Although encompassing a vast number of women's groups, the NCWC appealed to a broad spectrum by an adherence to a "common core of femininity."[5], one that did not entail breaking with traditional norms which may have resulted in alienating large sections of its established and potential membership. Thus, while these early feminists did venture into new arenas of female activity by tackling issues such as urban poverty, alcoholism and women's suffrage, they did not pose an immediate challenge to contemporary mores and divisions between the sexes. On the contrary, the feminist resolve to win the vote for women rested in large part

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[4]Wendy Mitchinson, "The WCTU: For God, Home and Native Land: A Study in Nineteenth Century Feminism," in L. Kealey, ed. *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1880-1920s.* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1979), 166.

[5]Strong-Boag, *Parliament of Women*, 7.

on the fact that female enfranchisement was essential to give women a crucial voice in government, thereby enabling the unique attributes of women to cleanse society and make changes to the social system that were deemed necessary. Thus it was in their emphasis on the perceived differences between feminine and masculine that women's quest to reform many social institutions was rendered less threatening to both those in power and to the general public.[6]

While a cursory evaluation of the early feminist movement may seem to indicate a commonality of mission between groups, not only was there a significant divergence between the mandate of most organizations, there even existed certain fundamental disagreements between them[7]. It is in terms of membership composition that the some of the most profound variations are to be found within the women's reform movement. Although many accounts have portrayed the average clubwoman as a white, middle to upper-class Anglo-Saxon Protestant[8], the extent to which this impression is based on a realistic assessment of the women's reform movement has indeed been questioned by many historians. Not only does a failure to look beyond this stereotypical description preclude an investigation into the existence of women's groups that did not exactly fit this mould but, as Eliane Leslau Silverman has illustrated, the very definition of the term

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[6]However, this rhetoric of "difference" did not always preclude a desire for equality with men. For instance, Ellen Dubois, in her book on the American women's suffrage movement, *Feminism and Suffrage*, has stated that despite the fact that winning the vote did not have an immediate effect on solving the difficulties of women's oppression, what is important is that this was the first "independent women's movement" in the U.S. and would have a much greater relevance on women's fight for equality in the late twentieth century than historians have realized.

[7]For example, the WCTU's and YWCA's obstinate opposition to the official non-sectarian ideology of the NCWC. See Veronica Strong-Boag, 'Setting the Stage'.

[8]See Carol Lee Bacchi's *Liberation Deferred?* for a glaring example.

'middle class' is highly problematic, given its vague and often ambiguous usage by scholars.[9] Furthermore, while women's groups whose members belonged to various Protestant denominations have formed the bulk of the analysis on the Canadian women's movement, there has been little investigation into the role played by non-traditional women's associations. Moreover, it would be erroneous to assume that the fervour to organize was restricted to one type of woman. While many women were barred from membership in certain organizations on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion or class, this did not prevent them from establishing their own associations that included women from similar circumstances.[10] These organizations often served as support groups for women who felt systematically discriminated against within Canada, provided newly immigrated women with crucial assistance upon arrival and, perhaps most importantly, enabled women to meet and socialize with others from their own religious or cultural background without fear of reprisals from others.

In the case of Canadian Jewish women, there has been virtually no examination of the role which Judaism played in the early reform movement. While there were several Jewish women's organizations in existence at the turn of the twentieth century, there have been few noteworthy attempts made at incorporating these groups into a broader feminist framework. There is also no indication of the stance of Canadian Jewish women in the female suffrage campaign in general accounts of the movement. In addition, there has been

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[9]Silverman, "Writing Canadian Women's History", 524-5.

[10]Groups such as the Coloured Women's Club of Montreal, La Fédération Nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste, and the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada are but a few examples. See *Canadian Women: A History*, sections 2 and 3 for an excellent discussion on this subject.

no research by either historians of Canadian Jewish women or the early women's movement in Canada which define the nature and extent of any discrimination incurred by Jewish women which prevented them from joining non-Jewish organizations.

Despite this scarcity of literature, accounts which have traced the history of Canadian Jewish women demonstrate that these women were, to a large extent, highly influenced by the attitudes and beliefs prevalent in Canada at the turn of the twentieth century. It has been suggested, for instance, that many Jewish women 'absorbed' the dominant Protestant ideals of femininity of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and reflected these within their philanthropic ventures.[11] It was during this period in Western society, within both the Christian and Jewish faiths, that moral virtue became increasingly identified as "feminine" and the preservation of religion, a "female" pursuit, as women were considered to be more innately spiritual than men and thus, more inclined to promote a righteous social order. Hence, Jewish women began to organize in ways that resembled other Canadians, by establishing several charitable immigrant aid associations and benevolent societies, ones which assisted Jews fleeing pogroms in Eastern Europe and Russia.[12] In other words, these women established philanthropic organizations which enabled them to participate outside the home in a milieu that embodied proper, "domestic" notions of femininity. Charity thus became for Jewish women, a "...logical extension of their family role."[13]

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[11]Draper, "The Role of Canadian Jewish Women in Historical Perspective", 5.

[12]See Arthur Daniel Hart ed., *The Jew in Canada* for an exhaustive list.

[13]Draper and Karlinsky, "Abraham's Daughters", 77.

There are, however, two additional factors central to an examination of Jewish women's involvement in the organizational movement. Far beyond the influence of Protestant reform ideals and more pertinent to a study of Jewish women are, first, the perceptions of women within *halacha*, Jewish religious law, and second, the phenomenon of women's own desire to acculturate into Canadian society while simultaneously striving to uphold a Jewish identity for themselves and their families within the dominant identity. Both elements significantly shaped Jewish women's experience in Canada, motivating them to create organizations specific to the needs of members of their own community.

Traditionally, Judaism has been identified as a family-based religion and women have been assigned the principal role within that particular realm. While in many other cultures the 'domestic sphere' is greatly unrewarded and under-valued, a woman's function in the preservation of the family unit is greatly respected within Judaism.[14] Historically, Jewish women have been socialized into the domestic role of wife and mother, or *Eyshet Hayil*, a proverbial Hebrew term meaning "woman of valour". As such, women have had bestowed upon them the responsibility of maintaining *sholom bayit*, a peaceful home, and the duty of preserving a Jewish identity within that home through ritual observance, such as keeping the Sabbath and Passover. By sustaining this intergenerational religious connection within the family, women have been able to transmit Jewish cultural and religious values to their children.[15] In fact, a woman was often in the

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[14]Adrienne Baker, *The Jewish Woman in Contemporary Society: Transitions and Traditions*, (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 123.

[15]Schlesinger, "Changing Roles of Jewish Women", 61-64.

position of having the most influence over her family's beliefs and value structure. Paula Hyman has stated that "[i]n some ways Jewish women were agents of assimilation: in others, buffers against the disruptive influences of the new society."[16] In other words, Hyman suggests that women have been instrumental in both Jewish cultural preservation and in acculturating themselves and their families to Canadian ways, and by extension, providing the community with its stability and survival.

It has been observed that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the lives of both Jewish and non-Jewish women in Western societies were similar insofar as their identity was associated with and restricted to the family and domesticity, with limitations placed on the chances for activity outside of these confines.[17] However, a closer evaluation of the issues surrounding Jewish women's organizational participation reveals that in certain ways, the identity which these women were prescribed by their cultural and religious backgrounds may have actually facilitated their entry into a more 'public' arena and provided the justification for the formation of female-run organizations which both helped the less fortunate and defended the home. In addition, Jewish women were also motivated by *tzedakah*, a deeply rooted Judaic precept, translated as "righteousness" and interpreted in practical terms as "charity", requiring all Jews to assist the poor and disadvantaged. As Jewish women were expected to fulfil their role as guardians of the familial institution while upholding the tenets of Judaism, the creation of philanthropic

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[16]Paula E. Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representations of Women*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 97.

[17]Draper, "The Role of Canadian Jewish Women", 4.

women's groups was not at all inconsistent with this image. While many groups of Canadian women may have used the concept of separate public and private "spheres" to further political causes and justify their questioning of the Canadian power structure, there appears to have been little contradiction between what was expected of Jewish women at the turn of the twentieth century and their actions within the reform movement. As the position of women within the family was well-established and glorified within Judaism, Jewish women's organizations were viewed within the community as a natural expression of their commitment to furthering a Jewish identity in Canada, providing essential assistance to community members and acting as inspirational mentors by encouraging others to do the same.[18]

Besides the guiding principles of Judaic law, Jewish women's own desire to act as part of a larger Canadian movement for reform in the belief that this would accelerate their acculturation into the dominant society also served as an incentive propelling these women into action. Eliane Leslau Silverman, for instance, has suggested that in the late nineteenth century, young Jewish women's aspirations to become "Canadianized" often meant having to adopt the ideal of "genteel womanhood" in public, despite the empowering messages about women's place in the world they received at home from mothers unacquainted with the Anglo-Saxon notion of "the lady". It was the search for a reconciliation between these conflicting messages that caused Jewish women to organize. On one hand, joining the reform movement gave Jewish women a certain level of acceptance from other Canadian

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[18]See Irving Abella's praise of women's philanthropic efforts in *A Coat of Many Colours*, 117-9.

women, while on the other, it permitted them a genuine "public" voice through which to confront the problems which affected their lives as Jewish women.[19]

Paula Hyman describes the phenomenon of Jewish women being seemingly caught between two cultures as one of the "paradoxes of assimilation". Hyman asserts that while Jewish women did indeed embrace certain aspects of the Protestant Christian model of philanthropy, the form that Jewish charitable endeavours eventually adopted was designed to protect economically disadvantaged Jews who were subject to the proselytizing efforts of Christian missionaries.[20] Hence, Jewish women created culturally specific aid associations in order to shield fellow community members from negative influences of the outside culture, or in other words, these women assisted other Jews in the acculturation process while not forcing them to abandon their Jewish identities. Thus, while charity work brought Jewish women into the same realm as Christian women, these organizations acted as both a vehicle for their own acceptance by other Canadians and as a defence against some of the more hostile elements of life in Canada.

Hannah G. Solomon and the World's Fair of 1893

To evaluate the founding and evolution of the NCJWC, its American origins must be explored. While the key differences between the American and Canadian councils will be demonstrated later in this chapter, there are certain elements of the NCJW's early history and philosophy which influenced Canadian women into creating a division in

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[19]Silverman, "Private Lives, Public People", 50.

[20]Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation*, 31.

Canada four years after the Council's American debut and should be considered. The NCJW's belief in and commitment to the potential of women's collective activity to affect progressive change in society, religious education for women, dedication to both the Jewish community and the general populations, and the pledge to further Jewish life in the United States, all impacted upon the establishment of the Council in a Canadian setting. Thus, in examining the NCJW's initial platform and what this organization strove to accomplish, it is hoped that a deeper understanding of the early development of the Council in Canada will result. Furthermore, as the history of the NCJW has been dutifully told in numerous books and articles, it will not be fully recounted here. Instead, highlights from the early years of the American Council's existence will be used to discern the ideological climate under which the concept of a council of Jewish women was first devised.

It was under the guidance of Hannah Greenbaum Solomon, feminist, organizer and visionary, that the National Council of Jewish Women came into being. Encouraged by the leaders of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, Solomon assembled the first Jewish Women's Congress, which participated as part of the larger Women's Congress at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893. In becoming one of the first Jewish members of the Chicago Women's Club along with her sister Henrietta Frank in 1877, and strongly influenced by the "emancipatory" message of Reform Judaism, Hannah Solomon soon became a staunch proponent of Jewish women's right to equality in education, to engage in professional work and to campaign for social reform[21]

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[21]Linda Gordon Kuzmack, *Woman's Cause*, 32.

In organizing the Jewish Women's Congress, Solomon united a group consisting of mainly economically advantaged German-Jewish women and attempted to foster an environment which would link like-minded women across the United States to a common cause of reform. In addition, prominent community speakers were invited to provide the necessary publicity clout which would encourage strong attendance at the Congress.[22] It was in the midst of this assembly that Sadie American, another prominent Jewish feminist and often considered the most radical of the Council's founders, proposed the formation of a national Jewish women's organization which would serve as a platform for the free exchange of ideas among all American Jewish women. It would provide women the opportunity to study Judaism and engage in essential charitable works for the community such as furnishing Sabbath schools for the children of working-class families, to ensure that no Jewish child would be raised without a religious education.[23] The resulting consensus was that early Jewish feminists were indeed ready to commit to the idea of building a national network of women which would serve to enhance their lives both as Jews and as females. Thus, it was the enthusiastic atmosphere generated at the Jewish Women's Congress of 1893 that encouraged its organizers to found the National Council of Jewish Women.

From the outset, women's religious education was a priority for the Council. As Jewish women had traditionally not been given religious education or training in

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[22]Among the high-profile invitees to the Congress were Ray Frank, the first American Jewish woman preacher and Rebekah Kohut, author and editor of the Jewish women's journal *Helpful Hints*, wife of rabbi and scholar Alexander Kohut.

[23]Gordon Kuzmack, *Woman's Cause*, 33.

childhood, Hannah Solomon proclaimed that both "Philanthropy and Education" would be the hallmarks of the Council's program. It was only through a deeper knowledge and understanding of Judaism that women could adequately assist others within the Jewish community and fully participate in social activism to improve the lives of their fellow citizens. Thus, while the creation of the NCJW heralded the beginning of Jewish women's foray into the world of women's clubs in the United States, it also signalled the hopes for change in women's lives envisioned by its founders. Although the Council was officially non-sectarian and wished to appeal to Jewish women from a variety of religious and cultural backgrounds, it became apparent quite soon after its establishment that the NCJW could not serve the needs of all Jewish women, resulting from the seemingly *avantgarde* nature of many of its ideas which tended to alienate the more conservative elements within the community and prevented a universal acceptance of the organization's message. The NCJW's membership would therefore remain composed of predominantly German Reform Jews until well into the twentieth century.

It seemed almost destiny then, that throughout its formative years, the NCJW would be no stranger to controversy. Although Reform Judaism's emphasis on modernization, acculturation and the need for changes to certain ritualistic practices enabled these women to explore opportunities outside the traditional female domain, these tendencies also drew harsh criticism from those who opposed what they perceived as "...Reform's apparent devaluation of Jewish law and custom."[24] Despite these objections, the NCJW remained committed to religious study, eventually leading its members to seek

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[24]Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting*, 3.

voting rights for women in the synagogue and increased participation in ritual during religious ceremonies. Moreover, this newly-formed enlightenment on the part of the Council's members created strong support for the aims of the women's movement in the United States, most notably the female suffrage campaign, thus creating a reputation for the NCJW as America's first "politically conscious" Jewish women's institution.[25]

Perhaps no event illustrates more explicitly the extent to which the NCJW found itself caught up in the ideological debates between the Orthodox, Conservative and Reform forces for hegemony over the American Jewish community than the Sunday Sabbath controversy of 1896, an episode which almost led to the early demise of the NCJW. In an attempt to prevent the increasingly rapid assimilation of Judaism into American culture, there was a movement from within the Reform synagogue to change the Sabbath from its historical place on Saturday, to Sunday. It was hoped that by aligning the Sabbath with the traditional secular "Day of Rest" the effect would be a marked increase in both Sabbath observance and synagogue attendance. Reform rabbis, namely Emil G. Hirsch, supported this move and encouraged Hannah Solomon and other Council members to do the same.[26]

The result was nearly fatal for the NCJW. At the Council's first Triennial meeting, a vote was held on a resolution of whether to support or reject the Sunday Sabbath proposal. The debate which ensued quickly polarized Council members into two camps,

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[25]Gordon Kuzmack, *Woman's Cause*, 32-4.

