

**Creating Identities: A Case Study of Second Generation Polish
Immigrants in Manitoba after World War II**

by

Magdalena Blackmore

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
The University of Manitoba
in partial fulfillment of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of History
Joint Masters Program
University of Manitoba/ University of Winnipeg
Winnipeg

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of creating identities by the second generation Polish immigrants in Manitoba after World War II. In it, I argue that the second generation did not abandon their ethnic roots as Hansen's Law suggests, and instead the ethnicity was transformed and adapted to suit their new Canadian - Polish identities. This history of Polish immigrants in Manitoba is based on oral history interviews; because this method is better than quantitative research at bringing out the personal experiences of the respondents. I also argue that the social and political changes that occurred in Canada in 1960s and 1970s influenced the interviewees from this study. The atmosphere of acceptance of ethnicity and diversity, fostered by Trudeau's multicultural policy, had a positive impact on the second generation immigrants.

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I also extend my thanks to my advisory committee; John Lehr, Gerry Friesen and Roy Loewen. Their suggestions improved the final copy of this work and provided encouragement for future studies.

This thesis would not exist if people had not been willing to share their experiences with me. I would like to thank my interviewees for inviting me to their homes and sharing with me their stories of growing up in Polish Canadian family.

Finally, I appreciate the help and encouragement of volunteers from Polish Museum *Ogniwo*.

Mojej fantastycznej córce -- Ani

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INTRODUCTION

The story of Polish immigrants in Manitoba has been of interest to me for a long time because I am one of them. I first learned about immigrants' experiences, other than my own, when I worked for a Polish language radio program in Winnipeg. As a reporter and the host of the show, I met with many people in the Polish community and listened to their stories. My contact with the different waves and different generations of immigrants was further extended when I became editor-in-chief of the local weekly Polish newspaper, *Czas*. This was a time when I not only listened to but also started to record the stories I heard. I first discovered the post World War II immigrants who, in the 1990s, were in charge of most of the Polish organizations in Winnipeg and whose children and grandchildren took vital roles in celebrations of Polish heritage in Canada. My own participation in dinners, dances and commemorations of historical events, as well as teaching Polish language classes, were an unanticipated history encountered thousands of kilometers away from Poland.

This project is a result of my appreciation for the incredible stories immigrant shared with me over the years. To discover the history of people of Polish descent who live in Manitoba I invited some of them to take part in a Polish Oral History Project. All of my interviewees agreed to recorded interviews and showed great interest in the project. Their questions and comments regarding my project suggest an appreciation of the fact that the story of Polish - Canadians will be documented both for future generations of Polish immigrants and the broader Canadian audience. The interviewees understood that their individual stories will also contribute to the creation a larger narrative.

My interviewees were all born after World War II. Their parents emigrated from Europe to Canada between the 1940s and 1960s. There is a story of the baby - boom generation inflected by experiences of growing up in an immigrant family.

I spoke first to Christine Tabernor whose immediate family is involved in the local Polish community. Her father is a World War II veteran and her mother was displaced by the war from Poland; she and her Canadian-born brother tirelessly volunteer for the Polish Combatants Association No. 13, the Polish Museum *Ogniwo*, the *Iskry* Dance Ensemble and many other community organizations. My second interview subject was Krystyna Gajda, who told a story about her parents meeting in a Displaced Persons camp in Germany and immigrating to Canada with her as an eight month - old baby in search of a new homeland. Krystyna became involved in the Polish community as a young adult by managing ethnic theater, rescuing a local Polish language newspaper from bankruptcy, and supporting many other community projects. Her husband Bogumil Gajda enriched the project with a detailed and vivid narrative of his youth spent in Winnipeg's North End. Chris Lorenc's was a chronicle of family sometimes called by Poles in Winnipeg 'The Lorenc Clan.' His parents, Chris, and his sister helped build Polish Combatants Association No. 13, an organization whose mandate was to educate Canadians of Polish descent and new immigrants about the Polish heritage as well as to help Poland regain its freedom from Soviet communist influence. Zofia de Witt also told a story of her appreciation for Polish heritage and her efforts to showcase the community among other ethnic groups in Winnipeg. Zofia's mission was to share the best of Polish heritage with multicultural Canadian society. Barbara Kieloch grew up in a Polish family that fostered tolerance and offered choices for their children's future. Personal interest in her heritage

increased when she and her Polish - born husband decided to enrich their children with Polish language and culture. Elizabeth Mogk and Raymond Dolny represent interviewees who as adults were not involved in the Polish community. Both of their narratives enhanced the project by providing views about Polish heritage from the perspective of people who embraced life in Canadian multiethnic society and do not need to associate with any particular group. Ron Romanowski and Ryszard Dubanski are writers of Polish descent. Romanowski is a poet who cherishes his Polish background by using it as a 'template' which stimulates his creativity. Ryszard Dubanski, after some years of separation from his Polish roots, decided to relive his memories and gather them as a collection of short stories. Both interviews and these authors' writings take the reader into the North End of Winnipeg that is described in a metaphoric way, with attention to people's characters, architecture, favorite meeting spots, tastes and colors.

The classification used in this research defines first generation immigrants as those born outside Canada. Second generation immigrants are those who both had one foreign-born parent or who arrived in Canada at an early age and were raised primarily in Canada. Those born outside Canada are sometimes described as the 1.5 generation.¹ The birth years of the interviewees ranges between 1947 and 1962; however, they are treated in my research as a single generation. The decision is based on the fact that their stories contain common aspects, such as memories of the same national events (i.e. references to social changes reflecting the multicultural composition of Canada implemented by

¹ Satzewich, Vic and Nikolaos Lioudakis " 'Race' and Ethnicity in Canada: A critical Introduction." (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.115. See also: Alba, Richard and Victor Nee *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*. (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2005), p.215.

Trudeau), memories of local events that they took part in (i.e. ethnic concerts called Folkways), and similar experiences of ethnic prejudice that were part of the childhood of persons born between 1947 and 1962.

The birthplaces of the interviewees include Poland, Germany, France, and Canada. Half of the interviewees were born in Canada and half in Europe. Most of them immigrated as very young children, except for Zofia de Witt, who was twelve years old when she arrived in Canada. For the purpose of this research Zofia's story can be treated in the same manner as others since her formative years were spent in Winnipeg and she remembers events that are common to the rest of the group. For example, she joined the Polish Scouts where she met Krystyna Gajda (they are the same age).

HISTORIOGRAPHY

In this research I present the findings of a study of the second generation of Polish immigrants in Manitoba. I am particularly interested in the manner in which members of this generation created their identities. In order to explore this question, I focus on the experiences of the descendants of post World War II immigrants to Canada who arrived between the 1940s and 1960s, such as the children who accompanied parents and the Canadian born children of these immigrants. While there is research concerning former World War II soldiers and people from Displaced Persons camps², there has not been an in depth study of their descendants in Canada. It is important to document their experiences of growing up in Canada. Considering the fact that their parents were forced out of their native country, first, by war and, later, by communism, I would like to determine the role a parent's heritage played in forming children's identities, and to what degree the second generation perceives their parents' heritage as valuable.

Defining ethnic identity requires that a distinction between individual and collective ethnic identity be made. In their study *'Race' and ethnicity in Canada: a critical introduction* Satzewich and Liidakis write

[C]ollective ethnic identity refers to the existence of a certain consensus within the group about what constitutes it as such and differentiates it from other groups, whereas individual ethnic identity refers to the relationship of

² Anna Jaroszynska- Kirchmann, *The Exile Mission: The Polish Diaspora and Polish Americans, 1939 – 1956*. Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2004. Kazimierz Patalas, ed. *Providence Watching: Journeys from War Torn Poland to Canadian Prairies*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2003.

individuals to their own ethnic collectivity – that is the strength and the scope of the group characteristics with which they identify.³

The collective ethnic identity is rooted in ancestry, homeland, and culture, transmitted from generation to generation, while individual ethnic identity is more malleable, located not in the fact of ancestry, etc., but in the individual's interpretation of that fact.

Historians such as Franca Iacovetta acknowledge that most work devoted to immigration is by social historians; therefore, it provides analysis of such issues as immigration policies, demographic characteristics of immigrants, and their integration and assimilation. This research, Iacovetta writes, provides important knowledge about immigrants; however social historians do not typically investigate the more personal views held by the immigrants.⁴ To this end I have conducted oral history interviews with representatives of this second generation of immigrants in order to establish how distinctive their experience of creating identity was.

The available quantitative data reveals a pattern of deteriorating relations between the first and second generation of Polish immigrants and a distinctive separation of both groups.⁵ However, the qualitative data that I gathered through interviews presents a relationship between parents and children that was created through modification, rather than rejection of ethnic heritage. This unique balance in relations between parents and children is the subject of research by Danuta Mostwin, who writes about the importance of family socialization which creates one's "code of values and imprints in mind and

³ Satzewich, Vic and Nikolaos Liodakis, *'Race' and Ethnicity in Canada*, 112.

⁴ Iacovetta, Franca, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), XII.

⁵ Radecki, Henry and Benedykt Heydenkorn, *A Member of a Distinguished Family: The Polish Group in Canada*. (Toronto: The Canadian Publishers, 1976).

hierarchical order.”⁶ In Mostwin’s opinion, immigrant parents face a choice between sets of two opposite values: the inherited one (i.e. patriotism, family, religion, tradition) and the adopted one in a new country (i.e. independence, achievement, pragmatism). It is the parents’ choice to either preserve ethnic identity in the next generation or to break from it which might help the children join mainstream society. According to Mostwin’s research, it is not possible for children to cut off from their parental heritage completely. Therefore, immigrant children feel obliged to be loyal to their parents who represent their cultural heritage. Moreover, failure to keep up with their Polish culture might result in feelings of guilt.⁷ As a result, Mostwin proposes a “Third Value” which describes identity creation that “eliminates absolute either/or decisions. It introduces a new creative choice which does not destroy the past nor negate the present.”⁸ A similar process is described by Alba and Nee who write that immigrant children have to be proficient in some aspects of mainstream culture, such as language, in order to succeed beyond the boundaries of ethnic settings. At the same time, the next generations can preserve the ethnic distinctiveness that they acquired from their parents. They write that this “concept assumes parental choice and ethnic community constraint in the adoption of American cultural practices by the second generation. Ethnic community norms would therefore have a determinative influence on major life decisions of immigrants and perhaps their

⁶ Mostwin is a clinical psychologist who has experiences in working with children of Polish immigrants who undergo “identity confusion”. Mostwin, Danuta, “In Search of Oneself: From the Concept of Ethnic Identity to the Idea of ‘The Third Value’” In *The Polish Diaspora*, Ed. James S. Pula and M.B.

Biskupski. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.)

⁷ Mostwin, *In Search of Oneself*, 21.

⁸ Mostwin, *In Search of Oneself*, 24.

children – about jobs, residential location, and marital choice.”⁹ Nevertheless, this process of creating one’s identity by acquiring the elements of both the adopted and the ancestral cultures does not depend only on choices of parents; it is greatly influenced by social environment such as school and peer influence. Relationships between the immigrant parents and their adolescent children are especially fragile, and parents often lose the ‘social control’ of their children’s decisions.¹⁰ This study examines whether the above practices of identity formation are true in the life stories of second generation immigrants in Manitoba.

Another question investigated is whether the representatives of the second generation acquire particular elements of their heritage and implement it in their lives, or whether their heritage was transformed? The early scholarship on immigrant adaptation constructed the theory of assimilation. The classic work on the subject was written by Florian Znaniecki and William Thomas.¹¹ These authors viewed assimilation as a linear experience: upon arrival in a new country, the individual departs from the heritage group and eventually acquires the model of the new country. A similar observation is provided by Oscar Handlin for whom immigrants are “dispossessed” and “uprooted.” His descriptions of the immigrants’ experiences show the breakdown of family and community upon arrival in the new country. Handlin’s uprooted immigrants do not express agency in the decisions about their future, instead they submissively follow their

⁹ Alba Richard and Victor Nee, *Remaking the American Main Stream*, 218.

¹⁰ Alba and Nee *Remaking the American Main Stream*, 218.

¹¹ William, Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*. Edited and abridged by Eli Zaretsky. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984).

destiny embracing the American lifestyle.¹² Another scholar whose writings played an important role in assimilation research was Milton Gordon. Upon accepting prevailing assimilation theories such as Anglo-Conformity, the Melting Pot, and Cultural Pluralism and finding them incomplete, Gordon suggested another two types of assimilation. His first addition to the existing theories of assimilation is behavioral assimilation, which means that the immigrant absorbs cultural behavior patterns of the host society; his second addition, structural assimilation, describes the tendency of immigrants to join mainstream social organizations and cultural institutions. In Gordon's opinion, the second generation wants to be fully accepted, and, therefore, it leans towards structural assimilation. If they are rejected, however, they have ethnic institutions and culture into which to withdraw.¹³

Assimilation theory, as described here, presents the ethnic community as a place of temporary passage in the immigrant's life. In the long run, however, the immigrant's association with the ethnic group prevents him or her from taking advantage of the mainstream society which "requires individualistic mobility, not ethnic loyalty."¹⁴ In this research, I will support the work of recent scholars who define immigrant adaptation as mutual interactions between immigrants and the host society and not as a linear model of assimilation. Raymond Breton writes that ethnicity is not a set of norms brought from the country of origin and fixed in the new one. He defines ethnicity as an entity that

¹² Handlin, Oscar *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations That Made the American People*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

¹³ Milton, Gordon, "Assimilation in America: Theory and Reality." In: *The Shaping of Twentieth Century America*. Eds. R. Abrams and L. Levine. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1965), p.72.

¹⁴ Alba and Nee *Remaking the American Main Stream*, 5

undergoes transformations as a result of interactions among groups.¹⁵ Further innovation into defining ethnicity is proposed by Werner Sollors. He views ethnicity as a “modern and modernizing feature of contrasting strategy that may be shared far beyond the boundaries within which is analyzed” and allows for re-reading of the facts and stories.¹⁶ Kathleen Conzen’s and others interpretation of ethnicity puts the emphasis on observing the changes that occur during the process of transition, when immigrants are in between old and new worlds. The changes include both the culture of the country of origin and the culture of the receiving society. Conzen chooses ethnicity as a model for describing the process of immigrant adaptations. She concludes that immigrant groups are “inventing ethnicity,” and this process of invention is the product of diverse influences: old world, other ethnic groups and receiving society. The invented ethnicity, then, becomes an entity that in the end modifies not only the immigrant cultures but also the culture of the receiving country.¹⁷

Alba and Nee describe the modification of one culture by another as acculturation, a process characterized as changes that occur in two groups and results in minimizing differences between them. In addition “in the process of convergence, the impact of minority ethnic cultures on the mainstream can occur also by expansion of the range of what is considered normative behavior within the mainstream.”¹⁸ The fusion of cultures

¹⁵ Breton, Raymond, *Ethnic Relations in Canada: Institutional Dynamic*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), p.187.

¹⁶ Sollors, Werner, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.XIV.

¹⁷ Kathleen Conzen, David Gerber *et al.* “The Invention of Ethnicity: A perspective from the U.S.A.” *Journal of the American Ethnic History* Vol. 12, No.1 (1992).

¹⁸ Alba, Richard and Victor Nee *Remaking the American Main Stream*, 25

can be visible in changes that occur in the mainstream's inspirations taken from ethnic cultures and used within pop culture, myths or cuisine.

While analyzing cultural adaptation of immigrants the relevance of historical time should be acknowledged. Nancy Green writes that assimilation is not ahistorical; therefore, the time period and the choice of generation influence the outcome of the results of the study. At the same time, the final conclusions drawn from the research depend also on the generation of historians who are conducting the research and the state of scholarship devoted to the subject.¹⁹ In light of this statement, I will attempt to analyze the role of the Canadian social and political systems in the creation of immigrants identity. Raymond Breton describes the consecutive stages in which the laws supporting Canada's multiculturalism policy were created along with the public's reactions and interpretations of it. The large wave of immigration that began in 1946 and continued up to 1975 brought 2,000,000 people to Canada and resulted in politicians' increased interest in the newcomers as well as public debate about the laws and regulations governing immigration. The structural changes were reflected in the creation of new governmental institutions and policies such as Department of Citizenship and Immigration (1950), the Immigration Act (1952), and the introduction of a point system in evaluating immigrants' applications (1975). In addition to amendments of the laws, Canada's Prime Ministers accepted the mission of changing the public perception of society.²⁰

Howard Palmer lists the political and social reasons for greater acceptance of post World War II immigrants. Among them were the following: the revision of Anglo-Saxon

¹⁹ Nancy Green, "Time and Study of Assimilation." *Rethinking History* Vol. 10 No.2 (2006).

²⁰ Breton, Raymond *Ethnic Relations in Canada: Institutional Dynamic*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005).

racism prompted by findings about Hitler's treatment of Jews; the decline of Great Britain as a world power; the civil rights movement in the United States; the economic prosperity of 1950s and 1960s, which reduced competition on the labour market; and a greater number of people becoming educated, especially among second and third generation immigrants -- a process which increased the social mobility of immigrants, diminishing the relationship between class and ethnicity.²¹ This social and political environment wherein pluralism was more accepted had another outcome. In the 1960s, Prime Minister Lester Pearson's government established a Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism; its goal was to present a report on the English and French languages and the acquisition of culture. Ukrainians and other ethnic groups pressured the government to be included in the study. In 1969 the commission published a fourth volume of recommendations, concluding that the integration of immigrants into Canadian society is possible without their assimilation. As a result, in 1971 Pierre Trudeau and the Liberal government introduced a Policy of Multiculturalism.²²

The main goal of Trudeau's policy on multiculturalism was to encourage Canadians to maintain their ethnic and cultural identities. The policy acknowledged and justified a process that was a part of Canadian culture for a long time; however, official recognition of it resulted in a scholarly discussion on the validity of this social policy. Satzewich and Lioudakis define multiculturalism as follows: "a demographic reality; part of pluralist ideology; form of struggle among groups for access to economic and political resources;

²¹ Palmer, Howard "Reluctant Hosts: Anglo-Canadian Views of Multiculturalism in the Twentieth Century." In: Tulchinsky, Gerald ed. *Immigration in Canada: Historical Perspectives*. (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman Ltd., 1994), p.315.

²² Harles, John "Multiculturalism, national Identity, and National Integration: The Canadian Case." In: Francis, Douglas and Donald Smith ed. *Readings in Canadian History Post Confederation*. (Toronto: Thompson & Nelson, 2006), p.511.

and a set of government policies and accompanying programs.”²³ Since the official launching of Canada’s multiculturalism policy, historians have disputed whether multiculturalism helped establish a dialogue among cultures or whether such a policy disrupted it. Donald Cuccioletta summarized some of the discussion against the policy, writing that multiculturalism was supposed to create a model of the society that would help strengthen national unity and differentiate Canada from the United States. In his opinion, three decades later this goal was not achieved due to the fact that multiculturalism does not facilitate the integration of immigrants to the Canadian society while it permits social mobility at the same time. In addition, the policy divides society by encouraging celebrations of cultural diversity.²⁴ The last argument is acknowledged by other scholars as a way of ‘hardening of stereotypes’ and promoting folkloric instead serious cultural exchange.

Perhaps the strongest critique against multiculturalism is presented by Canadian sociologist, Reginald Bibby, who claims that the policy promotes cultural relativism and leads to the undermining of social cohesion. Bibby concludes that “we have enshrined into law our good intentions of bilingualism, multiculturalism, and anti-racism by institutionalizing appropriate policies. But in consequence, we have become a fractious nation that lacks a sense of community.”²⁵ Will Kymlicka argues against the thesis that multiculturalism is promoting ethnic separateness. In support of his view, Kymlicka notes that, since the policy was implemented, more immigrants took Canadian citizenship,

²³ Satzewich and Liodakis “*Race*’ and *Ethnicity*, 123. See also: Cuccioletta, Donald “Multiculturalism or Transculturalism: Towards a Cosmopolitan Citizenship.” *London Journal of Canadian Studies* Vol. 17 (2001- 2002), p.4

²⁴ Cuccioletta, *Multiculturalism or Transculturalism*, 5.

²⁵ Satzewich and Liodakis, *Race*’ and *Ethnicity*, 132

which is not required to live in Canada. In Kymlicka's opinion this proves immigrant support and identification with Canada. Further, the ethno-cultural groups increased participation in Canadian politics; even though they did not create separate parties devoted primarily to the ethnic issues, they supported existing national parties. Another argument shows an increasing numbers of immigrants who can speak one of the official languages. There are also growing rates of intermarriage, which Kymlicka interprets as a sign that Canadians feel comfortable living, working, and interacting with the members of other ethnic groups.²⁶

Emerging theories of transnationalism have refined earlier discussions of multiculturalism. Transnationalism, as defined by Alba and Nee, "refers to the possession of ties to two (or even more) societies and, at its extreme, implies that individuals can be literally at home in, and participate in the life of, places that are separated by national borders and may even be at quite distant points on the globe."²⁷ Scholars write that if multiculturalism was to encourage immigrant attachment to Canada, then transnationalism creates a challenge to it, as it reflects the modern pattern of their involvement in politics and cultural life in Canada and in their homelands.²⁸ This practice alters our previous understanding that immigrants abandon their connections with the old country when they settle in a new. The concept of transnationalism is also used to describe the formation of a hybrid identity. According to Satzewich and Wong "hybrid identities are grouped with other identity categories and are severed from essentialized,

²⁶ Kymlicka, Will, "The Merits of Multiculturalism." In: Francis, Douglas and Donald Smith ed. *Readings in Canadian History Post Confederation*. Toronto: Thompson & Nelson, 2006.

²⁷ Alba and Nee *Remaking the America*, 145.

²⁸ Satzewich, Vic and Lloyd Wong ed. *Transnational Identities and practices in Canada*. (Vancouver: UBS Press, 2006), p.2. See also: Cuccioletta, *Multiculturalism or Transculturalism*, 8.

nativist identities associated with constructions of the nation, or homeland.”²⁹

Although the concept of transnationalism is an important theory when it comes to analyzing immigrant lives, research shows that the transnational identities prevail among immigrants who experienced life in the homeland. Even though there is research documenting the transnational political involvement of the second generation of immigrants, this pattern is not frequent. The second generation of post World War II immigrants studied here grew up in Canada during significant changes to the citizenship laws and ideas of ethnic adaptation. The interviewees presented their own reflections on this topic and they provided observations of what it meant for them to be part of multiethnic society.

Research on the history of Polish immigrants in Manitoba includes two major books: Victor Turek’s *Poles in Manitoba*³⁰ and Kazimierz Patalas’³¹ *Providence Watching: Journeys from War Torn Poland to the Canadian Prairies*. Turek’s extensive study records and analyzes the past of Polish settlers from the time of Lord Selkirk’s expedition until the 1950s. The author ends his work by introducing a statistical analysis of postwar immigration. Patalas’ book provides life stories of post-World War II Polish immigrants as they told them. This text mainly concentrates on wartime experiences leading to permanent settlement in Manitoba; however, it includes summaries of their lives in Manitoba. These two valuable books, however, end the research on the Polish group in Manitoba in 1950. There is no more recent study on the subject available.

²⁹ Satzewich and Wong, *Transnational Identities*, 12.

³⁰ Turek, Victor *Poles in Manitoba*. (Toronto: Polish Research Institute in Canada, 1967).

³¹ Patalas, *Providence Watching*.

Due to the limited research on Polish immigrants in Manitoba and, specifically, on second generation Polish immigrants in Canada, consulted the work of historians researching Polish groups in the United States as well as research on other ethnic groups in Canada. One of the books used to provide background information about Polish immigrants is *The Exile Mission: The Polish Political Diaspora and Polish Americans, 1939- 1956* by Anna Jaroszynska- Kirchmann. The author describes the situation in European Displaced Persons camps and the conditions that were created to allow for emigration. My preliminary research found literature related mainly to post-World War II immigrants and their experiences settling in Canada. Books by Patalas, Jaroszynska - Kirchmann as well as Franca Iacovetta³² provide far-reaching investigations into the lives of men and women relocated after the war. There is, however, little interest among historians in the lives of their children. Perhaps the only scholar who investigated this particular second generation is the sociologist Danuta Mostwin. In her book *The Transplanted Family. A Study of Social Adjustment of the Polish Immigrant Family to the United States after the Second World War*³³ Mostwin gathered over a thousand responses to a questionnaire related to the experiences of postwar immigrants and their children. The author's findings provide extensive data about this wave of immigration. However, when it is compared to qualitative research, it shows generalizations in understanding personal experiences.

³² Iacovetta, Franca *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992).

³³ Mostwin, Danuta, *The Transplanted Family. A Study of Social Adjustment of the Polish Immigrants Family to the United States after the Second World War*. (New York: Arno Press, 1980.)

Henry Radecki and Benedykt Heydenkorn³⁴ also write about Polish post-war immigrants and their children. Their research is, however, limited to general findings based on statistical data. The authors acknowledge the changes in relationships within immigrant families but do not raise the question of identity.

Furthermore, the existing research related to Polish immigration was constructed without attention to the role of gender and class in the lives of immigrants. The experiences of children and women are put together in one general narrative about former soldiers and people from Displaced Persons camps. In my research I observed the social roles of each of the family members and analyze similarities and differences in ways of creating identities.

Immigrant adaptation is related to class. In their research Portes and others argue that the question is not whether the second generation will assimilate to American society, but to what segment of that society it will assimilate.³⁵ Satzewich and Liidakis summarize the outcomes of research findings on segmented assimilation, listing the following possibilities for the immigrant children: “a) they become assimilated to the dominant culture (measured by their economic success); b) they are integrated into ethnic enclaves (measured by retention of ethnic identity); c) lower-social class immigrant children may develop marginalized identities and positions in the labour market.”³⁶ In this research I observe if and how the process of segmented assimilation affected social mobility of the children of Polish immigrants.

³⁴ Radecki, Henry and Benedykt Heydenkorn, *A Member of a Distinguished Family: The Polish Group in Canada*. (Toronto: The Canadian Publishers, 1976).

³⁵ Portes, Alejandro, Patricia Fernandez- Kelly and William Haller “Segmented Assimilation on the Ground: The New Second Generation in Early Adulthood.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 28, No.6 (2005),p. 2

³⁶ Satzewich and Liidakis ‘Race’ and Ethnicity, 116.

The issue of gender and ethnic identity creation is observed by analyzing scholars' assumptions that in some countries there are sharp differences in viewing the role of males and females in the family. Immigrants often copy these patterns when establishing their families in the new country.³⁷ In this study, women's history will not be treated separately from the main narrative in order to eliminate the artificial division that Sydney Weinberg drew: "Historians of immigration too often view 'Women's History' as a particular specialty, while 'History' stays mainly the story of men. Immigrant women remain in a ghetto of their own."³⁸ Furthermore, the elimination of the division between private and public spheres allows for the presenting of women's history not only from the perspective of work and labour activism. The history is enriched by descriptions of activities, experiences and decisions made by women in the private spheres that are often overlooked by historians, but are accessible through oral history research.³⁹

³⁷ Portes, Alejandro and Lingxin Hao "The Price of Uniformity: Language, Family and Personality Adjustment in the Immigrant Second Generation." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol 25, No. 6, November (2002); p.6

³⁸ Weinberg, Sydney, "The Treatment of Women in Immigration History: A Call for Change." *Journal of American Ethnic History* Vol.11, No. 4 (1992); p. 6

³⁹ Erdman, Mary, *The Grasinski Girls: The Choices They Had and the Choices They Made*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), p.3. Gabaccia, Donna "Immigrant Women: Nowhere at Home?" *Journal of American Ethnic History* Vol. 10 No. 4 (1991), p. 63.

METHODS

The primary resources used in this work are oral history interviews with representatives of second generation Poles living in Manitoba. Writing immigrants' history based on interviews has its traditional roots in the Chicago School; however, the material gathered by William Thomas and Florian Zaniecki in *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* was collected in order to research social problems related to immigration and to categorize the existing pathology. The collection includes autobiographies of Polish immigrants. These became the basis for their theory that social disorganization in Poland is linked with the immigrants' problems in the Polish community in Chicago.⁴⁰ Recently, researchers have collected oral histories from immigrants in order to gain a better understanding of ordinary people's experiences in the new country. Oral histories provide insight into such aspects as work and living conditions as well as the manner in which ethnic relations between kin and community institutions can be maintained. Further investigation of oral histories includes discussions of intermarriage, discrimination, and creation of culture that borrows elements from the old and the new. The advantage of using oral histories is that they present evidence that is often not acknowledged even by the ethnic community itself. Often ethnic communities have their own written histories, or at least they have preserved documents and artifacts illuminating their pasts. Nevertheless, these community stories concentrate on events and leaders, and, as such, they represent institutionalized history as opposed to

⁴⁰ Thomas, William and Florian Zaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*. Edited and abridged by Eli Zaretsky. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984).

individual histories.⁴¹ In this research oral histories tell less about events themselves than they do about the events' meanings for the interviewees.

Another advantage of using recorded sources is that these are more reliable and accurate than notes taken after a conversation. Furthermore, recording recollections preserves hints of social position that are coded in the language, emotions, humor, and pauses as well as the command of language and dialect -- all attributes that give the story its full meaning. Paul Thompson writes that the benefit of the interview is that the speaker can be immediately challenged, asked to explain or elaborate on the story. In his opinion the fact that a story is never told the same way twice creates ambivalence that "brings it much closer to the human condition."⁴²

Alessandro Portelli points to the limits of oral history based research, particularly to its "unfinished nature". The project based on an oral history of second generation Polish immigrants will always be 'in progress' unless all of the representatives of this particular generation are interviewed and all of their views are recorded. Portelli summarizes this state as follows: "[H]istorical work using oral history sources is unfinished because of the nature of the sources; historical work excluding oral sources (where available) is incomplete by definition."⁴³

The historiography of oral history distinguishes a few different genres of oral histories: for example Sherna Gluck distinguishes topical, biographical and autobiographical oral histories, while Mary Larson writes about subject oriented histories,

⁴¹ Thompson, Paul, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) p. 115.

⁴² Thompson, *The Voice*, 126.

⁴³ Portelli, Alessandro, "What makes oral history different" In: *The Oral History Reader* Perks, Robert and Alistair Thompson ed. (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 71.

life histories, community histories, and family histories.⁴⁴ Subject-oriented histories are chosen when a researcher seeks to answer to a particular question. In this case, the author must both have a problem that will be addressed and a theory of this problem's importance to the field. Life histories, as opposed to subject-oriented histories, are meant to "portray the events and experiences of an extraordinary person and to emphasize a person whose life illustrates the experiences and history of others in the region."⁴⁵ Community history gained its currency in the 1960s, due to a project called *Foxfire*; its principle was to encourage communities to record their pasts.⁴⁶ The community is understood by oral historians as the inhabitants of a geographical region, or as a group of people who share race, gender, age, class, occupation, or vocation. The last category of oral history is family history, which is not limited to aspects of one's genealogy, but considers the family to be a social institution that influences people's lives.⁴⁷ In the conclusion to her analyses of all four categories, Larson writes that these are not exclusive and often overlap each other.

The history of second-generation Polish immigrants in Manitoba presented in this thesis is a subject-oriented research project, since I specifically studied a particular group of interviewees that were born after World War II and whose parents emigrated from Europe to Canada between the 1940s and 1960s. At the same time the investigation of individual life stories became a community story that sheds light on the common experiences of members of the same ethnic group.

⁴⁴ Larson, Mary, "Research Design and Strategies" in: *Handbook of Oral History*. Thomas Charlton, Louis Myers and Rebecca Sharpless eds. (Toronto: Alta Mira Press, 2006) p. 106.

⁴⁵ Larson, *Research Design*, 108.

⁴⁶ Wigginton Eliot, "Reaching Across the Generations: the Foxfire experience" in: *The Oral History Reader* Perks, Robert and Alistair Thompson ed. (London: Routledge, 2004)

⁴⁷ Larson, *Research Design*, 111.

Another aspect of designing an oral history project that requires attention is the theoretical approach to be taken. Larson describes the three most commonly used theories. She describes the first one as 'elite versus non - elite' inquiry, representing the story of "great white men' school of oral history that was represented by Allan Nevins at Columbia University."⁴⁸ The non-elite approach involves ordinary people whose history is called "bottom up" and has its roots in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s. This type of research is proclaimed by Paul Thomson as the best way to investigate the experiences of those not in power.⁴⁹ Next is the "critical theory" that shares some convictions with the previous category, in that it represents groups that usually cannot express their voices in matters such as gender, class, ethnicity, or race. Last is "grounded theory", which assumes that the researcher does not have a hypothesis at the start of the research and that the theory is derived from the data, hence "theory grounded in data."⁵⁰ This type of research is characterized by not having specified questions that lead to a free-flowing interview where the interviewer gains a

'subjective' record of how one man or woman looks back on their life as a whole, or part of it. Just how they speak about it, what they miss out, how they order it, what they emphasize, and the words they choose are important in understanding any interview; but for this purpose they become the essential text which will need to be examined.⁵¹

Similarly, as for the genres of oral history, more than one theory can be used in one research project. If we follow the definition of a critical theory, which, according to Thompson, not only celebrates but empowers people, my research is meant to empower the Polish community and to open their stories to the larger scholarly and popular arenas.

⁴⁸ Larson, *Research Design*, 112. See also Thompson, *The Voice*, 65.

⁴⁹ Larson, *Research Design*, 113. See also Thompson, *The Voice*, 89.

⁵⁰ Larson, *Research Design*, 119.

⁵¹ Thompson, *The Voice*, 227.

I conducted this project according to grounded theory, where the priority was given to a life story interview, although these interviews were guided by general questions.

As for the other qualifications, I followed the general guidelines of oral history practice. Interviewees for this project were found through various media such as the local Polish language newspaper, church bulletins, local Polish organizations, as well as personal contacts with members of the community. My research is not stratified, because it does not include representatives of all the classes of the community. The criteria for choosing these ten interviewees were guided by my desire to represent both people who are presently active in the Polish community and those who are not currently affiliated with it. Half of the interviewees are women and half are men, even though such strict division was not previously planned.

When contacting interviewees, I followed the procedure of having primary conversation with the potential subject about the project either over the phone or in person. Next, I emailed the interviewee the topics for discussion, which was then followed with another conversation and appointment agreement. All of the people that I approached agreed to a recorded interview. While my list of prospective interviewees consisted of more than ten people, time restricted me from conducting more interviews and the decision of choosing one person over another was made based on the availability of those who agreed to the interview. The interviews on average were one and a half hour long and are all transcribed verbatim.⁵²

⁵² The complete project, including digital recordings of interviews, photographs, transcripts, and any published information referring to the project is deposited in the *Ogniwo* Polish Museum in Winnipeg; copies of the project are also deposited into Provincial Archives of Manitoba in order to allow researchers access to the files.

The interviews were based on a questionnaire containing general topics for discussion. The survey⁵³ was constructed in a chronological manner and included the interviewee's biographical information as well as that of his or her parents. The process of analyzing the life stories of second generation immigration necessarily involves some discussion about their parents; therefore, the first part of the questionnaire refers to the reasons for the parents' immigration and their experience of their first years in Canada. Further topics are more oriented towards the childhood memories of interviewees; however, most of the story is closely connected with memories that the interviewees have about their parents' views, customs, and choices. The last part discusses the interviewee's adult connection, or lack of it, to their Polish heritage.

The general structure of topics for discussion informed the interviewee about the nature of the research; however, the life story approach in interviewing provided the possibility for the interviewee to choose which subjects he or she would discuss at length and which she or he would merely mention. In most cases the decision to talk at length on one subject more than another came from the interviewee's personal knowledge or his or her ability to remember events. Most of the interviewees shared details of their lives even though these memories were very personal and emotionally fraught. While I did not know the interviewees very well, I was familiar to them through community events and projects, affording me the position of an insider. This, I noticed, gave the interviewees who knew me the ability to tell their stories more freely, while others hesitated, unsure how to manage the intimacy of telling their life story to a stranger and being recorded at the same time.

⁵³ See appendix 1

All of the interviews were conducted in English; nonetheless, the interviewees had some command of spoken Polish and did not hesitate to use Polish words to describe rituals, foods, names of people and places. Again, my position as an insider with knowledge of the Polish language and an understanding of the culture and people helped me to find common ground in the conversation. However, my generational difference, and my being a first generation immigrant, eliminated the assumptions that I knew ‘the story’ and the need to have it explained to me in detail.⁵⁴

My role as a historian creating a document that becomes evidence to be interpreted within a socio-historical space and tradition is complicated by the fact that in part this is a community project.⁵⁵ Therefore, it is possible that subjects would want to present a positive image about themselves; furthermore, I needed to represent professional standards and intellectual independence. To address this issue, I presented the preliminary findings of this research to the Polish community in Winnipeg. The lecture was well attended and well received. Members of the Polish community gained co-authorship to the process of creating their community image.

The comments and questions following my presentation concerned more general information about the scope of the project as well as methods that I used to create it. There were also inquiries about the accessibility of my research to the public and comments stressing the need for the continuation of such projects in the future. As a community historian and a member of the Polish community I anticipated positive and negative feedback from the participants. On one hand the public discussion demonstrated

⁵⁴ Kikumura Akemi, “Family life histories: a collaborative venture.” In Perks and Thomson ed. *The Oral History Reader*, 140. See also: Thompson, *The Voice*, 141.

⁵⁵ See discussion on community based research in Larson, *Research Design*, 162.

that the audience now fully understood the project and supported not only the collection of the oral histories but my interpretation of them. On the other hand, the public presentation followed by discussions in both public and private settings resulted in comments that were more subjective and referred to the class structure of my interviewees: my stories, some claimed, are about the 'elite', because too many of my interviewees were people who represented the organized Polish community.

Portelli notes that "even accepting that the working class speaks through the oral history, it is clear that the class does not speak in the abstract, but speaks to the historian, with the historian and inasmuch as the material is published, through the historian."⁵⁶ Therefore, the historian becomes a partner in a dialogue, and instead just discovering sources – creates them. In such an understanding of a role of a historian I understood that my research is not representing all classes of Polish immigrants in Manitoba; however, when I reflected on the interviewees, I noted that their parents all represent the working class, and the second generation represented the middle class. The downside of my research, as I understood it, was the lack of interviews with the children of the upper class parents. Nevertheless, allowing the exposure of my work in the early stages to the public brought to my attention that there is the class within the class – as described by the commenter.

⁵⁶ Portelli, Alessandro, *What makes oral history different*, 72.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE FIRST GENERATION

a) War experiences

Parents' stories provide a background that illuminates the experiences of their children. Sixteen of the parents were born in Poland before World War II began, and all of them experienced the war traumas as youth, and all later experienced dislocation from their birth places and disappointment with the communist regime that prevailed in Poland. These circumstances influenced their decisions to emigrate to Canada. Most of the parents were part of the military service that fought on the Allied side against the Nazis. Romanowski, Lorenc, Dubanski and Tabbernor men were deported to Siberia, from where they later joined the Polish army units that formed on Soviet territory. Raymond Dolny's father was captured in 1939 by Nazis and placed in POW camp from which he managed to escape. He joined the Polish army in France.⁵⁷ Elizabeth Mogk's parents survived World War II in Poland, taking part in the Home Army actions against the occupying forces.

Bogumil Gajda's father was captured during World War II in Poland and transported to Germany as a prisoner of war, where he remained until the end of the war. Bogumil recalls stories that his father told about being in the camp. In one story, his father told how he got into trouble with Nazis by convincing a group of imprisoned men, when he was put in charge of them, to keep their army insignia, disobeying the German authorities, who had ordered that they get rid of them, so he got into trouble. Bogumil uses this example to illustrate his father's prevailing attitude during this and other times

⁵⁷ All of the citations are according to transcript. Dolny, Raymond. Interview by Magdalena Blackmore (April 2007), p.2

of his life. This characteristic, along with a general dislike of the communist regime, was instrumental in his decision not to go back to Poland after World War II.⁵⁸

Bogumil's mother was twenty-one at the outbreak of the war, when the Nazis moved in to colonize the area in which she lived. She was soon captured and sent to Germany and forced to work on farms. Bogumil describes his mother as an 'open-minded' person who got along with people easily, and soon learned to speak German. His parents met and married in a Displaced Persons Camp after the war, and Bogumil was born there.⁵⁹

Krystyna Gajda's parents also met in Germany soon after World War II. Her mother was taken as a forced laborer and worked at a farm near a prisoner of war camp, where her future husband was located. Krystyna's mother had other family members close by as well; her brother was a prisoner in the camp and she also had a sister who was working on a farm nearby. On Sundays, Krystyna's mother would travel by bike visiting family and discovering that there were more people from her village brought by the Nazis to work in the area. After the war, her parents married in a Displaced Persons Camp, where Krystyna was born.⁶⁰

Barbara Kieloch's and Raymond Dolny's mothers also became forced laborers. Raymond's mother was captured after the Warsaw Uprising, and, together with her two young daughters, she was deported to a work camp in Germany. Raymond recalls the stories told by his mother as traumatic ones that changed her outlook on life forever:

(...) you don't go through a German work camp with two kids and perform abortions on women that got pregnant because of German guards and walk out of it being very idealistic. You wind up being very pragmatic.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Gajda, Bogumil. Interview by Magdalena Blackmore (June 2006), p. 2.

⁵⁹ Gajda, Bogumil, 4.

⁶⁰ Gajda, Krystyna. Interview by Magdalena Blackmore (June 2006), p.1.

⁶¹ Dolny, Raymond, 15.

That pragmatism, in Raymond's opinion, allowed his mother to secure a life for herself and for her daughters. When the war ended she made her way to Paris, where she was placed in sanatorium and her daughters were sent to an orphanage. Upon release from the sanatorium, poverty prevented her from being able to take care of her daughters. To her knowledge, her husband was executed in Poland by the Nazis, and she was responsible for the well-being of her family. At that time she met Raymond's father, who adopted the two girls; they married and began a new life. This family's war story has its second ending in 1950s when relatives from Poland informed Raymond's family that the bullet that wounded his mother's husband was not fatal and that he had survived the war.⁶²

The interviewees' knowledge about wartime experiences demonstrates that their parents thought it was important to tell the stories to their children. The children in turn acknowledged the stories as a part of their family history and heritage. The descriptions of their parents' wartime encounters provide not only a relation of historical facts, but also personal details that characterized their parents in the eyes of the children. Bogumil makes a point of his father being stubborn and mother communicative. Krystyna shows the importance of family connections that did not cease due to war and relocation. Raymond tells how war trauma changed his mother's character, bringing out a strength that helped her survive all future challenges. These images of their parents' pasts will later, in the children's opinions, explain the decisions they made in their lives in Canada.

⁶² Dolny, Raymond, 4.

b) Immigration

Each of the interviewees recounted experiences that are typical of post-World War II immigration stories. Based on the agreement between Great Britain and Canada, Polish veterans and other immigrants from Displaced Persons (DP) camps had to work for two years on Canadian farms. This program reflected the post war shortage of manpower for farm labor and other skilled occupations.⁶³ A document obtained from the designated employer was needed to obtain any other work.⁶⁴ The fathers of Ron Romanowski, Elizabeth Mogk, Barbara Kieloch, Bogumil Gajda, Krystyna Gajda, and Christine Tabernor arrived in Canada to work on farms or in the forest. For those men who were married in Europe, the conditions of immigration meant separation from relatives; for the others, the hardship was a lack of contact with companions of the same nationality. Men and women from DP camps had to deal with their war-time experiences and the conditions in overcrowded and under funded camps where they stayed before relocating to Canada.

Anna Jaroszynska Kirchmann writes that people in DP camps gathered according to ethnic background, and that each camp operated as a mini community with a governing body, schools, and bakery. Rooms in large buildings were made of blankets used as partitions, and many buildings were dirty, worn out, and lacking in adequate sanitary installations. Exhausted by war and malnutrition, people did not find the camp food situation much of an improvement – an average meal included small amounts of meat and no vegetables. Liberated from concentration and labor camps people did not have

⁶³ Radecki and Heydenkorn, *A Member*, 33. Hoerder, Dirk, *Creating societies. Immigrant Lives in Canada*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), p.276

⁶⁴ Radecki and Heydenkorn, *A Member*, 54.

adequate clothing, and they were suffering from diseases. The Polish Red Cross and United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) took care of the physical health problems; however, there was no support for people with depression or post-traumatic stress disorders. The conditions of camp life added to the negative state of displaced persons: lack of privacy, worry about the future, and feeling useless tormented many war survivors.⁶⁵

Christine's parents arrived in Winnipeg separately. Her father came from Great Britain as a demobilized Polish soldier, and her mother arrived with her immediate family. They married in Winnipeg in 1949. Immediately after coming to Canada, Christine's father's first job was on a farm, and after a year he moved back to the city and worked in construction, where he was quickly promoted to supervisor. While doing construction work in the South part of Winnipeg, he lived with the Polish family of a Mr. & Mrs. Siwik. Later, he bought his own lot and built a house on it, where he moved with his new family in 1950.⁶⁶

Ron Romanowski and Barbara Kieloch told similar stories. Their parents arrived in Canada separately, and they met and married here. Six of the other men sponsored their wives into Canada after serving their work contracts. Different, but not unusual, circumstances were described by Chris Lorenc. Chris's father was sponsored by his mother, who was born in the United States, moved to Poland and then back to Canada during World War II. Chris's father and mother met in Great Britain.⁶⁷ Another example of transmigration is Zofia de Witt's family. Zofia's grandmother went to Winnipeg in

⁶⁵ Jaroszynska- Kirchmann, *The Exile Mission*, 67-69.

⁶⁶ Tabbernor, Christine. Interview by Magdalena Blackmore (June 2006), p.6.

⁶⁷ Lorenc, Chris. Interview by Magdalena Blackmore (June 2007), p.2.

1949 to visit with her sister who lived there; she then married a Polish-Canadian man and decided to go back to Poland, in 1958, to spend her elderly years with her two daughters and grandchildren. Upon arriving, she realized that living conditions in Poland were very difficult, so she returned to Canada and, with the help of her sister, sponsored her two daughters with their families. One of these daughters was Zofia's mother, who arrived in Winnipeg in 1960.⁶⁸

c) Settlement in Winnipeg/ Work.

The majority of the interviewees remember that the North End of Winnipeg was their first neighborhood. Their first homes were found on streets such as Manitoba, Dufferin, Burrows, and Mountain. In the memories of the interviewees, the choice of this location was related to the accessibility of Polish organizations, churches, or stores.

Bogumil Gajda's family, in 1960, bought a house on Pritchard Avenue that had three suites, one for the family and two for rent. Bogumil remembers this neighborhood as diverse, with many Polish and Ukrainian families. He noted that he understood the Ukrainian that people spoke on the street; later, when he heard formal Ukrainian, it was a different language⁶⁹. In retrospect, Bogumil describes the North End of Winnipeg as "little Europe but without political division. Egalitarians who wanted to get along."⁷⁰ He does remember, however, a divide between "Eastern European and Anglo society." This cultural divide was most noticeable on the streets where he was called a "DP" and told to

⁶⁸ de Witt, Zofia. Interview by Magdalena Blackmore (May 2007), p.20.

⁶⁹ I did not have the chance to ask for the explanation of this fact; however, the common case for differentiating two types of language is that people from the Western parts of Ukraine, especially Lvov region speak a Galician dialect influenced by Polish language. Those from central Ukraine speak literary Ukrainian that is not as similar to Polish language and therefore more difficult to understand.

⁷⁰ Gajda, Bogumil, 21.

“go back where you came from” by the English speaking kids. Bogumil says that he does not remember how he reacted to the name calling, adding that his social circle was located around the Polish Saint John Cantius Church.⁷¹

Krystyna Gajda’s family first settled in an apartment on Aikins, and then they lived on Magnus, later buying a house opposite a church on Burrows, and then finally moving to one on Anderson in the North End of Winnipeg. For Krystyna, Burrows was the neighborhood of her childhood, and her parents chose it because of the nearby bus connections on Main, Selkirk, and Salter, as well as the closeness of Polish stores. The story relating to settlement that Krystyna remembers is her mother’s surprise concerning fashion. Krystyna arrived in Winnipeg with her mother in December, when it was very cold, and her mother did not have warm clothes because she traveled with a small child and could not carry more than one suitcase. Arriving from Germany, her mother was wearing pants, but she soon discovered that North American women did not wear pants at that time. Krystyna says that her mother always remembers that fact as “being relocated and having to adjust to the environment”.⁷²

Upon settling in Canada, Christine Tabbemor’s parents did not choose the traditional pattern of immigrants who moved near other Polish families and businesses. Because her father worked and lived in the South part of the city, he built his first house there. Like many immigrants he soon bought a second house in the same area, which was to generate revenue for the family, and which, in the future, became Christine’s house.⁷³ Christine remembers that the neighbors in their area were of different ethnic backgrounds. Some

⁷¹ Gajda, Bogumil, 21.

⁷² Gajda, Krystyna, 4.

⁷³ Tabbemor, Christine, 7.

were German and Italian; however, the majority of them were of British origin.

According to Christine, her father recalled that when they lived at their first address, there were families that looked down on them. He now interprets this attitude as jealousy, because these were people born in Canada and yet they were just beginning to establish themselves, while Christine's father was an immigrant who was buying property and building a new house for his family.⁷⁴

The first impressions of settling in the new country as conveyed by parents or remembered by the children provide a picture of settlement as a cultural adjustment, inflected by the difficulty of finding personal space. In retrospect, Christine's father saw his experience as successful and interprets prejudice as a compliment to his resourcefulness. Bogumil also remembers experiencing direct discrimination, but does not make any judgment upon locals, concentrating instead on the positive relations among those of Slavic background and on the comfort he found in the church community. For Krystyna, her mother's story is also a positive one relating not so much to ethnic distinction but to cultural differences that could broadly be described as continental.

In the recollections of the interviewees, an important part of remembering their parents' past is connected to their intellectual habits. The common level of their parents' education was elementary school in Poland. This was in some cases due to the family's material situation and in others due to the outbreak of World War II, which brought disruption to their everyday lives. Ron Romanowski and Chris Lorenc recall that their fathers were literally taken from classrooms by Soviet soldiers and placed on trains to

⁷⁴ Tabernor, Christine, 19.

Siberia. Elizabeth Mogk's mother and father completed high school and were both on their way to begin university studies in September 1939. Their wartime circumstances, however, did not stop people from trying to attain professional training. Some vocational training was available to Polish soldiers in camps in Africa and Egypt,⁷⁵ where Siberian survivors trained before joining the front. In other cases, such as Elizabeth Mogk's parents, university courses set up by professors in an underground system hidden from the Nazi occupiers allowed them to continue their studies.

Most of the interviewees knew about their parents' education and their first occupations in Canada. Christine Tabbernor said that her father completed technical-vocational school in Poland, and her mother completed high school and obtained a business diploma in Mexico, in schools started there for Polish refugees. Later, she repeated these courses in English in Winnipeg. She used these skills to do bookkeeping as a volunteer for Polish organizations. Before getting married, Christine's mother worked in a sewing factory with her grandmother, but she did not go back to work after having children.⁷⁶

Krystyna Gajda did not know about her parent's education; however, she recalls that her father was a passionate reader. Both her mother and father learned English. Krystyna remembers seeing the books from which her mother had studied, along with exercises and homework that her mother did. Krystyna's father worked for Canadian Pacific Rail, biking to the St. Boniface yards, and he was later transferred closer to home. Her mother stayed home until the children were older, later getting a job cleaning at the University of

⁷⁵ Jaroszyńska- Kirchmann, Anna, *The Exile Mission*, 27.

⁷⁶ Tabbernor, Christine, 4.

Manitoba. She stayed home during the day, had supper ready for the family, and then went to work in the evening.⁷⁷

The commonality among all the interviewees is that, upon their arrival in Canada, their parents found work as soon as possible and were able to support their families. Often these jobs started at the bottom of the scale, but, due to their determination and high motivation, the new immigrants moved upwards to secure stable incomes. Refugees from the Displaced Persons camps did not have savings or possess the material goods necessary for everyday life. Arriving in a new country with one suitcase meant they had to start life over again. Therefore, most immigrant families required two incomes. Krystyna Gajda and Raymond Dolny tell stories that are typical for the other immigrant families of the times; their fathers worked day shifts in the factory and their mothers went out to work in the evening.

Even though the parents of the interviewees from this research arrived in Canada without formal knowledge of English, they were able to find work, as Zofia de Witt recalls: “ language was always an issue and a barrier for my parents, they never took a command of the English language, my dad worked at the Motor Coach Industries where most of the employees also spoke Polish or Ukrainian.”⁷⁸ Only Krystyna Gajda and Ron Romanowski remembered their parents learning English at home from textbooks or by attending evening classes. Most of the parents learned English in everyday situations obtaining more or less fluent communication skills.

Most of the representatives of the second generation that I interviewed talk about both successes and hardships related to establishing a family in the new country. Some

⁷⁷ Gajda, Krystyna, 5.

⁷⁸ de Witt , Zofia, 3.

children associated their family's difficult material situation with their parents' inability to succeed in the new environment. Bogumil Gajda's father taught himself to read and write and his mother had elementary schooling from Poland. In Winnipeg, his father worked as a carpenter's helper but did not succeed at it because of health problems and his "lack of patience with authorities". Later on, he became eligible for a veteran's pension that provided income for the family. His mother worked as a caretaker; nevertheless, Bogumil remembers that whatever job she got she adjusted to it and succeeded at it. Bogumil remembers that his family lived very thriftily and there was no fancy stuff purchased when he and his brother were kids.⁷⁹

Ryszard Dubanski remembers that his father worked many different jobs that did not allow for stable income, and his mother was unable to work because she looked after a young child. Dubanski says: "The cupboard, as I quite often say, was quite often bare. There just wasn't much there and the house itself, I mean, it was a very primitive house."⁸⁰ Dubanski's recollection reveals a family history that seems difficult for him to understand. Dubanski sees his father as a person who did not want to learn English and "get ahead in life": "My father was a passive person, he didn't want to have anything to do with this new world, and he didn't want to establish himself or anything. He didn't really wanna find a decent job."⁸¹ The explanation of life choices as provided by Ryszard Dubanski was set in the past: "To tell you the truth he didn't seem to care much about anything after his war experiences."⁸² Dirk Hoerder reviewed stories of other persons who immigrated to Canada from DP camps. These memories were filled with war and

⁷⁹ Gajda, Bogumil, 14.

⁸⁰ Dubanski, Ryszard, 7.

⁸¹ Dubanski, Ryszard, 8.

⁸² Dubanski, Ryszard, 9.

persecution stories, the severing of family ties due to 'man-made forces' and not the individual's decision to leave. Hoerder notes: "Camp survivors and refugees had to rebuild identities. They would remain emotionally scarred, and passed on their memory of suffering to their children even if they tried to hide it or wanted to forget about it."⁸³

The results of clinical studies on refugees illuminate the stages that new immigrants had to go through. The first several months after their arrival were characterized by a burst of activity, enthusiasm and positive outlook for the future. Six months after their arrival had taken place, a stage called 'psychological arrival,' during which refugees had a chance to realize the differences of life in the new place and often compared the new with an idealized old life, set in. Jaroszynska Kirchmann compared these findings with the situation of a displaced person. In the early stages of arrival, these newcomers expressed interest in education, training programs, changing jobs and moving to a better life. Four or five years into their new lives brought discouragement or at least an end to major life changes. Stability came ten years later. Here is where displaced persons' experiences differed sharply from those of immigrants: often after ten years, the immigrants realized that their hard work did not produce similar results to those from the old country.⁸⁴ The interviews with the second generation Polish immigrants provide a very personal account of the difficulties that parents had to experience which the children remembered as a foundational part of their childhood.

⁸³ Hoerder, *Creating societies*, 277.

⁸⁴ Jaroszynska- Kirchmann, *The Exile Mission*, 164.

The CHILDHOOD OF THE SECOND GENERATION

Childhood memories of second generation Polish immigrants are interwoven with stories of friendships, ethnic community involvement, and prejudice. The use of Polish comes up as an important distinction between their domestic lives and their public ones. Most children from Polish immigrant families in this research grew up in households where Polish was spoken exclusively. Only Barbara Kieloch and Ron Romanowski remember their parents speaking both Polish and English at home. A majority of the interviewees said that they did not know English when they started school. All the interviewees remember this moment in their lives and the associated experiences. Some recall it as a fact of life; others describe it as distressing.

Ron Romanowski remembers his early school experiences as a very positive time. He enjoyed the possibility of meeting new friends and playing with new toys in kindergarten class. Romanowski remembers schoolmates of mixed ethnic backgrounds, such as German, Ukrainian and Polish. His comments about learning English are mostly affirmed among all of the interviewees: "I remember it as just an absolutely wonderful time, because I was learning a new language. You know, I just, I just loved it; here's a fantastic new language and I just remember like a joy of a seed growing, if you were a seed and you're growing."⁸⁵ This optimistic approach to learning English might have its roots in the fact that Ron's mother was Canadian-born and therefore bilingual and that his father as Ron recalls "was rapidly trying to learn English. To improve his English, it would improve, you know, help his sales right, help his career."⁸⁶ Like his parents, Ron was

⁸⁵ Romanowski, Ron. Interview by Magdalena Blackmore (June 2007), p.11.

⁸⁶ Romanowski, Ron , 9.

bilingual by the time he started school and his knowledge of English eased the transition into a world outside the home.

When Christine Tabbernor's older brother first went to school, he did not know any English. She learned to speak it with neighborhood kids and with her brother after he started to learn it at school. Christine says that knowing how to write and read in Polish helped her to learn English. She never had an accent in English and when her mother went to school for the first time, the teacher was very surprised that the family spoke only Polish at home because Christine's skills in English were excellent. Even though Christine's school experiences were positive, the problem of language learning came from her parents' awareness that going to school might endanger her knowledge of Polish. Christine and her brother were punished with a spanking or being sent to their room for not speaking Polish at home. Christine also went to Polish language classes on Saturdays. The Polish school system mirrored the public school system, which children began to attend at the age of five. However, Christine already knew how to read in Polish when she entered the school because her mother had taught her at home. Only a few other kids were on the same level as Christine and her brother. She describes school events where the children presented special performances for the families, for example: Christmas, November 11th and May 3rd anniversaries. Christine explains that there was a core group of students who were selected every year to give performances; she was usually chosen to sing, while her brother was chosen to play the accordion.⁸⁷

When she described her school experiences, Christine also mentions the fact that, even though her parents spoke English, they were very adamant about correctness in

⁸⁷ Tabbernor, Christine, 15.

writing and would ask one of the children to proofread letters written for official matters.⁸⁸

Bogumil Gajda went to elementary school in Ontario, but he could not speak any English when he began; therefore, he failed the grade one “Christmas exams” due to the lack of language skills. Bogumil later learned English from one of his classmates who understood Polish but could not speak it. By June at the end of grade one, Bogumil was able to pass the exams and advance to grade two. His study of English went so well that Bogumil remembers trying to teach his father to speak it, but his father usually got very frustrated and did not learn much.

Connected to learning English is Bogumil’s memory of being the “family’s business agent;” from the age of nine he translated for his parents and helped them with visits to the doctor or the income tax agent. Bogumil says that this “was a good experience because from an early age I had responsibilities beyond my age that a Canadian kid would not have. I never resented that.”⁸⁹

The early school memories of immigrant children portray a typical scenario of childhoods filled with family responsibilities. Henry Radecki and Benedykt Heydenkorn, in their book *A Member of a Distinguished Family: The Polish Group in Canada*, write that school was the main place where immigrant children gained “the means of communicating with the outside society, which their parents lacked or possessed only in limited degree.”⁹⁰ Bogumil points directly to the difference between himself and children whose parents were not immigrants: taking over responsibilities assigned to adults such

⁸⁸ Tabbernor, Christine, 16.

⁸⁹ Gajda, Bogumil, 33.

⁹⁰ Radecki and Heydenkorn, *A Member*, 131.

as communicating with a doctor is recollected as a learning experience. Christine interprets her parents' reliance on her to correct their outgoing official correspondence as a sign of their need for respect from others, an aim which could be achieved by presenting themselves as competent, educated people.

Radecki and Heydenkorn comment on the changes that had to be implemented in traditional patriarchal families due to the new environment: "On many occasions the fathers had to rely on the newly acquired skills of their children when faced with the necessity of translation, and such dependence was bound to undermine the father's authority and power."⁹¹ Although quantitative research shows that family ties among Polish immigrants loosened during this generation due to a lack of common language and interests between parents and children, the examples of Bogumil Gajda and Christine Tabernor demonstrate that both parents' authority was, in the children's eyes, unchanged. The reason for that difference can be explained by the different understanding of previous research on language acquisition. Research done by Portes and Hao shows that the best results in achieving a positive relationship between immigrant children and their parents is "the ability of the second generation youth to preserve knowledge of their language of origin, together with acquisition of English."⁹² A selective acculturation that combines old and new traditions provides the best results. Most of the interviewees from this project were fluent in both Polish and English in their early years.

⁹¹ Radecki and Heydenkorn, *A Member*, 131.

⁹² Portes, Alejandro and Lingxin Hao "The Price of Uniformity: Language, Family and Personality Adjustment in the Immigrant Second Generation." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol 25, No. 6, November (2002), p.19.

Zofia de Witt and Ryszard Dubanski brought to light yet another experience of going to school, one that resulted in great stress. Zofia de Witt arrived in Canada as a twelve year old girl; she remembers that her uncle, who already lived in Winnipeg, took her to school where she was registered into an English-as-a-Second-Language class. Zofia remembers children from Italy, Germany, Hungary, Portugal and Poland as her classmates and this was her first experience. She recalls that: "It was interesting to get along with other cultures. That was something new because in Poland it was one culture."⁹³ Zofia says that her first school friend was a girl from Germany whose family also just emigrated. Together, the two girls studied English, and by the end of the school year, they were transferred to a regular grade seven class. The first few school years were especially challenging for Zofia, because her formal knowledge of the subjects was higher than her knowledge of English language. As a result, she spent only half a year in grade seven and was moved to grade eight. By the end of grade nine she felt comfortable understanding English and communicating with others; however, she remembers feeling "less than everybody else in terms of, I guess my self esteem because of speaking with an accent."⁹⁴ This feeling of being different was strengthened by an incident where Zofia's English teacher made fun of her accent and pronunciation in front of the class. The children witnessing it all took Zofia's side explaining to the teacher that it is not right to make fun of someone who just learned English. The teacher's failure to apologize, Zofia explains, was normal for the time: "Comments like that by teachers and such were not considered something that the teachers would get in trouble, they certainly would get in trouble for ridiculing a student in front of the classmates now, but in those days you

⁹³ de Witt, Zofia, 8.

⁹⁴ de Witt, Zofia, 9

didn't so you kind of knew your place, you knew you were at the bottom of the pack."⁹⁵ Zofia comments that her later success in school was due to her own perseverance and her parents' encouragement.

Ryszard Dubanski's mother assured him that he would pick up English quickly at school; therefore, she did not want to make changes to their ritual of speaking Polish at home. Not knowing the language was, for Dubanski, an obstacle in managing his school experience. He describes it as follows: "I wasn't part of the crowd because I couldn't speak English and I just kind of, you know, was on the sidelines... learning."⁹⁶ The first school in which Dubanski was enrolled was Margaret Scott Elementary, and he remembers that there were many children of different ethnic backgrounds at that school, as well as "English speaking Canadian kids from, that came from the upper, upper end of North End, towards Mountain Avenue and beyond."⁹⁷ Many families lived nearby, and the men worked in the CPR yards. Regardless of the immigrant society that made up the school population, Dubanski continued to dislike going to school, saying "I did not find it, you know, [a] particularly pleasant experience, I felt as if I was always gonna be ah, sort of picked out for some, some punishment."⁹⁸ Dubanski recalls that this antipathy for this institution was shared by his mother: "She didn't want to have anything to do with, with the school administration."⁹⁹

⁹⁵ de Witt, Zofia, 9.

⁹⁶ Dubanski, Ryszard, 11.

⁹⁷ Dubanski, Ryszard, 10.

⁹⁸ Dubanski, Ryszard, 11.

⁹⁹ Dubanski, Ryszard, 11.

Ryszard Dubanski's trauma of school isolation lasted into adulthood and provided the basis for his story was "Black Teeth."¹⁰⁰ In this tale, the narrator describes the protagonist's first day of school: Ryszard (name of the hero of the story) stood in front of the class introducing himself. As soon as he said his name, the children in class started to whisper and point at him. Six years old Ryszard was unaware of the fact that all of his teeth were black. At home and among his few family friends no one ever pointed to it. That day upon coming back home Ryszard looked in the mirror and consciously realized that he did look different and began to understand the word 'freak' that he heard children saying behind his back. Ryszard's mother vaguely explained that his teeth turned black as a result of a sickness that he suffered in a Displaced Persons camp, and she encouraged him not to worry about it, since only his 'baby teeth' were affected and the whole issue would soon be over. However, for a small boy who was already feeling uneasy at school due to his inability to speak English, the physical imperfection made him even more conspicuous. The schoolteacher's and the nurse's discovery of Ryszard's teeth resulted in a request for his mother to visit the school. Dubanski describes this visit as awkward, with the principal on one side explaining that the child had to be taken to the dentist and Dubanski's mother repeating only a few English words of explanation that she knew.

This autobiographical narrative reveals feelings of alienation in the world outside of the house that Dubanski repeats over the course of the interview. Dubanski grew up remembering his and his mother's isolation. He does not have the positive outlook that Bogumil Gajda and Christine Tabernor had in their memories of being "family agents", of being able to help make the linguistic and social connection between the immigrant

¹⁰⁰ Dubanski, Ryszard, *Black Teeth and other North End Souvenirs* (Winnipeg: Signature Editions, 2005), p. 9.

parents and the official representatives of Canadian society. Portelli writes that memory is an active process that creates meaning. Perhaps the different ways in which my interviewees remember their involvement in family activities can be explained by the “narrator’s effort to make sense of their past and to give a form to their lives, and set the interview and the narrative in the historical context.”¹⁰¹

Immigrant parents stood between old and new worlds. Some, like Dubanski’s mother, held on to the old world, others, such as Romanowski’s parents, helped their children’s transition into the new one. The relationship between parents and children was challenging in both cases. The image of a post - war Canadian family as seen by social workers and educators provided for

A husband and wife [who] enjoyed the benefits of a relatively egalitarian marriage, with each playing separate but complementary roles, and they raised their children within a wholesome family environment in which everyone was encouraged to participate. On another level this type of family, in which children were accorded a certain respect (...) was expected to produce well-adjusted citizens who could take their place in the wider world.¹⁰²

This image was often juxtaposed with the casework of social workers who described immigrant family models as inadequate to Canadian realities. One of the issues raised was the ‘discipline problem.’ It was observed that the traditional European family had a strong sense of an authoritarian father figure. The immigrant parents were too strict when raising their children; the use of corporeal punishment was an especially controversial way to keep “children (and, in some cases, a wife) in line” in immigrant households.¹⁰³

This observation was based on a case of the children of displaced persons who, in the

¹⁰¹ Portelli, *What makes oral history*, 69.

¹⁰² Iacovetta, Franca, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*. (Toronto: Between the lines, 2006), p.177.

¹⁰³ Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers*, 189.

opinion of nursery workers, had too much pressure put on them while they were learning a new language and dealing with parents who were not prepared to accept Canadian standards of family life.

Franca Iacovetta shows the hypocrisy of the statements made by social workers whose goal was to re-shape European families into Canadian ones. In the author's opinion the immigrant families were singled out for the violation of particular norms and behaviors, suggesting erroneously that similar violations did not occur in Canadian families. Special attention was paid to teenaged children, who, in the specialists' opinions, were exposed to conflicts and "culture clash" in relation to their parents. Furthermore, the problems were "most likely to occur within immigrant, working class, and poor families. They also tended to attribute the problem within newcomer homes to the 'cultural backwardness' of those families."¹⁰⁴ According to Iacovetta, immigrant parents were aware of how the authorities portrayed them and they did not omit to present a critical opinion about the mainstream model. One Polish family described children raised according to the Canadian norms as "spoiled, noisy and rude" and was greatly disappointed in that image of youth which was to be an example for their children. Alina and Jan Zaramba in their interview for *Macleans* defended their way of raising children, who were respectful towards elders and who had small responsibilities within a household. They said "it is good discipline and we feel, too, it gives them a sense of belonging and being part of the family."¹⁰⁵ The interviews gathered for this research confirm the perception that Polish immigrant parents were strict; however, the family relations were not as abusive as mainstream observers presented them. In particular, the

¹⁰⁴ Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers*, 190.

¹⁰⁵ Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers*, 192.

accusation of cultural backwardness ought to be replaced by the perception that Polish parents had a particular set of values that were not primitive – just different.

In the memories of most of the second generation immigrants, their early school years were the first time they became aware of prejudices against them. Six of the interviewees experienced prejudicial actions directed against them. Two witnessed negative reactions to others and two did not witness any intolerance. Zofia de Witt and Ryszard Dubanski told the stories of discrimination that took place in elementary school. Their accounts are still vivid, told with details and emotional distress, which suggests that these incidents must have been hurtful when they occurred. Bogumil Gajda, Raymond Dolny and Barbara Kieloch remember the narrow-mindedness of neighborhood kids.

As adults, the interviewees interpret the acts of prejudice in the context of the social changes that happened in Canada since their childhood. Raymond Dolny says: “Sure, there was a pecking order, if you were a new immigrant, as you were winding your way into the social structure or community you were called a DP, displaced person, which was one of the most negative things that could be said to anybody.”¹⁰⁶ He further explains that the name calling was done by third generation Canadians because they wanted to feel more important. Another reason for that behavior, Dolny suggests, was resentment based on economic status: “How could you as an immigrant have the same lifestyle as somebody who has been here for awhile.”¹⁰⁷ An interesting point drawn from this oral history is that the prejudice experienced by newcomers was not limited to encounters with the Anglo Saxon community, but it also came from different waves of immigrants.

¹⁰⁶ Dolny, Raymond, 11.

¹⁰⁷ Dolny, Raymond, 12.

Prejudicial responses to newcomers were not exclusive to the time immediately following World War II. Barbara Kieloch went to school in the 1960s, and she recalls: “Growing up from grades one to nine, being Polish or from Europe wasn’t the cool thing; it wasn’t as well accepted; so you were DP or a daughter of DP, or you were a ‘Polak.’ You have to remember that in the sixties there were a lot of umm, shows coming out...*Archie Bunker*... where racism was a parody, so it was just starting to be unacceptable.”¹⁰⁸ The attitudes towards immigrants’ children were not restricted to one area of the city. Barbara Kieloch who lived in Fort Rouge had negative experiences similar to those of Bogumil Gajda, who lived on Pritchard Avenue in the centre of ethnic settlement in Winnipeg.

Not all children of Polish immigrants, however, experienced these forms of prejudice. Ron Romanowski, Chris Lorenc and Elizabeth Mogk do not remember any prejudice directed against them. Chris Lorenc portrays his neighborhood as a tolerant society: “That was one of the unique things about the North End; that people didn’t care what your background was, it was who you were as an individual and a person so there was a great community strength in that respect.”¹⁰⁹

As they grew up, the immigrants’ children established their own comfort zones that afforded them more insulation from the prejudice of those outside the community. In some cases, that was achieved by becoming involved in the Polish community and in others by adjusting to Canadian social realities; as Raymond Dolny summarized, the name calling “did not last too long, once you worked your way into society you rarely

¹⁰⁸ Kieloch, Barbara, 5.

¹⁰⁹ Lorenc, Chris, 7.

heard it.”¹¹⁰ However, full assimilation was not the path that these representatives of the second generation chose as a way to escape prejudice.

The later school experiences of all the interviewees have them establishing themselves in the world outside the home. Eight of the ten interviewees were involved in activities within the Polish community as adolescents and young adults. These formative years were a time of decision - making about their ethnic affiliations, either following their parents' path or becoming resentful towards their heritage. The choice was influenced by two very important social and political factors. First, the late 1960s and 1970s was a time when women's rights, world peace, civil rights, and environmental movements emerged. Young people contested existing laws and social rules and tried to create their own system of values. Second, under Pierre Trudeau, changes occurred in Canadian social policies with regard to a multi-ethnic society marking an end to an exclusive English-French nation. Consequently, the interviewees grew up in a time where being of ethnic descent was becoming socially acceptable.

Victor Turek, in his study *Poles in Manitoba*, writes of the great effort by the members of Polish organizations to encourage and retain the membership of young people. Special interest groups were established, such as dance or sports groups; there was, nonetheless, no significant reaction from the Polish youth born in Canada. Turek writes that the second generation parted with their roots for such reasons as the “Ukrainization of Polish element in Manitoba;” inadequate Polish services, especially in rural Manitoba; lack of cooperation between clergy and secular organizations; and the

¹¹⁰ Dolny, Raymond, 12.

low level of education in the preceding generations of immigrants.¹¹¹ In author's opinion, the actions taken to attract youth by organizations could not deliver positive results because of incompetent leaders in charge of organizations. Writing primarily about the situation following World War I, the author comments that there was too large a gap between the generation born in Canada and their parents. The author says that Canadian-educated youth had higher expectations of their culture, and the only way to attract young people was to offer them the ethnic culture at its best through literature, art, music, and folklore. This task, according to Turek, was impossible due to the older immigrants' lack of education.

Turek also highlights the dichotomy between the attractiveness of Polish culture and the difficult everyday life of immigrants. The fact was that many immigrants had a low educational level, endured very modest living conditions, and were unprepared for the life in Canada discouraged youth from following the ethnic traditions. Polish youth connected ethnicity with the lack of economic advancement.¹¹²

In the 1950s, Turek described the situation of Polish ethnic organizations as being in a "deep crisis." At that time, there were eighteen active Polish organizations in Winnipeg, among them: Holy Ghost Fraternal Aid Society (est. 1902), the Polish Gymnastic Association *Sokol* (est. 1906), the Polish Fraternal Aid Society of St. John Cantius (est. 1918), and the Polish Combatants Association Branch No. 13 (est. 1946). The three oldest organizations existing in Manitoba had a secular character and their mandates were to support the Polish community through mutual aid insurance. Nevertheless, the Polish Gymnastic Association *Sokol* and Polish Fraternal Aid Society of St. John Cantius both

¹¹¹ Turek, *Poles in Manitoba*, 191

¹¹² Turek, *Poles in Manitoba*, 192

carried out large scale educational and cultural activities such as Polish language schools, folk-dance groups, sports groups, concerts, and theatrical productions.

The newest organization, the Polish Combatants Association Branch No. 13, had a slightly different agenda; its membership consisted only of immigrants who were former servicemen of the Polish Army during World War II. These were the post-war political refugees, young, energetic and educated people who between 1950 and 1970 took the leading role in maintaining the political, educational and cultural life of Polonia.¹¹³

The last institution that played an important role in the Polish community was the Canadian Polish Congress (est. 1944), a national organization coordinating the work of several different associations in Canada. Its mandate included united action on political and financial support for the Polish government in exile, lobbying to allow immigration to Canada of Polish ex-soldiers and displaced persons, as well as educating Polish Canadians about their ethnic culture and history. In addition, it called for close cooperation with the Canadian government and other ethnic groups. Eventually it became the main body representing Polish Canadians.¹¹⁴

From the perspective of Canadian social agencies, ethnic organizations were viewed in the 1950s as a means to cushion the shock of immigration. Citizenship officials understood that by contacting the elites of ethnic groups such as the presidents of organizations or journalists in the ethnic presses they could make a great deal of progress in the acculturation process. Franca Iacovetta, in her book *Gatekeeper: Reshaping*

¹¹³ Turek, *Poles in Manitoba*, 214.

¹¹⁴ Reczynska Anna, "The Origin and the Beginning of Canadian Polish Congress" in Edward Soltys ed. *Half a Century of Canadian Polish Congress*. (Toronto: Canadian Polish Research Institute.), p.22.

Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada, writes that ethnic organizations in the government's view prevented disorientation and disorder among the newcomers. The critics of immediate involvement of immigrants in an organizations argued that there was a danger of creating ethnic ghettos. However, the supporters of immigrant involvement proposed a plan of close cooperation with ethnic groups and the provision of written materials about Canadian social and political systems, propagandizing in favour of Canada, democracy and against communism. Through this cooperation governmental institutions placed existing ethnic organizations into mainstream Canadian social system.¹¹⁵

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the second generation of Polish immigrants who took part in this research project entered its formative years. Growing up in Polish families often meant keeping close ties with Polish ethnic organizations, or at least knowing about them. The post-World War II organizations, especially the Polish Combatants Association Branch No. 13 and the Canadian Polish Congress, were led by the new immigrants whose level of education and experience in social institutions was much greater when compared to those from previous wave of immigration.

The interviews reveal the relationship between the interviewees and Polish ethnic organizations and, as a result, show what influence the institutions had on the second generation immigrants. Furthermore, how this relationship changed when compared to the model from before World War II as described by Victor Turek. While attending Churchill High School, Christine Tabbernor continued to be active in the Polish community, where she was a member of a dance group. Most members of the group were

¹¹⁵ Iacovetta, Franca, *Gatekeepers*, 62.

children of Polish combatants. Christine remembers when her group performed in a multicultural concert called *Folkways*, which was later transformed into *Folklorama*.¹¹⁶ In the interview, Christine points out that the concerts were held even before the official policy of multiculturalism was implemented in 1972.¹¹⁷

The massive influx of immigration to Canada after World War II resulted in a renewed interest in defining Canadian society. Prime Minister John Diefenbaker was the first to promote a multi-racial nation as opposed to a bi-racial nation. The establishment of the Canadian Folk Arts Council in 1964 was one of the answers to the visible cultural diversity within Canada. Furthermore, “the Council, with member organizations in all ten provinces, sponsored a large number of activities and contributed to an increased level of awareness of ethno cultures in Canada.”¹¹⁸ These, and other, changes in official policy were not immediately acknowledged by the wider society. However, the popularization of ethnic diversity worked its way from the grass roots of communities and inspired a positive view of ethnicity among second generation immigrants.

The two worlds of Christine’s high school and community did not intertwine. She remembers that when there was an event in the Polish community she would not invite her best friend to join, unless “there was something not entirely in Polish, so that guests could understand.”¹¹⁹ Christine remembers more interaction with different ethnic groups during her university years which she characterizes as studying within a ‘cosmopolitan group’. At that time, boyfriends would invite girlfriends to dances organized within the Polish community; however, more intense contacts between youth of Polish ethnic

¹¹⁶ Tabbernor, Christine, 23.

¹¹⁷ Breton, *Ethnic Relations*, 274.

¹¹⁸ Breton, *Ethnic Relations*, 260.

¹¹⁹ Tabbernor, Christine, 31.

background and others were limited. Most of Christine's Polish friends lived in the North End and very few families had more than one car, which the parents did not willingly lend to the youth.¹²⁰

Bogumil Gajda's formative influences came from his extracurricular activities at St. John Cantius Church. Upon completing elementary school in 1962, Bogumil Gajda then went to St. Paul's High School. His memories of the time he spent outside of school, around his parish, are his most vivid. Bogumil's family had chosen St. John Cantius church, even though it was predominately composed of English - speaking parishioners. Bogumil remembered that the Holy Ghost church was "too traditional; too old country", and his parents were not "comfortable with the spirit there". The St. John Cantius church, besides offering religious classes, had set up tennis courts where young people could play every summer, and it had a clubhouse where they could gather. Bogumil tells that these years were very important and that he still knows a lot of the people he knew then. Some have continued to socialize and some even married within this group. He concludes that there was a "neat community spirit for youth" and that it was the one place that his parents never questioned, as it was seen as being safe. The priest who was most involved with the young parishioners during this time was Stan Jaworski. On Sundays, during the summer months, after the 10 am *Suma*¹²¹ in Polish, he would take them to the beach.¹²²

Bogumil Gajda also says that his high school life and neighborhood did not overlap. He says that he went to school only for education and did not take part in extracurricular activities there. This was partly because he was a poor kid from the North End, who

¹²⁰ Tabernor, Christine, 32.

¹²¹ Suma is a main mass celebrated in Sundays in Catholic Church.

¹²² Gajda, Bogumil, 22.

biked to school in the summer and took a bus there in the winter¹²³. In addition, he did not like contact sports, which were popular at the school. He characterizes himself as an introverted person who was also not interested in the St. Paul's drama club, which he says was famous at that time. Bogumil concludes that the activities available at St. John Cantius church were sufficient for him.

Krystyna Gajda went to St. Mary's Academy in 1962 to continue her education. She says that her mother went to work in order to pay for the school; they also had tenants to supplement their income. In the summer, the family had a small garden and generally lived thriftily. Her mother even sewed her own clothes. Although Krystyna does not know why her parents had chosen this school (she did not think that they had the knowledge to compare public and private school programs), upon finishing Holy Ghost School, students and their parents were encouraged to continue on to St. Mary's, and some received financial help to do so.

At the new school, Krystyna recalled that children socialized in different groups, since they knew each other from their neighborhoods. Krystyna further comments "St. Mary's was cliquish; girls from the North did not mix with the South. Comfort levels came from knowing people on different levels, who were from Holy Ghost."¹²⁴ In Krystyna's opinion, the divisions were due to differences in material status not ethnicity.

During her high school time, Krystyna Gajda was not involved in Polish community activities; she thinks that her parents could not afford to pay the dues. Nevertheless, she was always interested and wanted to be active, especially when her mother took her to see events like the concert of a folk group from Poland, *Mazowsze*, or traditional

¹²³ The Saint Paul's High school was located in downtown Winnipeg.

¹²⁴ Gajda, Krystyna, 19.

celebrations of Polish national anniversaries such as November 11th or May 3rd. The contact with their Polish heritage was, at that time, maintained by her family by listening to Polish radio programs, speaking Polish at home and celebrating traditional Polish holidays.¹²⁵

Chris Lorenc remembers his youth as a time devoted to Polish ethnic organizations. His father Henryk Lorenc and mother Janina Lorenc were involved in the Polish Combatants Association Branch No. 13 from its inception. Among other community projects, both parents were involved in establishing the *Iskry* Dance Ensemble and in co-founding Folklorama. Chris explains that in the Lorenc household “the cultural life and the involvement in community was as second nature as breathing. There was an expectation and a value that you are involved in the community.”¹²⁶ Chris Lorenc began his community life at the age of five when he joined cubs, and later moved into scouts, joined the dance group and followed his parents’ footsteps in taking leadership positions in the Combatants Association as well as with the Polish Canadian Congress. Chris describes the community association as a social connection, and says that “the dance group was really more than just a dance group - it was an opportunity for young people to get together; we used to have dances and parties. The same with the scouting organization, it was an opportunity not just to be a member of scouts but it was as well, it was the Polish language, Polish culture, the Catholic religion, tradition.”¹²⁷

Chris’ early school experiences were very positive; he does not recall anyone making any distinction between students of different ethnic backgrounds: “You were just another

¹²⁵ Gajda, Krystyna, 8.

¹²⁶ Lorenc, Chris, 10.

¹²⁷ Lorenc, Chris, 15.

student and you made your friendships and the friendships were based on whether or not you could connect with the individual and had nothing to do with what your background was.”¹²⁸ Later on, Chris Lorenc graduated from Saint John’s High School, studied Arts at the University of Manitoba and completed a law degree. As a young adult, Chris took part in events held outside the Polish community. However, he points out that “[his] primary focus of social activity was very much the Polish community.”¹²⁹

Finding their own place between the Polish home and the English school is described by the second generation as a time of adjustment. None of the interviewees talk about it as a very negative experience, even though two of them mention differences in social status that they saw between themselves and their peers. Christine Tabernor and Chris Lorenc seem to have the best memories, probably because they went to public school and the differences in class were not so visible. Bogumil and Krystyna make clear statements about their relative poverty, citing that as a reason they gravitated toward others of the same ethnicity.¹³⁰ Again, they do not describe this as an entirely negative experience. Bogumil highlights the benefits of his parish-centered social life, led by a priest who “bought us a set of weights to get us in shape; do something positive.” Krystyna Gajda defines her adolescent experiences as ‘interesting’ and admits that, years later, she sent her own daughter to the same school. In all cases, the ‘institutional completeness’¹³¹ of

¹²⁸ Lorenc, Chris, 6.

¹²⁹ Lorenc, Chris, 17.

¹³⁰ There were other Polish children at St. Mary’s Academy. Krystyna mentions that she socialized primarily with those who lived in her neighborhood and went to Holy Ghost school as the group that she socialized with.

¹³¹ Raymond Breton “Institutional Completeness...” p.193. Breton argues that immigrant’s assimilation should not be seen as a transition from ethnic community into a receiving society. In Breton’s opinion, the immigrant chooses the community that offers the most complete structure

the Polish community allowed them to find a comfort zone where they fulfilled their intellectual and social needs. This manner, in which the second generation found its own place in society reflects definitions of ethnicity provided by sociologists such as Breton or Isajiw, who claim that by participating in the society at large the subject's ethnicity, is "selectively retained, transformed, reconstructed or disappears".¹³² Their exposure to the world outside their homes prompted them to compare it with the ethnic community, and as Krystyna, Christine, Chris and Bogumil stated, in some respects the ethnic community provided the social and intellectual structure that they needed in order to thrive.

Not all of the interviewees were closely tied to the Polish community. However, most of them remember their parents' engagement and their own sporadic attendance at social functions. Barbara Kieloch taught the first communion preparation class at the Holy Ghost School¹³³ and joined her parents in "events at the church whether it was a spring tea or the bazaars."¹³⁴ Ron Romanowski recalls that his parents were involved in the Polish Gymnastic Association *Sokol*, the Polish Combatants Association Branch No. 13 and the Holy Ghost Fraternal Aid Society. Consequently, Ron and his siblings attended events that these organizations organized. Romanowski characterizes these ethnic organizations as a former centre of social life where many events, such as weddings and Christmas celebrations, took place. There was also a personal memory that he reminisces on; "I watched movies about Monte Cassino there, and I was just shocked, and also, really full of admiration to the veterans, as a kid; I remember. Maybe that is where I got

of institutions that will fulfill his needs, from immediate organization, through credit unions, schools, churches, media and business.

¹³² Breton, *Ethnic Relations*, 187. Wesevolod W. Isajiw, *Ethnic Identity*, 14.

¹³³ Kieloch, Barbara, 7.

¹³⁴ Kieloch, Barbara, 6.

interested in history...because I wanted to go back and study what happened.”¹³⁵

Raymond Dolny's parents joined the Polish Gymnastic Association *Sokol* and the Polish Combatants Association Branch No. 13, where they met recent immigrants like themselves and where Raymond went as a child to Christmas parties. However, he does not remember anything about other visits to the organizations. Elizabeth Mogk's parents were members of the Polish Combatants Association Branch No. 13, and her mother taught dance in one of the groups and Polish in Saturday School at St. Andrew Bobola church. Elizabeth remembers being “taken along” to the school on Saturday, but her most memorable experiences are connected with the Polish scouts. She joined the weekly meetings and the annual camps and eventually became a leader. Being a part of the Polish scouting movement was the last connection that Elizabeth Mogk had with the organized community. She severed the connection when her family life changed. Elizabeth's father bought a store outside of Winnipeg where he worked during the week and where the family was spending weekends helping him prepare for the next week's work.¹³⁶ In Elizabeth's memory, during her high school years she did not have much of the social life. Being away on weekends prevented her from continuing with the scout activities as well as from establishing closer relationships with the schoolmates.

Contact with the world outside of the ethnic community also resulted in friction between parents and children. In order to maintain their connection to their Polish heritage, parents paid special attention to language retention and other forms of exposure to ethnic traditions. Their children's reactions varied. Christine admits that between the ages of 9 and 12 she had issues with speaking Polish in public. During trips to the

¹³⁵ Romanowski, Ron, 13.

¹³⁶ Mogk, Elizabeth, 9-10.

department store, she stood close to her parents and whispered. She describes it as a feeling of not 'fitting in' while speaking Polish.

Her reluctance to engage in public displays of her ethnic background lessened as Christine grew up. She thinks that the turning point might have been in 1967 when her family went to visit the Expo in Montreal. While she was there she saw many people speaking different languages and began to think that it was a good thing. As she concludes: "if I spoke another language I was better for it."¹³⁷ That acknowledgment of Christine's acceptance of her second language was also noticed by her father. She remembers an observation that her father made in the last few years: when she was in grade 10, she was with her father somewhere in public and Christine yelled something in Polish to her father across a large distance with other people around. At that time, Christine's father thought that his daughter accepted the language and did not care about speaking it in public anymore. Christine's father described it to her as a very moving incident.¹³⁸

Christine remembers that her parents felt very strongly about "maintaining Polish heritage within Canadian society." In order to do that, they made their children actively participate in everything they did. The whole family listened to weekly radio programs in Polish, and went together as a family to many events. Sometimes, there were performances by traveling entertainers during the evening and, apart from Christine and her brother, there were not many children attending. Christine says that "we as children were going to these concerts because we understood, I still remember those performances, and they were great." Her understanding of her parents motivation was

¹³⁷ Tabernor, Christine, 23.

¹³⁸ Tabernor, Christine, 24.

that they were attending these events not just for themselves but also for their children, as it was a way of giving them a “strong sense of their heritage”. This was at a time before the internet or videos and when any family that had remained in Poland did not have easy access to telephones, so contact with those who remained in Europe was very limited.¹³⁹ Christine’s understanding of her parents’ reasons for emphasizing the continuation of Polish heritage suggests the overlapping of the Polish and Canadian identities. She says that her parents wanted them to “maintain Polish heritage within Canadian society”, which allows for integration and creates an option of choice and therefore is more applicable to the second generation.

Although Bogumil’s parents never joined any Polish organizations in Winnipeg, his mother helped from time to time in the kitchen during community functions. However, she stopped doing this when during one event the volunteers were treated very poorly; this incident was hard for her as she was still very much a “people person”. Bogumil describes how his mother had felt as if she had been taken advantage of. Regardless of his parents’ lack of affiliation to any particular organization, Bogumil remembers that they still valued their Polish heritage and shared it with their children, but “they would pick what context to do that in. The most natural one was the church, rather than a cultural one.”¹⁴⁰ Bogumil never questioned the need to maintain his heritage; in his opinion “I was happy, my parents were happy, there was no area of conflict.”¹⁴¹

Krystyna was involved in a Polish Girl Guide troop with which she went camping and took part in a variety of activities. With the Guides, she met people with whom she still

¹³⁹ Tabbemor, Christine, 29.

¹⁴⁰ Gajda, Bogumil, 30.

¹⁴¹ Gajda, Bogumil, 31.

stays in touch. Time spent with the Girl Guides was an extension of practicing Polish outside the house. Other ethnic traditions that Krystyna's family celebrated were associated with religion such as Easter and Christmas. Even her family's everyday way of living was based on what her parents knew from Poland, and there was not much discussion about it. Krystyna's mother cooked Polish meals and it seemed like "normality". Krystyna remembers first eating pizza when she went to high school, because there were no pizzerias in North End part of town. The only novelty food was bought during occasional trips to the Kelekis restaurant where she would have a hot dog and French fries.¹⁴²

Ryszard Dubanski remembers the Polish organizations for their financial support of his family. Like many post-war immigrants his parents experienced a very difficult material situation in the first years of living in Canada. Dubanski remembers that help came from his parents' "friends from the army days" who also settled in Winnipeg as well as from St. John Cantius church.¹⁴³ The family was never formally connected with any of the Winnipeg organizations, and Ryszard does not remember attending any functions celebrating Polish culture or history. The Polish community's mutual help and socializing took place on the private level with celebrations of birthdays, weddings, and other personal occasions. Later Ryszard realized that: "I always thought we had a lot of relatives, but then I discovered that my mother uses the terms aunt and uncle very loosely. So a lot of these aunts and uncles weren't really per se aunts and uncles, I

¹⁴² Gajda, Krystyna, 13.

¹⁴³ Dubanski, Ryszard, 7.

thought though we were part of a big family, but in fact, those were just sort of euphemisms for good friends.”¹⁴⁴

The knowledge about Poland was passed to Ryszard through personal stories told to him by his mother. Dubanski remembers vividly the feelings that accompanied these stories: “There was this big anger, well especially with my mother; there was this big kind of, anger always, behind whatever she told me about Polish history; there’s not much joy, or celebration of it; it was this kind of feeling that the Poles had been screwed over very badly, and the world didn’t know it.”¹⁴⁵ Memories of war that Ryszard’s parents carried with them throughout their lives became his childhood memories. Talking about them now, Dubanski reflects on his mother’s “fixation on the war” that resulted in constant retelling dark and dramatic episodes. Both in the interview and his autobiographical short stories, Dubanski presents the main motif of family conversations -- the war. Even social gatherings always ended with war stories being retold year after year by the people who experienced them. This practice had a great impact on Dubanski: “To tell you the truth I think both my brother and I were quite damaged by this because all we wanted to do is to get the hell out of the house, so we wouldn’t have to listen to this.”¹⁴⁶ Ryszard Dubanski’s parents were most likely not aware of the trauma they passed onto the children. Based on the narrative of the interview we can assume that the parental memories were an integral part of their everyday life and they shared with children and friends their interpretations of their past. However, Ryszard, in time, began to recognize simple actions, such as listening to the Polish program on the radio, as a way

¹⁴⁴ Dubanski, Ryszard, 15.

¹⁴⁵ Dubanski, Ryszard, 25.

¹⁴⁶ Dubanski, Ryszard, 26.

of demonstrating his parents' sorrow over their lost country; he recalls the music of Chopin that his father enjoyed as a "very dramatic, very melancholic, historic kind of music. And that's all you'd hear then over the potatoes and chicken; you'd hear all these horror stories about the war."¹⁴⁷

Some sort of balance in his life came from St. John's High school. During the conversation about his time in school, Ryszard Dubanski lightens up and talks with pride, even though not all his memories are positive. In Ryszard's memories, St. John's was a school where children of different ethnic backgrounds studied and played, maintaining good relations. Furthermore, the interviewee states that the multicultural environment created a special energy and fostered many future famous scientists, musicians and other professionals. Dubanski describes the school as a wonderful place where "there was this kind of real multicultural buzz, that kind of positive thing there, and that was just after, or very near when multiculturalism itself became a policy."¹⁴⁸ Dubanski combines in his memories the positive elements of the ethnic backgrounds of his schoolmates with the atmosphere of the mid sixties, of rock and roll, partying, dancing and a very vibrant life style.

The connection between the ethnic organizations and the interviewees who took part in this research varies from person to person. Most of them had contact with the Polish organizations and churches due to their parents' commitment and choices. Some of them continued their involvement into their adulthood; others severed the ties as soon as there was no more pressure from the parents. