Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project,

August 1947 to February 1952

Ava Sharpe 261101576

Department of History, Faculty of Arts, McGill University, Montréal

Submitted for Evaluation November 5, 2023

A thesis submitted to the Department of History and Classical Studies in partial fulfilment

of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts

<u>Abstract</u>

Between August 1947 and February 1952, Canada received approximately 1,100 young Holocaust survivors through the War Orphan Project led by the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC). These survivors serve a crucial role in forging an image of Canada's prompt and compassionate response to the plight of European Jews after the Holocaust. However, such a celebratory narrative, reproduced in the historiography, obscures Canada's significant history of antisemitism and resistance to hosting Jewish refugees. This thesis will address how the complex resettlement experiences of the War Orphans nuances this historiographical consensus. Namely, it will question the Canadian state's failed attempt to mould these young survivors into archetypal model child immigrants using the foster family model, an aspect of the resettlement process thus far neglected in the historiography.

It will advocate for a reorientation of methodology surrounding agency to one that historicizes acts of youthful autonomy and youngsters' contributions to historical change over time. More precisely, I will utilize age as a primary category of analysis to illustrate the complexities surrounding the resettlement of the War Orphans in Canada.

Part I will analyze the rhetoric and visual materials of the CJC August and September 1947 campaign to attract foster families and donations to illustrate the preferences of Canadian Jewish families and lay out the expectations they held over the presentation of the War Orphans.

Part II will analyze the information given by CJC social workers in the individual War Orphans case files to illustrate how these expectations held by foster parents directly impacted the development of successful foster family relationships, subsequently nuancing the historiographical consensus surrounding the success of their resettlement. It is crucial to reread the case files written and produced for the adults running the project against the grain to uncover the voices of the orphans during their resettlement.

Part III further utilizes the case files of the War Orphans to begin to illustrate how they could dictate their course of resettlement, challenging the historiographical narrative that the War Orphans were passive victims.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Entre août 1947 et février 1952, le Canada a accueilli environ 1,100 jeunes survivants de la Shoah dans le cadre du projet des orphelins de guerre mené par le Congrès juif canadien (CJC). Ces survivants jouent un rôle crucial en forgeant une image d'une réponse rapide et compatissante du Canada à la situation critique des Juifs d'Europe après la Shoah. Cependant, un tel récit de célébration obscurcit l'histoire de l'antisémitisme et de la résistance à l'accueil de réfugiés juifs au Canada. Cette thèse examinera comment les expériences complexes de réinstallation des orphelins de guerre nuancent ce consensus historiographique. Il remettra en question la tentative échouée de l'État canadien de transformer ces jeunes survivants en enfants immigrants archétypaux en utilisant le modèle de la famille d'accueil, un aspect du processus de réinstallation actuellement omis par l'historiographie.

Cette thèse réorientera la méthodologie concernant l'agence vers une méthodologie qui historicise les actes d'autonomie des jeunes et les contributions des jeunes au développement historique au fil du temps. Plus précisément, j'utiliserai l'âge comme catégorie d'analyse pour illustrer les complexités entourant la réinstallation des orphelins de guerre au Canada.

La première partie analysera la rhétorique et le matériel visuel de la campagne du CJC d'août et septembre 1947 pour attirer des familles d'accueil et des dons afin d'illustrer les préférences des familles juives canadiennes et de souligner les attentes qu'elles avaient concernant la présentation des orphelins de guerre.

La deuxième partie analysera les informations fournies par les travailleurs sociaux du CJC dans les dossiers individuels des orphelins de guerre afin d'illustrer comment les attentes des parents d'accueil ont eu un impact direct sur le développement de relations réussis avec les familles d'accueil et, par la suite, sur la nuance du consensus historiographique entourant le succès de leur processus immédiat de réinstallation.

Il est indispensable de relire les dossiers écrits et réalisés à destination des adultes qui ont géré le projet à contre-courant pour découvrir les voix des orphelins lors de leur réinstallation.

La troisième partie utilisera les dossiers des orphelins de guerre pour commencer à illustrer comment ils ont pu dicter le cours de leur réinstallation, en contestant le récit historiographique des orphelins de guerre faisant des victimes passives.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

<u>Acknowledgements</u>

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Table of Contents

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Abbreviations

A.J.D.C - AMERICAN JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE

CJA - CANADIAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

CJC - CANADIAN JEWISH CONGRESS

DP - DISPLACED PERSONS

JFCS - JEWISH FAMILY AND CHILD SERVICE

JFS - JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES

JVS – JEWISH VOCATIONAL SERVICE

UHSSB - UNITED HEBREW SOCIAL SERVICE BUREAU

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Introduction

Cité Mémoire and the Jewish War Orphans

While walking the streets of Old Montréal in the spring of 2016, it would have been impossible to miss the illuminations of various tableau projected onto the city's cobbled walls. One such tableau was that of an orphaned child rescued by the Montréal Jewish community in 1947.[1] The orphan was just one of 1,121 young Jewish orphans brought from Europe to Canada between August 1947 and February 1952 as part of the War Orphan Project.[2] The project was an initiative to place child Holocaust survivors with Jewish foster families, and the federal government entrusted the day-to-day running of the project to the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC), an organization founded in 1919 to represent the interests of Canadian Jews domestically and abroad.[3]

The orphan in the tableau stands in front of a gloomily lit train carriage, dressed in monotone, ragged greyscale clothing, a thin scarf protecting their fragile body. The image of the malnourished, skeletal orphan with a shaved head is reminiscent of those Holocaust survivors seen in photographs circulating in the post-war Canadian press of liberated concentration camps.[4] To the onlooker, the orphaned child appears as a needy young victim, entirely dependent on the care of the Montréal public. Notably, the image obscures the age and gender of the orphan, who appears physically mature and adultlike. The photo portrays the war as having attacked the very *idea* of childhood - destroying both children's bodies and

---

[1] Janice Arnold, "Exhibit Pays Tribute to Orphaned Survivors Rescued by Jewish Montrealers," *The Canadian Jewish News*, June 8, 2016, https://thecjn.ca/news/canada/montreal-exhibit-honours-orphaned-holocaust-survivors/

[2] Antoine Burgard, "A New Life in a New Country, Trajectories of Holocaust Orphans to Canada (1945-1952)" *Études canadiennes / Canadian Studies* 86, no.1 (2019): 193, DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/eccs.2087

[3] Antoine Burgard, "Visualising Holocaust Child-Survivors in Canada: From Post-war Humanitarian Campaigns to National Memory," *Cultural and Social History* 17, no. 5 (2019): 733, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14780038.2019.1658698

[4] Arnold, "Exhibit Pays Tribute to Orphaned Survivors Rescued by Jewish Montrealers." See this link for more information on the exhibition and photographs of the tableau.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

their sense of innocence.[5] The tableau positions the Canadian public as the ultimate guardians

of childhood innocence relative to the Nazi regime that had threatened its very existence.

The tableau formed part of an exhibition known as *Cité Mémoire*, celebrating the

375th anniversary of the foundation of the city of Montréal.[6] Each tableau illustrates a

significant moment in the city's history.[7] The exhibition's featuring of the War Orphans of

1947 serves a clear ideological purpose. Antoine Burgard has used *Cité Mémoire* to illustrate

the crucial role the Jewish War Orphans played in manufacturing an image of Canada's

prompt and compassionate response to the plight of European Jews amid the Holocaust.[8] This

celebratory narrative obscures Canada's complex history of antisemitism and hostile

treatment of Jewish refugees.[9] The federal government's decision to approve the rescue

mission was, in fact, just a minor break in the twentieth-century Canadian immigration policy

towards Jewish refugees. A mere eight years earlier, Frederick Blair, director of the

Government of Canada's Immigration Branch, refused to allow the MS *St. Louis* ship

holding 900 Jews fleeing Germany to disembark at Halifax port.[10] The dismissive attitude of

the Canadian federal government towards Jewish immigration is evident in the infamous

1945 phrase uttered by an unnamed senior government official who, when asked how many

---

[5] Carly McLaughlin,""They Don't Look Like Children": Child Asylum-Seekers, the Dubs Amendment and thePolitics of Childhood," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 17, no. 18 (2018): 1760, DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2017.1417027 The theory surrounding the destruction of the idea of childhood innocence is taken from McLaughlin's argument surrounding the presentation of childhood innocence in humanitarian images.

[6] Antoine Burgard, "The Holocaust, Refugee Children, and Canada's National Narrative," Social History Society (website), November 11, 2019, https://socialhistory.org.uk/shs_exchange/the-holocaust refugee-children-and-canadas-national-narrative/

[7] Burgard, "The Holocaust, Refugee Children, and Canada's National Narrative."

[8] Burgard, "The Holocaust, Refugee Children, and Canada's National Narrative."

[9] Burgard, "The Holocaust, Refugee Children, and Canada's National Narrative."

[10] Steve Schwinghamer, "Canada and MS *St. Louis*," Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 (website), July 21, 2021, https://pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/canada-and-ms-st-louis. For more on the failed voyage, see also Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None Is Too Many* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1982), 63-4.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Jewish refugees should be admitted by the government, claimed that "none" was "too many."[11]

In the decades preceding the project, the Canadian public had also become increasingly suspicious of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. Irving Abella and Harold Troper have argued that until the mid-twentieth century, the Church in Quebec denounced the growing Jewish community as vectors of "corruption" that could sabotage the obligation to protect the Christian faith.[12] Meanwhile, in the early twentieth century, Canadian immigration policy began to prioritize moving non-English speaking immigrants to agriculturally dense areas of the Prairies.[13] Nonetheless, in English-speaking Canada, Jewish immigrants began to settle in urban areas like Toronto, a move which the public considered to be a deliberate barrier to this plan of agricultural settlement.[14] As such, anti-Jewish discrimination became commonplace in employment and housing accessibility.[15]

Subsequently, the exhibition's use of the War Orphans project to cast a celebratory light on the government's humanitarian efforts towards Jewish immigrants contributes to what Tony Kushner calls "the usable past" in history.[16] Such overwhelmingly positive representations elevate public narratives of Canadian humanitarianism, side-lining the young refugees as passive historical actors and ignoring any pre-existing antisemitism in Canadian society.[17] Additionally, while memorials such as *Cité Mémoire* present the Canadian public as redeemers of childhood innocence, the sympathy of the federal government and the Jewish public towards the orphans was not always guaranteed. Carly McLaughlin has argued that a

---

[11] Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many*, x.
[12] Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many*, x.
[13] Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many*, x.
[14] Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many*, x-xi.
[15] Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many*, xi.
[16] Tony Kushner as quoted in Burgard, "The Holocaust, Refugee Children, and Canada's National Narrative," Social History Society (website), November 11, 2019, https://socialhistory.org.uk/shs_exchange/the-holocaust refugee-children-and-canadas-national-narrative/.
[17] Burgard, "The Holocaust, Refugee Children, and Canada's National Narrative."

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

universal politics of childhood exists within modern migration campaigns that laid out the terms under which governments in the West granted these children protection.[18] This, she argues, is primarily based on the concept of innocence, one marked by vulnerability and dependence but also fragmented acutely by age and race.[19] These hierarchies of worthiness are a well-known part of state-sponsored immigration practices. The universality of this notion of childhood innocence fuels considerably more public sympathy for child migrants than adults, illustrated by the common phrase utilized by contemporary humanitarian organizations: "child first, migrant second."[20] Subsequently, age is a key determining factor in the perceived desirability of migrants.

Additional insights from the field of the history of emotions help to explain this relative government preference for younger child migrants. Stephanie Olsen and Karen Vallgårda have written at length about the concept of emotional formation:

> an emotional formation is a set of emotional structures ordered in a particular *pattern*…The point is that within this large-scale collective, there exists a certain level of coherence in people's conception of appropriate or even fathomable emotional comportment in different situations… [Emotional formations] also tend to be characterized by a high degree of diversity across space, class, ethnicity, age, and gender.[21]

Olsen points to childhood as an important time for emotional formation, with age being an axis for differentiating "between emotional formations."[22] This partially explains the government preference for child migrants, who, being less emotionally developed, could easily be moulded into alternative societies with different emotional norms. Older migrants, on the other hand, were more likely to experience what Olsen and Vallgårda term an

---

[18] McLaughlin, ""They Don't Look Like Children,""1758.
[19] McLaughlin, ""They Don't Look Like Children,"" 1758.
[20] McLaughlin, ""They Don't Look Like Children,"" 1758.
[21] Kristine Alexander, Stephanie Olsen, and Karen Vallgårda, "Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood," in *Childhood, Youth and Emotion in Modern History: National, Colonial, and Global perspectives*, ed. Stephanie Olsen (London: Pallgrave Macmillan, 2015), 20.
[22] Alexander, Olsen, and Vallgårda, "Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood,"19.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

"emotional frontier."[23] One is said to have reached an emotional frontier when "the contrast between two distinct emotional formations" is "felt sharply," such as when moving between two different locations.[24] In this way "emotions work to align some subjects with some others" to create both local and national emotional, as well as national, identities.[25]

Refugees in the grey area between childhood and adulthood have consistently been labelled not as helpless, but as suspicious and less worthy of rescue within the broader politics of childhood.[26] These hierarchies of worth governed the eligibility criteria of the War Orphan project: the Canadian federal government capped the age limit of those applying to eighteen years of age, hoping that most applicants would be very young children.[27] Additionally, contemporary fears surrounding a rise in post-war juvenile delinquency meant that the public often viewed teenage orphans with suspicion.[28] The politics surrounding age transformed these teenage refugees "from innocent children into blameable adolescents who no longer deserve protection."[29] The experiences of teenage orphans, therefore, poses a substantial challenge to the widespread use of the War Orphan project as an illustration of Canada's exceptional hospitality towards child refugees.

The War Orphan project is not the only twentieth-century child rescue mission commonly used to model exemplary national humanitarianism. Many parallels exist between the War Orphan project and the Kindertransport rescue mission in Britain. Donations funded the project, and responsibility was placed by the government on Anglo-Jewish refugee

---

[23] Alexander, Olsen, and Vallgårda, "Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood,"19.
[24] Alexander, Olsen, and Vallgårda, "Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood,"22.
[25] Sara Ahmed as quoted in Alexander, Olsen, and Vallgårda, "Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood," 20.
[26] McLaughlin, ""They Don't Look Like Children,"" 1758.
[27] Antoine Burgard, "Contested Childhood: Assessing the Age of Young Refugees in the Aftermath of the Second World War," *History Workshop Journal* no. 92 (2021): 175, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbab016
[28] Mona Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal, Psychology, Schooling and The Family in Post-war Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1999), 10.
[29] McLaughlin, ""They Don't Look Like Children,""1763.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

support agencies to allocate children to British foster families or place them in hostels.[30] The

available source material has contributed to sustaining a congratulatory narrative of the

Kindertransport and the children as passive historical actors.[31] Both the War Orphans project

and the Kindertransport missions obscure otherwise hostile national refugee policies and the

absence of rescue campaigns for Jewish adult refugees.

Literature Review i)

The production of these celebratory narratives in public memory and historiography

contributes to what Tony Kushner describes as "the understandable desire for a happy

ending" in Holocaust history.[32] The first wave of literature on the project was written not by

historians trained in the academy but by social workers intimately involved in the orphan's

resettlement. The first significant example is Ben Lappin's 1963 monograph, *The Redeemed*

Children: The Story of the Rescue of War Orphans by the Jewish Community of Canada.[33]

This early work mapped out the project's development, from the search-and-rescue mission

in the DP camps in Europe to foster family integration.[34] Although Lappin does not avoid the

difficulties experienced by foster families with the orphans – ranging from cultural, religious

and behavioural issues – his monograph ultimately celebrates the successes of the project.[35]

Lappin was a graduate of the School of Social Work at the University of Toronto and a

former executive staff member of the CJC.[36] Speaking from personal experience, with first-

---

[30] Anthony Grenville, "Introduction" in *The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39: New Perspectives,* eds. Andrea Hammel and Bea Lewkowicz (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2020), 8.

[31] For more on the historiographical challenges surrounding the Kindertransport, see Jennifer Craig-Norton, *The Kindertransport: Contesting Memory* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2019).

[32] Kushner as quoted in Burgard, "The Holocaust, Refugee Children, and Canada's National Narrative."

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

[34] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children.* For more on Lappin's discussion of the search-and-rescue mission, see pages 10-22, and for more on his discussion of foster family integration, see pages 68-86.

[35] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children,* 68-86.

[36] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, vii.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

hand interviews, Lappin portrays a project that speaks to the strength of the human spirit in

the face of persecution. The foreword, written by the then executive director of the CJC in

1962, Saul Hayes, sings the praises of the legacy of the project:

> The book gleams with the encouraging moral that no amount of destruction can
> obliterate the indomitable courage of the human spirit. It also bespeaks an old
> tradition that amidst martyrdom and dispersion, the human spirit is endowed with
> such *élan vital* that it can, with great fortitude, recall the past and, with great courage,
> face an unknown future.[37]

Alongside the celebratory tone of the foreword of the book, Lappin's use of source material

develops a narrative of the project from the perspective of the participating adults. He draws

much of his material from memory and first-hand experience interacting with the

youngsters.[38] Thus, much of the orphans' experiences remain mediated through the social

worker's perspective. Unsurprisingly, the work reproduces a celebratory narrative of the

project's success, as it was produced and funded by the CJC as a memorial initiative.[39]

The 1990s brought a significant theoretical shift in the writings on the War Orphan

project. These histories focused more closely on contextualizing the project within the

Canadian child welfare policy of the era and the prevailing attitudes of social workers about

how Holocaust survivors coped with resettlement. While they continued to be written

predominantly by social workers, they utilized a more comprehensive range of source

material. Fraidie Martz, a social worker based in Montréal, published the ground-breaking

monograph *Open Your Hearts: The Story of the Jewish War Orphans* in 1996.[40] This focused

not only on the bureaucratic process of the immigration negotiations between provincial

governments and the CJC but also on how wildly unprepared Canadian public services for

---

[37] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, vii.
[38] See Lappin, *The Redeemed Children,* vii for Saul Hayes' description of Lappin's purpose and command of his own social work expertise to narrate the project.
[39] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, vii.
[40] Fraidie Martz, *Open Your Hearts: The Story of the Jewish War Orphans in Canada* (Montréal: Véhicule Press, 1996.)

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

children's welfare were for the orphan's arrival. For example, in the province of

Saskatchewan in 1948, there was no separate Minister to provide children's services. This

responsibility was instead assigned to the Minister of Mines.[41]

The monograph utilized not only memoirs of social workers but also testimonies of

the orphans alongside the archival records of the CJC.[42] Additionally, Martz presents a more

nuanced account of the orphan's integration and resettlement into their Jewish foster families.

While she notes the generosity and efforts of families who, on short notice, accepted

refugees, she also argues that not all placements were successful due to personal differences

between the orphans and their foster families.[43] Subsequently, *Open Your Hearts* marked a

watershed moment in the historiography surrounding the War Orphans. It presented a more

complex picture of the resettlement process and the long-term psychological effects of

displacement on the War Orphans and social workers assigned to their care. Nonetheless, the

use of source material produced exclusively by adults meant Martz's work remained a history

of the War Orphans constructed according to the encounters of adults as opposed to the

youngsters' contemporary experiences.

Literature Review ii) The Canadian State: A Coercive or Benevolent Entity?

The first decade of the twentieth century saw historians continue this line of inquiry

into more critical histories of the state concerning immigration policies and refugee

experience. Rather than the twentieth century Canadian state emerging as a protective

structure ensuring social security, historians focused on the state's role as an oppressive

organ of the white settler state. As thinking surrounding the development of the Canadian

---

[41] Jack Kugelmass, "Review: Martz, Fraidie. Open Your Hearts: The Story of the Jewish War Orphans in Canada," *Canadian Jewish Studies* 5, no. 192 (1997): 192, DOI: https://doi.org/10.25071/1916-0925.19824.
[42] For an example of the use of orphan testimony, see Martz, *Open Your Hearts: The Story of the JewishWar Orphans in Canada*, 139-140.
[43] Martz, *Open Your Hearts*, 210.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

state in the twentieth century evolved, so did the histories surrounding mediators of state policy, such as extra-governmental officials. Franca Iacovetta's monograph *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada* labelled these middle-class individuals regulating the borders of the nation as gatekeepers.[44] Included in this definition were those who facilitated contact between the welfare state and Canadian society, including new immigrants, such as social workers and child-care experts.[45] Gatekeepers encouraged immigrants "to reap the rewards" of adhering to the standard of the middle-class, patriarchal family, making steps towards full assimilation.[46] The critical role of gatekeepers in enforcing the regulation of the coercive Canadian state would remain crucial to the next generations of histories of the Jewish War Orphans, namely the shifting conception of the social worker from a benevolent agent of the state to an enforcer of its regulation.

Developments surrounding the role of state gatekeepers emerged parallel to historiography surrounding the politics of childhood and child immigration. Tara Zahra's *The Lost Children, Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II* documents the development of international relief on behalf of children, particularly the notion of the child's "best interests" - a concept emerging after World War II.[47] In addition, she traces the development of the universality of childhood innocence, one that fuelled public sympathy for child asylum seekers and made them into a protected victim "deemed worthy of special consideration."[48] In particular, the emergence of the symbolic archetype of the white,

---

[44] Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006), 18.
[45] Vic Satzewich, "Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada," *The Canadian Historical Review* 89, no.3 (2008): 399-400.
[46] Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives*, 58.
[47] Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families After World War II* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015), 19.
[48] Lynne Taylor, "Taylor on Zahra, "The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II," HABSBURG (website), July 2012, https://networks.h-net.org/node/19384/reviews/19945/taylor-zahra-lost-children-reconstructing-europes-families-after-world.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Western child refugee – dependable, young, innocent and damaged – reinforced the notion that states were saviours of childhood innocence when in the position to provide aid.[49] Zahra, however, fails to note that childhood innocence was not a given – "innocence" is a concept heavily equated with Whiteness, youth and femininity.[50] Nonetheless, her work influenced the next wave of historiography on the War Orphans, emphasizing how European Jewish immigrants straddled the conceptual boundaries of Whiteness and were perceived to have the ability to adapt their European customs to Canadian life more so than those from outside the West.

Literature Review iii) Historicizing the Politics of Child Immigration

This line of inquiry was nuanced further by historians' theoretical approaches to the politics of childhood. The work of Antoine Burgard illustrated that childhood was not simply a characteristic that guaranteed protection for children in post-war Canada but was open to interpretation.[51] Ultimately, the Canadian state negotiated the boundaries of childhood so much that its gatekeepers could actively reject immigration claims based on age.[52]

Burgard joins together historical lines of inquiry on gatekeepers and the politics of childhood, applying them to the case study of the War Orphans. While age is biologically determined, it, too, is a socially constructed life stage that scholars can historicize.[53] The use of age as a category of analysis was an outgrowth of early twentieth-century histories of childhood and youth. In his 2008 article, Steven Mintz reflected on the complex ways age

---

[49] Taylor, "Taylor on Zahra, "The Lost Children."

[50] Julie Garlen, "Interrogating Innocence: "Childhood" as Exclusionary Social Practice," *Childhood* 26, no.1 (2019): 54, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568218811484.

[51] "Abstract" in McLaughlin, ""They Don't Look Like Children, ""1758.

[52] Burgard, "Contested Childhood," 176.

[53] See William. A. Corsaro, "Historical Views of Childhood and Children," in *The Sociology of Childhood,* 2nd ed., ed. W. A. Corsaro (SAGE Publications: London, 2005), 65-86 for a comprehensive overview of the development of sociological thought on childhood as a socially constructed life-stage.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

interacts with power, gender, class, and race to produce historical change.[54] Burgard was the

first to use Mintzs' concept of age as a category of analysis when analyzing the immigration

negotiations between provincial governments and the CJC. As he demonstrates, the

conditions of war physically and bureaucratically made it harder to identify someone as a

child.[55] Hyper independence, physical deformities and malnourishment were just three of the

factors skewing the ability of social workers to determine age by a physical examination in

the absence of a birth certificate.[56] Without this empirical data, the Canadian state encoded its

boundaries of childhood and the methods to determine it, such as social worker evaluations.[57]

      Burgard's second article is the first to analyze the visual promotional materials of the

CJC, produced to find foster families in Canadian Jewish communities.[58] Burgard notes that

foster families preferred younger children who conformed more to the archetype of childhood

innocence and could quickly adapt to Canadian family life, having a weaker attachment to

their Eastern European lifestyle.[59] Subsequently, the contrast between the model child

immigrant and the children of the War Orphan project grew wider, as photographs flooded

the Canadian press of War Orphans arriving at Pier 21 in Halifax.[60] The subject of Burgard's

most recent work is how children responded to the imposition of these age categories by the

Canadian state in the negotiation process with the CJC.[61] In his 2022 article in the *History

Workshop Journal Digital Magazine*, Burgard notes the examples of refugees whose

---

[54] Steven Mintz, "Reflections on Age as a Category of Historical Analysis," *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1, no. 1 (2008): 91-4, DOI: doi:10.1353/hcy.2008.0003
[55] Burgard, "Contested Childhood," 181.
[56] Burgard, "Contested Childhood," 181.
[57] Burgard, "Contested Childhood," 186.
[58] Burgard, "Visualising Holocaust Child-Survivors in Canada," 731.
[59] Burgard, "Visualising Holocaust Child- Survivors in Canada," 740.
[60] Burgard, "Visualising Holocaust Child- Survivors in Canada," 739.
[61] Antoine Burgard, "'Very Few Actual Children': Defining Childhood and Assessing Age in the Aftermath of the Second World War," *History Workshop Digital Magazine*, April 27, 2022, https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/family-childhood/very-few-actual-children-defining-childhood-and-assessing-age-in-the-aftermath-of-the-second-world-war/.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

testimonies of the 1990s revealed that they pretended to be a year younger in order to qualify

for the Canadian programme in 1947.[62] His case confirms what Didier Fassin notes as the

"negotiation games" between individuals and power structures that work to dominate them.[63]

Young people would often take advantage of being within the "grey zone of adolescence" to

navigate the legal categories of childhood and adulthood to benefit from the protection of

institutions such as the federal government.[64]

Literature Review iv) Historiographical Interventions and Methods

This thesis will make three interventions into this wider historiography surrounding

the War Orphans project and the Canadian state. The first will illustrate that age as a category

of analysis was a vital determinant of the success of the orphan's placement. While Burgard

noted that the instability of age as a contested category was critical to the CJC's campaign to

find foster homes, he did not link the impact of age to the success of the orphan's foster

family placements.[65] By utilizing age as a category of analysis, this paper will push Burgard's

analysis further to illustrate that older orphans often had more complex resettlement

experiences as they were less likely to conform to the expectations of Jewish foster families.

Subsequently, this thesis will begin to complicate the congratulatory narrative that has existed

within the previous historiography on the War Orphans.

In doing so, I will consider the ways in which adult expectations of the idealized War

Orphan tangibly impacted the resettlement process. Studying the success of foster family

integration is critical to this argument, and this thesis hopes to inspire historians to reorient

---

[62] Burgard, "'Very Few Actual Children,'" April 27, 2022.
[63] Didier Fassin quoted in Burgard, "'Very Few Actual Children,'" April 27, 2022.
[64] Burgard, "'Very Few Actual Children,'" April 27, 2022.
[65] Burgard, "Visualising Holocaust Child-Survivors in Canada," 732.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project,
August 1947 to February 1952

themselves back towards contemporary source material, such as case records, using new methods to centre the War Orphans.

This thesis' second historiographical intervention seeks to insert the CJC into the discourse surrounding state gatekeepers in the Cold War period in Canada. While Iacovetta and others have conceptualized gatekeepers as regulators of state policies, they do not often have such a personal stake in their results. The CJC, therefore, is a unique case that demands using the term gatekeepers in two contexts. The federal government placed the CJC with a dual responsibility to safeguard both state and Jewish interests. I will argue that this government decision to put the CJC into this safeguarding role was strategic. It allowed the Canadian government to provide a solution to the so-called Jewish refugee problem while mitigating public pressure to provide humanitarian aid. Ultimately, the federal government's decision to accept 1,121 War Orphans disguised its refusal to accept needy adult Jewish refugees during the Holocaust.

The third historiographical intervention this paper addresses involves a methodological shift surrounding childhood agency. Much of the source material on the War Orphans such as memoirs, oral testimony, and archival records of the CJC conceptualizes the project through the eyes of adults. Additionally, celebratory historical narratives that call attention to the hospitality of the Canadian public sideline the orphans by presenting them as passive historical actors in resettlement. This thesis will uncover examples of the youngster's agency in the case records by reading them against the historical grain to illustrate how they altered their resettlement and contributed to historical change.[66] I will use the arguments of Mona Gleason and Lynn Thomas to explore teenage agency. Thomas advocates for "de-

---

[66] See Ann Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (New York: Princeton University Press, 2009), for information on this methodological approach. This method allows one to draw attention to voices of those operating from a relative position of powerlessness in the creation of historical material.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

liberalizing" agency by moving away from frameworks which stress agency only as deliberate attempts to assert independence or rebel.[67] Additionally, Gleason notes that one cannot search for children's agency only in their imitation of adults, such as liaising with refugee agencies to prepare the path for their parents to emigrate to Canada.[68] This thesis, therefore, attempts to follow in Thomas's lead in "historicizing agency" to consider what the youngsters themselves would have conceived of as agency, using it as an analytical tool to further nuance narratives surrounding youngsters' experiences of resettlement.[69] While the three chapters below have dedicated methodology sections, I hope to advocate for an overall methodological approach that places the focus back on uncovering the voices of the War Orphans as they experienced resettlement, as opposed to those of the adults organizing the project.[70]

Argument and Outline

The findings of this thesis will suggest that the adult image of the War Orphan was largely idealized and existed in public memory but less so in reality. This idealized image serves a clear purpose to elevate the exceptionalism of Canadian national hospitality, side-lining the youngsters as passive historical actors. Exploring how the youngsters did not fit neatly into the idealized adult conception of the child refugee complicates the popular congratulatory narrative of the project.

I will attempt to complicate the celebratory narrative surrounding the War Orphans project in Canada by illustrating a spectrum of resettlement experiences of the orphans in

---

[67] Lynn Thomas, "Historicising Agency," *Gender & History* 28, no.2 (2016): 326.
[68] Mona Gleason, "Avoiding the Agency Trap: Caveats for Historians of Children, Youth, and Education," *History of Education* 45, no.6 (2016): 458.
[69] Thomas, "Historicising Agency," *Gender & History* 28, no.2 (2016): 324.
[70] The title of this paper, "Can the Child Speak?" is a play on the title given by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak to his book "Can the Subaltern Speak?" which explored the politics of silence within the development of subaltern and postcolonial studies (see. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988). The choice to mimic Spivak's title is a nod to this thesis's methodological approach of critiquing the historiographical field of the War Orphan Project that has led to the side-lining of orphan voice and experience.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

their foster family placements, ranging from very successful to wildly unsuccessful arrangements. Age and gender are used as categories of analysis to illustrate how much of an orphan's experiences was dependent on the degree they conformed to the adult image of the young, innocent, and vulnerable War Orphan.

Chapter one illustrates how the press campaign of the CJC in August and September of 1947 presented foster parents with an idealized version of the War Orphan that differed significantly from the realities of their condition. This version of the War Orphan pandered to the preferences of adult foster parents who, influenced by media stereotypes, envisioned the orphans to appear young, innocent, and helpless. Subsequently, the chapter probes how the CJC press campaign and popular discourse regarding post-war immigration influenced the foster parents' impressions of the War Orphans.

Chapter two then illustrates how the CJC's idealized version of the War Orphan in their campaign material drastically impacted orphan's interactions with their foster families. The gap between foster parents' expectations and the reality of the orphans contributed to the breakdown of many foster family relationships and contributed to tensions between the two parties. I will marshal numerous case records available in the CJC archives, in which caseworkers detailed the orphan's foster family placements. While the chapter notes many successful examples of placements where orphans met the expectations of their foster parents, the emerging spectrum of experiences complicates the congratulatory historiographical narrative surrounding the orphans' resettlement. What becomes clear from the case records was that their success was primarily governed by how well they fit the profile of the idealized child migrant – a young, innocent, female, dependent and grateful figure.

Chapter three complicates the notion long held in historiography that the orphans were passive agents in their resettlement process. The chapter will illustrate how the orphans

altered the course of their resettlement by using new frameworks to uncover childhood agency. I will end by advocating for historians of the War Orphans project to write histories that better centre the voices of the orphans. Shifting the focus from the histories of the project written by adults to those written by the orphans themselves helps to challenge the celebratory narrative retained in Canadian national memory.

The period of this study has been confined to four and a half years, from August 1947 to February 1952 to account for the timespan within which the orphans arrived in Canada. The exact period of the teenage years remains contested, as historians of childhood have detailed a myriad of ways to define age, and the factors affecting its social construction. This period, as the federal government of Canada conceptualized it, had no specific start date but a sharp end at eighteen years of age. For the purpose of this thesis, War Orphans who are considered teenagers are between the ages of twelve or thirteen to eighteen years. This age-range is wide enough to account for their varying experiences and acutely illustrate the impact of age on their resettlement experiences.

Background to the War Orphan Project

The CJC was not a dominant organization within Canadian Jewish life until the early 1940s, with its activity primarily limited to lobbying campaigns to boycott German goods throughout the 1930s.[71] When Saul Hayes became executive director in 1942, Congress turned its aims towards legitimizing its position as the voice of Canadian Jewry. The decision to lobby the federal government to establish the War Orphan project in 1947 was fundamental to establishing this authority.[72]

---

[71] Burgard, "Visualising Holocaust Child-Survivors in Canada," 733.
[72] Burgard, "Visualising Holocaust Child-Survivors in Canada," 733.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Child rescue missions had, however, been commonplace abroad across the twentieth century with varying levels of success in cultivating a public and historical image of national humanitarianism. A lesser-known predecessor to the CJC's 1947 War Orphan Project was the establishment of the Ukrainian War Orphan Committee during the 1920s, under which the CJC facilitated the arrival of 150 Ukrainian-Jewish orphans into Canada.[73] Perhaps one of Canada's most famous child emigration missions occurred between 1869 and 1932, where over 80,000 children - known as the "Home Children" - were sent from Britain to Canada.[74] Assisted juvenile emigration placed these impoverished children with families in rural Canada to mould them into "respectable" citizens according to British middle-class philanthropic standards.[75] The historiographic record, however, does not document this mission for its humanitarian goodwill but rather the accounts that emerged of physical abuse and neglectful working environments children faced when placed with their new families.[76]

The War Orphans project of 1947 has retained a more favourable perception in Canadian public and historical memory. The project took place following the successes of another child rescue mission from the previous decade, the Kindertransport. The unprecedented scale of destruction aimed at children was exponential with the onset of the Second World War. Children who threatened the Nazi utopian vision of the pure-bred, well-educated German race were persecuted fiercely by the German *Reich*.[77] In 1938, the Home Office of the United Kingdom announced that it would supply temporary visas to every

---

[73] Burgard, "Visualising Holocaust Child-Survivors in Canada," 733.

[74] For more information on the "Home Children" see Joy Parr, *Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869-1924* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1980), 11.

[75] Patricia T. Rooke and R. L. Schnell, "Imperial Philanthropy and Colonial Response: British Juvenile Emigration to Canada, 1896-1930," *The Historian* 46, no. 1 (1983): 57, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24446558

[76] Morgan Brie Johnson, "Settler Colonial Structures of Domestication: British Home Children in Canada," *Genealogy* 5, no. 78 (2021): 2, https://www.mdpi.com/2313-5778/5/3/78

[77] Nicholas Stargardt, *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives under the Nazis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 13.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Jewish child in German-occupied areas as part of a scheme known as the Kindertransport.[78]

Despite also utilizing a foster-family model, the CJC initiated the War Orphans Project in a

dramatically different historical moment. The number of young Jews living in German,

Austrian and Italian DP camps, in children's homes in Poland, Belgium and France, or with

British or Swedish families, had increased as the war ended.[79] The Canadian public,

increasingly open to "carefully selected immigration," increased the pressure on the federal

government to relax its immigration quotas.[80] As Burgard notes, William Lyon Mackenzie

King's Liberal government saw the project as "a perfectly placed token gesture that would

'do justice to the nation's humanitarian self-image.'"[81]

The federal government authorized the admission of 1,121 European youth into

Canada with an Order-in-Council in the summer of 1947.[82] The admission, however, came

with two significant caveats. Firstly, the CJC was obligated to take total legal, as well as

financial, responsibility for each orphan.[83] Secondly, the project could only use foster care to

resettle the orphans.[84] Post-war views on the family influenced the federal government's

choice to mandate fostering as the primary resettlement model. Burgard quotes Article 16 of

the 1948 United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* which positioned the

family as the "neutral and fundamental unit of society" that is "entitled to protection by

society and state."[85] Following the end of the Second World War and the public breakdown

---

[78] Grenville, "Introduction," 6.
[79] Burgard, "Contested Childhood," 175.
[80] Burgard, "Visualising Holocaust Child-Survivors in Canada," 733.
[81] Claudio Curo quoted from "Were Unaccompanied Child Refugees a Privileged Class of Refugees in the Liberal States of Europe?' in *Refugees from Nazi Germany and the Liberal European States*, eds. Frank Caestecker and Bob Moore (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 183, in Antoine Burgard, "Contested Childhood," 175.
[82] Burgard, "Contested Childhood," 175.
[83] Burgard, "Visualising Holocaust Child-Survivors in Canada," 731.
[84] Martz, *Open Your Hearts,* 119.
[85] United Nations General Assembly, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: United Nations General Assembly, 1948), https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights, quoted in Burgard, "A New Life in a New Country, Trajectories of Holocaust Orphans to Canada (1945-1952),"203.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

of the nuclear family,[86] fears surrounding juvenile delinquency and the collapse of social

order aroused efforts to rebuild the family in public and state discourse.[87] The rising divorce

rate in Canada was noted by contemporary psychologists as a symptom of the diminishing

strength of the nuclear family model.[88] The ideal family that emerged in much discourse

produced by psychologists in the immediate post-war years mirrored the values of the white,

middle-class ideal that Mona Gleason notes was microcosmic for the "'New World'" social

order.[89]

Following the project's approval by the federal government, the CJC's search and

selection of candidates began under the guidelines provided by the newly established

Canadian Welfare Council.[90] German Jew Manfred Saalheimer supervised the project from

the American Joint Distribution Committee (A.J.D.C) offices.[91] Head of the United Nations

Relief and Rehabilitation Administration Displaced Person (DP) camp in Germany and

Congress social worker Ethel Estry was tasked with interviewing children and determining

their eligibility for the project according to immigration and child welfare standards of the

federal government.[92] Additionally, the A.J.D.C provided the CJC with the additional social

workers needed to conduct the interviews to select candidates.[93]

However, upon the arrival of the search-and-rescue team, it became obvious that there

were few very young children left in Europe for the project. As Burgard has noted, the

displaced orphans became a source of great competition amongst "internationalist" and

---

[86] The public breakdown of the nuclear family structure during wartime in Canada refers to the collapse of youth social services, and domestic-related tasks for women in the home due to the migration of female labour to the war effort. For more information on the contemporary situation, see: Samuel Price, "The Canadian Family in Wartime," *Marriage and Family Living* 4, no.2 (1942): 25-28, DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/347487.
[87] Mona Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal, Psychology, Schooling, and the Family in Post-war Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1999), 8.
[88] Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal*, 8.
[89] Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal*, 81.
[90] Burgard, "A New Life in a New Country," 196.
[91] Burgard, "A New Life in a New Country," 197.
[92] Burgard, "A New Life in a New Country," 197.
[93] Burgard, "A New Life in a New Country," 197.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Zionist actors in the European DP camps: becoming symbols of "both wartime destruction and post-war rebirth."[94] Indeed, Burgard argues that CJC agents in Europe admitted in their correspondence to the team in Montréal that most of the children in the camps had already gone to Palestine or had stated their desire to do so.[95] Additionally, as the Nazis made Jewish children targets in the violence of the Holocaust, very few of them had survived the war. Young Jewish children were often the first to be sent to the gas chambers of concentration camps, given into Christian orphanages by their parents, or placed into hiding. As it became clear that most orphans applying for visas were adolescents, the CJC attempted to negotiate to increase the age limit to twenty-one years of age.[96] However, the federal government eventually capped the age limit at eighteen years of age.[97]

Nonetheless, Burgard has shown that many of the orphans, without documentation confirming their birth, falsified documents or provided incorrect dates to obtain entry into Canada.[98] For those with documentation, this included oral confirmation from relatives or friends or DP identification cards.[99] In order to match administrative requirements, social workers would "fix" identities to produce consistent profiles for resettlement.[100] Each child had a file written by the social worker of the A.J.D.C, which depicted the orphans in short, few-line descriptions orientated around their lives during the years of the Holocaust and the extent of their religious observation - omitting many of their more complex personality traits.[101]

---

[94] Burgard, "A New Life in a New Country," 198.
[95] Burgard, "A New Life in a New Country," 198.
[96] Burgard, "Contested Childhood," 178.
[97] Burgard, "Contested Childhood," 187.
[98] Burgard, "Contested Childhood," 187.
[99] Burgard, "A New Life in a New Country," 201.
[100] Burgard, "A New Life in a New Country," 195.
[101] Burgard, "A New Life in a New Country," 202.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Meanwhile, with news of the search-and-rescue mission arriving in Canada, the national office of the CJC in Montréal and the regional office of Toronto were overwhelmed with fostering offers from Jewish homes.[102] However, most of these applications were for young children.[103] When the search-and-rescue committees reported to Congress that the group consisted of older individuals, most families responded with the offer to foster girls.[104] However, with girls only making up one-third of the group, Congress subsequently rejected many applications, with many uncovered as scams to obtain domestic labour.[105]

Subsequently, the CJC developed a paid and part-paid home system alongside the free housing scheme.[106] Fraidie Martz's interviews with the War Orphans' foster families give insight into how the CJC determined if a family was suitable for fostering. Martz highlights the case of Toni and Benjamin Robinson, who noted that a social worker came to evaluate their home to determine if it was a happy one. The social worker asked if the Robinson's marriage was stable and happy, much to the dismay of Mrs Robinson, who took offence, considering she had already successfully raised three children.[107] Through these home visits, Jewish families from a variety of class and religious backgrounds were considered for selection by social workers. Each A.J.D.C file contained information on the children's preferences for religious observance and vocation, with the likelihood of being used by caseworkers to match the orphans with families who best suited their preferences.[108]

Nonetheless, twelve days before the first group arrived, the plan to resettle the orphans immediately in foster homes was replaced with a plan to place them in a reception

---

[102] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 54.
[103] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 54.
[104] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 54.
[105] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 54.
[106] Burgard, "A New Life in a New Country," 202.
[107] Martz, *Open Your Hearts*, 130.
[108] Martz, *Open Your Hearts*, 130.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

centre, where they would be given an orientation before placement.[109] This policy change was primarily dictated by an initial lack of available homes for fostering, and meant that simply finding a family became the CJC's priority - less so if the family was a perfect match.[110] The Jewish Family and Child Service in Toronto (JFCS), the United Hebrew Social Service Bureau in Winnipeg (UHSSB) and the Jewish Family Services (JFS) in Montréal supervised and ran the reception centres.[111] European orphans were held temporarily in the centres before placement, where they were obliged to attend routine interviews with case workers, doctor and dentist appointments, and civics and Canadian Jewish life classes.[112] These activities were intended to promote self-sufficiency amongst the War Orphans, who were expected to undertake employment as soon as possible under the supervision of the Jewish Vocational Service.[113]

Subsequently, from August 1947 to February 1952, 1,121 orphans arrived in eight Canadian provinces.[114] The province of Quebec, closely followed by Ontario, took the most orphans, with most settling in the cities of Montréal and Toronto.[115] More than 770 were boys, and only 23 were under ten years of age.[116] Most of the orphans originated from Romania, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia.[117]

---

[109] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 54.
[110] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 54.
[111] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 60. All three organizations emerged respectively in their regions in the late 19th century as amalgamations of social service agencies which, often sponsored by prominent Jewish philanthropists, responded to the needs of a growing number of Jewish immigrants arriving to Canada from Eastern Europe.
[112] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 61.
[113] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 98. Also see page 98 for additional information on the Jewish Vocational Service. For orphans in Toronto and Montréal, the Jewish Vocational Services was presented with the task of guiding the young orphans through finding employment opportunities. The orphans undertook aptitude tests, and JVS workers took record of their educational background and previous work experience. For orphans in Winnipeg, this task was conducted by a member of the faculty of the University of Manitoba.
[114] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 68.
[115] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 68.
[116] Burgard, "A New Life in a New Country," 195.
[117] Burgard, *"A New Life in a New Country,"* 195.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Issues plagued the project from the outset, the most pressing being the continued shortage of foster homes. With most of the applications for fostering rejected due to a preference for young girls, Saul Hayes admitted that the CJC was "facing severe difficulties in home-finding" from the very start.[118] As a response to this shortage of homes, the CJC launched a campaign in the summer of 1947 to attract donors and potential foster families within the Canadian Jewish community. The campaign is crucial in determining precisely what the CJC told foster parents to expect regarding the War Orphans upon arrival. It also provides insight into the pre-existing preferences of Jewish foster parents, as the CJC created the campaign to encourage fostering, and thus pandered to their preferences. Most of this campaign took place within the Jewish press of Ontario and Quebec.[119] The direct support of the campaign came from the *Congress Bulletin*, the monthly publication of the Canadian Jewish Congress.[120] While the CJC produced monthly publications, the visual materials and rhetoric of the August and September 1947 editions provide most insight into the expectations of foster parents regarding the War Orphans, as these constituted the bulk of the initial campaign to find foster families.

What exactly were these foster families' preferences regarding the fostering process? What contemporary stereotypes influenced these preferences? While the foster parents involved in the process were not monolithic regarding family structure, personal character, and religious observation, much initial CJC correspondence during the search-and-rescue stage explicitly reveals two widely held fostering preferences amongst Canadian Jewry. The first regarded age; David Weiss, the newly appointed executive director of the Jewish Family and Child Services[121] in Montréal, noted in August of 1947 that most of the applications to

---

[118] Saul Hayes quoted in Burgard, "Visualising Holocaust Child-Survivors in Canada," 734.
[119] Burgard, "Visualising Holocaust Child-Survivors in Canada," 734.
[120] Burgard, "Visualising Holocaust Child-Survivors in Canada," 734.
[121] The Jewish Family and Child Services, Toronto, is a charitable organization that is the conglomeration of numerous associations for Child and Family social services, particularly those of new immigrants. It was

the CJC were for "children below the age of 16 without family ties in the US or Europe."[122] The reason for this age preference likely surrounded the perceived ease of assimilation that came with fostering very young child immigrants. Very young children, without strong cultural, religious, or emotional attachments to their friends and family at home, were more malleable and easier to incorporate into a new family structure. The additional preference for children without family ties in the US or Europe was likely to prevent fostering a child who yearned to be reunited by caseworkers with pre-existing family members, a possible barrier to successful long-term assimilation into Canada. Ben Lappin notes the widespread impression amongst foster parents that these young children would be lacking any pre-existing ethical or moral values, making it easier for foster parents to mould them into Canadian Jewish citizens.[123]

The second preference regarded the gender of the youngsters. Jewish foster parents indicated a clear preference for fostering female children. This was not particularly unusual in the context of the contemporary politics surrounding child rescue. A wealth of historiographical material exists on this gender preference in adoption processes amid European child rescue efforts from the mid-1930s. Judy Tydor Baumel Schwartz notes this preference was due to the perception that young girls would be more malleable and assimilate quicker into a new cultural environment.[124] Young girls required more protection and could add value to a nuclear family dynamic, and adults perceived them as less inclined to

---

officially founded in 1943, but its tradition dates to 1868. For more information, see: "Our Past, Present & Future," Jewish Family and Child Service of Greater Toronto (website), accessed 4 November, 2023, https://www.jfandcs.com/strategic-plan#:~:text=JF%26CS%20has%20been%20around%20for,Learn%20about%20our%20history.&text=The%20charitable%20tradition%20of%20Jewish,number%20of%20poor%20Jewish%20immigrants

[122] Burgard, "A New Life in a New Country," 200.

[123] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 75.

[124] Julie Baumel-Schwartz, "The Rescue of Jewish Girls and Teenage Women to England and the USA during the Holocaust: A Gendered Perspective," *Jewish History* 26, no. 1-2 (2012): 241, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10835-012-9

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

delinquency.[125] This dynamic was likely particularly pertinent for traditional Jewish families due to the cultural emphasis on gender-related domestic tasks such as caretaking, where parents expected their teenage daughters to undertake tasks such as caring for elderly family members.[126]

Additionally, the widespread preference for young female orphans resulted from notions of what constituted the image of childhood innocence in contemporary humanitarian campaigns. Art historian Anne Higonnet notes that the symbolic image of the innocent child could first be seen in Romantic paintings, portraying their innocence as a perfect state "from which adults fall and never return to."[127] Fragments of this romantic ideal exist in twentieth-century visual portrayals of children that appeal to large consumer audiences, even though children's lives have vastly changed since the Romantic era.[128] Importantly, Higgonet notes that the image of the innocent child summons adult projections of both fear and hope.[129]

This stereotype of the innocent child was recurrent in twentieth-century Western humanitarian campaigns. The image of the innocent child, free from the influence of adults, has a clear ideological purpose. It deploys ideas of "rescue" while deflecting from probable sources, evoking sympathy from the onlooker.[130] This image of what constituted "innocence" also intersected with race, age, and gender in the post-war period. Julie Garlen has shown that the concept of "innocence" in twentieth-century America held connotations of youth, femininity, and Whiteness.[131] It is not surprising that Jewish foster parents drew parallels

---

[125] Baumel- Schwartz, "The Rescue of Jewish Girls," 241.
[126] Baumel- Schwartz, "The Rescue of Jewish Girls," 241.
[127] Anne Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1998), 28.
[128] Juhani Ihanus, "Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood, Anne Higonnet, NY," *The Journal of Psychohistory* 27, no.4 (2000): 462
[129] Ihanus, "Pictures of Innocence," 462.
[130] Laura Briggs, "Mother, Child, Race, Nation: The Visual Iconography of Rescue and the Politics of Transnational and Transracial Adoption," *Gender & History* 5, no.2 (2003): 180.
[131] Garlen, "Interrogating Innocence," 56.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

between youth, femininity and innocence when forming their fostering preferences. The image of the innocent white female orphan is crucial to constructing hierarchies of desirability concerning immigration policy in the twentieth century that governed projects such as that involving the War Orphans, both at a government and local level. Western governments have long seen children as more innocent and, thus, more deserving of rescue than adult refugees.[132]

Nonetheless, the case of the War Orphans illustrates that simply being a child did not guarantee the privilege of rescue – race and gender played a clear role in determining who was given the privilege to immigrate. The notion of childhood innocence also contributed to the pre-existing expectation of foster parents that the youngsters would be passive, dependent, shy, and traumatized victims. Ben Lappin noted that the horror photography emerging from the liberated concentration camps embedded a collective image in the minds of Canadian Jews of meek and needy young survivors.[133] However, on the contrary, many of the youngsters who arrived were aggressive, independent teenagers with strong pre-existing personal and Jewish identities.

Developing contemporary notions surrounding child-rearing and parenting in post-war Canada further contributed to the concept that children, reared effectively through clearly regulated societal standards, could grow up into 'normal' Canadian citizens.[134] Mona Gleason has argued that adults held a prior set of normative standards that governed what constituted 'normal' development in a child, both emotionally and physically.[135] Many of these standards were the product of a developing scientific discourse on child-rearing. For example, The Department of National Health and Welfare produced parenting pamphlets which homogenised

---

[132] McLaughlin, ""They Don't Look Like Children,"" 1763.
[133] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 75.
[134] Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal*, 89.
[135] Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal*, 89.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

child development, illustrating the characteristics parents identify in their child to indicate the stages of normal psychosexual development.[136]

Due to the socially constructed nature of this psychological approach to parenting, when faced with juvenile delinquency, societal focus turned to the parents as opposed to the child. Psychologists maintained that it was parents who determined whether children would undergo normal development.[137] This understanding of children as mouldable and dependent on their environment contributed to social workers' comprehension of the importance of foster parents. As Ben Lappin notes, behavioural difficulties were viewed as learned survival mechanisms for navigating wartime situations - behaviours that could be unlearned in a new familial environment.[138] The orphans' mental ailments were not long-term, chronic, conditions that foster parents needed to be alerted to, but rather fixable behaviours.[139]

Subsequently, there was a significant gap between the contemporary preferences of foster parents regarding the War Orphans and the reality of their condition. Firstly, only one-third of the youngsters arriving between August 1947 and February 1952 were female, and more than 770 were boys in their late teenage years.[140] These youngsters were highly diverse in many ways: many had long-lost family members residing in Israel, the US, and Europe, some were from intellectual, middle-class families, some from agricultural backgrounds, some secular, and some religious.[141] These youngsters were not simply passive, dependent victims of war but robust, aggressive and ambitious teenagers. The CJC, therefore, had the difficult task of bridging the reality of the demographic makeup of the War Orphans and the expectations of foster families in their press campaign of 1947.

---

[136] Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal*, 89.
[137] Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal*, 92.
[138] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 81-2.
[139] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 81-2.
[140] Burgard, "A New Life in a New Country," 195.
[141] Martz, *Open Your Hearts,* 123.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

CHAPTER ONE: The CJC Press Campaign: August and September 1947

Chapter Outline

This chapter seeks to use the campaign material of the August and September *Congress Bulletins* to ask a fundamental question: What impression would potential foster parents have regarding the War Orphans after reading upon the campaign? While much of the historiography notes the impact of popular discourse regarding post-war immigration on the formation of foster parents' expectations regarding the War Orphans, very few have noted the tangible impact of the CJC's press material. In this chapter, I will not only focus on the expectations foster parents were equipped with originating from the informative and promotional material from the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC), distributed to Jewish families with the purpose of encouraging them to foster an orphaned child, but will begin to illustrate that the messages conveyed in the material had a significant impact on the success of the orphans' resettlement.

I will argue that the CJC's attempt to manage the expectations of Jewish foster families while appealing to their preferences resulted in inconsistent messaging to foster parents, regarding both the demographic and character of the War Orphans in the CJC campaign. Subsequently, this often left foster parents with an unrealistic understanding of the orphans and largely ill-prepared for their arrival. With the campaign's contradictory and often confusing imagery and rhetoric, foster parents reaffirmed their pre-existing expectations and contemporary stereotypes of child survivors. Lastly, the chapter will contend that the campaign's imagery and rhetoric resulted directly from the government's decision to assign the CJC as a gatekeeper of both government and foster parent interest.

In order to illustrate the argument presented in this chapter – namely, that the CJC campaign deliberately glossed over important realities regarding the War Orphans to pander to foster parents' preferences and encourage them to open their homes – it is essential to

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

illustrate that agents of the CJC were privy to these realities regarding the orphans in 1947. So, what information did the CJC have about the state of the War Orphans preceding their arrival?

Three months before the Canadian government's Order-in-Council, Congress acquired and released commissioned by the American Joint Distribution Committee (A.J.D.C) originating from a six-month study conducted on European Holocaust survivors.[1] Martz notes that this report, written by Paul Friedman, a New York psychiatrist, was the first of such studies on the mental health of children who had survived the Holocaust and were living in European Displaced Person (DP) camps.[2] The study entitled "Europe's Jewish Children Yearn for Love, Show Amazing Vitality to Build New Lives" was one of the first indications given to Canadian Jewry that child survivors had the capacity and intent to rebuild familial bonds in their new homes.[3] Fraidie Martz details one such relevant quote from an interview given by Dr. Friedman at the New York Offices of the A.J.D.C upon his arrival from Europe in 1947:

> The Jewish boys and girls who lived through Nazism are not mentally sick. The brutalizing Nazi terror has left many of them shy, emotional, and withdrawn - a defence mechanism against the horror that was part of their daily lives. However, those years have taught them to be self-sufficient and make the most of their opportunities. The ideal situation would be one in which every orphaned Jewish child could again find a home and affection. The children, too, feel an overwhelming need for a sense of identity, of family.[4]

Perhaps what stands out most from Dr. Friedman's analysis is his emphasis on the absence of mental illness among the child survivors. Instead, he notes examples of behaviour that he deems to be adaptations to survive life under adverse Nazi rule. These "defence mechanism[s]" were not signs of mental illness and would subside when the youngster was

---

[1] Fraidie Martz, *Open Your Hearts: The Story of the Jewish War Orphans in Canada* (Montréal: Véhicule Press, 1996), 120-21.
[2] Martz, *Open Your Hearts*, 120-1.
[3] Martz, *Open Your Hearts,* 120.
[4] Martz, *Open Your Hearts,* 121.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

placed in a family environment with a strong Jewish character.[5] However, not everyone

involved in the project to resettle the War Orphans held the same views as Dr. Freidman.

David Weiss, the newly appointed executive director of the Jewish Family and Child

Services in Montréal, held a different, more wary opinion on the mental state of War Orphans

in the DP camps in the summer of 1947.[6] Weiss not only hypothesised that there would be

numerous delinquent children but spoke in favour of commissioning a social worker to warn

potential foster parents of the possible problems the children would face upon assimilation.[7]

Another significant player in the CJC did not share the same views as Dr. Friedman.

Saul Hayes, the executive vice-president of the CJC, when looking back at the project in

1962, noted that "we were warned that, because of the background of these youths, we could

expect mental breakdowns."[8] From the beginning of the 1950s, contemporary psychiatrists

began to take interest in child and adult Holocaust survivors alike. The rise of the term

"survivor syndrome" was used by psychologists to describe those individuals experiencing

difficulty adapting after experiencing extreme trauma in their lives, such as those who had

witnessed the horrors of the Holocaust in Europe.[9] Congress even advised a meeting of the

Jewish Junior Welfare League in November of 1947 that Canadian Jews should plan to be

"mortgaged to pay for the upkeep of those who might have to spend the rest of their days in

asylums and other protective institutions."[10]

Considering this prior knowledge known to the CJC regarding the orphans, the

following section will read the *Congress Bulletins* of August and September 1947 to illustrate

that the campaign was not entirely truthful about the state of the orphans. Subsequently,

---

[5] Martz, *Open Your Hearts,* 121.
[6] Martz, *Open Your Hearts*, 121.
[7] Martz, *Open Your Hearts*, 121.
[8] Ben Lappin, *The Redeemed Children: The Story of the Rescue of War Orphans by the Jewish Community of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), vi.
[9] Martz, *Open Your Hearts,* 122.
[10] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, vi.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

foster parents were given a rather contradictory portrayal of the orphans, leaving them somewhat unprepared for their arrival.

The *Congress Bulletin* of August 1947

While the *Congress Bulletins* of August and September followed one another closely in publication time, the rhetoric of the CJC regarding the War Orphans became increasingly convoluted and unrealistic. The August *Congress Bulletin* is surprisingly candid about the difficulties faced by the CJC and the current state of the War Orphans. The *Congress Bulletin* of August 1947 contained the first article on the project, written in preparation for the arrival of the first group of orphans. In the lead article for the August issue, CJC executive director Saul Hayes described Europe's current search and rescue mission. He did not shy away from the team's main challenge: the imminent arrival in Canada of a "large group of young people, older than at first contemplated."[11] He also frankly admits that the first group was primarily composed of "boys" while emphasizing the multitude of languages that they spoke and the vocational skills they possessed.[12]Accompanying the article is the first financial *Congress Bulletin* of the project, detailing in the abstract the CJC's responsibility to bear the costs for the project on request from the federal government - a clear signal to future Jewish donors across Canada as to where the CJC would spend their donations.

Hayes's immediate transparency surrounding the financial implications of the project on Canadian Jewish communities illustrates a key compromise in his initial rhetoric. If the CJC were initially ready to admit that the orphans were not young children, they had to portray them as young adults willing to enter the Canadian workforce and cover their living

---

[11] Canadian Jewish Archive (CJA), Inter-Office Information (I.O.I.) *Congress Bulletin* 4. no. 8, August 1947, Montréal, CJA, 64 (hereafter in the shortened form *Congress Bulletin*, August 1947). The *Congress Bulletins* are contained within a printed volume produced by the archive. Some articles are printed with no specific author, while many are printed with a named editor.

[12] *Congress Bulletin*, August 1947, 64.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

costs to convince foster parents to join the project. This matches up with CJC's intention to use the project to encourage the orphans to become self-sufficient– further signalling prospective foster parents that War Orphans would not be a financial burden on their households.[13]

The intention to relay to potential foster parents that the War Orphans were expected to become self-sufficient goes some way to explain the rhetorical focus on the orphans' multilingual proficiency and technical skills. The CJC likely intended this to indicate the flexibility and employability of these youngsters. Indeed, it was CJC policy that War Orphans should work at the earliest possible opportunity they could unless they showed extraordinary academic potential, in that case they were destined to a school environment.[14]

From the outset, it appears the CJC felt it necessary to declare that the project was a temporary fostering situation in which the War Orphans could eventually fend for themselves adequately. While Hayes's article remains surprisingly frank about the demographic makeup of the first group of orphans, it is here that the first instances of contradictory rhetoric used to describe them emerge. While referring to the orphans at first as "young people," the article ends by referring to them as "children."[15] While this is a slight inconsistency in vocabulary choice, possibly for convenience, it is significant when placing this vocabulary choice in the broader context of the rhetoric that would follow in the September edition of the *Congress Bulletin*. Additionally, in the context of most applications from Jewish foster parents being for young children with few cultural ties, this initial reference to the youth as "children" aligns with the CJC's primary aim, which was to pander to their preferences and encourage them to foster.

---

[13] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 98.
[14] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 119.
[15] *Congress Bulletin*, August 1947, 64.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

The *Congress Bulletin* of September 1947

By September 1947, the first group of orphans had arrived in Montréal. The September issue opens with a comment from David Weiss, executive director of the Jewish Family and Child Services in Montréal. Weiss's piece is part of an article on the issue's front page entitled, "Failure faces orphans' movement unless homes are found for them."[16] With the imminent arrival of further groups of War Orphans, the CJC needed to work fast to obtain enough foster homes to meet the overwhelming demand for them.

The imminent shortage of foster families results in the language of the *Congress Bulletin* becoming increasingly more ambiguous when describing the orphan's age when compared to the August edition. For example, Weiss opens with the contradiction that "the children coming are all in their teens," all of which are "healthy" and "well-bred youngsters."[17] The description of the orphans as both adolescents and children points to what I will argue is the purposeful lack of separation between children and adolescents by the CJC, even though scientific and psychological discourse in Canada at this point widely considered adolescence a separate stage of childhood. The idea that adolescence was a distinct stage of human and social development emerged at the turn of the twentieth century with the studies of American psychologist G. Stanley Hall.[18] In the post-war decade, educators in North America became increasingly concerned with the archetype of the rebellious teenager, unrestrained by traditional structures such as the nuclear family and youth services during the wartime era.[19] Additionally, psychologists produced books to help guide parents towards

---

[16] Canadian Jewish Archive (CJA), Inter-Office Information (I.O.I.) *Congress Bulletin* 4, no.9, September 1947, Montréal, CJA, 1. (Hereafter in the shortened form *Congress Bulletin*, September 1947.)

[17] *Congress Bulletin*, September 1947, 1.

[18] John Demos and Virginia Demos, "Adolescence in Historical Perspective," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 31, no. 4 (1969): 632, DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/349302

[19] Katherine Rollawagen, "Historical Experiences of Adolescence at Mid-Century" in John Douglas Belshaw (ed.) *Canadian History: Post-Confederation* (Vancouver: Vancouver Island University: 2015), https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/

morally controlling their children.[20] Moreover, Julie Baumel-Schwartz has noted that contemporary psychologists saw this image of the teenager in a refugee context as suffering from greater problems when adjusting and assimilating to new environments.[21] The greater impact of estrangement from previous family members and stronger emotional attachments to biological families meant that young teenage refugees were more prone to conflict with foster families and authorities.[22] The decision to describe the youngsters as children instead of teenagers, therefore, was intended to evoke entirely different images in potential foster parents about their ease of assimilation.

Additionally, the emphasis on the physical health of the orphans points to further tension between the realities of their condition and the CJC's depiction of them in the campaign. The CJC's rhetoric treads carefully between portraying the orphans as needy enough to require care and dependence but not war-trodden enough to present any significant emotional or physical burden on the families themselves. Although the Canadian press had already extensively circulated the horrors of the Holocaust in print, foster families expected that the children would present minor long-term psychological damage. As Dr. Friedlander had pointed out, the common conception amongst case workers was that much of the psychological behaviours exhibited by the orphans were simply survival mechanisms to their conditions in concentration camps or hiding.[23] The campaign's emphasis on the mutual desire for a family environment that could rectify these behaviours is a far cry from Weiss' previous warnings of possible long-term mental health issues among the groups of orphans.

---

[20] Rollawagen, "Historical Experiences of Adolescence at Mid-Century."
[21] Julie Baumel- Schwartz, "The Rescue of Jewish Girls and Teenage Women to England and the USA during the Holocaust: A Gendered Perspective," *Jewish History* 26, no. 1-2 (2012): 228, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10835-012-9
[22] Baumel- Schwartz, "The rescue of Jewish Girls and teenage women to England," 228.
[23] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, vi.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Significantly, the article adds an important caveat to the claim previously made by Hayes in the August edition, claiming that the orphans are only a "little" older than "we expected."[24] The subtle shift in rhetoric between the August and September issues illustrates the CJC's change in focus away from a realistic portrayal of the capacity of the demographic of the War Orphans to one that was becoming increasingly misleading. The use of gender in the first article of the September *Congress Bulletin* issue contributes to a portrait of the War Orphans that conforms to the idealized version of the child migrant based on the stereotypical contemporary notion of childhood innocence. The article does not mention the gender demographic of the groups of orphans that were to follow in the coming weeks but ensures to place a large photograph of a female orphan eating ice cream after arriving at Dorval airport in Canada, alongside the text.[25] The photograph's long-form caption refrains from noting the exact age of the orphan, instead choosing an image that significantly infantilizes her, with the image of the ice cream connoting ideals of innocence and youth.[26] The caption does include, however, that this orphan was part of the first group who arrived in Canada, even though this group were predominantly adolescent boys. The photograph, instead, is more aligned with the well-documented preference among Jewish foster parents for a young female child.

Alongside the contradictory rhetoric of the article, the additional accompanying photographs only further the confusion as to the demographic makeup of the imminent orphans. The article ends with the addition of another photograph, this time of a brother and sister of Turkish-Jewish origin arriving as part of the first group of War Orphans.[27] The child in the front of the photograph is considerably smaller and younger than the accompanying

---

[24] *Congress Bulletin*, September 1947, 2.
[25] Picture of a young lady eating ice cream, photograph in Canadian Jewish Archive (CJA), Inter-Office Information (I.O.I.), *Congress Bulletin* 4, no.9, September 1947, Montréal, CJA, 2. (Figure 1. Appendix)
[26] *Congress Bulletin*, September 1947, 2.
[27] Brother and sister of Turkish-Jewish origin, photograph in Canadian Jewish Archive (CJA), Inter-Office Information (I.O.I.), *Congress Bulletin* 4, no.9, September 1947, Montréal, CJA, 2. (Figure 2. Appendix)

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

sibling, who lovingly stands in a protective gaze over their younger sibling. This time, the

caption emphasizes the countries where the orphans have emigrated from, such as "France,

Romania," and "Hungary," and, importantly, not their age.[28] Both siblings appear in a happy

emotional state, excited at their arrival in Canada, despite the positioning of the youngest

sibling in a prominent position of dependence on their older sibling. Aside from the

photograph insinuating there was a broader and more evenly distributed age demographic of

orphans than, in fact, there was, the contents of the photograph foreshadow a tension that

would emerge between orphans and their foster families.

While the campaign insinuated that Jewish foster families would only foster one

child, the orphans often arrived with their siblings and were reluctant to be separated. While

the CJC, in an accompanying 1947 pamphlet to the *Congress Bulletin*, stated their intention

to keep siblings together where possible, pairs of siblings were not always guaranteed

placement in the same home.[29] Younger children demand more emotional and financial

resources from a potential foster parent. However, an older child would likely have a

vocational placement upon arrival and thus only require a board. It was, therefore, not always

possible for pairs of siblings in this instance to be placed by the CJC in a foster family that

was willing to meet the needs of both children. The separation brought about by these

competing needs was a standard tension documented by social workers of the CJC between

orphans and their foster families from 1947-9, resulting in orphans often demanding to be

moved to be with their siblings.[30] Even more so, where caseworkers placed siblings in the

same foster home, this did not guarantee a positive relationship between all the parties

---

[28] *Congress Bulletin*, September 1947, 2.

[29] Canadian Jewish Archive (CJA), pamphlet "*If There is Room In Your Heart, There is Room in Your Home*," UJRA Collection, War Orphans Project, series FA 3 Pamphlets and Ephemera, box 1. (Hereafter in the shortened form, CJA, pamphlet "*If There is Room In Your Heart, There is Room in Your Home*.")

[30] For more information on such tensions recorded in the case records of the War Orphans, see the second chapter of this thesis.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

involved; as the following chapter will illustrate, it was not uncommon for rifts to appear as one sibling formed a better relationship than another with the foster parents or existing siblings.

The next article concerning the War Orphans that follows in the September *Congress Bulletin* is perhaps the most explicit demonstration of the contradictory messaging of the campaign and the shift in the CJC's aims from an accurate portrayal of the orphans to one more palatable to Jewish foster families' preferences. The article immediately evokes rhetoric that draws on the moral conscience of the reader, conveniently titled: "They Look To You!"[31] The *Congress Bulletin* names the Honorary Campaign Chairman Samuel Bronfman as the article's author. Bronfman was once Canada's wealthiest Jewish figure as philanthropist, owner of the beverage company Seagrams, and president of the CJC from 1939 until 1962.[32] The article begins by evoking imagery associated with innocence and suffering. It describes the "tragic eyes of the orphaned seeking a fatherly hand" and the "look of the needy and the helpless."[33] His paternalistic overtones and dramatic descriptions of the orphans illustrate another core feature of the campaign's rhetoric: the desire to portray the orphans as damaged enough to need aid but not damaged enough that they have lost the joyful innocence of childhood. The article's emphasis on "tens of thousands of unfortunate eyes" of the orphans draws upon imagery of childhood innocence.[34] This image conforms to what Fraidie Martz has noted as the social worker's anticipation of "survivor syndrome" among the orphans.[35] Joseph Kage, the national executive director of the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society[36] in 1947,

---

[31] *Congress Bulletin*, September 1947, 17.
[32] Michael Marrus, *Mr Sam: The Life and Times of Samuel Bronfman* (New York City: Viking, 1992), 256.
[33] *Congress Bulletin*, September 1947, 2. Although the article states the author to be Samuel Bronfman, it is likely that he simply signed off on a pre-written body of text. As noted, Bronfman was a man of high status, particularly for his philanthropic efforts.
[34] *Congress Bulletin*, September 1947, 2.
[35] Martz, *Open Your Hearts,* 122.
[36] The Jewish Immigrant Aid Society is a communal organization dedicated to helping aid new immigrants in Canada. It was founded in 1922. For more on the history of the society, see: https://jiastoronto.org/who-we-are/.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

spoke of welcoming an incoming group of orphans at Halifax port who had been "emotionally deprived" and had subsequently "lost everything and everybody."[37] The image of the vulnerable wide-open, innocent and helpless eyes of children in Bronfman's article evokes feelings of sympathy and guilt from the reader for these dependent children. This image is also implicitly tied to youth and femininity.

The contradictory rhetoric of the campaign is evident in the way the article's connotations of dependence are juxtaposed with the photographic material of the *Congress Bulletin*. The campaign hints that this dependence associated with "survivor syndrome" was not expressed by all the orphans: it inserts sporadic examples of older, more independent orphans. For example, on the following page of the *Congress Bulletin* is another photograph, this time of a trained expert in the Jewish Vocational Service (JVS) interviewing a distinctly late adolescent.[38] The photograph's caption names this young man as one of the orphans of the first group of arrivals, this time stressing his vocational skills and capacity for independence.[39] The contradictions between the orphans in the various photographs of the *Congress Bulletin* and the rhetoric of the articles illustrate the CJC's attempt to capitalize on the preferences of foster parents while discreetly hinting that Bronfman's image of a "tragic" orphan was idealized and generally not reflective of the reality of future orphan arrivals.[40]

Alongside the monthly *Congress Bulletins*, between August and September of 1947, the CJC released a series of pamphlets of which only one exists in the CJC archives in Montréal. While the series itself is undated, the pamphlet appears likely an insert in the August or September *Congress Bulletin*, as has the explicit aim of encouraging families to open their homes to the War Orphans. It is around ten pages long and authored by executive

---

[37] Martz, *Open Your Hearts*, 22-4.
[38] Interview with the Jewish Vocational Service, photograph in Canadian Jewish Archive (CJA), Inter-Office Information (I.O.I.), *Congress Bulletin* 4, no.9, September 1947, Montréal, CJA, 2. (Figure 3. Appendix)
[39] *Congress Bulletin*, September 1947, 18.
[40] *Congress Bulletin*, September 1947, 17.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

director Saul Hayes. It lays out the background of the War Orphans arriving and the obligations of potential foster parents. Entitled *If There Is Room in Your Heart, There is Room in Your Home* the pamphlet contains drawn representations of imagined orphans with short descriptions of their needs from foster parents and their struggles from war-torn Europe.[41] The pamphlet does so for five children, three boys and two girls, all between the ages of fourteen and eighteen.

Nick Stargardt argues that in humanitarian child rescue missions across Europe and the Americas amid the Holocaust, social workers noted the children had more mature appearances and were more emotionally developed compared to their counterparts who had not experienced the effects of war.[42] However, in line with the CJC's intention to create an ambiguous image of the War Orphans, the rhetoric surrounding the images in the pamphlet occasionally infantilized them regardless of gender. The illustrations, too, depicted the orphans as teenagers who had retained somewhat of a childlike character, as opposed to having been entirely robbed of this innocence due to the onset of war.

Take the example of Mimi.[43] Mimi is a fourteen-year-old girl from Romania who was orphaned after losing her parents in the Holocaust. The illustration accompanying the text presents Mimi as one would expect a girl in their teenage years to look, gazing blankly into the distance. The text, however, continues to describe her as a "little girl" who has a "gay, vivacious spirit" beneath her "dark and solemn beauty."[44] Despite being war-torn, she is still a "sensitive child" whose "smile" and "story will tug at your heart."[45] The pamphlet does not insinuate that Mimi is more mature for her age due to her wartime experiences but illustrates

---

[41] CJA, pamphlet "*If There is Room In Your Heart, There is Room in Your Home.*" (Figure 4. Appendix)
[42] Nicholas Stargardt, "Children," in *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies,* eds. P. Hayes and J.K. Roth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 230.
[43] CJA, pamphlet "*If There is Room In Your Heart, There is Room in Your Home*." (Figure 5. Appendix)
[44] CJA, pamphlet "*If There is Room In Your Heart, There is Room in Your Home.*"
[45] CJA, pamphlet "*If There is Room In Your Heart, There is Room in Your Home.*"

her as having remained childlike despite the damage she has suffered. This illustration goes some way to explain the contradiction between the pamphlet's description of her as both a "little girl" and a "child" compared to her illustrated form, which appears to align more with the state of a late teenager or a young woman.

Where the pamphlet denotes those War Orphans approaching their late teenage years, it displays them as largely passive victims who were malleable enough to assimilate into the life of a Canadian Jewish family. For example, take the description of Blanche, a sixteen-year-old Belgian girl.[46] The pamphlet describes Blanche as having lost her parents to a concentration camp before being cared for by her mother's friends for several years. Despite being sixteen, Blanche has retained her youthful femininity and can sew "beautifully," tend to be "neat and orderly about herself, considerate and kindly."[47] Adequately prepared for her ambition to "become a schoolteacher," Blanche is also an ideal addition to the household in terms of her domesticity.[48] Blanche is positioned more in terms of what she can offer to a foster family in terms of free labour than what she may physically or emotionally require from a foster family. Blanche being a born "*balabosta*" the Yiddish term for a Jewish homemaker or housewife, illustrates that older orphans had to have an aptitude for work and not be a financial burden to be palatable to foster families.[49] Younger orphans, by virtue of their age, however, had the advantage of being attractive to potential foster families through their wholesale embodiment of innocence.

The pamphlet emphasised Blanche's capacity to be moulded by her foster family into a good Canadian citizen. This was ultimately a feature that all War Orphans had to possess, regardless of their age. The orphans could not simply show up and receive a welcoming

---

[46] CJA, pamphlet "*If There is Room In Your Heart, There is Room in Your Home*." (Figure 6. Appendix)
[47] CJA, pamphlet "*If There is Room In Your Heart, There is Room in Your Home*."
[48] CJA, pamphlet "*If There is Room In Your Heart, There is Room in Your Home*."
[49] CJA, pamphlet "*If There is Room In Your Heart, There is Room in Your Home*."

embrace from the Canadian government or Jewish communities. A hospitable welcoming was conditional on specific criteria based on their ability to adapt and assimilate. Childhood, in this sense, was no longer a protected and stable category that guaranteed safety.[50]

One final expectation that the attachment pamphlet relayed to foster parents was the orphans' precise desire for familial figures, particularly a new maternal or paternal figure. Where the pamphlet did mention older male orphans and their physical strength, they stressed that these orphans needed parental figures. For example, one illustration is of an eighteen-year-old orphan named Benjamin, who, despite having a "steeled" soul and an "appetite for freedom" today, needed "a home" and "a father."[51] The emphasis on this home and paternal influence added to foster parents' expectations that they would act as replacement parental figures – replacing the emotional attachments lost in the Holocaust. However, as the social worker's reports in the following chapter will illustrate, this was far from a universal desire amongst the orphans. This prospect that not all orphans wanted replacement families was known to the CJC even before the first group of War Orphans arrived. Burgard notes that the CJC abandoned formal adoption as a goal due to the legal implications of a widespread desire for the orphans to keep their family name alive.[52]

The impact of age on the lack of foster homes for the War Orphans between August and September of 1947 is only more apparent when comparing the CJC campaign to other individual Jewish child adoptions in the years following 1947. For example, while many children constituted part of the 1,121 War Orphans who arrived in Canada in 1947, many Jewish children arrived with one of their surviving parents from Eastern Europe, as the

---

[50] "Abstract" in Carly McLaughlin, ""They Don't Look Like Children": Child Asylum-Seekers, the Dumbs Amendment, and the Politics of Childhood," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 17, no. 18 (2018): 1758.
[51] CJA, pamphlet "*If There is Room in your Heart, There is Room in your Home.*" (Figure 7. Appendix)
[52] Antoine Burgard, "A New Life in a New Country, Trajectories of Holocaust Orphans to Canada (1945-1952)" *Études canadiennes / Canadian Studies* 86, no.1 (2019): 201, DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/eccs.2087

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Canadian government increased immigration quotas for Jewish refugees.[53] Such is the case of Anya Singer, who arrived as a toddler with her parents who had survived in a DP camp in Breslau, Poland, to Toronto.[54] However, on January 26, 1950, the *Kingston Whig-Standard* of Ontario reported that Anya's parents had been killed in a garment factory fire the previous Friday.[55] The article reports that despite Anya not being "available for adoption at present" as she was being cared for by friends of her parents, there had already been 150 offers from local Jewish families.[56] The stark contrast in demand for young female children like Anya and the adolescent War Orphans serves to help nuance Julie Berebitsky's claim that there have never been enough orphans to satisfy the demand for them throughout the twentieth century.[57] As this chapter has demonstrated, the question of demand is significantly caveated by the age of the children, alongside their gender and race. Anya's case illustrates that the demand for fostering, and adoption, was there from Jewish families but only for those orphans who were palatable to their preferences. These preferences hinged upon notions of childhood innocence, vulnerability, adaptability, and visions of dependence.

Conclusion

This chapter has utilized the campaign material of the August and September *Congress Bulletins* to answer the question of what impression potential foster parents would obtain regarding the War Orphans from reading the campaign. It has shown that the CJC's task of managing the expectations of Jewish foster families while appealing to their

---

[53] "Immigration," Ontario Jewish Archives (website), Blankenstein Family Heritage Centre, JIA Federation of Greater Toronto, accessed April 11, 2023, https://ontariojewisharchives.org/Explore/Themed-Topics/Immigration

[54] "150 Homes Open to Girl," *Kingston Whig-Standard* newspaper, Ontario, January 26, 1950, Samuel Lewin Collection, db 01 War Orphans – news clippings, 1950-1952, box 10, file 9, CJA, Montréal. (Hereafter, in the shortened form "150 Homes Open to Girl," *Kingston Whig-Standard* newspaper.)

[55] "150 Homes Open to Girl," *Kingston Whig-Standard* newspaper.

[56] "150 Homes Open to Girl," *Kingston Whig-Standard* newspaper.

[57] Julie Berebitsky, *Like Our Very Own: Adoption and the Changing Culture of Motherhood, 1851-1950* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 132.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

preferences resulted in inconsistent messaging to foster parents regarding both the demographic and character of the War Orphans. Subsequently, this often-left foster parents with an unrealistic understanding of the state of the War Orphans. Namely, it did not dispel expectations that the youngsters would arrive innocent, dependent and traumatized, seeking the familiarity of family and home life. Instead, it largely propagated the understanding that the orphans were more childlike than they were in reality – leaving them reaffirming their pre-existing expectations and contemporary stereotypes over what these child survivors would be like. The task of the CJC to find foster families was no mean feat – balancing their role as a gatekeeper of both government and Jewish community interests. Ultimately, however, not all of the information known to the CJC regarding the orphans was relayed effectively to potential foster parents in the campaign. Indeed, the campaign was intentionally selective in portraying the War Orphans. Subsequently, this analysis begs a further question: what bearing did these expectations portrayed in the campaign have on the ensuing foster-parent relationships?

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

CHAPTER TWO: The Complexities of Resettlement in the Foster Family Model

Chapter Outline

On April 3rd, 1949, seventeen-year-old Istvan sat across from his caseworker from the Jewish Family Service (JFS) at the reception centre of the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) on University Street of Montréal. The youngster recounted his experience in his new job to his caseworker, who sat and recorded his responses briefly in his case record. Since October 1948, the caseworker recorded that he had moved foster homes twice. The first home had been unsatisfactory for the orphan as he had considered the food and board arrangements to be lacking. The second move came after the youngster had obtained employment with room and board.[1] While Istvan maintained amicable relationships with his second foster family, his course of immediate resettlement came to the surprise of both sets of foster parents who took him into their care. Instead of being presented with a young, traumatized, and needy child, imbued with gratitude for their new home, the orphan who arrived at their doorstep was vastly different; a strong-willed, independent teenager in search of a new life.

Istvan's situation was not atypical for the groups of orphans who arrived in Canada between 1947 and 1952. Many orphans moved between various foster homes before finding permanent resettlement: their caseworkers documented complaints of inadequate food, shelter, the absence of siblings and the presence of general tensions. Istvan's case is just one example of the ways in which the realities of the War Orphans contrasted greatly with the expectations conveyed to foster parents by the CJC relating to resettlement. As Antoine Burgard notes, the CJC needed to match the expectations of potential foster families to obtain donations and housing proposals from the Canadian Jewish community, as we saw in the

---

[1] Case file of Istvan B., 1948-1949, UJRA Collection, War Orphans Immigration Project Case Files, General Case Files (FAJ-GLI), box 31, CJA, Montréal. (Casefiles hereafter will be referred to in the shorthand form as follows: Case file (name, date), UJRA Collection, box number).

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Congress Bulletin material examined in the previous chapter.[2] He posits that historians of the War Orphans project should "think on these expectations' impact" on the resettlement experiences of the War Orphans.[3] As he notes, these expectations were often influenced by media stereotypes relating to both the demographic composition and the character of the orphans.[4]

This chapter attempts to contribute to this historiographical gap by answering Burgard's question about how these parental expectations impacted the resettlement experiences of the War Orphans, particularly their foster family arrangements. The contrast between the expectations of foster parents and the demographic and personal realities of the War Orphans is documented most clearly in the records of the caseworkers assigned to each orphan. Chapter one drew from the contemporary source material of the CJC the normative expectations of foster families and noted how contemporary media stereotypes contextually influenced them. This chapter will continue this line of inquiry by drawing out how these normative expectations present themselves in the CJC archive's case records, which document the foster family relationships between orphans and Canadian Jewry.

I will illustrate that although foster parents' expectations were not monolithic, numerous normative expectations contributed to tensions in foster family relationships and appear repeatedly in the case files. As this chapter argues, the expectations of War Orphans negotiating resettlement were governed sharply by discourse with their case workers. As the CJC's rhetoric constructed an idealized version of the War Orphan, this version was largely unattainable. This chapter will highlight the pivotal role of these preconceived adult expectations, catered to by the 1947 CJC campaign, in generating successful and

---

[2] Antoine Burgard, "A New Life in a New Country, Trajectories of Holocaust Orphans to Canada (1945-1952)" *Études canadiennes / Canadian Studies* 86, no.1 (2019): 193.
[3] Burgard, "A New Life in a New Country," 193.
[4] Burgard, "A New Life in a New Country," 193.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

unsuccessful relationships between orphans and their foster families. Subsequently, it will show that there was a spectrum of experiences of War Orphans within their foster family placements - from complete assimilation to a complete breakdown in relations.

To do so, this chapter will read the records of the regional Jewish family agencies operating under the CJC agency against the grain, namely, the Jewish Family and Child Service (JFS) in Toronto, the Jewish Child Welfare Bureau in Montréal (JCWB) and The United Hebrew Social Service Bureau in Winnipeg (UHSSB). The CJC archives of Montréal hold the case files of hundreds of War Orphans in boxes in alphabetical order, many of which contain case worker reports covering the first two years of resettlement. The reports suggest that these bi-yearly updates were essential to the bureaucratic accountability of the CJC. However, due to the likely irregularity of visits and report filing, it was possible that many cases, and subsequently, orphans, fell through the cracks. Most of the case files contain information regarding the first one to two years of resettlement, after which most of the cases were closed by the CJC as they determined that the orphan had become financially self-sufficient. While this project involved the consultation of multiple case files in the first four boxes, covering orphans with the surnames beginning with the letters A through E, the cases selected below best illustrate the spectrum of experiences of War Orphans in their foster families. As a group, they function as representative samples to illustrate the results of a commonly held expectation of foster parents or as particularly atypical examples to illustrate the variety of experiences.

The case worker reports are written in a standard format across the regional offices and contain information about each orphan's situation during immediate resettlement. They include personal details of the youngster and their foster parents, the name of the supervising agency and information on whether the child is in a free or paid home. Each report has five sections: the first focuses on the child's adjustment, the second on their education and

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

vocational training, the third on religion, the fourth on employment, and the fifth on health.

Thus, the information utilized in this chapter is largely taken from the section concerning the

child's adjustment. This section required the case worker to document the child's social

adjustment in the foster home, relationships with other children, and their attitudes towards

themselves, work, and education. Each case record had to detail the reasons for any changes

in foster family placement and thus is ideal for inferring information about foster family

relationships. Nonetheless, many of the following conclusions on the ensuing success of the

placement utilize details from all five sections to build an accurate picture of the situation.

Where possible, information on the background of the orphans has been included in the

analysis of this chapter. Much of this background information is taken from the

accompanying American Joint Distribution Committee (A.J.D.C) file on the orphan which

was given to them upon their arrival into Canada. This file contained the basic information

known about the orphan and their family, alongside details of the orphan's requests for their

placements. For example, some orphans declared their intention to live in a democratic

country, or to undertake a specific trade. Additionally, many requests included religious

preferences for placement. However, in the analysis that follows, identifying details of parties

including the orphans and CJC officials are obscured or have been changed to preserve their

anonymity.[5]

---

[5] This research was conducted under numerous agreed terms of anonymity with the CJA when working with the case files. Full names and dates of birth of the orphans and minor CJC agents have been removed from analysis, and no direct quotes have been taken from the case file material. Identifying details were established to be date of birth and full name (first name and surname). As such, the case files are referred to using the first name of the child and the first letter of their surname as to preserve anonymity.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Sources and Methodology

Using case records as source material to uncover the experiences of War Orphans in their foster homes does not come without methodological setbacks. The rise in the practice of casework followed the professionalisation of the social work profession in the early twentieth century, conducted prominently by white, middle-class women.[6] The process followed a method of obtaining information from a client on their experience, or an "investigation" into their current conditions, followed by a "diagnosis" of their problem.[7] Although many of the case records are detailed, many contain partial and abbreviated details. Indeed, Katerina Clark and Evgeny Dobrenko noted in their study on the case records of unmarried mothers in twentieth century Canada that many incidents ceased to even make it into the records, as they required immediate attention or did not leave the interview room.[8]

Thus, historians must consider that case records are written for social workers' own use and provide information on the subjects through the language of the social worker on the case. The responses captured are created by the types of questions asked, who was asking them, and on the relationship between the case worker and their subject.[9] Ultimately, the case files reveal that what is written about foster family relationships is what the case worker deemed important enough to record. The profession of social work in the post-war era is also well documented for its role in conducting surveillance and Canadianization on behalf of the federal government on marginalized peoples, including unmarried women and immigrants.[10]

---

[6] Regina G. Kunzel, *Fallen Women, Problem Girls: Unmarried Mothers and the Professionalization of Benevolence, 1890-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 7.

[7] Katerina Clark and Evgeny Dobrenko, "Introduction," in Kunzel, *Fallen Women, Problem Girls*, 7.

[8] Clark and Dobrenko, "Introduction," in G. Kunzel, *Fallen Women, Problem Girls,* 8.

[9] Clark and Dobrenko, "Introduction," in G. Kunzel, *Fallen Women, Problem Girls,* 8.

[10] For more on this note, see Franca Iacovetta, "The Sexual Politics of Survival and Citizenship - Social Workers, Damaged Women, and Canada's Moral Democracy," in *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006).

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

As such, case records often reveal more about those conducting the interview and the power dynamics at play than the subject themselves.[11]

However, case records can, when read against the grain, provide a window into the subject's life from their perspective. Although the case records are not intended to capture the orphan's voices, there are indications that orphans knew what would be recorded in the case files and used their positionality to change their course of resettlement. It is, therefore, equally important to consider what the caseworkers do not say in the records, as it is to consider what they do choose to record. This methodological approach of reading sources aims to acknowledge the power dynamics present in their creation, while still recognizing their utility in being able to reveal the voices of those traditionally written out of the historical record. [12] While one can acknowledge that the orphans are operating from a position of powerlessness in their interactions with their caseworkers, this does not mean they did not leverage this position to create change for themselves.

Insights from the War Orphans Case Files: A Spectrum of Experience

One must begin by noting the numerous placements that met foster families' expectations regarding the War Orphans. These successful cases are not sparse within the archival record but appear most often when the case worker documents that the orphan conforms with the normative preferences of foster parents. One critical case is of Livia, a fifteen-year-old girl whose caseworker records of the Jewish Family and Child Service*s* in Toronto run from July 1948 to January 1949.[13] Livia was recorded by her case worker to have been born in Czechoslovakia. She had been separated from her parents upon their

---

[11] G. Kunzel, *Fallen Women, Problem Girls,* 8.

[12] See Ann Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (New York: Princeton University Press, 2009), for information on this methodological approach.

[13] Case file of Livia B., 1947-1949, UJRA Collection, box 31.

deportation to Auschwitz. After liberation in 1945, Livia and her two surviving sisters returned to Czechoslovakia before Livia and her youngest sister departed to England. The case file of Livia includes a case closing record written by a caseworker at the end of 1950. The initial report documents a positive relationship between Livia and her foster family, noting that she had formed a great attachment to her foster parents and felt protected. Livia was a good student who took studying seriously and got along well with her sister, with whom the CJC placed in the same family. The initial report mentions only one hardship experienced by Livia upon their resettlement: she longed for her other sister, who was due to arrive in Canada in the coming months from Ireland.[14] The initial report covering the same period for Livia's fourteen-year-old sister confirms the presence of a positive relationship forming between the two girls and their foster family during this initial period.[15]

The closing statement of the social worker, written in late 1950, concurs that Livia had successfully integrated into life in Canada, forming positive relationships with her peers and becoming financially independent of the agency. Thanks to the support of her foster family, in the summer of 1950, Livia and her sister successfully moved into their own housekeeping rooms and their case was closed.[16]

In this case, the support of a foster family had allowed for the successful integration of Livia into Canadian life, so much so that she could stand on their own two feet and lead an independent life just two years after their arrival. Caseworkers determined the benchmark for a successful integration in these instances, functioning largely as gatekeepers over the policy aims of the CJC. It is clear, according to the CJC, that a successful integration course involved the emotional and, most importantly, financial aid of a foster family to encourage

---

[14] Case file of Livia B., 1947-1949, UJRA Collection, box 31.
[15] Case file of Livia B., 1947-1949, UJRA Collection, box 31.
[16] Case file of Livia B., 1947-1949, UJRA Collection, box 31.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

the orphan to become self-sufficient enough to lead a successful life in Canada. In some instances, foster families would offer lifelong emotional support through a relationship sustained between both parties long after the orphans had moved out of a foster home. Much is notable from Livia's case that undoubtedly influenced the course of her successful resettlement. Although Livia and her sister were teenagers, not young children, they were both females who were able to join one family together. It is clear from the social worker's initial report that Livia had quickly become emotionally attached to her foster family, who fulfilled the emotional role of a parental figure. She arrived in a largely dependent state and desired a parental figure to replace those she had had lost in the war. The foster family's expectations for a female orphan who was dependent, conscientious, and, to an extent - still harbouring the stereotypical element of childhood innocence - were almost fully met in this case. Livia was able to integrate and gain independence, while the foster family could fulfil the temporary role they desired out of the placement process with the CJC.

However, Livia's case, although not rare, is atypical in relation to the speed of success of the foster family placement. The case is unrepresentative of most successful placements in that it involved moving to only one home before permanent resettlement. As Ben Lappin has noted, most orphans made several moves between foster homes before permanent settlement.[17] Indeed, while the case files indicate many similar cases, not all placements enjoyed such immediate success. The case of Bernat illustrates an alternative course the resettlement process often took - one where the foster family did not immediately accept the orphaned child. His closing case details his resettlement process from October 1948 until June 1950. Bernat was estimated to be sixteen years old when he arrived in Toronto in October of 1948, but his case file documents that verification of his birth could not be

---

[17] Ben Lappin, *The Redeemed Children: The Story of the Rescue of War Orphans by the Jewish Community of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), 85.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

obtained.[18] He was born in Czechoslovakia, where he remained as a young boy before his parents were sent to Auschwitz. His father later died, and nothing was known of his mother's whereabouts or survival. After liberation, Bernat was living in a DP camp in the US zone of Germany.[19] The caseworker placed him into a home shortly after his arrival after temporarily working while residing at the reception centre, documenting him to have made a relatively good adjustment at first. However, the caseworker documents that tensions began to emerge within the placement because Bernat's foster family did not accept him. The report does not mention why the caseworker felt the family did not accept him, whom they noted had a warm demeanour and strong interpersonal skills.[20] It is also unlikely the foster family would have had to extend significant monetary payment towards his upkeep. Offering a free home was rare, as it was common for the CJC to subsidize foster families in a partial housing scheme.[21]

How can we infer from the case report the reasons that Bernat's foster family did not accept him? It is worth considering how Canadian Jews would have approached the issue of parenting the orphans. Mona Gleason notes that one primary childrearing function of middle-class parents in the post-war era was the imposition of proper discipline and self-control.[22] Instilling obedience and conformity into children meant that foster parents approached the orphans with a sense of control they had learnt to disregard during the wartime era.[23] As Martz notes, survival in wartime was dependent on "one's ability to evade control and avoid emotional attachment" as the orphans got used to a life that required "open space" and the "ability to get away, to move quickly."[24] It is, therefore, unsurprising that many older orphans

---

[18] Case file of Bernat B., 1948-1950, UJRA Collection, box 31.
[19] Case file of Bernat B., 1948-1950, UJRA Collection, box 31.
[20] Case file of Bernat B., 1948-1950, UJRA Collection, box 31.
[21] Antoine Burgard, "A New Life in a New Country," 201.
[22] Mona Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal*: *Psychology, Schooling, and the Family in Post-war Canada (Studies in Gender and History Series),* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999, 89).
[23] Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal*, 89.
[24] Fraidie Martz, *Open Your Hearts: The Story of the Jewish War Orphans in Canada*. (Montréal: Véhicule Press, 1996), 132.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

reacted adversely to such strict notions of discipline; given the opportunity, many older orphans would not settle until they found a placement that best fulfilled their needs. Additionally, Martz notes that this kind of strict discipline "evoked bitter memories and suspicion" as they equated this authority with "tramping jack boots and the murder of their parents."[25]

The report on Bernat continues to note that he subsequently changed home five times but was unhappy with each of these moves as he was continually eager to find a better situation for himself. Thus, it is likely that his restless nature and eagerness to search for a better situation continually contributed to the unwillingness of numerous foster families to accept him fully. The case worker eventually closed the case in June 1950 because Bernat and his foster parents declared they were ready to finish the partnership as he felt he did not need further financial or advisory services from the agency.[26]

Bernat, as a teenage male orphan who desired quick emotional and financial independence, has a profile that does not fit the normative expectations of foster families in Canadian Jewry as neatly as that of Livia. While much of the 1947 campaign detailed teenage boys trained in various vocations, an orphan who displayed seemingly little desire to depend on a foreign foster family, who was aware of their own needs, and did not need to be moulded by parents into an ideal Canadian citizen was undoubtedly going to experience a more complex resettlement process than those like Livia. Indeed, it was common for orphans to complain to their caseworkers when the foster homes did not fulfil their basic needs. In one case, seventeen-year-old Abraham, a teenage boy from Hungary, documented from June 1948 to November of 1949 by a caseworker in Toronto, left his first home as it was simply

---

[25] Martz, *Open Your Hearts*, 132.
[26] Case file of Bernat B., 1948-1950, UJRA Collection, box 31.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

not well heated.[27] A closer look at the case file of Abraham provides a possible explanation behind his seemingly minor complaint. In May of 1944, Abraham and his entire family were deported to Auschwitz, where he was then separated before moving to a DP camp in the US zone in Germany upon liberation.[28] After surviving the freezing conditions in the barracks of Auschwitz for months on end, it is no surprise Abraham prioritized his basic needs for adequate food, heating, and shelter in his placement.

Like the case of Bernat, there are many cases in the archive in which significant tensions are documented by caseworkers between foster families and the orphans, despite a successful long-term integration for the orphan. It was common for orphans to complain to their case worker that their foster family did not accept them, as exhibited in the further case of Bela. Bela was one of the orphans in the group who did explicitly desire replacement parental figures. Bela was fourteen years old when he arrived from Hungary to Toronto in the summer of 1948.[29] After the deportation of his father in 1944, he never heard from him again. His mother then passed away and he was left under the care of his older sister before deciding to take himself to Austria where he was placed into a children's home, before moving to Canada as a War Orphan. He told his case worker upon his arrival into Canada that he wanted foster parents to replace the support of his own parents, as his sister could not care for him. Subsequently, the case worker documented that Bela was not happy as he felt his foster family did not wholly accept him.[30] The social worker notes that this was Bela's second foster family placement; he had to leave his first foster home as his foster mother had found him tough to manage. There had also been a growing tension between Bela and the foster mother's own relatives. The social worker noted that Bela was upset about this change as his

---

[27] Case file of Abraham B., 1948-1949, UJRA Collection, box 32.
[28] Case file of Abraham B., 1948-1949, UJRA Collection, box 32.
[29] Case file of Abraham B., 1948-1949, UJRA Collection, box 32.
[30] Case file of Bela B., 1948-1949, UJRA Collection, box 32.

current foster family was not treating him as a real family would. The report closes at the end of 1948 with the note that Bela attended public school for two months and began working, so had become financially self-sufficient.[31]

While noting the prevalence of cases where foster families do not accept older male orphans, even when they themselves desired replacement parental figures, the case of Bela brings up a new consideration for documenting the course of foster family relationships - the presence of existing children. While it is possible that childless foster parents desired to take in an orphan, many families with children took orphans into their homes. Most orphans arriving at foster family placements pushed boundaries and clashed with other children within the household. The absence of substantial rhetoric or advice on orphan interaction with foster parents' own children is notable in the 1947 CJC campaign, and this influenced both orphans' and foster parents' expectations. For Bela, the appeal of a foster family was to feel integrated into an environment where he was simply one of the family. His foster family could not extend the same level of unconditional acceptance to the orphan as they did to their children, leaving both parties disappointed. In these cases, it was not uncommon for foster parents to undoubtedly side with their own children and remove the orphan to restore their previous family dynamic.

Not all orphans desired to seek out a replacement family or parental figures like those portrayed in the CJC campaign. This was the case again for Abraham, made prevalent in his closing report written in December of 1949.[32] It notes that Abraham had continued to move between foster homes and had always been insistent on not living with a family. Most interestingly, the case worker now pegs his age at twenty-five or twenty-six years, despite the

---

[31] Case file of Bela B., 1948-1949, UJRA Collection, box 32. As per the case files, financial self-sufficiency is deemed to be when the orphan can survive without the limited subsidies provided by the agency. Financial self-sufficiency was usually declared by the CJC closing reports when the orphan relocated from a foster family to an independent living arrangement with a regular source of income.

[32] Case file of Bela B., 1948-1949, UJRA Collection, box 32.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

original A.J.D.C file reporting it to be seventeen just a year earlier.[33] It appears from the

closing report that Abraham did fabricate his age using forged documents or verification

means- a common feature of many of the War Orphans, as noted by Burgard.[34] Abraham had

arrived in Toronto with his sister, and they eventually moved into two furnished rooms in the

same house. The case worker eventually closed the case as he was largely independent of the

agency and, as the social worker reported, settled in their new country without the aid of a

foster family.[35] Abraham's case illustrates the intersection between many of the normative

assumptions held by foster parents. Potential foster parents saw younger orphans as more in

need or desiring of replacement parental figures to replicate the emotional maternal and

paternal bonds lost following the war. As Abraham was clearly above the age threshold

mandated by the federal government for the project, it is no surprise that he was uninterested

in the aid of a replacement foster family. Rather, for Abraham, admission into Canada under

the War Orphans project was simply a means to an end to arrive safely in Canada and start a

new life on his own terms.

Nonetheless, the inability to form emotional bonds was not only an issue for foster

parents but also a documented problem for the orphans. Orphans often expressed their

difficulties in relating to a new family to their caseworkers. Rosa's case file is one example: a

sixteen-year-old girl born in Budapest who, having lost her mother in Auschwitz, came under

the watch of the Jewish Family and Child Services in Toronto in August of 1948.[36] Before

coming to Canada, she was located in a children's centre in Germany and told her case

worker that she was eager to obtain a foster home placement which would enable her to

become independent. Rosa's case was eventually closed on July 1, 1949, as her report stated

---

[33] Case file of Abraham B., 1948-1949, UJRA Collection, box 32.
[34] Antoine Burgard, "Contested Childhood: Assessing the Age of Young Refugees in the Aftermath of the Second World War," *History Workshop Journal* 92, no.1 (2021): 182-3.
[35] Case file of Abraham B., 1948-1949, UJRA Collection, box 32.
[36] Case file of Rosa A., 1947-1949, UJRA Collection, box 31.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

that the youngster had been unable to relate to a family after several changes in homes and decided to move into a housekeeping room.[37] The caseworker noted that Rosa had difficulties undertaking adult tasks, such as managing money, but remained active in the local Hungarian youth club. Rosa's case was closed at this point, with the caseworker noting her to be sufficiently financially independent, as she expressed that she did not feel she needed the agency any longer.[38] While the individual case record leaves a little indication of exactly why Rosa was unable to relate to her foster family, the adult expectation that the orphans would be young and malleable enough to adapt to new families and cultures as if they were their own was simply not a reality. While Rosa could certainly function within these foster families - her lack of ability to relate to them prevented them from forming the emotional bonds necessary for full integration.

Additionally, the case records show the presence of various psychological and behavioural issues amongst the War Orphans, a fact not fully disclosed in the CJC's press campaign. Despite the orphans undergoing a screening process for medical and dental issues by the social workers of the A.J.D.C before they arrived in Canada, the full extent of the psychological trauma attained from their experiences in the Holocaust only became known to social workers in the years following these events. While Saul Hayes, the executive vice-president of the CJC, when looking back at the project, noted that "we were warned that, because of the background of these youths, we could expect mental breakdowns," this fact was not disclosed in the press campaign.[39] Hints at mental illness or psychological trauma were limited to descriptions of orphans' timidity, shyness or traumatized state, which parental love and a familial environment could quickly rectify.

---

[37] Case file of Rosa A., 1947-1949, UJRA Collection, box 31.
[38] Case file of Rosa A., 1947-1949, UJRA Collection, box 31.
[39] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, vi.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Even contemporary psychiatrists were beginning to revise their expectations over the extent of the psychological trauma of child survivors in the years following the liberation of the camps. The positive views expressed by psychiatrist Dr. Friedman in his initial report on child Holocaust survivors in 1947 differed significantly from his findings documented in his second major study for *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, published two years later in February of 1949,[40] on survivors who had been jailed in a detention centre in Cyprus in August of 1946 for having sought "illegal" entry into Palestine.[41] Dr. Friedman noted that he analyzed 84 children up to eighteen years of age residing in the camp. He documented numerous cases of depression and conditions for which doctors could find no physical causes. Many of these problems were accompanied by mild or acute states of anxiety, disorientation, and hallucinations. Indeed, Friedman noted they all displayed emotional fatigue that could not be explained by their physical condition.[42]

While the 1947 CJC campaign presented the orphans as virtually disease-free and full of childlike wonder because of their experiences - the reality displayed in the case files was often far more insidious. One case was that of Ruzena, who arrived in Canada in June of 1948, aged seventeen, from Romania.[43] The sole survivor of the Holocaust in her immediate family and the youngest of four children, she was found after liberation in Czechoslovakia living with a cousin. The case worker of the A.J.D.C, reported in her initial case file that Ruzena was eager to start a new life and was aware that the CJC would expect her to earn her own living. However, the caseworker reported from June of 1948 to December 1949 that Ruzena was experiencing tension with her foster family as she, unlike her new family, was strictly religiously orthodox. Her caseworker recorded her as being insecure and appearing

---

[40] Paul Friedman, "Some Aspects of Concentration Camp Psychology," The *American Journal of Psychiatry* 105, no. 8 (February 1949): 601.
[41] Friedman, "Some Aspects of Concentration Camp Psychology," 602.
[42] Friedman, "Some Aspects of Concentration Camp Psychology," 602.
[43] Case file of Ruzena A., 1948-1950, UJRA Collection, box 31.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

very depressed. Due to the lack of orthodox foster families, the caseworker then placed her into a new foster home.[44]

Nonetheless, the caseworker recorded that Ruzena was too shy to express her needs in her new home and subsequently had difficulty adjusting there. They document this dissatisfaction to have resulted in her becoming physically ill, creating a situation in which she had to move homes yet again. After developing migraines and insomnia, she was diagnosed with anxiety and referred to a psychiatrist. The case workers documented her illness to be a manifestation of hysteria. Following this, the case worker documented that they kept in close contact with Ruzena as she began to show signs of improvement. The case worker eventually aided her in moving into a more religiously inclusive home and her case was closed in June 1950. The case workers' use of language to describe the onset of Ruzena's psychological issues is most interesting – as they insinuate that her illness, and the subsequent attention she received, was a refuge for her pain upon resettlement.[45] What appears absent in the record of her illness is a consideration of the context preceding her arrival in Canada and the extreme loss she had suffered. No such mention of the impact of the loss of her family is present in the report. However, the caseworker's allusions to possible attention-seeking present her illness as a self-induced mechanism to alter her path of resettlement, whether that be to a new home or situation. The records encapsulate the attitude of such caseworkers and their attempts to present a unified, fixed version of the contemporary child migrant. To the caseworkers, the youngsters remained a moral and ethical blank slate whose psychological state could be corrected by adequate parenting and restoration of the nuclear, middle-class family.

---

[44] Case file of Ruzena A., 1948-1950, UJRA Collection, box 31.
[45] Case file of Ruzena A., 1948-1950, UJRA Collection, box 31.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Rubin's case further illustrates an instance in which an orphan's unprecedented behavioural issues directly impacted relations with their foster family. Many of the orphans carried forward their behavioural patterns and anxious tendencies from the war into their foster homes, contrary to the expectations of the adults around them that much of their atypical behaviour would subside in a familial environment. Rubin came to Canada in June of 1948 at eighteen years old.[46] Rubin was born in Poland, and was estranged from his two sisters, having lost his brother in Warsaw. He was deported first to Auschwitz before being liberated in April 1945. He remained in a hospital in Munich until December of 1946, before spending the following year in a radio-technical school.[47] Upon his arrival into Canada, Rubin went directly into the house of a distant family member who was already residing in Canada. However, he immediately began to illustrate anxiety over a previous illness and became fearful of undertaking employment. The case worker's closing statement of June 1950 documents his difficulty accepting anything from his relatives. He struggled to accept the budget limitations Congress placed upon him, attempting to falsify statements when declaring his earnings to them. Despite settling down by June 1950 with a stable job, he struggled to work out his relationship with his relatives.[48] This case points to a further similarity between the reception of orphans by existing relatives and foster parents: they both shared the expectation that the orphans would arrive as passive, innocent and shy young children. To their surprise, not all orphans were comfortable relying on the aid of the adults around them, particularly their relatives. They could not cope with the limitations placed on them when Congress provided that aid. Additionally, the case of Rubin illustrates that not all the behavioural issues displayed by the orphans dissipated upon their return to a familial

---

[46] Case file of Idel-Rubin A., 1948-1950, UJRA Collection, box 31.
[47] Case file of Idel-Rubin A., 1948-1950, UJRA Collection, box 31.
[48] Case file of Idel-Rubin A., 1948-1950, UJRA Collection, box 31.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

environment. In fact, as the case files demonstrate, orphans' behaviour often became more erratic in response to these new familial environments, even amongst relatives with whom they had pre-existing relationships.

While much of the orphan's behaviour caused tension with foster families, it was rarely ever the immediate cause for relationship breakdown. However, there are cases within the archival record where rebellious behaviour led to the removal and replacement of an orphan into a different foster home. Josef, a thirteen-year-old boy from Hungary, was first referred to Winnipeg in December 1947.[49] He was born in Budapest, and his entire family was placed in a ghetto in 1944. His parents were arrested by the gestapo in October 1944, whereas Josef remained in the ghetto until after the war, when he was sent to a centre for children in Germany.[50] The United Hebrew Social Service Bureau report of April to May 1948 indicates that Josef was among the most difficult of the entire group. The case worker noted that the youngster was distrusting and desired freedom to the extent he could not adhere to basic routines. Their caseworker first placed the youngster with a childless couple who became very attached to him. However, due to his desire for freedom, the couple decided that it had become too difficult to keep him but did so until they themselves relocated out of the city. The caseworker then placed him with another family, hoping the placement would be more successful, as the foster parents had already brought up their children and had substantially more parenting experience. The social worker noted that some improvement had followed regarding his self-discipline, but that he had become interested in moving again. This time, he claimed that he found the foster parents' food unsatisfactory, and that the family were finding him too great a challenge.[51]

---

[49] Case file of Josef D., 1947-1950, UJRA Collection, box 32.
[50] Case file of Josef D., 1947-1950, UJRA Collection, box 32.
[51] Case file of Josef D., 1947-1950, UJRA Collection, box 32.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

The United Hebrew Social Service Bureau's report of May to November of 1949 details a rapid deterioration in Josef's with two further home changes. According to the caseworker these changes were necessary because Josef had been accused of stealing. His tendency to steal can somewhat be explained by his previous experience in the ghetto.[52] Ben Lappin notes that due to the adult population being engaged at work from early until late in the ghetto, delinquency became widespread. Examples of delinquent behaviour included stealing food from communal kitchens.[53] Despite this, Josef's foster parents, who had been drawn to him at first, quickly grew tired due to the orphan's lack of cooperation, as he continued to display absenteeism at work. The report notes that other group orphans had begun to look down on him as a bad example to the group, illustrating that a normative standard existed among the orphans regarding appropriate behaviour.

Perhaps most notably, the following document in Josef's file details a letter from H. F, executive director of the Western division of the CJC, to Manfred Saalheimer in the CJC's national office.[54] The letter notes that since Josef arrived in Winnipeg in December 1947, it was clear that he would be troublesome for the agency. H.F notes that Josef's behaviour had deteriorated drastically; he had first been caught by the police stealing and had continually changed his place of residence without notifying his foster family or the agency. Subsequently, H.F details the case as the most serious they had yet to handle due to Josef's criminal tendencies. At the time of the letter, written on November 8, 1950, the Judge of the Juvenile Court had asked the agency to work with them to find techniques to quell Josef's behaviour. The letter notes that Josef, now sixteen years old, had recently been sent to an educational institute for problem boys but had, subsequently, escaped and illegally crossed

---

[52] Case file of Josef D., 1947-1950, UJRA Collection, box 32.
[53] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 79.
[54] H. F to M.S, November 8, 1950, Case file of Josef D., 1947-1950, UJRA Collection, box 32.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

the border into the US. After being deported back to Canada and placed into custody by the Juvenile Court, the CJC's Western division had brought up the idea of Josef's possible deportation to Hungary.[55] The letter implied that the Committee of the Western division was not opposed to this, but Josef had no valid Hungarian travel documentation. As a result, H.F ends his letter asking Saalheimer to discuss the possibility of Josef's transportation to Israel, where his father lived, as the national policy of the CJC would usually advise against such a deportation.[56]

The likelihood of delinquency amongst the group was, as Ben Lappin notes, not deemed a possibility by CJC agents, despite David Weiss's warnings and widespread public fear surrounding juvenile delinquency.[57] However, considering the lack of protocol amongst the regional offices for such cases, it appears that these extreme examples caught the CJC and foster families off guard. Josef's case illustrates how the resolution of some cases required flexibility and inter-office communication. While the mention of avoiding deportation measures suggests the CJC had a series of national policies pertaining to the orphans, it was up to the national offices to consult them in individual cases. Additionally, the absence of the intervention of psychologists in Josef's case indicates how little consideration caseworkers gave to the idea that his state was due to his traumatic past. The case illustrates again the idea that the agency saw the guidance of adults as a rehabilitative force for such behaviour, which was deemed purely situational and not part of a chronic illness due to a traumatic past.

---

[55] H. F to M.S, November 8, 1950, Case file of Josef D., 1947-1950, UJRA Collection, box 32.
[56] H. F to M.S, November 8, 1950, Case file of Josef D., 1947-1950, UJRA Collection, box 32.
[57] Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 155.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Conclusion

This chapter has theorized that the CJC's confusing depictions of the youngsters in their August and September 1947 campaign resulted in foster parents reaffirming their normative expectations regarding the War Orphans. The gap that ensued between the expectations of foster parents, governed by both the campaign and public discourse, and the reality of the War Orphans proved to be a cause of tension in foster family arrangements. These tensions are most acutely demonstrated in the caseworker reports of the orphans and demonstrate the centrality of age as a category of analysis to the success of the orphan's short-term resettlement in Canada. While many of the problems arising in the casefiles are common amongst the orphans, a spectrum of experiences exists from fast and successful resettlement to even geographical relocation.

Nonetheless, it remains clear that those orphans who mostly conformed to the normative set of expectations held by Canadian Jewry had the smoothest resettlement process – namely, young children who were unresistant and flexible to new parenting styles and cultural differences. This chapter has also noted the centrality of the campaign in cultivating expectations for potential foster parents and orphans as to the resettlement process. As the CJC campaign was often the only piece of media and press that exposed the Jewish foster parents to the War Orphans in the weeks before their arrival, the campaign had a pivotal and direct role in shaping the project's outlook that the historiography has thus far neglected. This chapter hopes to be a call to action to further historians of the War Orphans project to view the case files of the War Orphans and the material produced by the CJC in conjunction with one another to draw out these consequential links.

While reading the words of the caseworkers reveals much about the success of foster family relationships and the experiences of the War Orphans, a key methodological flaw remains. How can a historian truly uncover the voices and experiences of the War Orphan in

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

their immediate resettlement period through sources mediated and written by adults, such as case records? A review of the case files demonstrates that the orphans clearly saw their caseworkers and the CJC as a means by which to advocate for themselves – often moving placements regularly and expressing their dissatisfaction. As Ben Lappin notes, the reception centres became common gathering places for the orphans, a place in which their contact with adults ultimately changed the course of their resettlement.[58]

The following chapter will further utilize the material in the case files to challenge a final historiographical conception of the War Orphans; namely that they were passive and helpless victims at the mercy of the adults around them who dictated their course of resettlement. As the case records show, the War Orphans were not afraid to use their caseworkers to help them challenge the status quo, advocate for themselves, and fight for the kind of life they wanted to lead in Canada. The young survivors were far from passive victims, but rather ambitious trailblazers in the story of their resettlement.

---

[58] Ben Lappin, *The Redeemed Children*, 58.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

CHAPTER THREE: Escaping the Agency Trap

Chapter Outline and Methodology

On November 29, 1949, fifteen-year-old Eva boarded the SS *Samaria* sailing fromLe Havre to Pier 21 in Halifax, Canada. Eva had lived a happy childhood in Hungary beforeher family were relocated to a ghetto in Budapest by the Nazis. From there, her father placedher and her brother into hiding, providing them with false papers claiming they were of the Christian faith.[1] After liberation, she was placed in a seminary in Budapest, where she remained near her brother until she boarded the ship to Pier 21.[2]

On December 1, 1949, a requisition note was attached to Eva's case file from N. Heinish, the national vice president of the Canadian Jewish Congress, confirming her arrival at Pier 21 earlier that day. However, Heinish explained that Eva had experienced difficulty at customs, as was found hoarding one hundred gold watches in her belongings.[3] Hoarding was, however, not an uncommon behaviour amongst the War Orphans. Ben Lappin notes that those children living in the ghettos of Europe became accustomed to stealing food and clothing as a means of personal survival.[4] In fact, small children living in the ghettos were used by the adults to sneak out food and information. It is likely that Eva had planned to pawn the gold watches for a profit upon her arrival into Canada. Although the watches were confiscated at border control, it is clear that Eva considered them to be important enough to run the risk of smuggling them into Canada. This incident is just one of many examples where the orphans demonstrated their capacity to act in ways that could alter their

---

[1] Case file of Eva E., 1949, UJRA Collection, War Orphans Immigration Project Case Files, General Case Files (FAJ-GLI), box 32, CJA, Montréal. (Casefiles hereafter will be referred to in the shorthand form as follows: Case file (name, date), UJRA Collection, box number).

[2] Case file of Eva E., 1949, UJRA Collection, box 32.

[3] N. Heinish, requisition notes regarding SS *Samaria*, December 1, 1949, Case file of Eva E., 1949, UJRA Collection, box 32.

[4] Ben Lappin, *The Redeemed Children: The Story of the Rescue of War Orphans by the Jewish Community of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), 79.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

resettlement. Eva was not simply passively reliant on the adults around them but had the survival skills and ambition to fend for herself in a new country.

In this chapter, I will further utilize the material in the CJC case files to challenge a final historiographical conception of the War Orphans: that they were passive and helpless victims at the mercy of the adults around them. The War Orphans were not afraid to use their own skills and those of their caseworkers to help them challenge the status quo, advocate for themselves and fight for the kind of life they wanted to lead.

The celebratory narrative that exists within the current historiography of the War Orphans project centres the Canadian state and the hospitable Jewish public for their role in housing the orphans. In such a narrative, the orphans are entirely dependent on the adults around them. Such narratives conceive of agency as instances whereby the orphans act in the ways adults would. Mary Jo-Maynes argues that this framework of agency is restrictive, as it does not allow historians to perceive agency of those who, historically "acted from positions of relative powerlessness."[5] Mona Gleason, amongst other scholars of childhood, has also criticized those historical studies that strive to "liberate" children as opposed to contributing to understanding and knowledge of their cosmologies.[6] Much of this work utilizes the term "agency" without defining it, nor does it consider the ways children use their power to contribute to historical change.[7] Gleason terms this methodological framework as the "agency trap," one which many historians of childhood fall into by chasing an "agency ideal" which takes the exploration of youthful autonomy and resistance as the main interpretive goal.[8] Rather, historians should not simply be identifying these acts of autonomy, but

---

[5] Mary Jo Maynes, "Age as a Category of Historical Analysis: History, Agency, and Narratives of Childhood," *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1, no. 1 (2008): 116, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/hcy.2008.0001

[6] Mona Gleason, "Avoiding the Agency Trap: Caveats for Historians of Children, Youth, and Education," *History of Education* 45, no.4 (2016): 446, DOI: 10.1080/0046760X.2016.1177121

[7] Gleason, "Avoiding the Agency Trap: Caveats for Historians of Children, Youth, and Education," 446.

[8] Gleason, "Avoiding the Agency Trap: Caveats for Historians of Children, Youth, and Education," 447.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

illustrating the ways children contributed, in significant ways, to change over time. In this chapter, I hope to develop an understanding of agency that highlights these instances of autonomy to ask: how were these young people affected by, or how did they contribute to, change over time? In this case, the change over time in question is their course of resettlement in Canada and CJC protocol towards the War Orphans.

Contemplating what the orphans would have considered to be acts of agency reveals instances of what I will call in this chapter contingent agency. This term refers to instances when the orphans acted in ways they thought would help them to alter their own circumstances, whether it be placement into a new foster home, school, or job. Crucially, they often capitalized on the power of the adults around them to do so - in particular, their case workers. As I will illustrate, the orphans conceived of the case records as a powerful tool to get adults to document their dissatisfaction and lobby for a change in their condition. While Gleason warns against conceptualizing agency solely as instances of youthful rebellion, disruptive behaviour is an important way the orphans sought to alter their resettlement. Subsequently, I will consider the actions taken by the orphans to alter resettlement that include, but are not limited to, rebellious behaviour.

The War Orphans' Contributions to Change over Time

The CJC case files note many examples where orphans displayed unruly behaviour in a foster home they did not feel comfortable in, only for their behaviour to return to normal when their caseworker moved them into a new home. One notable example is sixteen-year-old Isaak, who was initially placed in the home of a childless young couple in March 1948. Isaak had grown up in Warsaw, Poland and was deported in 1940 from the Warsaw Ghetto to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Upon liberation, he was relocated to Germany and placed into a children's home. He then travelled to Italy with a children's transport in July 1947

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

before relocating to Winnipeg.[9] At first, the case worker reports that Isaak was anxious to please his foster parents but notes that he soon became disruptive and critical in his ways. Consequently, his foster parents asked him to leave their home, and he moved into a light housekeeping with his friend. Upon moving, the case worker reported that he was doing exceptionally well, maintaining a positive relationship with his landlady and remaining committed to his financial obligations.[10] It is possible that Isaak had become unhappy in his arrangement due to a disappointment with his foster parent's parenting style, or the condition of the home. Isaak's subsequent reversion back to behaving amicably upon his relocation suggests that this change in behaviour may have been a conscious decision. Perhaps he understood that his foster parents would request the caseworker remove him from the home if his behaviour became too unruly and used this to his advantage. In his American Joint Distribution Committee (A.J.D.C) file, the case worker had noted that Isaak was eager to build a new life and continue his career as a furrier.[11] By moving into a light housekeeping room with his friend, he could live the more independent life he desired. A case that exhibits similar behaviour changes is that of Abram. Abram was born in Poland and travelled to Vancouver after the war at the age of sixteen years from a children's home in Germany. He was initially reported by his case worker to be a pleasant child of positive demeanour towards his foster family. However, the caseworker soon noted that he had become stubborn and was gambling profusely.[12] The case worker's correspondence made mention of the possibility of Abram relocating to Montréal, a suggestion that, according to the case worker, pleased him.[13] It is possible that Abram's rebellious behaviour was both symptomatic of dissatisfaction in his home life and a conscious attempt to get himself relocated by the agency.

[9] Case file of Isaak B., 1948-1949, UJRA Collection, box 31.
[10] Case file of Isaak B., 1948-1949, UJRA Collection, box 31.
[11] Case file of Istvan B., 1948-1949, UJRA Collection, box 31.
[12] Case file of Abram B., 1949-1948, UJRA Collection, box 31.
[13] Case file of Abram B., 1949-1948, UJRA Collection, box 31.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Case records often indicate the exact reasons for the orphans' dissatisfaction and rebellious behaviour in their foster homes. Such is the case of Bronie, born in Poland before being transported to Auschwitz in 1944. Upon liberation, she moved to Germany where she remained in a DP camp until December 1947. She relocated to Winnipeg in June of 1948 when she was sixteen years of age.[14] The caseworker of Bronie notes that in June of 1948, she was sharing a room with a friend in the same foster home. In their case record, which spans the period from June to December of 1948, both girls are reported to have voiced their dissatisfaction with the home, threatening to move out if the agency did not act. The case worker notes that the foster family had indicated a preference for Bronie's friend, who was not as antagonistic as she was. Bronie, on the contrary, was noted to be extremely hostile, finding it difficult to adapt to the Congresses' allowance for food and clothing for the orphans.[15] While neither girl moved out of the foster home, the case worker notes that Bronie gradually became more collegial and engaged with the demands of the agency once her social life became more fulfilling.[16] As this case illustrates, much of the orphans' dissatisfaction stemmed from an unfulfilling lifestyle. Once orphans became more satisfied with their friendships, relationships or schooling arrangements, their belligerent behaviour in the home would often subside. This is unsurprising if we consider that Bronie's A.J.D.C file had detailed that she had no one in Europe and was eager to rebuild her community in Canada.[17]

While the case records indicate multiple incidents of unconscious and conscious rebellious behaviour, this is not the only mechanism the orphans used to alter their resettlement. Often, the orphans took advantage of educational opportunities presented to them by adults to further their career choices or gain financial independence. Such was the

---

[14] Case file of Bronie B., 1948-1949, UJRA Collection, box 31.
[15] Case file of Bronie B., 1948-1949, UJRA Collection, box 31.
[16] Case file of Bronie B., 1948-1949, UJRA Collection, box 31.
[17] Case file of Bronie B., 1948-1949, UJRA Collection, box 31.

case of Suzy, who was born in Hungary and deported to two different German concentration camps. In July of 1935, she was liberated by the Swedish Red Cross and arrived in Sweden, where she remained in a children's home until she arrived in Toronto in June 1948 at the age of seventeen.[18] Her case worker documented that Suzy was excelling in school and had been actively participating in student politics.[19] The opportunity to attend school, however, was not guaranteed for all orphans, as the CJC preferred to place them directly into employment. Suzy was aware of the importance of her school placement and was utilizing it to her full advantage. Additionally, her A.J.D.C file, written before her admission into Canada, stated that she had desired to undertake a career in the field of chemistry or continue into further education.[20] Suzy's case demonstrates that contingent agency can be seen in the orphan's everyday attempts to excel in their own personal lives, such as working towards a specific career goal. Equating examples of youthful autonomy simply with misbehaviour or rebellion obscures many of the more mundane expressions of contingent agency illustrated by the orphans in their day-to-day lives.

Additionally, many of the case files illustrate that the orphans would consciously capitalize on the resources of the caseworkers around them to express their autonomous desires. A prominent example of this is the implicit pressure applied by the orphans towards the agency to obtain visas or existing family members. Such was the situation of Family P in February of 1948. Their case file details that the children of Family P had been placed in Edmonton upon liberation. The three children, born in Poland, were seventeen, fourteen and sixteen years of age upon their arrival, with their A.J.D.C files stating that they had become separated from their parents in 1943, who were then killed while undertaking forced labour.[21]

---

[18] Case file of Zsuzsanna B., 1948-1949, UJRA Collection, box 31.
[19] Case file of Zsuzsanna B., 1948-1949, UJRA Collection, box 31.
[20] Case file of Zsuzsanna B., 1948-1949, UJRA Collection, box 31.
[21] Case file of Nachum, Chaya & Schlome B., UJRA Collection, box 31.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

However, a letter is attached to their case file from a H. F of the Western division of the CJC in Winnipeg, written in late October of 1949. H.F is writing to Manfred Saalheimer of the CJC and explains that the children of Family P had made the sudden revelation to the agency that their parents were still alive in Europe.[22] The children had continued to apply pressure to the Edmonton Jewish community to aid their parents in obtaining visas to reunite with them in Canada. The letter ends detailing that the Edmonton community had been successful in helping to obtain visas for the parents, who were due to arrive in Canada imminently.[23] Subsequently, the agency's responsibility over the children was to be relinquished. From May 1947, the federal government was eligible to sponsor adult European Jewish refugees in two main ways - through sponsored labour programmes or by having "close relatives" residing in Canada.[24] As the federal government capped the age limit for the project at eighteen years of age, it is possible that many older orphans applied to the project to secure their admission with the hope that their family members would later join them in Canada. The sudden revelation of the children of Family P suggests that this was a tactic to obtain an easier entry point for the adult members of the family. If the children in Family P were already in Canada, it would be faster for their parents to obtain their own visas.

Indeed, the case files note many instances of the orphans placing demands on their caseworkers and the agency. One further example is that of Ludwig. Ludwig was born in what was then Czechoslovakia and emigrated to Canada in September 1947 after both of his parents perished in Auschwitz. He was relocated to Geneva after liberation where he began to apprentice as a mechanic. Upon his arrival to Montréal, Ludwig was seventeen years old.[25]

---

[22] H. F to M. Saalheimer, October 28, 1949, Case file of Nachum, Chaya & Schlome B., UJRA Collection, box 31.
[23] H. F to M. Saalheimer, October 28, 1949.
[24] Adara Goldberg, "Canada and the Holocaust," The Canadian Encyclopedia (website), May 6, 2016, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/holocaust.
[25] Case file of Ludwig A., 1947, UJRA Collection, box 31.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

His caseworker noted him to be persistently demanding until the agency found a job for him

that matched his expectations. In an undated report, the caseworker added that Ludwig had

made good adjustments in his two paid home placements but continued to be stressed about

the future and his financial security.[26] Ludwig, they noted, had either been rejected or laid off

from all five work placements found for him by the agency, as he found them unsatisfactory

and had displayed a poor work ethic.[27] His poor work ethic was possibly a direct result of

vocational unfulfillment, as he continued to demand the agency find him better employment

opportunities. While Ludwig had been in training to become a mechanic before his relocation

to Canada, ultimately, he had decided to become a furrier.[28] The reason for this change in

vocation is not noted, but it is possible that it was a more lucrative trade to pursue in the

harsh winter climate. Ludwig's case demonstrates that the orphans were aware of the

agency's capacity to alter aspects of resettlement if enough pressure was applied. Many of the

orphans on the project were not simply passive recipients of the agency's decisions but avid

that their preferences and choices for employment were fulfilled. Ludwig's case ultimately

was closed because of his inability to settle into employment offered to him by the agency.

Ludwig's caseworker notes that the agency eventually informed him that they would expect

him to finance his own board and room from his savings, a decision that was only met with

anger.[29]

A final route taken by the War Orphans to alter their resettlement was to lobby

directly for relocation, both regionally and nationally. One unique example in the case files is

that of Wanda, whose case ignited an inter-office debate surrounding the relationship

between the project and Congress' policy on Zionism. Wanda's case documents her

---

[26] Case file of Ludwig A., 1947, UJRA Collection, box 31.
[27] Case file of Ludwig A., 1947, UJRA Collection, box 31.
[28] Case file of Ludwig A., 1947, UJRA Collection, box 31.
[29] Case file of Ludwig A., 1947, UJRA Collection, box 31.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project,
August 1947 to February 1952

relocation, following her arrival in Winnipeg in September 1948 at the age of fifteen years.[30]

By her first report between September 1948 and February 1949 she was in her third foster

home. Having been reluctant to move from her first two homes, she finally admitted to her

caseworker that she found family life difficult to navigate and preferred group living. Her

foster parents referred to her as insensitive and stubborn, and her caseworker noted that she

had expressed a desire to emigrate to Israel.[31] Specifically, Wanda requested to undertake

Hachshara training at a farm in Smithville, Ontario, before going on to make Aliyah to

Israel. The Hebrew word *Hachshara* translates into English as preparation, and was the term

used to describe agricultural centres in Europe and North America which trained young

immigrants to live on a Kibbutz in Israel.[32] While many of the youngsters in DP camps had

the opportunity to emigrate to Israel before being placed onto a child rescue scheme, many

orphans decided they wanted to follow their peers in the months following their resettlement

in North America.

In Wanda's case, this sparked a debate noted by the caseworker, that took place in

correspondence between the regional CJC offices in Winnipeg and David Weiss, the

executive director of the CJC. The correspondence considered the dilemma that the CJC, a

Zionist organization, did not want to deny the orphan the ability to emigrate to Israel, but

could not publicly encourage it.[33] Publicly encouraging her travel to Palestine would

contradict the CJC's aims to encourage the resettlement of the orphans in Canada. Indeed,

this would have possibly angered donors who gave money to endorse the project's aim of

resettling the orphans in Jewish Canada, and not in Israel. While the Congress did not

publicly endorse Wanda's emigration, she was given permission from the agency to leave

---

[30] Case file of Wanda B., 1947-1949, UJRA Collection, box 32.
[31] Case file of Wanda B., 1947-1949, UJRA Collection, box 32.
[32] Hagit Lavsky, "Reviewed Work: Finding Home and Homeland: Jewish Youth and Zionism in the Aftermath of the Holocaust by Avinoam J.Patt," *Shofar* 29, no.2 (2011): 211.
[33] Case file of Wanda B., 1947-1949, UJRA Collection, box 32.

Winnipeg in November 1948 and attend the *Hachschara* Training Farm in Smithville Ontario.[34] While Wanda had hinted that she would be content with a transfer to a Jewish Seminary in Montréal as an alternative to life in Winnipeg, it was her primary ambition to move to Israel.[35] By demonstrating her apparent incompatibility with the foster family model, Wanda achieved her desire of emigrating and eventually left for Israel. In fact, Wanda's case set a precedent whereby orphans would be allowed to emigrate to Israel with the aid of the agency, though this was never advertised as official CJC policy. The case illustrates the ways that the orphan's desires exposed the tensions that existed between the Zionist aspirations of the CJC, and their requirement to resettle the orphans in Canada.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a final challenge to the historiographical conception that the War Orphans were passive and helpless victims at the mercy of the adults around them who dictated their resettlement. As the case records show, the War Orphans were not afraid to use their caseworkers to help them challenge the status quo, advocate for themselves and fight for the kind of life they wanted to lead in Canada. While this chapter moves away from frameworks that categorize agency solely in forms of rebellion, it is important to recognize the instances in which unruly behaviour or rebellion is a part of how the orphans contribute to change over time. Change over time included both the orphans' individual resettlement all the way to changing CJC precedent on policy towards the War Orphans.

While this chapter utilizes the term contingent agency, it is important to recognize that future work on the War Orphans must consider whether the term remains methodologically appropriate. Historians of childhood are increasingly backing the move away from the use of such a term in favour of one that better conceptualizes individual action

---

[34] Case file of Wanda B., 1947-1949, UJRA Collection, box 32.
[35] Case file of Wanda B., 1947-1949, UJRA Collection, box 32.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

within power structures. Kristine Alexander, Stephanie Olsen, and Karen Vallgårda argue that agency carries with it problematic ways of conceptualizing such a subject in ways "inherited from liberal Enlightenment thinking" - an idea that suggests that the individual is inherently rational and free to make decisions.[36] Further challenging this historiographical line of inquiry that posits the War Orphans as passive victims with these conceptions of the term agency is a fundamental challenge of the next generation of historians of the War Orphans project.

---

[36] Kristine Alexander, Stephanie Olsen, and Karen Vallgårda, "Against Agency," Society for the History of Children and Youth (website), last edited October 23, 2018, https://www.shcy.org/features/commentaries/against-agency/.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

<u>**Conclusion**</u>

The findings of this thesis illustrate that the idealized image of the War Orphan in the CJC press campaign was one that existed in public memory but less so in reality. Viewing the cohort of orphans who arrived in Canada between 1947 and 1952 as a diverse group with a spectrum of resettlement experiences, fractured by age, nuances the celebratory narrative of the project that has dominated historiography on the topic. This gap between the demographics of the orphans and the preferences of foster parents had a tangible impact on integration.

Subsequently, this thesis contributes to a broader call to action to utilize age as a category of analysis in immigration histories. Conceptualizing the nuance between being saved from persecution and saved from further damage is critical for generating a more nuanced portrayal of the project's success in further historiography.

It is through exploring the ways in which the War Orphans did not neatly fit into the homogenised image of the child refugee that the popular celebratory narrative of the project is complicated. Namely, the success of the foster family model, the overwhelming hospitality of the dependable Canadian public, and the popular image of the orphan as passive are all narrative strands that this thesis challenges. The orphans arrived as fully grown citizens of another land, with their own developed relationships and cultural habits.

Critically, this thesis has attempted to break out of restrictive frameworks for understanding agency that do not allow historians to perceive acts of agency of those who have historically acted from relatively weak positions of power.[1] In short, historians must continue to ask what the orphans themselves would have constituted as agency. The case files reveal that the orphans had far more decision-making power over their resettlement than

---

[1] Mary-Jo Maynes, "Age as a Category of Historical Analysis: History, Agency, and Narratives of Childhood," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1, no.1 (2008): 116.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

historians have, thus far, granted to them. Repositioning the orphan from the object to the subject of history will aid in counteracting the emphasis on innocent suffering that has made them appear passive in adults' accounts.

The War Orphans project holds much potential for further historical work on the intersections between the history of childhood, post-war migration, and the Holocaust. Such research projects illustrate the value of developing a transnational perspective on children's experiences in the Holocaust. Much of the experience of being a child during the Holocaust was contingent on mobility. Children were both useful for their ability to adapt to and survive hostile political regimes across multiple regions of Europe and beyond. However, children also became prime targets of destruction due to their potential to rebuild lost culture, family, and traditions.

Through demonstrating the influence of age on the orphans' experiences, I have aimed to show that the popular image of the innocent child refugee and the problematic connotations surrounding the archetype of the adolescent are historical constructions. Post-war insecurity about the stability of family life in Canada aroused fears surrounding juvenile morality, a fact which provided crucial context to the various constructions of adolescents by the CJC and foster families over this period.

While this thesis has attempted to uncover the voices of the orphans as they experienced resettlement, it undoubtedly falls short without the aid of primary source material created by the orphans at the time. A methodological shift must occur for the historian to conceptualize these as serious primary sources worthy of being stored in an archive. Fragmented source material such as children's writings, drawings and games were long seen as impractical source material with little to offer the serious historian. If historians are to continue such work on the project, they must take these seriously as avenues into the orphans' experiences of resettlement.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

In light of the reimagination of the impact of the politics of childhood on the orphans' experiences, it is worth considering what the *Cité Mémoire* tableau would look like if it were to accurately represent them. As opposed to a tableau of a thin, frail, dependent and needy orphan, it would depict a range of mainly adolescent orphans, who appeared strong, independent, and ambitious to start new lives for themselves.

In 2008, Bernie Farber, the then CEO of the Canadian Jewish Congress, gave an interview to the *Toronto Star* commemorating a reunion of the orphans that had taken place in Montréal the previous day. Farber claimed that memorializing the project was necessary for the message it gave the world about the importance of humanitarian aid for refugees, but was careful not to cast the federal government's actions in too celebratory a light.[2] Farber's comments constitute a broader call to action to memorialize the project for what it truly represented; an essential step towards international post-Holocaust aid but one that ultimately did not go far enough. Canada's caution surrounding modern refugee crises in the twenty-first century was not simply a break from its historic commitment to humanitarianism, but a continuation of its fraught relationship with child refugees. One cannot help but recall the closing words to Farber's interview with sadness: "it should have been 10,000 orphans. It could have been 10,000 orphans."[3]

---

[2] Jessica Murphy, "Jewish War Orphans Reunite in Montréal," *The Toronto Star*, October 27, 2008, https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2008/10/27/jewish_war_orphans_reunite_in_montreal.html
[3] Murphy, "Jewish War Orphans Reunite in Montréal."

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Appendix

A Double Header...

This young lady is enjoying her first ice-cream cone at the Dorval airport soon after landing in Canada. She was in the first group of Jewish orphaned refugees admitted to this country under the special Order-in-Council granting permission to the Canadian Jewish Congress to bring into this country 1000 of these young people. A congress Staff member was recently in Europe to help in the selection of these refugees.
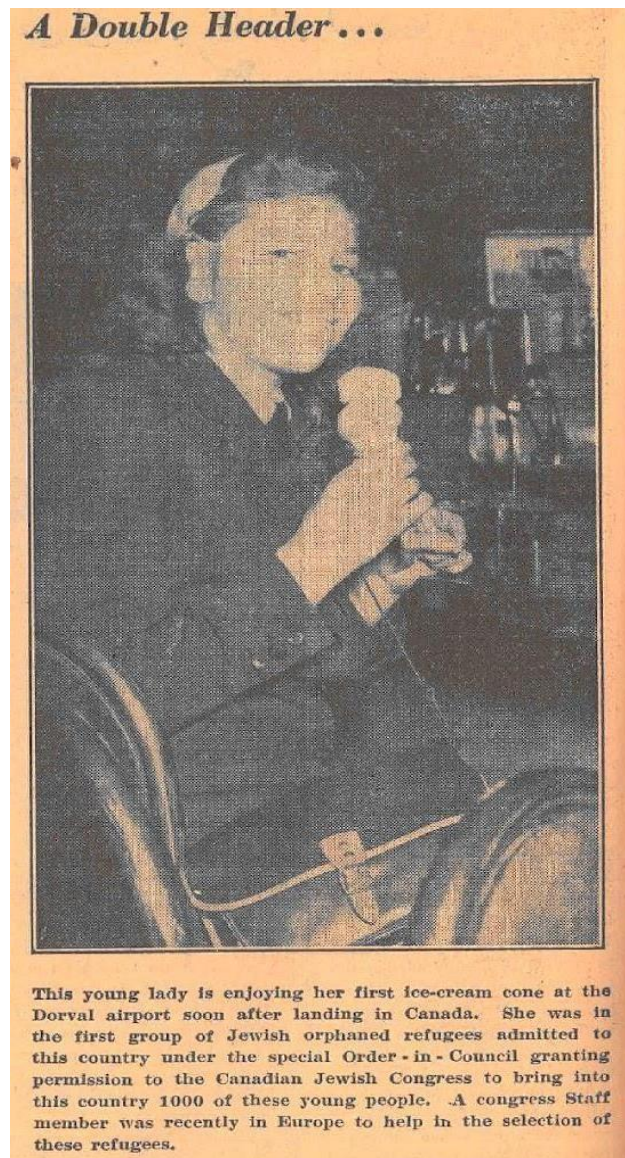
Figure 1

Picture of a young lady eating ice cream.

Photograph. CJA, Inter-Office Information (I.O.I.), *Congress Bulletin* 4, no.9,

September 1947, CJA, Montréal, Quebec, 2.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

This brother and sister of Turkish-Jewish origin were amongst the first group of refugee orphans to land in Canada. The group included Jewish youths from Poland, France, Roumania, Hungary, Germany and Switzerland.

Figure 2

Brother and sister of Turkish-Jewish origin.

Photograph. CJA, Inter-Office Information (I.O.I.), *Congress Bulletin* 4, no.9,

September 1947, Canadian Jewish Archives (CJA), Montréal, Quebec, 4.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

One of the newly-arrived refugee orphans is here seen being interviewed by a trained expert at the Jewish Vocational Service. Each of these youths will be given aptitude tests, and will receive the most scientific guidance in the selection of their schooling and ultimate work.
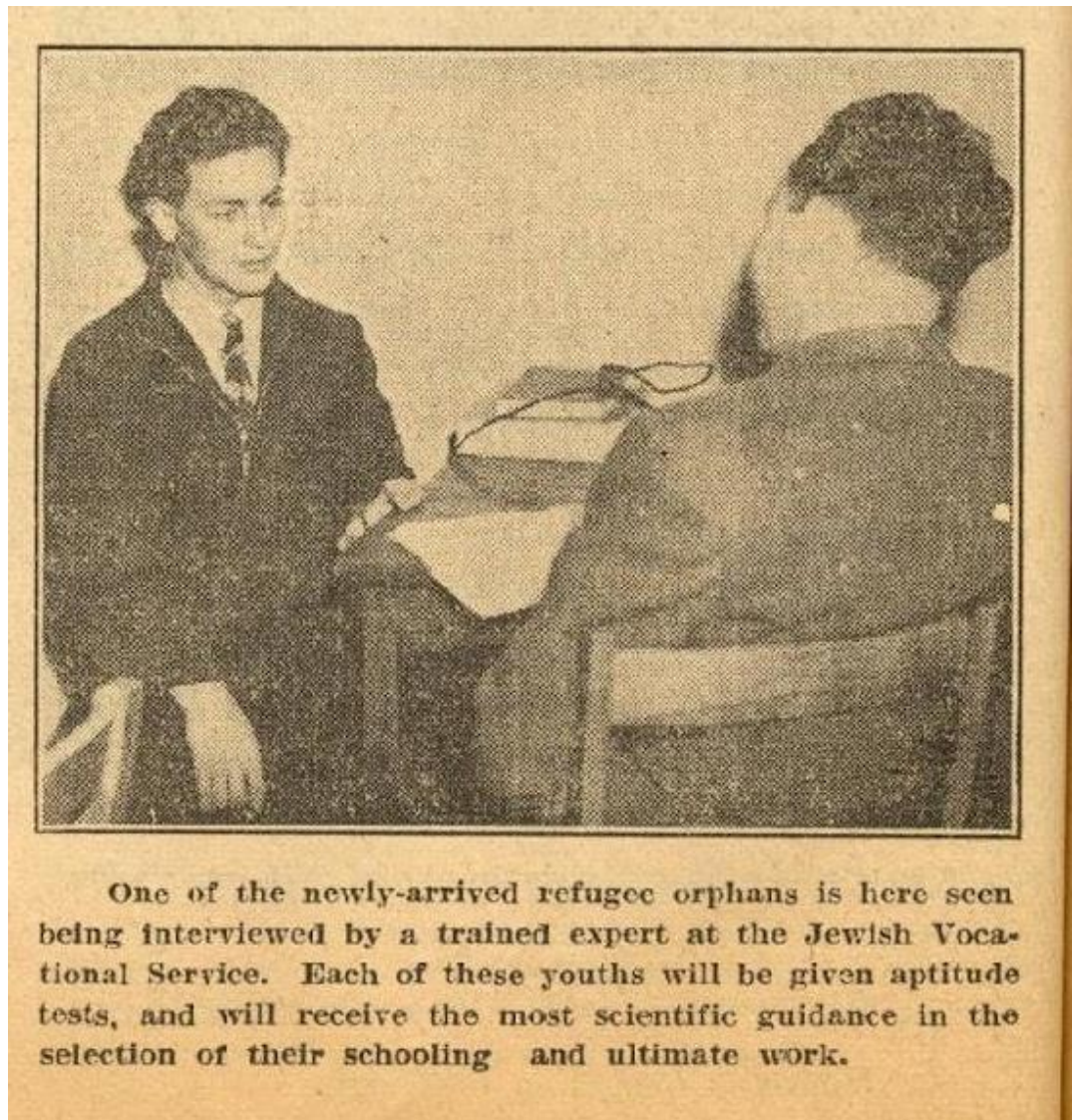
Figure 3

Interview with the Jewish Vocational Service.

Photograph. CJA, Inter-Office Information (I.O.I.), *Congress Bulletin* 4, no.9, September
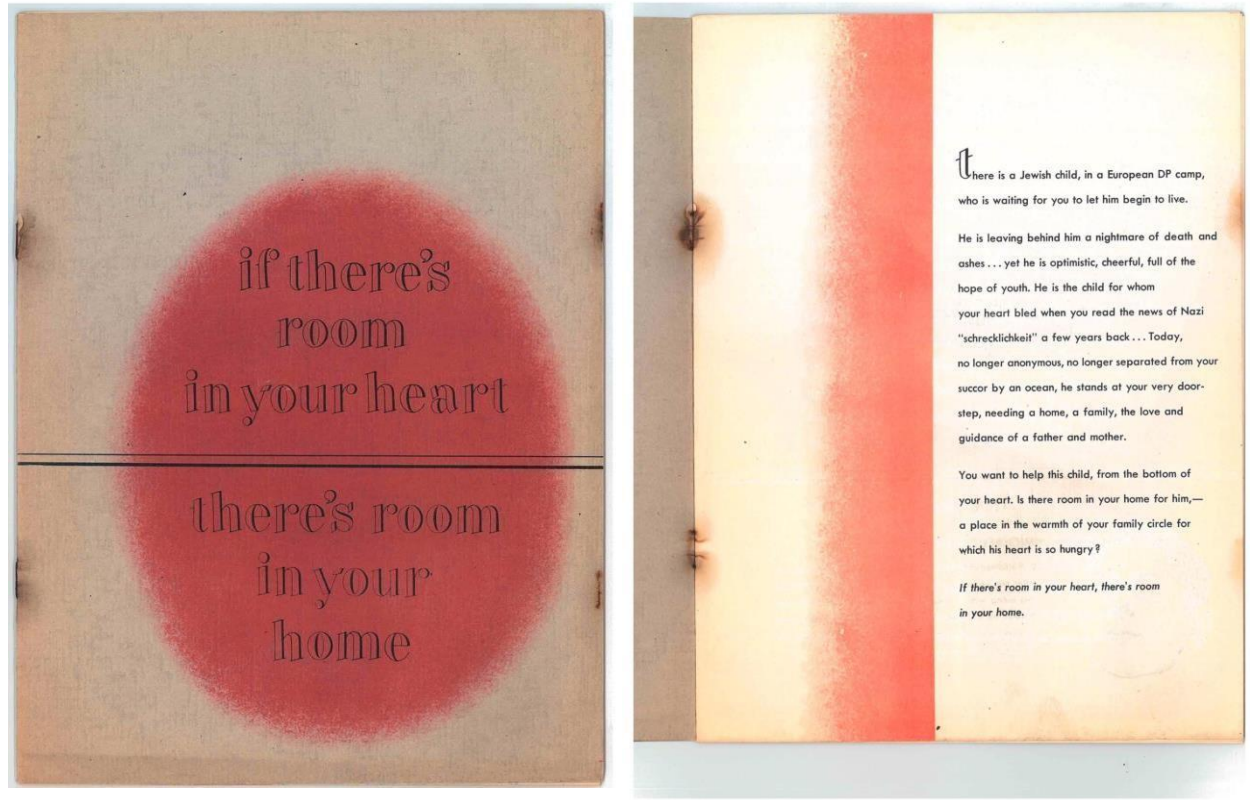
1947, CJA, Montréal, Quebec, 18.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Figure 4

CJA, pamphlet "*If There is Room In Your Heart, There is Room in Your Home,*" UJRA

Collection, War Orphans Project, series FA 3, Pamphlets and Ephemera, Box 1, CJA,

Montréal, Quebec.

Figure 5

CJA, pamphlet "*If There is Room In Your Heart, There is Room in Your Home*," UJRA

Collection, War Orphans Project, series FA 3, Pamphlets and Ephemera, Box 1, CJA,
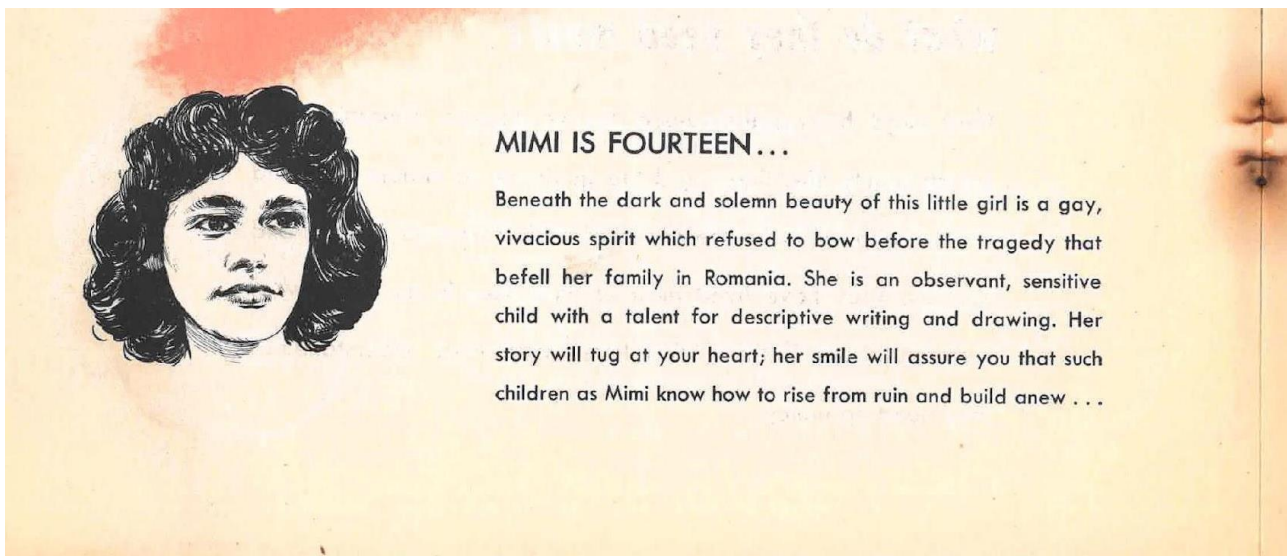
Montréal, Quebec.

BLANCHE IS SIXTEEN . . .

. . . her father was a merchant in Belgium before the Nazis sent him to his death in a German concentration camp. Her mother died, and friends took care of Blanche for several years. She sews beautifully, is a born "balabosta", neat and orderly about herself, considerate and kindly. She speaks several languages, is industrious and eager to learn, would like to become a schoolteacher.
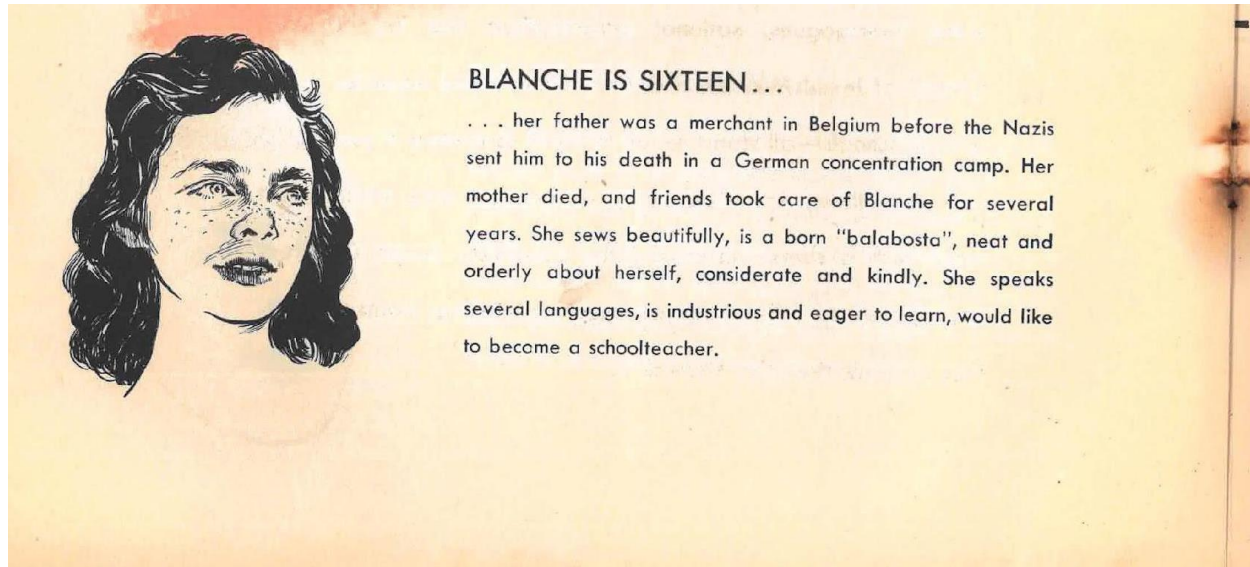
Figure 6

CJA, pamphlet "*If There is Room In Your Heart, There is Room in Your Home*," UJRA

Collection, War Orphans Project, series FA 3 Pamphlets and Ephemera, Box 1, CJA,
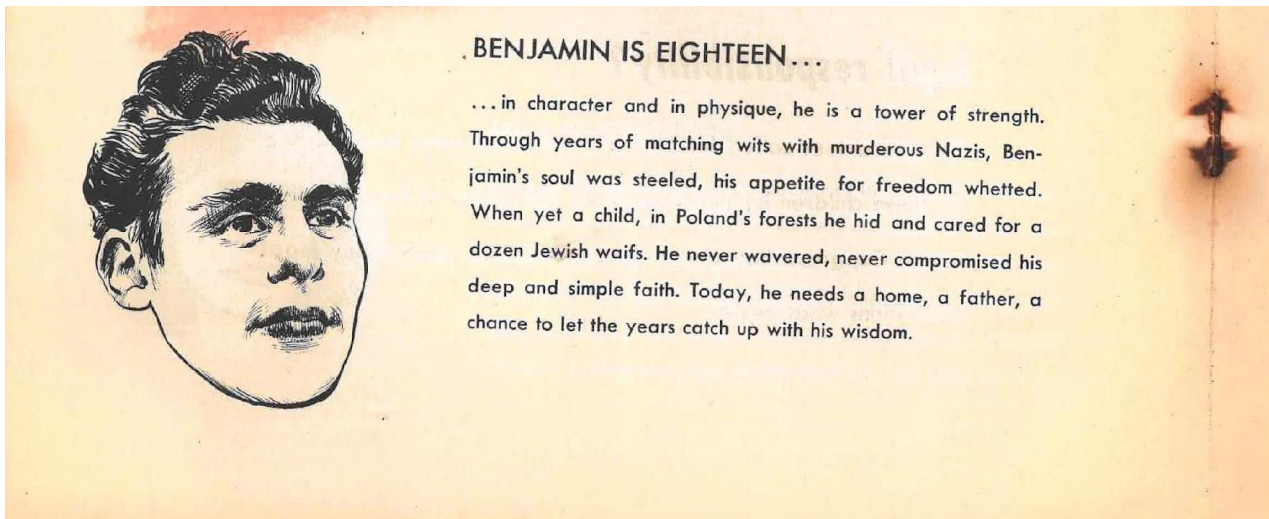
Montréal, Quebec.

.BENJAMIN IS EIGHTEEN...

...in character and in physique, he is a tower of strength. Through years of matching wits with murderous Nazis, Benjamin's soul was steeled, his appetite for freedom whetted. When yet a child, in Poland's forests he hid and cared for a dozen Jewish waifs. He never wavered, never compromised his deep and simple faith. Today, he needs a home, a father, a chance to let the years catch up with his wisdom.

Figure 7

CJA, pamphlet "*If There is Room In Your Heart, There is Room in Your Home,*" UJRA

Collection, War Orphans Project, series FA 3 Pamphlets and Ephemera, Box 1, CJA,

Montréal, Quebec.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Canadian Jewish Archives (CJA). Inter-Office Information (I.O.I.) *Congress Bulletin*, volume 4, no. 8, August 1947, Montréal. CJA, Montréal, Quebec, Canada.

Canadian Jewish Archives (CJA). Inter-Office Information (I.O.I.) *Congress Bulletin*, volume 4, no. 9, September 1947, Montréal. CJA, Montréal, Quebec, Canada.

Lewin, Samuel. Samuel Lewin Collection. Db 01 War Orphans - news clippings, 1950-1952. Box 10, file 9. CJA, Montréal, Quebec, Canada.

UJRA Collection. War Orphans Immigration Project Case Files. General Case Files (FAJ-GLI). Boxes 31-3. CJA, Montréal, Quebec, Canada.

UJRA Collection. War Orphans Immigration Project. Series FA 3, Pamphlets and Ephemera. Box 1. CJA, Montréal, Quebec, Canada.

United Nations. 1948. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. New York, USA.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Secondary Sources

"Immigration." Ontario Jewish Archives (website). Blankenstein Family Heritage Centre. JIA Federation of Greater Toronto. Accessed April 11, 2023. https://ontariojewisharchives.org/Explore/Themed-Topics/Immigration

"Our History." Jewish Immigrant Aid Services (website). Accessed 3 November, 2023. https://jiastoronto.org/who-we-are/

"Our Past, Present & Future," Jewish Family and Child Service of Greater Toronto (website). Accessed 3 November, 2023. https://www.jfandcs.com/strategic-plan#:~:text=JF%26CS%20has%20been%20around%20for,Learn%20about%20our%20history.&text=The%20charitable%20tradition%20of%20Jewish,number%20of%20poor%20Jewish%20immigrants

Abella. I., and H. Troper. *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012.

Arnold, J. "Exhibit Pays Tribute to Orphaned Survivors Rescued by Jewish Montrealers." *The Canadian Jewish News*. June 8, 2016. https://thecjn.ca/news/canada/montreal-exhibit-honours-orphaned-holocaust-survivors/

Baumel-Schwartz, J. T. "The Rescue of Jewish Girls and Teenage Women to England and the USA during the Holocaust: A Gendered Perspective." *Jewish History* 26, no. 1-2 (2012): 223–45. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10835-012-9151-9

Berebitsky, J. *Like Our Very Own: Adoption and the Changing Culture of Motherhood, 1851- 1950*. Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2000.

Briggs, L. "Mother, Child, Race, Nation: The Visual Iconography of Rescue and the Politics of Transnational and Transracial Adoption," *Gender & History* 5, no.2 (2003): 179-200. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0424.00298

Burgard, A. "'Very Few Actual Children': Defining Childhood and Assessing Age in the Aftermath of the Second World War," *History Workshop Digital Magazine* (website), April 27, 2022. https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/very-few-actual-children defining-childhood-and- assessing-age-in-the-aftermath-of-the-second world-war/

Burgard, A. "A New Life in a New Country, Trajectories of Holocaust Orphans to Canada (1945-1952." *Études canadiennes / Canadian Studies* 86, no.1 (2019): 193-206. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/eccs.2087

Burgard, A. "Contested Childhood: Assessing the Age of Young Refugees in the Aftermath of the Second World War," *History Workshop Journal* 92 (2021): 174 – 193. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbab016

Burgard, A. "The Holocaust, Refugee Children, and Canada's National Narrative." Social History Society (website). November 11, 2019.

Burgard, A. "Visualising Holocaust Child-Survivors in Canada: From Post-war Humanitarian Campaigns to National Memory." *Cultural and Social History* 17, no. 5 (2020): 731–54. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14780038.2019.1658698

Burrill, F. "The Settler Order Framework: Rethinking Canadian Working-Class History." *Labour / Le Travail* 83 (2019): 173–98. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26741326

Caestecker, F., and B. Moore. eds. *Refugees from Nazi Germany and the Liberal European states*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2010.

Chiel. A. "Review of The Redeemed Children: The Story of the Rescue of War Orphans by the Jewish Community of Canada, by B. Lappin." *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 53, no.3 (1964): 308-309. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23878112.

Corsaro, W.A. *The Sociology of Childhood*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE Publications, 2005.

Craig-Norton, J. *The Kindertransport: Contesting Memory*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2019.

Crystal, D. "The Redeemed Children: The Story of the Rescue of War Orphans by the Jewish Community of Canada. Ben Lappin," *Social Service Review* 37, no.3 (1963): 360-1.

Demos, J, and V. Demos. "Adolescence in Historical Perspective." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 31, no. 4 (1969): 632-638. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/349302

Donaldson, C. *The War Orphans Project Research Guide*. Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre Collections, July 2021. https://www.vhec.org/wp-content/uploads/WarOrphansProject_RG.pdf

Dubinsky, K. *Babies without Borders: Adoption and Migration Across the Americas*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010.

Friedman, P. "Some Aspects of Concentration *Camp Psychology*." *American Journal of Psychiatry* 105, no. 8 (February 1949): 601-605. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1176/ajp.105.8.601

Garlen., J. C. "Interrogating Innocence: "Childhood" as Exclusionary Social Practice." *Childhood* 26, no.1 (2019): 54-67. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568218811484

Gleason, M. "Avoiding the Agency Trap: Caveats for Historians of Children, Youth, and Education." *History of Education* 45, no. 4 (2016): 446–59. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/0046760x.2016.1177121

Gleason, M. *Normalizing the Ideal: Psychology, Schooling, and the Family in Post-war Canada (Studies in Gender and History Series)*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.

Goldberg, A. "Canada and the Holocaust." The Canadian Encyclopaedia (website), 1 June, 2020. https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/holocaust

Hall, S. G. *Adolescence: its Psychology and its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education.* New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1904.

Hammel, A., and B. Lewkowicz. eds. *The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/9: NewPerspectives*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012.

Hayes, P., and J.K. Roth. eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Higonnet, A. *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1998.

Iacovetta, F. *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006.

Ihanus, J. "Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood, Anne Higonnet, NY" *The Journal of Psychohistory* 27, no.4 (2000): 462. https://researchportal.helsinki.fi/en/publications/review-of-anne-higonnet-pictures-of-innocence-the-history-and-cri

Johnson, M.B. "Settler Colonial Structures of Domestication: British Home Children in Canada." *Genealogy,* vol. 5, no. 3 (2021): 78. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy5030078

Kugelmass, J. "Review: Martz, Fraidie. Open your Hearts: The Story of the Jewish War Orphans in Canada." *Canadian Jewish Studies* 5 (January 1997): 192-4. DOI: https://doi.org/10.25071/1916-0925.19824

Kunzel, R. *Fallen women, Problem Girls: Unmarried Mothers and the Professionalization of Benevolence, 1890-1945*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.

Lappin, B. *The Redeemed Children: The Story of the Rescue of War Orphans by the Jewish Community of Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963.

Lavsky, H. "Reviewed Work: Finding Home and Homeland: Jewish Youth and Zionism in the Aftermath of the Holocaust by Avinoam J.Patt." *Shofar* 29, no.2 (2011): 211-213. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5703/shofar.29.2.211

Marrus, M. *Mr Sam: The Life and Times of Samuel Bronfman*. New York City: Viking, 1992.

Martz, F. *Open Your Hearts: The Story of the Jewish War Orphans in Canada*. Montréal: Véhicule Press, 1996.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Maynes, M.J. "Age as a Category of Historical Analysis. History, Agency, and Narratives of Childhood." *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1, no. 1 (2007): 114–24. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/hcy.2008.0001

McLaughlin, C. ""They Don't Look Like Children": Child Asylum-Seekers, the Dubs Amendment, and the Politics of Childhood," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44, no.11 (2018): 1757-1773. DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2017.1417027

Miller, F. *Open Hearts – Closed Doors Guide*, Vancouver: Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, 1997. https://vhec.org/wp-content/uploads/openhearts_guide.pdf

Mintz, S. "Reflections on Age as a Category of Historical Analysis." *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1, no. 1 (2007): 91–94. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/hcy.2008.0003

Murphy, J. "Jewish War Orphans reunite in Montréal." *The Toronto Star*. October 27, 2008. https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2008/10/27/jewish_war_orphans_reunite_in_montreal.html

Olsen. S. ed. *Childhood, Youth and Emotion in Modern History: National, Colonial and Global Perspectives*. London: Pallgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Parr, J. *Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869-1924*. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1980.

Price, S. "The Canadian Family in Wartime," *Marriage and Family Living* 4, no.2 (1942): 25-28. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/347487

Rollawagen, K. "Historical Experiences of Adolescence at Mid-century," in Belshaw, DJ. *Canadian History: Post-Confederation*. Vancouver: Vancouver Island University: 2015. https://opentextbc.ca/preconfederation/

Rooke, P., and R.L. Schnell. "Imperial Philanthropy and Colonial Response: British Juvenile Emigration to Canada, 1896-1930." *The Historian* 46, no. 1 (1983): 56–77. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6563.1983.tb01587.x.

Satzewich, V. "Review of *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*." *The Canadian Historical Review* 89, no. 3 (2008): 399-400. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/can.0.0076

Schwinghamer, S. "Canada and MS *St. Louis*." Canada Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 (website). July 21, 2021. https://pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/canada-and-ms-st-louis

Shefiel, A., and S. Zembrzycki. "'We Started Over Again, We Were Young': Post-war Social Worlds of Child Holocaust Survivors in Montréal." *Urban History Review /*

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952

Revue d'histoire Urbaine 39, no. 1 (2010): 20–30.
http://www.jstor.org/stable/43560282

Spivak, C. G. *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988.

Stargardt, N. *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives under the Nazis*. London: Vintage, 2007.

Stoler, A. *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009.

Taylor, L. "Taylor on Zahra, "The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II." *HABSBURG*. July, 2012. https://networks.h-net.org/node/19384/reviews/19945/taylor-zahra-lost-children-reconstructing-europes-families-after-world.

Thomas, L. "Historicising Agency." *Gender & History* 28, no. 2 (2016): 324–39. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0424.12210

Vallgårda, K., K. Alexander & S. Olsen. "Against Agency," Society for the History of Children and Youth. October 18, 2018. https://www.shcy.org/features/commentaries/against-agency/.

Waxman, Z. *Writing the Holocaust: Identity, Testimony, Representation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Zahra, T. *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families After World War II*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 2015.

Can the Child Speak? Uncovering the Childhood Voice in the Canadian War Orphan Project, August 1947 to February 1952