[26]See Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting*, chapter 4 for a further discussion of this watershed event in the Council's history.

those who, along with certain Reform groups, agreed with the proposal and felt it an effective solution to the lack of religiosity among America's Jewry and others who, backed by religious traditionalists, considered the move sacrilege and an insult to the basic precepts of Judaism. The aftermath of this issue was not only the severity of the divisions it created amongst the Council's membership, but the end of any notion of the NCJW ever serving as a voice for all Jewish women. The Sunday Sabbath controversy remained unresolved until well into the pre-World War One period, when the Council was forced to turn its focus from its self-perceived role of "Saviour of American Judaism", to a program devoted strictly to social welfare and immigrant aid, a decision which effectively ended the Council's involvement in struggles over religious doctrine within the American Jewish community.[27]

Although immigrant aid had always been a feature of the Council's mandate, it would be this work in particular that would come, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, to rejuvenate and restore confidence in the NCJW's program in the eyes of those women who had shied away from it years earlier. The success of the Council's immigrant aid program was based on two factors: not only was its focus centred on the specific needs of women and children in the immigration process, but the Council's leadership was careful to avoid replicating services which already existed, thus accentuating the uniqueness of the NCJW.[28] Hence, the commitment to immigrant aid work became the

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[27] *ibid.*

[28] *ibid,* 130.

new thrust of the Council's philosophy, a service which would be delivered, in the words of Hannah Solomon which became the Council's credo, "With Faith and Humanity".

It has been postulated by Linda Gordon Kuzmack that Jewish women's desire for acceptance into American women's clubs was reflective of these women's need for a more profound sense of acculturation into American society. Not only did such membership ensure Jewish women an improvement in social standing in the eyes of their Christian sisters, but it permitted them to engage in philanthropic works in conjunction with women with whom they shared a commonality of purpose.[29] With the advent of a national organization of Jewish women, however, they could now affect changes in a specifically Judaic tradition, while still maintaining a place in the larger women's reform movement.

The extent to which the NCJW actually impacted upon the status of women within the Jewish community has been the subject of several studies. According to Faith Rogow, the Council was limited in its ability to alter the *status quo* for women as it clung heavily to traditional notions of femininity as a justification for its "public" activities. Furthermore, even while the NCJW did help to shape the idea of an "American Jewish Womanhood", it did not significantly challenge women's status within the Jewish community.[30] In other words, by virtue of upholding contemporary stereotypes of the maternal role, Rogow states that the women of the NCJW did not pose a threat to the established and severely limited definitions of masculine and feminine. The Council ultimately provided these

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[29]Gordon Kuzmack, *Women's Cause*, 30.

[30]Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting*, 4.

women with a way to "Americanize" while retaining a Jewish identity, without explicitly challenging the accepted definitions of gender.

The implication that the NCJW made little progress in addressing power issues within the American Jewish community has prompted scholars such Deborah Grand Golomb to suggest that assigning a feminist label to describe the Council's organizers is problematic as these women would most likely have rejected the feminist label, their self-identification as Jews coming before their gender identity.[31] Nevertheless, Gordon Kuzmack maintains that this traditionalism was more likely a survival tactic, a way for Jewish women to avoid the scourge of anti-Semites who portrayed Jews as a separate people and racially "alien". By downplaying any outwardly radical stances on gender issues, Jewish women were expressly diverting controversy that may have left them susceptible to attacks from groups searching to vilify American Jews.[32] Therefore, according to Gordon Kuzmack it was expedience and not necessarily religious doctrine that caused Jewish women to embrace secular concepts of womanhood.

While scholarly interpretations of the socio-political orientation of NCJW leaders do not indicate a general consensus of opinion on the motivations of early Council leaders, a clearer understanding of the significance of the founding of the Council for American Jewish women may be found in the words of its founder Hannah Solomon. It was Solomon who, when commenting upon the impact of belonging to a council of Jewish women, stated that ""to join an organization of 'women' - not ladies - and one which bore

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[31]See the discussion of Deborah Grand Golomb in *Woman's Cause*, 3.

[32]*ibid*, "Introduction", 1-6.

the title 'club' rather than 'society,' was in itself a radical step.'"[33] Thus, armed with the visions of progress and change, the members of the NCJW were encouraged to take their rightful place within the early American women's movement.

The NCJWC: An American Idea in a Canadian Context

Although immigrant aid work became a prominent feature of the American NCJW only after 1910, it was this aspect of the Council's program that was to be the initial focus of the NCJWC. To understand the context under which the NCJWC was formed it is necessary to examine the history of Jewish communal aid in Canada.

The Jews at the beginning of the twentieth century already had a small, established community in the urban centres of Toronto and Montreal. In fact, Jewish immigration to Canada had begun in the late eighteenth century, albeit in small numbers, making Jews one of the earliest immigrant groups on the Canadian frontier. The uniqueness of the Jewish community lies in the fact that they are identified as both a religious community and ethnic group. However, the nature of this community has been altered over the course of its history in Canada, subject to fluctuations in ethnic composition and religious affiliation. The period from 1880 to 1920 has been the most significant in this respect, with record numbers of Jewish immigrants arriving in Canada, fleeing pogroms in Eastern Europe and Russia. During this period, the community grew from approximately 2,500 in 1880, to over 100,000 by the eve of the First World War. The mass influx of Yiddish-speaking

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[33]Hannah G. Solomon, quoted in Beth S. Wenger, "Jewish Women and Voluntarism: Beyond the Myth of Enablers", 25.

Eastern European Jews had the effect of permanently transforming the character of Canadian Jewry which until then had been predominantly Western European and fully Anglicized.[34] At least initially, these changes created a two-tiered community in Canada: on one hand were the "Establishment" Jewry whose members tended towards wealth and a high degree of acculturation into Canadian society and on the other hand, the newer, poverty-stricken immigrants who were culturally different in outlook from the Establishment and in utter economic desperation.

Despite the socio-economic, cultural and linguistic divergence between them, however, Canadian Jews responded to the challenge of caring for the newcomers in the tradition of *tzedakah* by establishing immigrant aid societies. These groups assisted new immigrants financially, facilitating their search for employment, helping to prevent the extreme poverty and destitution that would have occurred in the absence of this support. In Canada, until well into the twentieth century, the burden of relief services and immigrant assistance fell to individual communities, private charities, benevolent individuals, churches and synagogues rather than being administered at the state level. Furthermore, depending upon the degree of need, a heavy reliance on support from the community level could often result in chaotic and disorganized distribution of that aid. Gerald Tulchinsky has suggested that prior to 1890, this was in fact the case of the Jewish community of Montreal. The burden of supplying relief for desperate immigrants arriving by the thousands was often too much to bear for ill-equipped immigrant aid groups and

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[34]Abella, *A Coat of Many Colours*, 103.

sometimes led to resentment between the established community and the new arrivals.[35] Nevertheless, highly successful immigrant aid societies were established during this period, remarkably performing what undoubtedly must have often seemed a daunting task. The Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society of Montreal was formed in 1847, later to be re-named the Baron de Hirsch Institute in 1900 after the generous patronage of the Baron Maurice de Hirsch, a highly regarded Jewish philanthropist, who, over a lifetime, donated millions of dollars to Jewish communities around the world. The Jewish Emigration Aid Society (JEAS) was established in 1881, the predecessor of the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society (JIAS), which was founded several years later in 1920. All of these groups assisted immigrants materially and financially in their quest for survival in Canada. Yet perhaps even more importantly, through their philanthropic ventures, these organizations helped to forge a collective identity within the Jewish community, one which included both the existing population and the newcomers to Canada.[36]

It has been suggested that Jewish communal infrastructure has had a tendency to be more highly developed than that of other ethnic groups. For instance, in their work, Paula Draper and Janice Karlinsky have posited that as Jews were coming from countries in which they had already experienced minority status, these people had "...a pre-established minority mentality and frameworks for cultural and religious institutions.",

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[35]See Gerald Tulchinsky, "Immigration and Charity in the Montreal Jewish Community Before 1890", in *Immigration in Canada: Historical Perspectives*, Gerald Tulchinsky, ed., (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman Ltd., 1994), 154-176.

[36]Joseph Kage, *With Faith and Thanksgiving*, 52-55.

more so than most immigrant groups coming to Canada.[37] When viewed from this perspective then, the leaders of the Jewish community were most likely in an more advantageous position to ensure the well-being of its members vis-à-vis many other ethnic communities in Canada. Hence, organizations such as the Baron de Hirsch Institute and the JIAS were able to act effectively when confronting Jewish immigrant issues in the Canadian situation.

The contributions that were made to the plight of starving immigrants notwithstanding, these organizations were operated by and, to a large extent, dominated by men of the Jewish community. The focus of these organizations was generally directed toward the economic stability of the family unit. However, many women of the Establishment felt that immigrant women had specific needs resulting from their roles as wives, mothers and homemakers that were not, and could not be adequately addressed by existing aid societies. Although groups such as the Ladies' Hebrew Benevolent Society and the Ladies' Montefiore Benevolent Society enabled women to assist in the distribution of aid, they acted primarily as auxiliaries of larger men's organizations, rarely having the ability to dispense funds in areas where they deemed it essential, and never assigned any decision making power in that area. As Jewish women of the late nineteenth century had developed their own philosophy of benevolence which emphasized the necessity of focussing on the emotional well-being of families, not just on immediate material needs, they were becoming increasingly discontent with serving as adjuncts to male-dominated institutions. Hence, women in the Canadian Jewish community embarked upon creating

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[37]Draper and Karlinsky, 76.

separate philanthropic organizations which would specifically address women's immigration issues.[38] The establishment of the NCJWC was a result of these aspirations.

The Council was founded in Toronto in 1897 by Meldola de Sola, wife of a distinguished Montreal rabbi. Encouraging a group of women from the Ladies' Montefiore Benevolent Society[39] to establish a section of the Council of Jewish Women following the principles set forth by Hannah Solomon of the NCJW, de Sola created the first independent Jewish women's organization in Canada. As the newly-created Toronto Section was to be an affiliate of the NCJW and not an independent organization, the chapter was required to pay membership dues to the American Council, receiving financial assistance for its activities and program directives in return. Commencing with only 20 members, the NCJWC embarked on its modest program of "Philanthropy and Education" by holding twice-monthly religious study groups in private homes and organizing a sewing school at the Holy Blossom Synagogue. By the first two decades of the twentieth century, however, and with an ever-increasing membership, the Council began to engage primarily in social welfare work, placing the educational aspects of the Council's mandate

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[38]Draper, 5-6.

[39]Hart, *The Jew in Canada*, 244. Although certain members of the LMBS left to join the NCJWC, the former continued to operate until well into the twentieth century. Also, there is no historical data to indicate why de Sola selected the women of this group in particular to form a Council section. One possibility is that as it was one of the few women's groups in the Toronto Jewish community, the members of the LMBS were the most obvious candidates. The LMBS had been organized in 1878 shortly after the construction of the Holy Blossom Synagogue in Toronto, and was devoted to charitable aid in the Jewish community. Although the first few years of the LMBS' existence were marked by a limited necessity for charity work in the Toronto community, resulting not only from the small size of the community but also from the relative lack of poverty amongst its Jewish families, this situation would change dramatically as the influx of immigrants into the Toronto area in 1882-3 created an emergency situation wherein the assistance of this women's group became indispensable. By the 1890's the immigrant situation had become increasingly acute and more aid was required. It would be in this area that the Council would carve out its niche in the Canadian Jewish landscape.

temporarily aside, concentrating instead on raising funds for immigrant relief, and establishing a Junior Council for adolescent girls who were drawn to the message of the NCJWC and felt a need to participate in the Council's activities in their own right.[40]

The women of the NCJWC became concerned, first and foremost, with assisting Eastern European immigrants in adapting to Canadian life. What prompted this action was the belief that only through immigrant integration and support would prejudice against Jews be minimized. As Council women had successfully acculturated themselves into the dominant culture, it was essential to help others accomplish the same. Thus, immigrant Jewish women were urged to transmit Canadian values to their children.[41] To this end, a program of "immigrant adjustment" was instituted, including English language instruction, along with naturalization and citizenship classes with the expectation that this would encourage new immigrants to become fully Canadian.

It would not be an understatement to suggest that the origins of the NCJWC were not as illustrious as those of the NCJW. Unlike the Council of the US, there were no Canadian equivalents to the colourful and controversial figures of either Hannah Solomon or Sadie American. While Mrs. de Sola helped to found the Toronto section there is a virtual absence of historical evidence which might reveal either her motivations for establishing a division of the Council in Canada or this woman's personal influence over

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[40]National Council of Jewish Women of Canada, *Golden Book for Golden Anniversary: National Council of Jewish Women of Canada, 1897-1947.* (n.d.).

[41]OJHS, RG4.08 NC (National Council of Jewish Women), vol. VII, Yearbooks, 1945, 19.

the development of the fledgling group.[42] Despite this paucity, there are certain circumstantial reasons which may explain why the NCJWC evolved in a different manner than its American equivalent.

The NCJW was founded by Reform Jews who wished to build a national organization of Jewish women that would spread 'Enlightenment' ideas throughout the Jewish community, thereby awakening its members to religiously-based gender inequities. In Canada, however, Reform Judaism did not yet have a stronghold. While Reform had made a modest impact upon the Toronto community by the 1870's resulting from the arrival of American immigrants fleeing economic hardship in the United States, Orthodoxy continued to be the dominant religion.[43] Furthermore, the period of mass Jewish immigration from 1880 to 1920 served to reinforce the traditionalist character of Judaism in Canada as the overwhelming majority of the people arriving from Eastern Europe and Russia were religiously Orthodox. Although there was a small German Reform Jewish element in Toronto, it was never as proportionally strong vis-à-vis the remainder of the Canadian community as in the United States and was therefore relatively uninfluential.

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[42]There were two difficulties inherent in researching the NCJWC's early history. Although a highly significant women's organization, no archival records exist prior to the mid-1930's. Furthermore, the existing accounts of its history are publications written by actual members of the Council and therefore reflect only the historical memory of these members. While the chronology appears correct, the facts may be somewhat distorted. Secondly, prior to 1965, all documents containing the names of Council members are listed by husband's first and last names only. Every effort will be made, however, to use the women's own names in this thesis. Where it was impossible to determine the name of an individual member, the husband's name will remain.

[43]Speisman, *Jews of Toronto*, 31-2. Speisman discusses the existence of conflict between Reform and Orthodox members of the community in the mid to late-nineteenth century, but never to the extent present in the American situation.

Therefore, without the strong overtones of Reform Judaism to propel their organization in the direction of a more vocal, activist stance, the NCJWC retained a more religiously "conservative" identity than its American counterpart. In fact, it appears that religious affiliation was not attached as great an importance within the Canadian Council as in the NCJW. As the original precepts of the NCJW, as established by Hannah Solomon, stated that no Jewish woman was to be denied membership in the Council on the basis of religious beliefs[44], religious divisions appear to have been downplayed in the NCJWC in favour of a more ecumenical approach. In absence of an overt Reform message in Canada then, the NCJWC's commitment to Judaism was in its entirety.[45]

The Council eventually expanded to include 12 sections across Canada by the mid-twentieth century, however it would take more than twenty years for a second section to open. In 1918, the Montreal section of the NCJWC was founded by Amy Jacobs and Miriam Arnold, the latter being a section organizer from the NCJW. Two theories have been offered to explain this curious delay in the Council's expansion. Ethel Vineberg has suggested that de Sola was unsuccessful in her bid to open a Council section in Montreal resulting from fact that as the Baron de Hirsch Institute was such a dominant presence in the area of immigrant aid in that city, it was likely deemed that another organization of this type would result in a duplication of services.[46]

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[44]National Council of Jewish Women of Canada, *Golden Book for Golden Anniversary, 1897-1947* (n.d.).

[45]NCJWC documents, both from the early and later periods, do not indicate an attachment to any particular Jewish denomination, but instead seem to emphasize "totality" of Judaism in Canada.

[46]Vineberg, 10. This is a spurious explanation which does not account for the possibility that a women's organization founded on the principles of Reform Judaism may have been objectionable to the more Orthodox members of the Montreal community. Furthermore, as the Council's philanthropic philosophy was

A more recent and indeed, more plausible explanation has been offered by Stuart Rosenberg, who has proposed that the twenty one-year lapse between the Toronto and Montreal openings was largely a result of fear on the part of the "essentially conservative" Jewry of Montreal to the development of an independent Jewish women's organization.[47] Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, the Council continued to develop and evolve within Canada, eventually attracting thousands of Jewish women through its distinctive focus on the Canadian Jewish community.

The focus of the NCJWC has always been to serve the needs of the Canadian Jewish and general communities. This is the most significant of the many aspects that makes the Council unique amongst Jewish women's organizations. The importance of the NCJWC to the membership in the early stages of its development was that through participation in the Council, women were able to maintain a Jewish identity within a Canadian framework. While the two positions could often be contradictory, the Council's success was in its ability to enable women to create a distinctive Jewish Canadian reality for themselves; acting as full participants in Canadian society, while not forsaking their cultural personae. Faith Rogow has concluded that one element which attracted women to the NCJW was that it provided them with "...a way to Americanize without sacrificing Jewish identity"[48]. This view can be extended to the Council in Canada as well, as the

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to ensure that its social welfare services were unique, it is unlikely that there were already 'sufficient' services of this type available in Montreal.

[47]Rosenberg, *Jewish Community in Canada*, vol. II, 76.

[48]Rogow, 2.

desire of its members to balance their Canadian and Jewish identities has and indeed continues to be a prominent feature of the NCJWC.

While Meldola de Sola had undoubtedly envisioned that the Toronto section would adhere closely to Hannah Solomon's concept, this group evolved in a substantively different way from its American counterpart. While self-education and philanthropy may have been the initial directives of the NCJW, the Canadian Council soon became devoted almost exclusively to immigrant aid and the general integration and acculturation of new immigrants.[49] The Council of the United States was concerned in its earliest years with the plight of women and their political powerlessness within the Jewish community, yet by contrast, the earliest manifestation of the NCJWC witnessed a downplaying of these tendencies in favour of extensive communal relief efforts, as there was an urgent need in the Toronto community for this type of assistance. Further, while the NCJW attempted to reach all women of the American Jewish community, albeit unsuccessfully, such was not the case at the founding of the Toronto section. The earliest membership of the Canadian Council was drawn exclusively from Reform Establishment women of British descent who do not appear to have recruited others into their ranks, however, this would in fact change by the 1950s.[50]

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[49]Vineberg, *History of the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada*, 17.

[50]The lack of primary documents for this early period makes determining the exact nature of the differences between the Canadian and American Councils difficult. While in Canada, British Jews took the place of German Reform Jews in forming the NCJWC, the exact reason why "equal rights" initiatives were muted in Canada at that time seems to stem from the generally more Conservative and Orthodox character of Canadian Jews, as opposed to their more Reformist American neighbours. See Yael Gordon-Brym, "The Changing Role of Canadian Jewish Women".

While critiques of the NCJWC have tended to focus on what is perceived as the 'un-feminist' stance of this organization[51], this inference is based upon a faulty interpretation of the Council's activities in two ways: not only are these criticisms founded on a limited and rather ambiguous definition of the term 'feminism' but, while the NCJWC may have demonstrated ambivalence toward broader women's causes in the late nineteenth century, this was certainly not the case in later years of the Council's development, with substantial changes in focus occurring in the post-Second World War period. In declaring categorically that the NCJWC has been unsympathetic to feminist causes these authors are implying that this organization has remained stagnant throughout its existence and unresponsive to the needs of its members, both of which are false assumptions.

The Council's immigrant aid program was a well-conceived and comprehensive plan of action to assist newcomers to Canada in virtually all facets of life. For instance, members of the NCJWC visited hospitals and acted as interpreters for Jewish patients with limited English-language skills. In keeping with the Council's female focus, programs were initiated that included a recreational summer camp for girls, a "Big Sister" committee, designed to help immigrant mothers deal with parenting difficulties which often arose as a result of "cultural" disparities, in addition to providing milk for undernourished children, as well as volunteer assistance at local Jewish orphanages. The NCJWC also had keen interest in assisting Jewish girls and young women in finding lost overseas relatives, aiming

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[51]See Paula Draper and Janice Karlinsky's, "Abraham's Daughters", for instance.

to reunite families by bringing them to Canada with the assistance of other Jewish immigrant aid societies.

The World War One era witnessed the devotion of the Council's members to patriotic causes as well. The Council's Toronto headquarters were transformed into a Red Cross Centre, sewing rooms for soldiers' uniforms were established and supplies were collected to send to those in combat. This war-time mobilization gave the NCJWC a tremendous amount of positive public exposure and caused a post-war surge in membership, to over 700 women nationally by the early 1920s.[52] The post-war period was also a time of consolidation for the Council's platform, with the development of a detailed of program of guiding principles entitled the "Five-Point Program of Positive Action", including service to the foreign born, social legislation, social welfare, contemporary Jewish affairs and international relations.[53]

The two decades following the First World War saw a virtual cessation of Jewish immigration to Canada and a decline in the necessity for immigrant aid services. It was during this period that the Council witnessed the growth of its identity beyond that of group devoted almost exclusively to immigrant assistance, to an influential organization capable of exerting itself politically. The most significant date in this respect came in 1934, when the Council broke away from its parent organization in the United States. Although from the time of its inception in 1897 the NCJWC had close ties with its parent organization, by the 1930's it was apparent that the Council in Canada had developed a

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[52]*Golden Book.*

[53]OJHS, RG4.08 NC (National Council of Jewish Women), vol. VII, Yearbooks, 1945, 19.

distinct identity from that of the NCJW and no longer wished to be subject to the dictates of the American Council. This movement for independence, spearheaded by Irene Samuel, president of the Toronto section, was raised at the 1931 Triennial Meeting of the NCJW in Detroit, where it was met with resistance by several American members. It was suggested that the Canadian Council, although it had already formed nine sections, was not large enough to be self-supporting and must remain part of the NCJW. Nevertheless, the Canadian delegation held firm to its position that in order to formulate a common program, unite the Canadian members of the Council under one banner and ensure the organization's survival, a break with the US was essential. Although it would take almost three years, by 1934, a separate Canadian Division was established. While the decision was made to remain affiliated with the American Council, the new division would be free to develop a program in keeping with its own vision.[54]

The first Triennial meeting of the newly-formed Canadian Division took place in Winnipeg in 1937, where delegations from all nine Council sections were present. To mark the occasion, and more significantly, to define the NCJWC's position and status within the North American Council movement, Irene Samuel, first National president, dedicated the following words to all Canadian members:

> The first Conference of Canadian Jewish Women,... must be viewed as a significant step in the development of Council in Canada. Future objectives clarified through personal contact and discussion will aim at adaptation, wherever possible, of the program of the National Council of Jewish

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[54]Vineberg, 18-20.

> Women, the Mother Organization, leaving scope however for activities requiring differentiation because of Canadian conditions and needs.[55]

Hence, the pre-World War Two era was a very active one for the Canadian Council. Not only did this organization reach a level of self-awareness which enabled it to become an independent member of Jewish women's organizational movement, but it came to identify itself as a genuine force in the Canadian Jewish community.

Despite its break with the American Council, the NCJWC would continue to acknowledge its American origins, recalling the legacy of Hannah Solomon and her words of wisdom to support its efforts in the Canadian community. The developments of the Second World War and the birth of the nation of Israel would influence the outlook of this organization, and witness the growing political consciousness of its membership.

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[55]OJHS, RG4.08 NC (National Council of Jewish Women), vol. VI, Newsletters, Canadian Newsletter, June 1937, 1.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NCJWC'S OTTAWA SECTION: A COUNCIL PRESENCE IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL

Throughout its existence, the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada has carefully fostered and maintained an identity as a group created to provide Jewish women with the opportunity to participate in activities which would enable them to fulfil their religious obligations and strengthen their Judaic beliefs. The Council has always striven to incorporate every aspect of its members lives into its program by developing an integrated plan and philosophy of self-education, philanthropy and social action. The ability of the NCJWC to appeal to Jewish women from a variety of circumstances and permit them to partake fully in vital Council projects both within the Jewish and general Canadian communities has been a hallmark of the NCJWC and a tremendous source of pride for both the organization's executive and the general membership as well. The period commencing with the Second World War and lasting through to the mid-1980s in particular witnessed the maturation and solidification of the Council's distinctive Canadian emphasis and saw the greatest membership expansion since its inception in 1897. It has been the Council's firm commitment to upholding a Canadian focus and a dedication to addressing the issues affecting Canada's Jews which has made the NCJWC unique among Canadian Jewish women's organizations. As a result of this mandate, the Council has, through its many study groups and workshops, demonstrated a strong conviction to

furthering an understanding amongst its members of the responsibilities of Canadian citizenship and the importance of upholding democratic rights and freedoms. Furthermore, the NCJWC has provided Jewish women with a multitude of opportunities to participate as part of a larger collective effort to propose and support legislation which would institute affirmative policies regarding such issues as human rights protection for minority groups, gerontology, fair employment practices, nuclear disarmament and penal reform. Through such activities, the NCJWC has endowed Canadian Jewish women with a voice unlike any other organization in Canada. Whereas organizations such as Canadian Hadassah-WIZO and Pioneer Women's Organization (Na'amat) provided Jewish women with a means to express their support of Israel and have served as vehicles for many women to enter the Zionist movement[1], the NCJWC has retained its identity as group focused on Canadian Jewry. While Israeli social welfare projects did eventually constitute a fundamental component of the Council's program after 1948, there is no indication that Zionism was ever a precondition for a woman's acceptance into the NCJWC. Instead, the Council has chosen to remain a group which appeals to a broad spectrum of Jewish women whose concerns originate from a desire to affect change in people's lives wherever that need is deemed essential. Thus, as the Council recognizes the monumental significance of the rise of Israel for Jewry throughout the world, it has never lost sight of

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[1]For further information on Canadian Hadassah and Pioneer Women's Organization, see Esther Waterman, ed., *Golden Jubilee: Canadian Hadassah-WIZO, 1917-1967.* (Montreal: Canadian Hadassah-WIZO, 1967), and Janice Karlinsky, "The Pioneer Women's Organization: A Case Study of Jewish Women in Toronto" (M.A. thesis, University of Toronto, 1979).

its original purpose as an organization concerned with improving the situation of Jews in Canada.

The NCJWC has always considered itself an organization dedicated to furthering social justice and equality for all humanity. Hence, an awareness of the legislative processes which directly affected the lives of Canadians was considered a responsibility of Council membership. To that end, a program devoted to examining legislation was established in the Canadian Council in 1911, immediately following the formal adoption of this idea at the Sixth Triennial of the NCJW in the United States.[2] While the American Council demonstrated an immediate interest in legislative activities, in Canada, the reality was that not until the late 1940s would "Social Legislation" study groups and committees actually become a visible and active part of the standing Council program, this interest undoubtedly arising in response to the post-war atmosphere in which the horrors of the Holocaust propelled an international re-examination of human rights issues and fuelled a deep concern over the persistence of racial and ethnic hatred in Western society. As the early decades of the twentieth century were trying times for the Canadian Jewish community given the enormity of the immigrant aid resources required, the delay in the NCJWC's participation in legislative issues likely resulted from the significant immigrant aid obligations already incumbent upon the Council during this period.

An evaluation of the activities created and the rhetoric used by Council members indicates that Jewish women did not sit idle in the years following the Second World War,

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[2]Canadian Jewish Congress National Archives (CJCNA) - MA4, Box 006, Public Affairs - Correspondence - Study Discussion Program - Public Affairs Study Guide, 1.

but were involved in numerous ventures which aimed at addressing crucial questions which affected humanity on a global level. Thus, in many respects it is difficult to speak of a "hiatus" in the women's movement when seen in light of the fact that the more overtly political activities of the NCJWC came into fruition in the 1940s and 1950s, several years prior to what has been titled the "Second-Wave" feminist movement. As the authors of *Canadian Women: A History* have suggested, despite the negative portrayals of women's volunteering in general which began to appear in the 1950s, the reality was that women's organizational activity in the post-WWII era in large part "...formed the bridge to the resurgent feminism of the late 1960s."[3]

Ultimately, the NCJWC served a duality of purpose in the lives of its members. The Council provided Jewish women with the means to act politically in a diversity of ways to facilitate the lives of other Canadians. They reaffirmed their commitment to Judaism and fulfilled their religious obligations which came through engaging in selfless acts of benevolence. The Council acted as a bridge between the Jewish and general communities of Canada and, as its members discovered, helping those outside of their own cultural group presented no contradiction to their personal belief structures. On the contrary, membership in the NCJWC actually enabled these women to further their dedication to Judaism by satisfying its commandments through helping all peoples. Commenting on the NCJWC's success and its value within the Canadian Jewish community, Mozah Zemans, the Council's national president in 1963, summarized the mission of the organization by declaring that "Through the totality of our program, we

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[3]Prentice et al., 331.

offer Jewish women the opportunity to live their Judaism, through a personal commitment to develop their self potential, and to use their individual strengths collectively for the total benefit of mankind."[4] In other words, the Council enabled Jewish women to explore the depths of their religious commitment and translate that devotion into collective action which assisted others. Moreover, the appeal of the NCJWC was not found simply in the expansiveness of its program, but in the "flexibility" inherent in Council membership as well. As Council women were at liberty to decide what their personal contribution to Jewish life would be, they were free to engage in the activities which suited their particular interests, whether that be volunteering in homes for the aged or fighting for women's rights on Parliament Hill. Thus, a woman was not bound to participate in all the NCJWC's programs, but rather was encouraged to take part in just a few of the many opportunities to express her Judaism available through the Council, while remaining committed to the greater cause of the organization.

This chapter will explore the post-WWII history of the NCJWC, as seen through the lens of the Ottawa section. In assessing this section's history, its development and function within the broader organization, the significance of the NCJWC to Jewish women, to the Jewish community and to other groups within Canada will be established. This analysis will demonstrate the close relationship between the Ottawa Section and the National executive, how the section's policy and directives were largely formed at the National level, and how the history of the Ottawa Section is inextricably tied to the history of the broader organization. It is difficult, therefore, to recount the activities of the Ottawa

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[4] CJCNA - MA4, Box 002, Minutes from 12 Biennial Convention, 2-4.

Section in absence of the larger picture of the Council's post-war history. Furthermore, the limitations of the primary sources used in this research were also key in determining how the section's history would be presented in this chapter. In general, the Ottawa Section documents, including minutes, yearbooks and bulletins were largely devoid of any indication of whether major projects reflected the interest of just a few individuals, or were implemented as a result of wide-scale discussion and debate. Absent as well was any evidence of division or dissent within the membership ranks in opposition to either the realization or format of Council activities. There is little indication as to why particular projects were initiated, except that the directives to do so came from the National office. While the National biennial reports are more revealing in terms of specifying the importance of certain projects for the entire organization, once again, these documents do not reveal the exact nature of the decision making process at either the National level or elsewhere.

Despite the difficulties inherent in the source documents, it is possible to trace the history of the Ottawa section from its beginnings in 1944 through to its closing in 1995. The role of the Ottawa section in the Council's various programs will be examined, the theme of cooperation and collective action will be explored, and an evaluation will be made as to how official Council directives from the National office manifested themselves into local, community-based initiatives by individual sections.

The Council's Ottawa Section: A History

The Second World War was a period of profound challenge for the NCJWC. Not only was the Council's support required to send supplies to Canadian soldiers on the battlefront, but thousands of displaced persons throughout Europe were in dire need of material and emotional assistance as well. The women of the NCJWC rose to meet these wartime demands in the Council's tradition of dedication to upholding democracy and citizenship responsibilities. The magnitude and expansiveness of their war-assistance program demonstrates the commitment of these women to ensuring not only the success of Canadian troops overseas, but that those who remained at home were not neglected as well.

Beginning in 1939, the Council developed a "War Effort" program[5] which included a wide range of services on both the national and international levels. Throughout Canada, Council sections created Red Cross Sewing rooms to make children's clothing and quilts, collected toys to be shipped overseas as part of the 'Bundles for Britain' campaign, and gathered supplies and necessities for "Comfort Boxes" to be sent to Jewish soldiers on the front lines of battle. The NCJWC was also active in efforts to raise funds in support of the war, donated Mobile Blood Donor Clinics to be operated in each Canadian province for the collection of blood plasma, and collected drugs and other medical supplies to be sent to Europe and China. At home, the Council implemented child care services for women

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[5]The War Effort program was a distinctly Canadian idea. Whereas many of the Council's programs had been developed following American initiatives, Ethel Vineberg has stated that had an independent Canadian Division not been established in 1934, the NCJWC would have not been permitted to engage in wartime endeavours as long as the United States maintained its neutrality in WWII. See Vineberg, 26.

working in the paid labour force during wartime, established "Service Centres" in various cities throughout the country to provide returning soldiers and those in the barracks with entertainment in the form of parties, and helped to create a peaceful "home" environment for wounded servicemen and women by donating libraries to rehabilitation centres across Canada, in partnership with the I.O.D.E. and the YMCA.[6]

Yet the NCJWC's wartime program was not limited solely to providing basic assistance to those affected by combat. One project with which the Council was greatly involved was ensuring the rescue of male Italian, German and Jewish students who, although living in Great Britain as war was declared on Germany, had been sent to Canada to be interned in camps as 'enemy aliens'. Acting in cooperation with the Canadian Jewish Congress, the NCJWC worked tirelessly to find homes for these men, whose release the Canadian government stated was conditional upon receiving individual sponsorship from Canadian families. Further, in keeping with their philosophy of immigrant aid, the Council was also involved with facilitating the integration of these men into Canadian society.[7]

The success of the Council's philanthropic endeavours during this period can not be exaggerated. Organizers took painstaking care to ensure that the War Efforts program touched all facets of life during this period and as a result, demonstrated to other Canadians the extent to which women's collective action could make a significant impact upon the lives of others during times of emergency and crisis. In the midst of this

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[6]See OJHS, RG4.08 NC, vol. II, Bulletins 1944-49 (Incomplete) nos. 2-7 and *Golden Book for Golden Anniversary.*

[7]Vineberg, 26-7.

atmosphere of unified response, the Council began examining its prospects for expansion into cities where Jewish communities were sizeable enough to warrant a section of the NCJWC, both to amass even greater support for the Council's activities and to help strengthen the bonds between Jewish women across the country.

It was as a result of the Council's desire to broaden its national profile that the Ottawa Section was formed. Prior to the Second World War, it was becoming apparent to the National executive that a Council section was needed in the Nation's capital city, not only to serve the needs of the growing Ottawa Jewish community, but also to act as part of an expanding Council project to encourage an interest in the legislative process and promote active participation in Canadian social legislation. Thus, as a consequence of its geographic location, it was envisioned that a section in Ottawa would serve the function of overseeing the legislative process for the Council, acting as an advisory body or "Listening Post"[8] for the National executive.

The Ottawa Section of the NCJWC was formed in March 1944, after a small local women's group, the Ottawa Jewish Juniors, resolved to collapse its existing organization and become instead an official section of the Council.[9] Amelia Loeb and Rochelle Caplan would serve as the first president and vice-president respectively of the newly formed section. An inaugural meeting was organized for March 27, 1944 at the Chateau Laurier at which Senator Cairine Wilson was the guest speaker, choosing as her topic "Canadian-

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[8]CJCNA - MA 4 , Box 006, Public Affairs Correspondence- Study Discussion Program 1965, 3.

[9]To date, there is no written historical record of the Ottawa Jewish Juniors, except for the one reference contained in the minutes of the first meeting of the Ottawa Section. Neither the Council documents examined for this thesis, nor local Council members consulted through interviews gave any indication as to the exact nature of this organization, or why this group of women in particular chose to become a Council section.

American Relations", emphasizing the importance which the Council placed on an awareness of international relations.[10] Although the Ottawa Section was founded to perform a specific political role within the overall Council, Amelia Loeb decided that the initial priority for the section would be to support the National Division's War Effort program. The result was that Ottawa's "Listening Post" function would not be realized until several years after the end of World War II. Nevertheless, by October 1944, NCJWC-Ottawa Section had become an affiliate of the Ottawa Local Council of Women, and later that month was declared by Stanley Lewis, then Mayor of Ottawa, to be on the official list of Women's Organizations in Ottawa.[11]

The membership profile of the Ottawa Section largely followed a particular pattern, although there were undoubtedly certain exceptions. In general, however, women of all ages belonged to the Council, although they initially joined in their twenties and thirties, normally soon after marriage or while raising young children. For adolescent girls, there was a "Councilette" or junior group which served as a form of training ground for full Council membership, performing social service volunteer tasks similar in nature to the regular Council section. Although no Jewish woman was precluded from joining the NCJWC, the Council largely attracted women from similar class backgrounds. These women tended to be from a middle-to-upper-class social status, university educated, sometimes former professionals themselves, ie. teachers, nurses, social workers, psychologists, and lawyers, and were often women whose husbands were active within the

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[10]OJHS, RG4.08 NC, vol. VI, Minutes, Ottawa Section Meetings, March 13-20 , 1944.

[11]OJHS, RG4.08 NC, vol. VI, Minutes, Ottawa Section Meetings, Oct 26-31, 1944.

Jewish community as well. For instance, the executive of the Ottawa Section was dominated for many years by the women of the Loeb family, a wealthy, highly influential family in the Ottawa area. Not only were these women instrumental in founding the Council in Ottawa, but Mrs. (Norman) Amelia Loeb, Mrs. (Jules) Joyce Loeb, and Mrs. (David) Faye Loeb all served as section presidents. In fact, as Amelia's daughter, Judy Loeb-Cohen was also quite active in the section's operations, the "Loeb women" held a presence within the Ottawa Section from its inception until the 1970's. Religiously, Council women in Ottawa came from all spectrums of Jewish belief, Orthodox, Conservative[12] and, after 1966, the Reform synagogue.[13]

While the post-war era was a time of economic prosperity throughout North America, for Jews everywhere this triumph was accompanied by revelations of the horrific slaughter in Nazi death camps, producing a period of grave emotional devastation. For the women of the NCJWC, the most catastrophic consequences of the Holocaust were the thousands of children left orphaned by the war and the poverty-stricken Jews who fled Europe for Israel only to find a country unprepared for the economic burden resulting from the influx of refugees. In focussing on these two issues, the Council created a post-war program which involved relief work for war orphans and material assistance for Israel.

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[12]Conservative Judaism is described by Sylvia Barack Fishman as a blend of a "...deep respect for the halakah with a willingness to make changes appropriate to modern life." In other words, Conservatism has blended the religious traditions of Orthodoxy with certain changes proposed by Reform. See Fishman, *A Breath of Life: Feminism in the American Jewish Community*, (New York: Macmillan Inc., 1993), 160.

[13]Religiously, the NCJWC did not discriminate between the particular religious affiliations of Jewish women. Although Orthodox women tended to belong to organizations with a more Zionist and traditional religious focus, such as Hadassah-WIZO, see Draper, 6., Orthodox women were not precluded from membership in the NCJWC and did belong to this organization.

In the years immediately following the war, the Council developed such projects as the "Ship-A-Box Program" and "Supplies for Overseas Survivors", both of which involved the collection of supplies and necessities for shipment to both Europe and Israel.[14] In addition, the NCJWC took part in a program initiated by the American Council designed to assist young or "unattached" Jewish women, namely, those left without relatives after the war, with group homes providing psychological counselling by social workers, and pre- and post-natal care by nurses. This project, entitled "Rehabilitation for Unattached European Women Survivors of Hitler's Purge", also offered a number of scholarships which allowed several of these women the opportunity to study in professional programs in North America such as public health nursing, teaching, social work and dental hygiene, to then return to Europe and utilize their skills in helping others. The first such home was established in Athens in 1946 and by 1948 a second home had been opened in Paris. The rehabilitation project, which provided invaluable assistance to hundreds of women throughout Europe was made possible only by the concerted financial and material support of Council women within both Canada and the United States. Ottawa Section was an active participant in fundraising for this Council program and often surpassed the monetary donations of other Council sections for this worthy cause.[15]

The Ottawa Section participated wholeheartedly in major Council ventures, heeding the directives it received from the National executive. However by the 1950s, the section had matured to the point where members began proposing their own projects and

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[14]OJHS, RG4.08 NC, vol. VII, Yearbooks, 1946-50.

[15]OJHS, RG4.08 NC, vol. VI, Minutes, Ottawa Section-Meetings, May 28, 1946 and March 12, 1947.

activities which would enable the Section to contribute to the NCJWC in a unique manner. In fact, many of the programs conceived of at this time became enduring Ottawa community activities. In 1951, a Community Friendship Club was formed to promote a sense of comraderie within the Ottawa Jewish community, as well as the development of a Golden Age Club for Jewish senior citizens in 1953, which served to further the Council's philosophical commitment to enhancing the lives of the elderly. As facilitating women's education was one of the cornerstones of the Council's development, Ottawa Section also began donating scholarships for Jewish female students to area schools and universities such as Glebe College, Carleton College, which would later become Carleton University, the University of Ottawa, Lisgar Collegiate, and the Talmud Torah. The Ottawa Section also awarded the Irene Samuel Fund. This scholarship, named after the first National president, and to be awarded by each Council section, was designed to promote an interest among young women in teaching Hebrew and Judaic Studies in Jewish schools in Canada. In Ottawa specifically, study groups formed during this period focused on international affairs, child psychology, mental health, the elimination of discrimination, immigration to Israel, the crises in Ethiopia, an in-depth look at the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, in addition to lectures on human relations and public speaking classes.[16]

The first post-war decade saw the development in Ottawa of the Council's immigrant aid program and the broadening of the NCJWC's overseas projects. In 1956, the Ottawa Section participated in what would be its most significant accomplishment that

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[16]OJHS, RG4.08 NC, vol. VII, Yearbooks, 1949-51, 1955.

year, a program to assist Hungarian refugees settle into the Ottawa region. In close cooperation with the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society and the Ottawa Citizenship Council, the section helped these newcomers find suitable housing, provided them with material necessities, and, in keeping with the Council's philosophy of immigrant aid, worked to help integrate them into Canadian society.[17] It was also at this time that the National Division, in conjunction with the American NCJW, established an "Israeli Project" in the form of the Israeli Family Counselling Association (IFCA). The first association of its kind in Israel, IFCA provided assistance to families having parenting and marital difficulties, counselling for grief and bereavement, as well as a plethora of family-oriented medical services.[18] As each section was requested to contribute financially to this crucial Council project, the Ottawa Section began holding an Israeli Tea to raise funds within a few short years of IFCA's founding, demonstrating the seriousness with which the section took its responsibility to this cause. By 1974, this annual social would become the highly-anticipated Israeli Brunch, an immensely successful, Ottawa-wide event to be held at a different member's home each year and designed specifically to raise funds for IFCA, the only project which was directly supported by Council in Israel.

Although the NCJWC did not define itself as a fundraising organization, the collection of money was essential to maintaining the diversity of the Council's programs and projects. Several events were held annually in the Ottawa area, such as the Israeli Tea and Brunch, rummage sales, dances, variety shows, raffles and theatrical plays, all to raise

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[17]OJHS, RG4.08 NC, vol. VI, Minutes, Ottawa Section Meetings , Feb. 26, 1957.

[18]OJHS, RG4.08 NC, vol. VI, Bulletins, Ottawa Section Meetings, November 1979.

money for the section's larger ventures such as the Golden Age Club, the Israeli Project, the equipping of rooms at the Rehabilitation Institute of Ottawa, and the numerous scholarship funds. Yet perhaps the largest and most noteworthy of all Ottawa Section fundraisers was the annual Exhibition and Sale of Paintings, begun in 1958, soon becoming the hallmark of the Ottawa Section's contributions to the Council's activities. First held under the patronage of the Governor General at Assembly Hall, Lansdowne Park, this art sale and auction provided invaluable public exposure for burgeoning Canadian artists, and all funds raised through ticket sales went directly to support Council projects.[19] More than any other event, the Ottawa Section's Exhibition and Sale of Paintings enabled the Council as a body to interact with other individuals and groups toward a noble cause. As a consequence, the Council increased its public profile in the Nation's capital and raised awareness within both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities of the activities which this organization performed to the benefit of all people in the Ottawa area.

In the area of "Social Action", the title given to the NCJWC's wide range of community volunteer activities, the Ottawa Section was often called upon to provide volunteers and to collect donations for other organizations, demonstrating the willingness on the part of the membership to assist other groups and associations when necessary. The Ottawa Red Cross, the Ottawa Cancer Society, the Community Chest Fund, United Jewish Appeal, the Salvation Army, the Poppy Day Campaign and the Ottawa Philharmonic Orchestra Drive were direct beneficiaries of the volunteer support supplied

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[19]OJHS RG4.08 NC , vol. VI, Minutes, Ottawa Section - Meetings, Feb. 18, 1958.

by the women of the Ottawa Section. In addition, members assisted the Ottawa Central Volunteer Bureau, helped to staff the Ottawa Civic Hospital's Canteen and the Bright Hope School for developmentally challenged children.[20]

It was in the 1950s that the Ottawa Section became an active participant in the Council's Social Legislation program and it is necessary, therefore, to explore the depths of this program as it related to the entire organization. To the NCJWC, an interest in progressive social legislation and public affairs was inherent in the Council's platform of "women's education." It was felt that only through an awareness of democratic legal processes could this organization fulfil its responsibilities to the greater community. The concept of "education for public responsibility" which was present in the Council's mandate since the late nineteenth century, was now beginning to emerge within the Canadian Council as it had decades earlier in the United States.[21] Furthermore, as each member of the NCJWC was considered a "citizen-volunteer", the responsibility of ensuring the well-being of communities at the local, national and international levels was required and could be fulfilled through taking an active role in the Council's program of observing and proposing progressive public legislation.

In practical terms, participation in legislative action meant that the Public Affairs committees in each Council section were requested by the executive to put forth draft statements either in support of or in opposition to human rights and social welfare

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[20]OJHS RG4.08 NC, vol. VI, Minutes, Ottawa Section Meetings, Oct. 18, 1954, Nov. 2, 1954, Nov. 1, 1955. June 14, 1956, Jan. 29, 1959.

[21]CJCNA-MA 4, Box 006, Public Affairs Correspondence, Study Discussion Program, pt III, 2.

legislation that had been proposed in the House of Commons. The individual sections were required to study the submissions and to provide appropriate opinions and suggestions, at which time the National Division would take these recommendations and formulate a final resolution on behalf of the entire NCJWC on the particular issue, usually in accordance with the statements of other groups affiliated with the Council. This statement was then sent directly to the Prime Minister's office, Senate Committees, as well as to selected Members of Parliament. Moreover, the Council was often compelled to act independently by presenting resolutions to Parliament regarding issues which were considered of specific interest to the Council and its members. In addition, commencing in the 1950s, official NCJWC delegations were sent to events such as the Conference of the Canadian National Commission for UNESCO, the Human Rights Conference of the United Nations, the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews, the Canadian Conference on Social Work, as well as meetings with federal and provincial cabinet ministers to discuss a variety of legislative issues.[22]

Although traditionally women's volunteer organizations maintained what was perceived overtly as a "non-political" stance on legislative issues[23], this did not imply that these groups were indifferent to or ignorant of the importance of political action in affecting changes in social policy. On the contrary, in the case of the NCJWC, its sections were encouraged to partake in legislative activities by means of "political action which is

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[22]CJCNA-MA 4, Box 002, Biennial Reports and Minutes, 10th Biennial Convention 1959, Biennial Report, 5-6.

[23]CJCNA-MA 4, Box 006, Public Affairs Correspondence, Study Discussion Program, pt III, 2. See also Kathleen McCarthy, "Parallel Power Structures", 11.

non-partisan [yet] is an imperative for [Canada's] democratic survival."[24] This impetus for the NCJWC to take an affirmative role and actively observe the legislative process in Canada was fostered by the creation of the United Nations in 1948, and the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a framework for positive global changes to humanity. Indeed the rhetoric of the National executive reflected a determination to not only mobilize and raise the consciousness of Council members to the cause of social justice, but to make those outside the NCJWC fully aware of the intentions of this organization in that regard. Addressing a group of Council members at an annual general meeting, Dr. Reva Gerstein, National President in 1956, affirmed the necessity for political action by the NCJWC by proclaiming that:

> Women as equal citizens, are interested in all legislation that affects the well-being of the nation. Women are not a special interest group. Women voters today are as much interested in international understanding and aid to underdeveloped countries as they are in new school construction and equal pay for women (...) The woman voter will not be influenced by empty tribute of being told how important she is. She will insist on being shown. She will insist on having a hand in shaping the planks on the vital issues which affect our nation's well-being, and determine its role as a leader of the free world.[25]

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[24]*ibid.* The term "non-partisan" should be interpreted here as indicating an abstinence from "party" politics, as the NCJWC was never officially affiliated with any particular Canadian political party. However, this term does not imply "neutrality" on the part of the Council's platform for social action and public affairs.

[25]CJCNA-MA 4, Box 011, Public Affairs Releases, Bulletins file, "In the Spotlight Release #4", December 1956, President's Message, Dr. Reva Gerstein, National President. It was in 1956 that the name of Council's Social Legislation program was changed to Public Affairs. No sufficient explanation exists in the archival data for this name change, although there is a reference in this document to the 'negative' connotations of the name 'Social Legislation'. See *ibid.* Despite this change, by the 1970s, the title Social Legislation appears once again in Council's documents.

Thus, for the Council's leadership, demanding a larger role in public affairs was a natural expression of women's collective action, and indicated a strong desire for increased influence over the laws that affected them as citizens.

During the 1950s, the NCJWC took firm, and often controversial stances on many issues by adopting resolutions on legislation which would foster improved living conditions and enhance the quality of life of many Canadians. As a Council of Jewish women, there was a duality of interest inherent in the NCJWC's legislative platform. While advancing women's rights was certainly the goal of many of the Council's resolutions, particularly in the period after 1970, there was always a strong commitment to ensuring general human and minority rights in Canada and internationally. It would seem that for the members of the NCJWC, ethnic identity acted equally with gender as a motivating force for their activities. Further, the Council's resolutions were based upon an adherence to three themes or "guiding principles" for its public affairs activities, each category devised in an atmosphere of post-Holocaust, post-WWII, Cold War consciousness of building a better world: The Promise of Democracy, the Challenge of World Peace, and Enriching Our Jewish Heritage. Moreover, always regarding the welfare of women to be crucial to ensuring the transmission of democratic principles throughout the nation, the Council resolved to support legislation "(...)designed to advance the welfare of the individual, to preserve the family and to promote the development of the community.", which included ensuring civil rights and liberties for all citizens.[26]

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[26]CJCNA- MA 4, Box 002, 9th Biennial Convention 1957, National Resolutions Adopted at the 9th Biennial Convention, Saskatoon, 3.

Hence, between 1948 and 1953, the NCJWC promoted legislation that furthered equality among all Canadian citizens through its "Promise of Democracy" objective. One such action was the endorsement of the Canada Fair Employment Practices Law, which would see the end of discriminatory hiring on the basis of ethnic background, skin colour or race, the elimination of application questions which may lead to employment discrimination, and to guarantee equality of opportunity in employment. They encouraged the establishment of a "Canadian Bill of Rights", which would act in the spirit of the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights" by upholding the rights of individuals and minority groups, and beseeched the government to reconsider the Immigration Act of 1952 which would deny entry into Canada to "worthwhile refugees" by discriminating against them on the basis of country of origin rather than on an individual basis, in particular those affected by displacement after World War II.[27]

By the late-1950s, the Council's "Promise of Democracy" resolutions had expanded to include legislation in the area of "Consumer Welfare" and as a member of the Canadian Association of Consumers, the NCJWC urged the government to require official inspection of meat products, as well as implement regulations to guarantee the uniform pasteurization of milk to protect families. Moreover, the NCJWC demanded official changes to the Dominion Succession Duties Act, which would regard adopted children as natural children at the time of succession, as well as eliminate succession duties from a husband's estate when passed onto a widow, thus equalizing the rights of men and women

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[27]CJCNA- MA 4, Box 002, 7th Biennial Convention, 1953, National Resolutions Adopted at the 7th Biennial Convention, Toronto, 1,2,6.

within the Act. The Council pressured the government to enact equal pay for equal work legislation for women within the federal civil service, stressing the importance of setting a precedent for the private sector to follow this practice. They also petitioned provincial governments where women were excluded from jury service to amend the Jurors Act to allow women to rightly serve on juries. The NCJWC lent its support to the Joint Committee on Penal Reform for Women, which would see, among many other recommendations, women confined to Kingston Penitentiary returned to institutions in the respective provinces where they had been originally committed, as well as treatment programs established for alcoholics, drug addicts and sex offenders. In the field of gerontology, the Council requested the government recognize the need to provide a fund to be made available for increased programming for the elderly, and a concerted effort to change cultural values toward old age which would see the later years of life as a period of "challenge and opportunity" instead of the stereotypes of a time of "decline and decay." Lastly, in the area of education, this organization strongly opposed legislation that would institute Christian religious curriculum in public schools as a violation of the principle of the separation of Church and State, arguing that the tensions and divisions amongst the students whose beliefs differed from those of the official curriculum would counteract any benefit perceived to derive from such a policy.[28]

For the NCJWC, world peace was an essential precondition for the survival of democracy. As one of the Council's primary mandates was to foster concern and

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[28]CJCNA- MA 4, Box 002, 9th Biennial Convention 1957, Resolutions Adopted at the 9th Biennial Convention, Saskatoon, 9-11, 15-17.

awareness of international affairs both amongst the membership and all citizens, a commitment to assisting in the "Challenge of World Peace" was synonymous with the Council's precept to act "in the spirit of Judaism". Thus, the Council declared its support for the efforts of the United Nations, the development of international cooperation, including the strengthening of defence and security in the "free world" to further peace initiatives, and the provision of economic and technical aid for developing countries to ensure the development of democracy in areas of the world threatened by "undemocratic" regimes. It was between 1955 and 1959 that resolutions were adopted pledging the Council's support for the United Nations and recognition of its importance in maintaining world peace, asking the Canadian government to bolster its backing of the U.N. by "upholding the sanctity of International Treaties." Further, an appeal was made to the government that as international peace is contingent upon stability in the Middle East and that advocating a "strong Israel" would be a critical step toward advancing the peace process. Furthermore, Canada was also urged as a member of the U.N. to continue to support "freedom of navigation for all nations" through the Suez Canal. Finally, the Council requested that Canada promote the development of atomic and nuclear energy for peaceful and constructive purposes only, while also instituting "preventive measures" to avoid disaster and war resulting from the misuse and abuse of nuclear power.[29]

As an organization of Jewish women, the NCJWC was devoted to furthering Judaism culturally, religiously and historically in Canada. To advance their goal of

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[29]CJCNA- MA 4, Box 002, 9th Biennial Convention, 1957, National Resolutions Adopted at the 9th Biennial Convention, Saskatoon, 5, 19-20.

strengthening Canadian Jewish community life, the Council developed and promoted several educational programs designed to increase the self-awareness of its members, with the express intention of renewing and reinforcing Jewish belief systems and cultural values which could then be transmitted to their families. These beliefs included not only those of doctrine, but also the cultivation of an appreciation of what it meant to be a Jew in Canada in the post-Holocaust consciousness, and instilling a sense of pride in that identity through acknowledging the importance of Jewish cultural heritage. Hence, the NCJWC resolved to ensure the availability of high quality Jewish education in Canada under the banner "Enriching Our Jewish Heritage", which extended even to those regions with relatively small numbers of Jews, thus attempting to create a uniform standard of instruction throughout Canada. In addition, the Council was dedicated to encouraging cooperation and respect between all groups in Canada, a goal which they considered to be an integral aspect of ensuring the rights and freedoms of all Canadian citizens.

The economic and emotional well-being of Jewish communities abroad, in particular the citizens of the state of Israel was of great importance to the NCJWC as it was the Council's belief that assistance should be provided to all Jewry where dictated by circumstance. To solidify their relationship with the international Jewish community, the Council repeatedly reaffirmed its affiliation with the International Council of Jewish Women, an organization which served to promote cooperation and understanding between Jewish women on a global level, working to strengthen the "bonds of Judaism" throughout the world.[30]

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[30]RG4.08 NC - vol. IV, Ephemera, International Council of Jewish Women Pamphlet - 1993.

The NCJWC was not averse to voicing its concerns about the welfare of Canadians to ensure that every level of government was aware of the critical issues affecting the lives of average citizens. The Council always placed the rights of women and minority groups in the forefront of its platform and insisted that the particular needs of these groups must be addressed if Canada aspired to maintain a basic standard of human rights. While the period immediately following the Second World War has in the past been characterized by scholars as a period of stagnation and even reversion in women's activism, the women of the NCJWC were vigorously and profoundly involved in advocating changes to employment and family law. Always at the forefront of reflecting changes in women's issues and concerns, the Council's far-sightedness and diligent attention to policy making would prove to be a permanent trend in the NCJWC's public affairs philosophy, prompting one council member and former Ottawa Section president to declare that when compared to other Jewish women's organizations, in many respects "the Council was ahead of its time."[31]

While the National executive intensely promoted its public affairs projects on a broad scale, at the local level individual sections were often placed in a position of having to balance community needs with their responsibilities to the larger directives of the National program. For the most part, the extent of a section's commitment to public affairs was limited to organizing study groups on particular issues and forming a public affairs committee to endorse briefs. In the case of the Ottawa Section, it was expected that this section would serve a particular function in the overall Public Affairs Program as the

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[31]Interview with Carol Kassie, Ottawa Section President 1981-1983. November 13, 1997.

Council's "link" to the House of Commons, monitoring legislative activities and alerting the executive to issues of significance and interest to Council members. Attempts had been made by the National executive immediately following World War II to encourage an awareness amongst Ottawa's membership of the need to form a Council "Listening Post" in that city, yet there is no indication that these early initiatives were successful given that the members of Ottawa Section had an existing active agenda resulting from participation in the Council's extensive Post-War program. It would be several years before Ottawa members would show significant interest in the Social Legislation and Listening Post aspects of Council's program.

Although commencing rather modestly, the Ottawa Section nevertheless did organize study groups to discuss legislation beginning in 1949 under the advisory of two section members, Reva Rosove and Minnie Rachlis, to examine current U.N. reports, as well as to arrange a meeting with Pakistan's High Commissioner to Canada to discuss the current political dynamic in India and Pakistan. Over the next few decades, Ottawa Section members would be granted the occasion to meet with the High Commissioners and Ambassadors of various nations and this provided them with the opportunity to develop a unique and increasingly important position within the overall Council. Furthermore, with the assistance of Frieda Lauterman, Chairperson of the Social Legislation Committee from 1952-56, Ottawa Section presented a brief before a special Senate Committee urging the adoption of a Canadian Bill of Rights and eventually established a Listening Post to study resolutions adopted at National Conventions and to observe and report on bills which were of interest to the Council that were being debated

in the House of Commons. The Ottawa Section also studied and proposed resolutions to amend the Dominion and Provincial Succession Duty Act, addressed the concerns pertaining to a bill proposing the fluoridation of drinking water, and supported a brief by the University Women's Club which urged that women barristers be granted equal access to facilities at the local court house. In addition, the section endorsed an amendment to a brief to the Royal Commission on the Criminal Law in Relation of Criminal Sexual Psychopaths at the request of the Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa, and discussed the feasibility of group libel law legislation proposed at the 8th Biennial Convention in 1955 under the guidance of Rhoda Abbey and Sarah Metrick, each serving as Chairperson of Public Affairs in 1956 and 1957 respectively.[32]

It was also during this period that several discussion groups were formed, focussing on a diversity of topics such as religious education in public schools, penal reform, subsidized low-cost housing in Ottawa, Israel and the Middle East, as well as a review of the reports issued by the Canadian Committee on the Status of Women, which had as its objective to persuade provincial governments outside of Quebec to amend the laws pertaining to married women's property rights, by making them more equitable and to review the Succession Duties and Gift Tax, to raise awareness of the disabilities suffered by widows under the existing legislation.[33]

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[32]OJHS - RG4. 08 NC, vol. VII, Yearbooks - Ottawa Section, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1956, 1957; vol. VI, Minutes - Ottawa Section Meetings, Feb. 22, 1955, Jan. 24, 1956, May 1st 1956.

[33]OJHS - RG4.08 NC, vol II, Bulletins - Ottawa Section, Nov. 1954; vol. VII, Yearbooks - Ottawa Section, 1951, 1952, 1955, 1957.

By the 1960s, Ottawa Section had reached its maturity in terms of both programing and membership. This decade witnessed the continuing expansion and success of community activities and an increasing dedication to public affairs projects. These years would also see the profile of Ottawa Section and indeed the entire NCJWC expand nationally with Canada's Centenary Celebrations in 1967. Existing programs such as the Exhibition and Sale of Paintings, the Golden Age Club, Ship-A-Box to Israel, the Israeli Tea, and the scholarship funds were maintained and membership in the section reached close to 500 members. The Ottawa Section would receive much acclaim during this period as both its communal and national activities garnered awards and the media spotlight. Always active in the field of gerontology, it was during the 1960s that the Ottawa Section intensified its work among the aged and the aging. Recognizing the steady growth in the aged population and the increasing need within the community for services for the elderly, members of the Ottawa section participated in training courses arranged by the National Division at various local hospitals. Designed to increase their knowledge of new trends in geriatrics and gerontology, these courses improved the ability of members to volunteer among the elderly by making them more sensitive to the special needs of older people. One aspect of this care which was of the utmost importance to the Council was the emphasis on the need to help the elderly retain their dignity and self-respect and not to feel helpless in the face of old age and reduced mobility.[34] To honour its initiatives for the elderly already instituted within the community, Ottawa Section was chosen in 1962 by the Canadian National Recreation Association as the recipient of its annual award in

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[34]OJHS - RG4.08 NC - vol. VII, Reports - Ottawa Section, 1964.

recognition of outstanding achievement in the field of recreation programs for seniors. In support of this distinction, the section introduced new recreational activities in 1963 entitled "Tea and Films", monthly entertainment groups to be held at Perley Hospital for the Aged and at Hillel Lodge, a home for the elderly. In addition, in 1966, a highly successful Kosher Meals on Wheels program for Jewish seniors was proposed by Jacquelin Holzman, Ottawa Section President from 1959-1961 and later Mayor of Ottawa, following directives from the National Division. This service was designed to serve the specific dietary needs of elderly Jewish people and other members of the Jewish community unable to prepare meals for themselves. Furthermore, Ottawa Section, in conjunction with the National executive, passed several resolutions urging the Federal government and the Department of Labour to eliminate barriers to the employment of older citizens, to increase grants to provincial health care programs in order to establish geriatric health centres for medical and social assistance counselling, in addition to insisting on an increased amount of housing developments for the elderly.[35]

As a group composed primarily of women with families, the members of Ottawa Section had a considerable interest in the welfare of mothers and children. Strong advocates of education, the National executive requested that each section devise a community "Higher Horizons for Youth" project to address local issues regarding the needs of children. Thus, commencing in 1966, a program was designed to provide assistance for women with pre-school children who required further preparation in

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[35]CJCNA- MA 4, Box 002, 13th Biennial Convention, 1965, National Resolutions Adopted at the 13th Biennial Convention, Montreal, 2.

vocabulary, social and motor skills prior to entering kindergarten. An enriched nursery program, Magic Land Nursery was fully staffed with teachers, social workers and volunteers who would facilitate the learning process for many children. A highly successful project within the Ottawa community, Magic Land became synonymous with the Council section and by 1967 the school was invited to join the Ontario Nursery School Association.[36]

In legislative matters, the Ottawa Section's Public Affairs Committee was increasingly active between 1960 and 1969, being requested to adopt resolutions on controversial issues as well as establish study groups on topics of concern to Council members. In the area of health care, the Council urged the federal government to increase funding for research into mental illness and to help foster an environment sympathetic to diseases of the mind and Ottawa Section alone endorsed a submission prepared by the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ottawa Branch, which recommended the establishment of a Mental Hospital in Ottawa. The NCJWC implored the federal government to provide comprehensive universal health care, based on the principles contained in the Royal Commission Report On Health Services, requested that the federal government amend the Criminal Code of Canada to enable legal access to birth control pills and devices and insisted the government enact legislation which would allow for the lawful termination of pregnancy in the instance of sexual assault and incest.

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[36]OJHS RG4.08 NC, vol. VI, Minutes - Ottawa Section Meetings - August 3, 1965, January 13, 1966; vol.II, Bulletins - Ottawa Section, December 1964.

In the realm of Canadian Affairs, the Council resolved that in the spirit of recognizing the importance of immigration to the building of democracy and the development of Canada, that the federal government be urged to undertake a complete revision of the Immigration Act and its discriminatory clauses, support public education by standardizing university entrance requirements and establish a National Research Council. Furthermore, the Council requested the government enact legislation which would make it a criminal offence to use public media to incite violence and hatred against any ethnic or racial group, so as not to interfere with the civil liberties of the Canadian people. In addition, the Council requested the Canadian government consider legislation to protect the natural environment from damage by industrial pollution and urged the formation of a policy to encourage international disarmament and the total suspension of nuclear testing by all nations.[37] Study groups formed during this period included a series on understanding the role and function of the United Nations, a reading of the *Feminine Mystique*, followed by a visit and lecture by the author, Betty Friedan, an abortion study group series, a discussion on the status of women under Jewish Law and the signing of a petition circulated by the National Status of Women in Jewish Law Committee for a re-consideration of women's place in Judaism.[38]

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[37]OJHS RG4.08 NC - vol. VI, Minutes - Ottawa Section Meetings, Minutes of the 12th Biennial Convention, Calgary, 1963, Resolutions, Domestic Affairs, 7; CJCNA- MA 4, Box 002, 13th Biennial Convention 1965, Resolutions Adopted at the 13th Biennial Convention, Montreal, 1-5; CJCNA- MA 4, Box 002, 14th Biennial Convention, 1967, Resolutions Adopted at the 14th Biennial Convention, Winnipeg, 2.

[38]CJCNA- MA 4, Box 002, 15th Biennial Convention 1969, Report from the National Public Affairs Committee, September 1967, 1; OJHS RG4.08, vol. II, Bulletins, Ottawa Section, December 1964.

The year 1967 marked Canada's Centenary and in celebration of this historic occasion, the NCJWC designed a unique project which reflected not only 100 years of Confederation, but also the women who made a difference to peoples' lives in Canada during that century. The Council's "Women of the Century" project would honour eleven living Canadian women, one from each province, and one from the Canadian North, who demonstrated a commitment to upholding "the principles of goodwill, justice and freedom, and contributed to humanity with distinction." Over 140 nominations for these awards were submitted to the NCJWC's non-sectarian Honorary Advisory Committee, and out of these, eleven women from all disciplines and professions were selected. Among the recipients were Therese Casgrain, Quebec Feminist who fought for the political rights in that province, Dr. Nina Cohen, of Nova Scotia, who worked for cancer relief and participated extensively in wartime welfare aid to Britain and the Soviet Union, Dr. Alice Douglas of Ontario, astro-physicist and Dean of Women, Queen's University and Dr. Irene Uchida of Winnipeg, a geneticist who had done pioneering work in the field of childhood disorders[39]. Undertaken in co-operation with Expo '67, the Centennial Commission and the Canadian Centenary Council, the ceremony was held under the patronage of the Right Honorable Lester B. Pearson, Prime Minister of Canada, and medals designed and executed by Canadian sculptor Dora de Pedery-Hunt were presented to the honoured women on June 6, National Council of Jewish Women of Canada Day at Expo '67, the theme for which was "A Women's Place is in the World." "Women of the

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[39]For a complete list of award recipients, see CJCNA-MA 4, Box 006, Canadian Women of the Century 1867-1967, Newspaper clippings.

Century" originally began as a Centennial idea of the Ottawa Section and was eventually endorsed by the National executive as the Council's official Centennial project, thus demonstrating to the National body Ottawa Section's understanding of the precepts of the NCJWC and illustrated the commitment of the section to furthering the Council's aims throughout Canada.[40]

The "Women of the Century" project garnered tremendous praise and adulation for the Council and in the patriotic fervour elicited by the entire Centennial Celebrations an idea was conceived of at the 14th Biennial Convention in Winnipeg which would see the establishment of a school for "instructing" Council members of their responsibilities as citizens of Canada. Two years after its acceptance at the 1967 Biennial, the School for Citizenship Participation project was officially adopted, one "school" to be established in each Council section. The rationale behind this instruction was that it would offer Council members an opportunity to become more acquainted with the decision-making or "social" process, both nationally and locally, thereby enabling them to take a larger role in influencing social change and generate more effective social and political action. It was believed that only through informed opinion could the women of the NCJWC influence government officials and policy makers in positive ways.[41]

While there is no indication as to the overall attitude of the general membership toward the School for Citizenship Participation, in the case of the Ottawa Section there is

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[40]CJCNA- MA 4, Box 006, Canadian Women of the Century 1867-1967, Correspondence, 1-2; OJHS RG4.08 NC, vol. VI, Meetings - Ottawa Section, Feb 1., 1966.

[41]CJCNA-MA 4, Box 002, 15th Biennial Convention 1969, Biennial Report.

evidence to suggest that this initiative was not as successful within the section as was hoped by the National executive. While several attempts were made to establish this project in the Ottawa area, Sarah Metrick, Public Affairs Committee Chairperson, reported that the notion of participating in a course of this nature was "...not met with overwhelming enthusiasm."[42] Although public affairs and legislative activities had achieved a relatively high degree of success within the section, this particular Council project was ill-perceived by the members in Ottawa.

Nevertheless, the 1960s were a period of heightened awareness within the Ottawa Section of its specific role within the general community and the extent of the contribution that members could make to facilitate the lives of others. Indeed by the 1970s, the focus of the section had evolved away from a need to "entrench" its identity and programming within the local community to one which was reflective of the intellectual and societal changes within Canada, with an increasing focus on education and social awareness, including a heightened concern with women's rights. With all of its major activities thriving and with a reasonably steady membership, Ottawa Section was now able to concentrate on expanding into the areas of member leadership training and community development.

One innovative project that emerged during this decade was the development in 1973 of the television program, "Shalom Ottawa", produced by Ottawa Section in conjunction with the Ottawa Jewish Community Council. Presented twice monthly on a

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[42]CJCNA-MA 4, Box 002, 15th Biennial Convention 1969, Biennial Report. A precise reason for the unpopularity of the School for Citizenship Participation in Ottawa is unknown.

local cable channel, the purpose of "Shalom Ottawa" was to portray a comprehensive picture of Ottawa's Jewish community, highlighting its interests, local projects and talent, as well as focussing on Jewish customs and heritage. Program topics included documentaries on the Jewish Community Centre, the Jewish family in Ottawa, a look at the history and future of Israel, as well as the popular educational segment, "Ask the Rabbi." As the members of the Ottawa Section were highly conscious of the need to remain at the forefront of popular trends, the medium of television was the ideal means through which the Council was able to elevate its profile within the Jewish community and actively demonstrate its commitment to furthering Jewish culture and values in Canada. Furthermore, the "Shalom Ottawa" broadcast became such a highly successful Council program that it has continued to be broadcast up to the present day in the Ottawa area.

The 1970s were also a decade of increased women's activism as the "Second-Wave" feminist movement had begun in Canada with the release of the Report of the 1967 Royal Commission on the Status of Women, followed years later by the U.N. General Assembly's proclamation declaring the year 1975 to be International Women's Year. The NCJWC was not unaffected by this atmosphere of increased focus on women's issues and the status of women in Canada, and responded to the concerns of its membership by offering educational support in the form of workshops and study groups which addressed the changes in societal attitudes toward women and families. As the NCJWC and its affiliates the NCJW and the ICJW were the only Jewish women's organizations to have listening privileges at the United Nations, a delegation from each Council was sent to the U.N. Conference on Women in 1974. Later that same year, the Ottawa Section, in

partnership with the Women's Committee of the Jewish Community Council, organized a conference on "The Changing Status of Women in the Community", a panel discussion on the effects of the recent women's movement for liberation, in an attempt to bring about an awareness of the evolving nature of women's role in Canadian society.[43]

In the area of human rights, the Ottawa Section took part in a Canada-wide Council project entitled "Prejudice in Textbooks", a program devised to increase public awareness of the instance of negative portrayals of particular groups along racial, ethnic and gender lines in grade school and high school textbooks. Further, in support of the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, the section continued its observance of legislative activity in the House of Commons by endorsing National resolutions in favour of old-age pensions for women, improved access to affordable child care and, in an matter of great urgency, implored leaders of the Soviet Union to facilitate the emigration of Jews from the USSR by forwarding letters to the Soviet Ambassador to Canada.[44] In fact, the arrival of hundreds of Russian Jews or, "refuseniks" to Canada during the 1970s and 1980s necessitated the revival of many immigrant aid programs within the Canadian Jewish community. For the Ottawa Section, as for the entire NCJWC this entailed assisting with the integration of these new Canadians into their adopted home by finding them suitable housing and employment, all in keeping with the Council's proud tradition of dedication to ensuring the well-being of Jewish immigrants to Canada.

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[43]OJHS RG4. 08 NC, vol. II, Bulletins - Ottawa Section, October 1974, November 1974.

[44]OJHS RG4. 08 NC, vol. II Bulletins - Ottawa Section, October 1974, October 1975.

Locally, the Ottawa Section continued to be responsive to the needs of the Jewish community by co-sponsoring the seminar "Ottawa Looks at Itself" in 1977 along with the Women's Committee of the Vaad Ha'ir, an open forum in which Ottawa Jewish community members were invited to express their opinions on the status of the community, what changes were needed to improve the lives of its members, and to what extent should women be active in management affairs within the community. A hugely successful and well-attended event, the "Ottawa Looks at Itself" seminar enabled the Ottawa Section to re-assess its programming structure to include new projects which would address more accurately the needs of the local community.[45] As a result of this self-reflection seminar, the Ottawa Section recognized that its own membership program required enhancement, and thus a decision was made to expand the section's activities to include a wider variety of study groups and the opportunity for existing members to participate in a voluntary leadership training course in community development instituted by the section in partnership with Algonquin College.

The NCJWC had always prided itself on the ability to evolve and reflect the changing interests of its membership, and in this the Ottawa Section was no exception. Since its inception, the section had sought to alter its program in accordance with broad changes in popular culture, while maintaining its original purpose as an organization of Jewish women dedicated to promoting Jewish religion and culture in Canada. Despite attempts to appease all facets of the Jewish community however, by the 1980s, the Ottawa Section had begun to struggle with a dwindling membership and a decline in volunteer

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[45]OJHS - RG4. 08 NC - vol. II, Bulletins - Ottawa Section, November 1976.

support for many of its existing projects and activities. Economic forces which caused increasing numbers of married women to enter or re-enter the paid labour force accompanied with changes in societal attitudes regarding the role of women within the family were factors which would permanently change the nature of the Ottawa Section. While efforts to transform the section's image were attempted, such as scheduling evening meetings instead of the traditional daytime ones to make the Council more accessible to those working outside the home, as well as actively seeking membership support from local professional women's groups, it was becoming increasingly evident that for growing numbers of women, time which was once given to volunteering was now being replaced by the pressures of balancing a paid career and family.

In many ways then, the years between 1980 and 1990 can be characterized as bittersweet ones for the Council section. For while many Ottawa Section programs celebrated milestone anniversaries, fewer and fewer women were joining or even maintaining their Council memberships. In 1982, the Annual Sale and Exhibition of Paintings marked its 25th Anniversary, and in 1983, the Golden Age Club reached 30 years. In 1984, the Annual Israeli Brunch for IFCA was held for the 10th time, and most notably, the Ottawa Section's 45th Birthday celebrations took place in 1989. Although it was becoming increasingly difficult for the executive to maintain certain activities, the section continued to play an active role in the Ottawa community, and maintained its status as a respected voice on women's issues and human rights concerns. Study groups held during this decade included topics such as "Women and Judaism", "Women's Economic Literacy", sponsored in conjunction with the Jewish Community Centre, an

important series on women's health issues highlighting a panel discussion on "Breast Cancer", as well as an open discussion on the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the United States, attended by selected Federal Members of Parliament. The Soviet Jewry committee continued to be active during the 1980s with a constant focus placed on persuading the Soviet government to expedite the visa process for Jews wishing to leave the USSR.

Despite the decrease in membership, the Ottawa Section did not abandon its original purpose as a community-based organization and actually implemented new projects in the Ottawa area during this period. For instance, in 1987, the section was successful in its campaign to have the Ottawa Vaad Ha'ir officially designate October 20 as International Jewish Education Day, an occasion marked by workshops, debates and seminars on such topics as "Jewish Identity in a Multicultural Society", and "Intermarriage and its Effect on Jewish Identity."[46] Furthermore, in 1988, Ottawa Section coordinated a food drive in partnership with the Jewish Community Council, which collected donations from the Ottawa Jewish Community to be given to the Ottawa Food Bank. While both of these ventures were successful in their own right, unfortunately, neither were to becoming enduring community projects.

The activities of the Ottawa Section of the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada were discontinued in 1995, a victim of the conjuncture between the inability of its executive to attract new members, and the general decline in Jewish women's participation

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[46]OJHS - RG4. 08 NC - vol. II, Bulletins, Ottawa Section, January 1988.

in volunteering.[47] As one member stated, a possible reason for the Section's failure to interest new members was that its public image toward the end had become one of an organization composed of "a group of old, snobby women, even though I was all of 33!"[48] Nevertheless, the Ottawa Section had a proud history and tradition of serving the Ottawa Jewish and general communities. The section participated to the fullest extent of its capabilities in major NCJWC programs, and successfully implemented its own unique projects to address the needs of the Ottawa region. For 50 years, the women of the Council's Ottawa Section worked to improve the lives of those around them. In the words of one Ottawa Section member, the NCJWC was "...perceived by the Jewish and general communities as that organization of Jewish women who care about Canadian issues and Canadian communities, who care about women's issues, who care about being Jewish and about being Canadian."[49]

In sum, when the activities of the Ottawa Section are viewed as part of the entire national organization, it becomes evident that, whereas the National Division was concerned with large-scale projects such as overseas funds and nation-wide programs such as social legislation, the War Efforts and the Overseas programs, on a local level, individual sections had a great deal of autonomy in selecting projects which met the needs of their particular communities. While program directives were taken from the national

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[47]The precise date of the section's closing is unclear as the last section president, Ellen Fathi continued to provide Council funds for certain scholarship programs and other activities which extended well beyond the collapse of the "formal" section structure. By 1995, however, all Council activities had ceased in the Ottawa area.

[48]Interview with Carol Kassie, Ottawa, November 13, 1997.

[49]OJHS - RG 4. 08 NC - vol. II, Bulletins, Ottawa Section, May 1981.

executive, as in the case of the Ottawa Section, there were some instances where local resources did not permit the actualization of certain National projects or where section opinions were at odds with those at the national level. For example, when the Ottawa Section's executive felt that extra fundraising projects decreed by National had become burdensome to their members, the leaders responded that "...our main purpose is education and service to the community and with the added money raising projects we would be neglecting our main purpose."[50] Furthermore, while the National executive was deeply committed to social legislation activities, there were discrepancies at the local level as to the extent of the interest and contribution made to this program by the general membership. While the Ottawa section was originally established to serve as the legislative monitor for the NCJWC, both the national and local executive had difficulty retaining member interest in this project. Moreover, although as a whole the Council's members were dedicated to furthering similar causes, differences in opinion existed between sections, largely depending upon geographic location within Canada, religious and political beliefs, often prompting discussion as to whether or not the National executive should speak for the entire organization.[51] Nevertheless, the NCJWC was an important voice for human rights throughout Canada and, regardless of its membership obstacles, the Ottawa Section, too, had a significant record as a willing participant in this most crucial and fundamental of Council programs as well.

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[50]OJHS - RG 4. 08 NC - vol. VI, Minutes, Ottawa Section Meetings, April 10, 1956.

[51]CJCNA - MA 4 Box 006, Public Affairs File, Public Affairs Institute Report, London, Ontario, December 3-5, 1967.

Notwithstanding its collapse, the Ottawa Section can be seen as a success story in several ways. This organization clearly demonstrated how individuals acting as part of a larger collective could attain goals which would otherwise have been impossible to achieve, and that organizations working in cooperation with each other, both locally and nationally can affect positive change in the lives of others in fundamental ways. On a more personal level, and perhaps most importantly, the Council's Ottawa members were able to acquire a sense of community and kinship with other Jewish women, form lasting friendships, receive training and develop skills which would benefit them as individuals, all the while celebrating and promoting their religious and cultural beliefs within Canada, as Canadians.

In assessing the impact of the section's closing, reaction from former Ottawa Section members was mixed. When asked if there was now a void in the Ottawa Jewish community in the absence of the Council, one respondent stated that she felt there was indeed "...something missing." and she would "...love to see a revival of Council in Ottawa." Another member stated that while she was sorry to see the end of the Ottawa Section, she felt that there were other organizations who could and were continuing the work of the NCJWC in Ottawa as "their [the Council's] forte had always been to get things going, to then have others [agencies] pick up where they left off." A third respondent stated that to her, the Council's demise was not entirely surprising as for many years it was becoming "...increasingly difficult to get people to help out."[52]

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[52]Taken from interviews with Carol Kassie, Ottawa November 13, 1997, Rhoda Blevis, Ottawa, October 30, 1997 and Geri Migicovsky, Ottawa, January 9, 1998.

Thus, the Council's Ottawa Section was at once a cherished institution, and at the same time, a volunteer organization which suffered as a result of the trend away from "giving of one's time for free". Realistically, however, the demise of the Ottawa Section should be considered a microcosm of the general experience of women's volunteer organizations throughout North America in the late twentieth century. A general discussion of Jewish women and volunteering, exploring the reasons for the "volunteer phenomenon" amongst Jewish women, what compelled them to volunteer, how it related to the experiences of former Council women, as well as the future of Jewish women's volunteer organizations will follow in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

IN SEARCH OF THE 'WOMAN OF VALOUR': PERSPECTIVES ON JEWISH WOMEN'S VOLUNTEERING IN CANADA

The Council's departure from Ottawa elicits a multitude of complex questions under the broad theme of women and volunteerism. For instance, why has volunteering been historically so prevalent amongst women in the Jewish community and what were some of the initial motivations behind Jewish women's espousing of volunteer work? Have volunteer organizations enabled women to attain positions of power within the community? What difficulties have arisen as a result of the heavy reliance on women's unpaid labour within Jewish communal organizations, and is there in fact a future for Jewish women's volunteer organizations in the twenty-first century? Although women's "groups", societies, sisterhoods and associations etc., have existed for centuries, it was largely with the advent of the wide-spread professionalization of many social service occupations in North America in the post-World War One era that the term volunteer was increasingly employed to describe the work women performed as members of charitable groups. This expression functioned to separate "professional" from "non-professional" activities and also served to distinguish financially remunerated labour from that which was not. As philanthropy and other seemingly "pure-hearted" pursuits were identified with women, while "real" labour and all of its financial rewards came to constitute the male realm, the result was a feminization of the term volunteer to indicate female activities

outside the home performed as part of a larger organization, which were, for the most part unpaid, and as many late twentieth century feminist critiques have assessed, undervalued.

Volunteerism, and indeed, volunteer organizations themselves, have conjured up negative images in the minds of many Jewish feminist scholars who, in turn, have produced largely unflattering analyses of these groups. While heartily praising the scope and quality of work that was accomplished by Jewish volunteers, feminist writers lament the "misuse" of women by community leaders and organizational executives and criticize what they see as the class-bias of many volunteer organizations, stemming from the perception that the only women able to achieve high-ranking positions within these groups were those originating from society's upper classes. While the issues of women's exploitation within volunteer organizations will be explored in depth in this chapter, the difficulty with the latter critique is that it ignores the fact that, just like the late-nineteenth century clubwoman, her mid-twentieth century manifestation, the volunteer, has tended to come primarily from among the more "monied" elements of society or at the very least, they are women whose husband's professions have enabled them to stay at home and devote their free time to benevolent pursuits. As volunteering was not an option for many, indeed, most women whose economic situation necessitated them to seek paid employment, this critique merely serves to chastize certain women for what is perceived as their leisurely lifestyle and undermines the sacrifices that they made to improve the quality of life for others.

For Jewish women, volunteering has endowed them with a unique opportunity to contribute to their community in ways substantially different from men. Religious obligation to perform charitable acts is one reason which can account for the fact that Jewish women have participated in volunteer organizations at levels much higher than women in most other ethnic groups in Canada. However, as philanthropy and "good works" are tenets of religions other than Judaism, this reason alone can not serve as a comprehensive explanation for the phenomenon. A more likely explanation is that as Jewish women were customarily barred from participation in religious ceremonies and excluded from religious study, they took to community volunteering as their 'personal' contribution to Jewish life. As one scholar has concluded, volunteerism was, in the eyes of women, "'their' Jewish activity, analogous in some ways to men's communal role in the synagogue.[1] Furthermore, as a large proportion of the women who joined the volunteer ranks did so once they had left the paid workforce to raise young families, becoming a volunteer was often viewed as a milestone in the lives of many Jewish women, signalling the end of young adulthood and the beginning of a new, more mature life phase.

For as many women who were willing to volunteer, there existed organizations ready to accept them within their folds. Far from being homogenous in approach, the diversity of volunteer groups from which they could choose enabled women the opportunity to join organizations which suited their particular ideological outlook, family traditions or individual interests. Organizations such as NCJWC, Hadassah-WIZO, Pioneer Women's Organization (Na'amat), Mizrachi and ORT are but a few of the

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[1] Fishman, 72.

countless groups which have benefitted from the hard-work and sacrifice of volunteer women. Moreover, it was often the case that Jewish women were members of several different organizations at once, and although traditionally volunteering for organizations within the Jewish community, there were certain women also active in non-communal enterprises; the Canadian Cancer Society and the Canadian Red Cross serving as examples of associations which received volunteer assistance from Jewish women. More importantly, however, despite the diversity of both Jewish women and the organizations to which they belonged, there are many similarities which emerge from the lives of volunteer women which facilitate the analysis of the volunteer experience. Above all, what can be said of Jewish volunteer women, past and present, is that they have truly believed in and worked toward a common goal: enriching the lives of Jews, whether in Canada, Israel or in other Jewish communities around the world.

The proficiency with which the Jewish community developed so many effective charitable volunteer organizations is attributable to what Draper and Karlinsky have posited as the "pre-established minority mentality" with which the early Canadian Jewish community arrived, characterized by a heightened sense of self-reliance and communal infrastructure, which eventually led to the development of a variety of institutions designed to serve both the religious and cultural needs of the "new world" community.[2] Jewish women in particular were exceptionally active in the field of philanthropy and had an extraordinary adeptness at responding to difficult and emergency situations through the development of support groups to address needs where voids in communal services

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[2]Draper and Karlinsky, 76.

existed. Although charity work was required of all community members, Irving Abella has stated that Jewish women were, in many respects, more progressive in their attitude toward philanthropy than men [3], their devotion to the plight of the underprivileged and their time spent volunteering remaining unmatched by men in the Jewish community.

Historically, the objective of Jewish volunteer organizations and the intentions of their members have differed substantially from those of other Canadian women's groups. Unlike many of their Christian counterparts at the turn of the 20th century who regarded immigrants and non-Protestants as the cause of civil disobedience, early Jewish volunteer women were more interested in securing rights for minority groups than preoccupied with cleansing the "moral fibre" of society. As contemporary Judaism is non-proselytizing, Jewish women neither criticized the "shortcomings" of other faiths, nor did they attempt to convert those whom they assisted outside the Jewish community. Rather, these women's sole "religious" concern was to foster and preserve a Jewish identity within their own community, in essence reflecting their minority position in Canada. Moreover, as certain groups, such as the NCJWC, encouraged religious study for women, members were taught the basic precepts and responsibilities of Judaism, which helped to create a strong Jewish identity within both the family and, by extension, the larger community. In many respects, then, Jewish women's organizations acted as a literal shield against the community's complete assimilation into mainstream or "Christian" Canadian life. Immigrant aid organizations, for instance, while encouraging the newly-arrived to

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[3]Abella, 118.

acculturate and become Canadian, insisted that this process not be accomplished at the expense of sacrificing their "Jewishness".

While Jewish women's organizations encouraged their members to perform countless acts of benevolence for which they received accolades both within and outside the Jewish community, there existed, however, definite negative aspects inherent in the volunteer vocation for Jewish women which need to be acknowledged here. The consciousness that there was "something wrong" in Jewish women's volunteer groups began to surface in the 1970s and early-1980s with the advent of the modern feminist movement, and the resultant re-assessment of women's particular role and status in society by Jewish feminist scholars. Paula Hyman, for instance, has described the Jewish volunteering problem as one which was "...bound up with the phenomenon of volunteerism among women in a society that devalues both unpaid work and female labor, and with the change in options available to women both as volunteers and as workers."[4] In other words, in an environment in which salary earnings were a key determinant of one's worth, and where "volunteer" had become synonymous with female, there was an instinctive tendency to denigrate unpaid labour in charitable organizations as superfluous, largely through ignoring the fact that the tasks these women performed was *bona fide* "work". Thus, volunteering would forever remain underappreciated, regardless of its true worth to the entire community, a problem in all societies which rely heavily on the unpaid labour of women to sustain their economies. As Jewish women themselves began to feel exploited, with little or no chance for advancement within the volunteer ranks, they began

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[4]Paula Hyman "The Volunteer Organizations: Vanguard or Rear Guard?", *Lilith*, 5 (1978), 22.

to seek out other workforce options now available to them, and the result was a steady decline in membership in most organizations.

The history of Jewish women's entry into philanthropic institutions is not unlike that of many non-Jewish women throughout North America and Western Europe. As immigrant families were able to take advantage of the wealth and business opportunities which were increasingly available in the industrialized world in the 19th century, it became fashionable, a sign of financial success, for a man to be the family's sole breadwinner while his wife stayed at home and engaged in pursuits of the domestic persuasion. For Jewish men in particular, this meant a dramatic shift away from the traditional lifestyle devoted to religious pursuits, to what Adrienne Baker has called a "defection" from the synagogue and religious life.[5] By contrast, their wives, who in Jewish culture had customarily been the primary source of a family's income, working outside the home, usually running a family business to allow their husbands and sons the chance to engage in religious study, were now precluded from wage earning upon marriage, as to do so would bring public shame and embarrassment upon the family involved. The result of this trend away from a traditional Jewish lifestyle to a more "Americanized" one was that handling money was no longer considered an appropriate female activity, a woman's economic power was virtually eliminated and her public persona disappeared.

However, Jewish women did not sit idle in their new role. In an attempt to regain some of the public power that had been taken from them, these women turned to philanthropy as a means through which to elevate their status in society. Kathleen

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[5]Baker, 127.

McCarthy, in *Lady Bountiful Revisited,* has concluded that unlike men who had access to an array of "meaningful careers", women turned to embrace volunteer work in non-profit organizations and reform groups as their only opportunity to gain entrance into the public arena from which they were otherwise excluded. In doing so, women inadvertently developed what McCarthy has called a "parallel power structure" to that used by men, asserting that it was through this separate "female" realm that women were able to create new avenues of public opportunity for themselves which were entirely distinct from those available to their husbands. Free from the influences of the "male" world outside, the "parallel power structure" allowed women to advance within their chosen occupations, albeit performing work which was not financially compensated.[6] While an analysis as to whether or not this "special" arrangement eventually had any impact upon the empowerment of women as a whole is beyond the scope of thesis, when the question is posed of whether or not volunteering ever provided women with power in the Jewish community, the answer it receives is an overwhelming and categorical "no", particularly when viewed in light of most late-20th century accounts analyzing Jewish women in the volunteer structure.

In essence, Jewish feminist scholars have argued that as long as women continue to be prohibited from taking an active role in synagogue life, no amount of volunteering for good causes will render them powerful within the Jewish communal hierarchy. According to Draper, although participating in volunteer activities in the early twentieth

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[6]Kathleen D. McCarthy, "Parallel Power Structures: Women and the Voluntary Sphere", in Kathleen D. McCarthy ed., *Lady Bountiful Revisited: Women, Philanthropy and Power,* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press), 1.

century signalled a "departure" for women from their domestic isolation, the unfortunate consequence was that this new vocation merely served to reinforce traditional stereotypes of femininity within the community rather than eradicate them. Moreover, while volunteer women were responsible for organizing crucial social services within the Jewish community, they continued to be excluded from religious ceremonies, and by extension, any significant status in communal decision-making. In short, their contributions to Canadian Jewish life went "unheralded."[7]

Sociologist Yael Gordon-Brym, looking at power structures and upward mobility in the Canadian Jewish community has observed that although most women who participated in volunteer organizations have reported a sense of "great satisfaction" with their accomplishments as members of these groups, any political power within the community thought to be derived from association with a volunteer organization has been largely illusory. For not only have the overwhelming majority of these groups remained "uninfluential", but in most cases they have been unable provide women with access to greater opportunities within the communal infrastructure.[8] Also examining the personal and communal ramifications of volunteerism among Jewish women, Rachel Schlesinger has concluded that the steady decline of women's organizations is largely the result of the lack of opportunity for upward mobility for members in general, as only a very small percentage of the membership ever reached high-ranking positions within these institutions. Moreover, women came increasingly to feel that their work has been

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[7]Draper, 6-7.

[8]Gordon-Brym, 13-15.

undervalued, their positions unchallenging, their tasks often menial, and their volunteer experience difficult to apply toward paid work.[9] As the Jewish community has come to rely heavily on the goodwill of unpaid women to perform critical social welfare tasks, the escalating shortage of volunteers has the potential to create a crisis in Jewish social services.

One explanation for the demise of volunteerism lies in the reality that, as American feminist scholar Paula Hyman contends, volunteer organizations have simply turned a blind eye to the concerns of modern women by not "keeping up" with women's quest for political decision making power within the Jewish community. Not only have these organizations appeared, by and large, unwilling to assist concerned Jewish women in their "...rightful struggle for positions of communal responsibility.", but they seem to be "out of touch" with the issues that affect women as they near the 21st century. By maintaining what Hyman calls a "rear guard" position on many of the contemporary issues surrounding women's lives brought to the forefront by the feminist movement, the one thing at which these organizations have succeeded is making themselves increasingly redundant to the lives of Jewish women.[10]

Perhaps the harshest criticism levelled at Jewish women's volunteer organizations comes from Aviva Cantor in her vitriolic "The Sheltered Workshop", in which the author describes a scene of virtual slavery for women caught in the "volunteer ghetto" which is masterfully controlled by a select few ultra-wealthy women specially chosen for their

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[9]Schlesinger, 66-7.

[10]Hyman, "The Volunteer Organizations", 22.

ability not to seriously threaten the Jewish male power structure, all the while ensuring their own unconditional authority. In addition to reinforcing women's "...lack of self-confidence and self-esteem", Cantor calls volunteering a form of "occupational therapy", one in which women are kept "...safely busy at harmless tasks that do not threaten...power relationships within the Jewish community." Isolated and lonely, the volunteer woman is easily seduced by "frauds" and "myths" in the constant hope that she will one day find the self-fulfilment she seeks through volunteering.[11]

While an exceptionally embittered and bleak picture, Cantor's sensationalistic exposé on the Jewish volunteer structure does provoke certain pertinent questions as to the true nature of volunteer organizations. For example, can volunteer work be accurately described as a dead-end ghetto and do volunteer organizations actually foster unnatural competitiveness among women. Do women feel "exploited" and stifled by the volunteer framework, and perhaps most relevant to this project, can all Jewish women's volunteer organizations be considered "basically interchangeable." as the author suggests.[12]

Beyond these indictments, however, to what extent can portrayals such as Cantor's be accepted as reliable indicators of the treatment Jewish women received as communal volunteers. As the critical emphasis of the literature tends to focus primarily on how women's volunteer work was received within the Jewish community, there is unfortunately little analysis as to how the women themselves felt about acting as unpaid social service workers and exactly how they perceived their role within the overall

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[11]Aviva Cantor, "The Sheltered Workshop", *Lilith* 5 (1978), 17-18.

[12]Cantor, 18.

community. An examination of the interview responses of former Ottawa Section members reveals that women's actual experiences in volunteering were quite different from what has been recorded in certain scholarly analyses. Despite all the negativity directed at their organizations, many women did find fulfilment and a sense of accomplishment from having been part of an volunteer network. Through these groups, women formed enduring friendships and had the ability to socialize with people with whom they shared a passion for a particular belief or cause. For these women, the issue was not about whether they were paid or unpaid, exploited or empowered, but rather it was about giving to the community, assisting others, and filling a void in people's lives by bringing them joy.

The women interviewed for this project represent the three "generations" of the Ottawa Section's membership. Two of the three respondents were members in the 1950s and 1960s when professional volunteering was seen as a suitable, desirable occupational option for a woman, while the third respondent became a member at a time when volunteering was coming under direct scrutiny from those within and outside the Jewish community. It is highly probable that the recollections of the two earlier members have been affected by present perceptions of volunteering, especially when seen in light of their organization's untimely demise. Nonetheless, what is striking about the responses given is the similarity in attitudes between all three women toward the NCJWC, despite the generational differences separating them.

In effect, there were as many reasons for joining the NCJWC as there were actual members. Women's motivations for joining the Council ranged from the purely social to

the most ideological. For many women, their years as Ottawa Section members were formative ones in the sense that belonging to this organization gave them the opportunity to meet with other married women and share their concerns about their own lives, Jewish life in Canada, and the world around them. One respondent, an Ottawa Section member from 1959 to the late 1960s, declared that for her, joining Council was a "... right of passage... It was the thing to do."[13] While the social aspects of volunteering were important and indeed, it was during her years with the Ottawa Section that this member made many of her "initial" life-long friends, what drew her to the Council over other Jewish women's groups was that the NCJWC was "...more of an action group... and more aware of feminism." than, say, Hadassah, which was largely involved with "...fundraising, teas, bazaars and that sort of thing." In fact, the decision of whether or not to join the NCJWC often had to do with family tradition, as "...certain families belonged to Council, while certain families belonged to Hadassah."[14]

Another member reported that the role of volunteering in her life was "a given, a natural." While also drawn to the "education and social action " mandate of the NCJWC, this woman, an Ottawa Section member between 1975 and 1990, stated that to her, the fact that Council was "...not focused solely on the Jewish community, but that they did a lot of work outside the Jewish community, was very important to me."[15] When asked how the Ottawa Section was different from other women's groups in the local area, the

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[13]Interview with Rhoda Blevis, Ottawa, October 30, 1997.

[14]*ibid.*

[15]Interview with Carol Kassie, Ottawa, November 13, 1997.

response was that the Council had a philosophy of dedication to "hands-on doing in the community.", unlike many other Jewish women's organizations. A third respondent, an Ottawa Section member from 1951 to the mid-60's, reported that what motivated her to join the Council was her admiration for Ottawa Section's founder, Amelia Loeb, whom she called a "...dedicated, marvellous organizer and an exceptionally charming woman." Furthermore, this member echoed the sentiments of her section colleagues when she stated that Council women tended to be those who were "...very anxious to deal with the Jewish community in a constructive way.", the membership profile generally being "...younger women who wanted a more useful, modern approach to Jewish issues than offered by Hadassah."[16] Moreover, the leadership of the NCJWC, both the local and national executive were described by one member as women who were "...really movers and shakers, women who had a lot to offer and were really exciting to be with."[17], baring no resemblance to the self-interested, power-hungry élite described by Aviva Cantor.

Interestingly, all three women reported that the Council acted as a "stepping stone" to other career opportunities both within and outside the Jewish community, quite at odds with Cantor's "doomsday" scenario. One member who was the first woman on the executive of the Ottawa Jewish Community Centre, becoming its first female President in 1991, described the Council as a "...wonderful growing place where I learned public speaking, how to manage a budget and chair a meeting."[18] Another woman stated that

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[16]Interview with Geri Migicovsky, Ottawa, January 9, 1998.

[17]Interview with Rhoda Blevis, Ottawa, October 30, 1997.

[18]Interview with Carol Kassie, Ottawa, November 13, 1997.

belonging to the Council had made a significant impact on her life as it "...opened the door for a lot of things..." such as a career in the media as a radio reporter and further involvement in the activities of the Ottawa Jewish community.

When asked if they had felt exploited in any way by their volunteer experiences, two of the three women flatly answered "no", one member stating that her initial response to the suggestion that volunteer women have been victimized by an uncaring, abusive system is "anger." The third respondent declared that although she did not feel "exploited" *per se*, she did feel as though "...sometimes I was taken advantage of if someone didn't show up [for a particular program] as I was often called upon to fill in. What turned me off volunteering was that you could give and give and there was a sort of bottomless pit." For this particular member, the difficulty with the Jewish community's traditional reliance on volunteers for the provision of services, was that "[i]n many ways, if the volunteers didn't do it, it just wouldn't have been done by anyone else." Nevertheless, this woman has stated that volunteering for the NCJWC did provide her with many fond memories and in retrospect "[y]ou get a good feeling about it now."[19]

The recollections of these former Council members, while generally positive, all lead to a central question: Is there a future for Jewish women's volunteer organizations in Canada in the 21st century? If so, will these groups be able to shed their negative image and recover lost memberships? While any theory on this issue is purely speculative, there are certain factors which may make this task seem somewhat daunting and may impede the process. First, Jewish women, as is true of their non-Jewish sisters throughout North

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[19]Interview by author, name withheld, Ottawa.

America, have been affected by, or at the very least, exposed to feminism and its liberating message. Given the new opportunities now available to women both personally and professionally, it has been argued that Jewish women are becoming increasingly unwilling "... to accept a role as cheap labour for the Jewish community."[20] Furthermore, as women discover their potential as paid professionals and the added responsibilities that this entails as they strive for a balance between family and career, it has become difficult for many groups to arouse women's enthusiasm for donating their spare time to organizations which appear out-of-step with the overall evolution of women's role in society. Among the remedies proposed by Jewish feminists are that volunteer organizations must be accepting of women who choose to volunteer on a part-time or occasional basis, and that women must be given the opportunity to advance into executive level positions within communal service agencies. Realistically, if women continue to feel trapped in feminine ghettos of volunteering by not being given the recognition they deserve, they will continue to abandon the vocation at rapid rates.[21]

Yet perhaps a more fundamental change is necessary, one which could radically alter gender relations within the Jewish community. It has been argued that until the Canadian Jewish community redefines the role of women and redresses the gender inequities that exist within it, women will not only abandon volunteering, but the actual community itself, in search of better opportunities elsewhere. As Gordon-Brym has maintained, not only would the Jewish community be "...ill-advised to hold women

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[20]Draper, 7.

[21]Draper and Karlinsky, 87.

back...", but, on the contrary, it is precisely in allowing women to "...realis[e] their full potential as community workers and leaders...", that Jewish culture in Canada has its most likely chance of survival.[22] Furthermore, women must be made to feel that the community accepts and supports them in their new roles. A failure to do so will undoubtedly lead to the weakening of a Jewish identity which, according to Sylvia Barack Fishman, is the single largest determining factor in a woman's decision to abandon communal activities.[23] In other words, unless a woman is made to feel that both her personal and professional decisions are an acceptable part of the Jewish framework, the less likely she is to donate her time to volunteer organizations.

Ultimately, the issue is not whether Jewish women will return to volunteering, but what the organizations themselves will do to entice women back into their folds. Volunteer organizations must be willing to accept the fact that women have changed, as has society's perception of them. Thus the onus is on the Canadian Jewish community to reassess its relationship with volunteer women, by sincerely and genuinely investigating how it can be more responsive to the needs of the women who are responsible for providing the community with its base of support. Thousands of Canadian Jewish women have devoted their lives to the causes of Jewish organizations. It is time that they received the full recognition they deserve.

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[22]Gordon-Brym, 19-20.

[23]Fishman, 76-77.

The National Council of Jewish Women of Canada celebrated its centenary in 1997. To mark the occasion, a photographic exhibition entitled "With Faith and Humanity: One Hundred Years of the National Council of Jewish Women" was held in the fall of that year at the Multicultural History Society of Ontario in Toronto. The displays included photographs from Council sections across Canada, from Vancouver to Quebec City, depicting the range of activities and "faces" which have defined the NCJWC throughout the years. In viewing these pictures, it was difficult not to experience a mixture of emotions, for while these women strove to improve the lives of all Canadians and brought comfort to those in desperate situations, in reality, these women are and will largely remain "unsung heroes". Although this thesis is one of the only historical analyses of the Canadian Council, it offers but a mere glimpse of the depth and complexity of the NCJWC waiting for academic discovery. Not only must the histories of other sections be written, but further research, both archival and in interview form, needs to be done to retrace the steps of the NCJWC's founders for a more complete understanding of their motivations in bringing the Council to Canada.

What is known is that the NCJWC has not wavered for over one hundred years from its founding precepts of "education and philanthropy", remaining committed to furthering Judaism in Canada through study groups for women, and assisting both the Canadian Jewish and general communities through its benevolent services. A volunteer organization which united Jewish women from across Canada, the Council was a patriotic, feminist institution devoted to advancing the rights of women, fostering an awareness and understanding of public affairs, social justice and citizenship amongst its members, and

most significantly accomplishing this within a Canadian context. While not as strong numerically as it once was, and perhaps a little ravaged by time, the Council steadfastly continues to perform its charitable duties throughout the country.

The uniqueness of the NCJWC lies in the fact that it is the only Jewish women's organization in Canada which has enabled women to participate in activities of benefit to all Canadians, following the belief that action which is limited to the Jewish community is not a complete fulfilment of the tenets of Judaism. On the contrary, it was precisely the dualistic nature of the Council's program that allowed Jewish women to profoundly explore and enhance their religious and cultural beliefs. The NCJWC's historical significance is that it was one of the first ethnic women's organizations in Canada, developed to provide Jewish women a voice in the reform movement of the late 19th century and, because of its focus on the "totality of mankind", the Council has acted as a bridge between the Jewish community and other groups in Canadian society. Moreover, membership in the NCJWC has enabled Jewish women to acculturate or "Canadianize" without sacrificing or compromising their Jewish identities. The flexibility and magnitude of its program meant that all Jewish women could participate in the Council, regardless of their particular religious beliefs and individual interests, whether they were interested simply in volunteering with children or the aged or actively fighting for women's and minority rights in Canada. The only prerequisite for membership was a devotion to preserving Jewish identity in Canada and a firm belief in the value of doing "good works" for humanity.

Although the Council did participate in several fundraising efforts, this was far from the sole purpose of the organization. One of the hallmarks of the NCJWC's philosophy was that it always endeavoured to promote social legislation that sought to improve living standards and human rights in Canada, either alone or in unison with other organizations. The Council's Social Action and Public Affairs programs successfully advocated, among other accomplishments in this area, that Canada implement a Fair Employment Practices Law, a Canadian Bill of Rights and uphold the values and spirit of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. These achievements, along with the development of the NCJWC's own School for Citizenship Participation, all demonstrated the Council's commitment to fostering an awareness of the responsibilities of Canadian citizenship and the preservation of democratic values amongst Jewish women.

As a national organization, the NCJWC was able to create an extensive membership network across the country by establishing sections in many Jewish communities throughout Canada. The importance of analyzing the activities of these individual Council chapters is that it provides an opportunity to evaluate closely the relationship between the National executive and its local sections, namely to what extent did sections follow program directives received from the National Division and was there any dissension to be found at the local level. In the case of the Ottawa Section, it appears that while there were some initiatives taken locally which were specific to the needs of the Ottawa community, the section followed closely those activities proposed by the Council's leadership. While the section did voice its concerns to the National executive where specific situations warranted, in general, there was little discernable tension between the

Ottawa Section and its parent organization. Most importantly, however, the Ottawa Section presented Jewish women in Canada's capital region with the opportunity to participate in the social and educational ventures of this nation-wide organization.

The unfortunate collapse of the Council in Ottawa does raise doubts about the future of women's volunteering in the Jewish community. As professional demands beckon and the role of women increasingly expands, it is difficult to imagine that Jewish women will return *en masse* to pursue full-time volunteer work, particularly in an age where money seems to determine a person's societal status and worth, and earning a salary has been directly linked to positive self-esteem. It seems unlikely that there will ever be a return to the "glory days" of volunteering, and it would appear that the 20th century professional volunteer just as the 19th century clubwoman will soon be relegated to a distant past. The ramifications this will have on the Jewish community, however, are potentially enormous. Having relied for generations on the goodwill of women to both develop and provide unpaid social services, the Jewish community will now have to re-evaluate its previous relationship with women's volunteer organizations, perhaps bestowing upon them greater responsibility and more positive public recognition of their work in an attempt to circumvent any future lapse in social welfare assistance within the community.

Nevertheless, despite the uncertain future of volunteering in Canada, the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada will forever remain Canada's longest serving Jewish women's organization, providing extraordinary service and demonstrating a perpetual

devotion to both the Canadian Jewish and general communities, all delivered with "Faith and Humanity".

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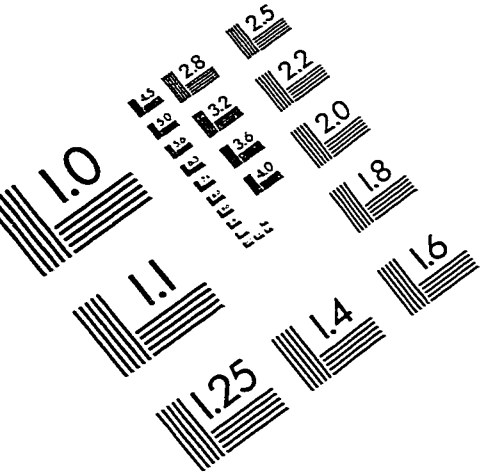

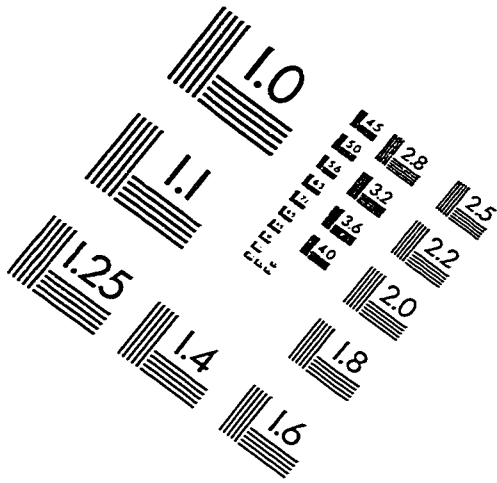

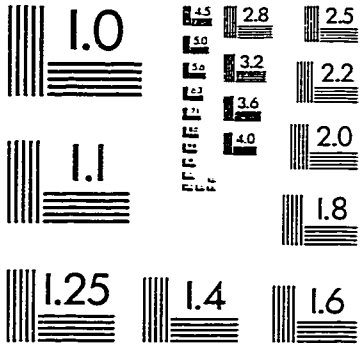

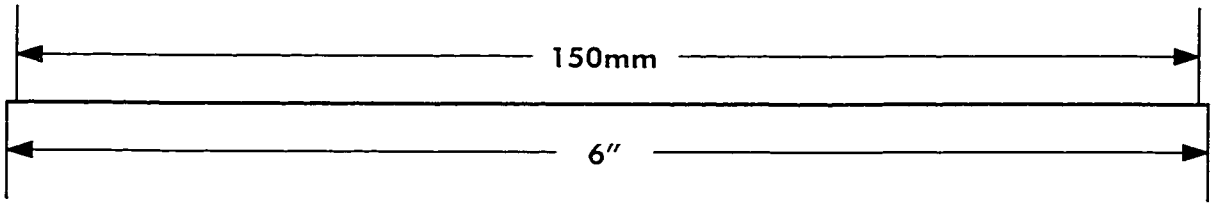

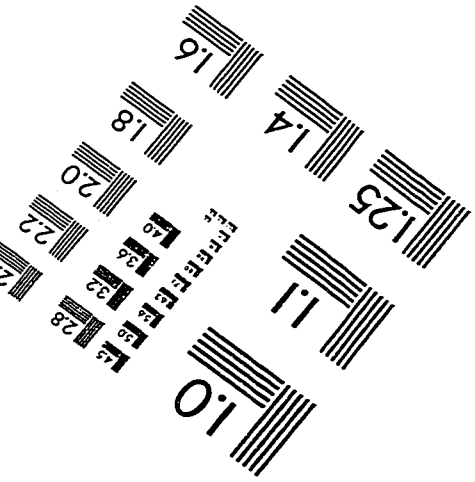

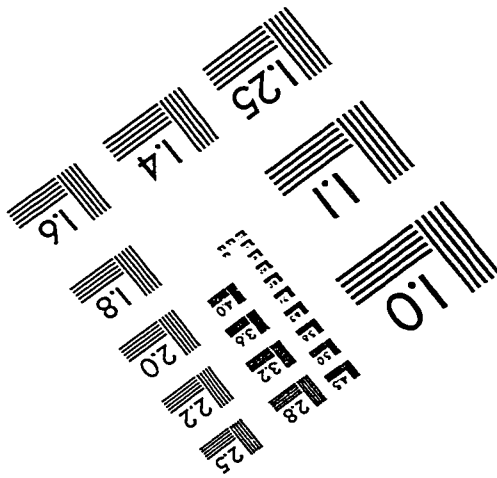

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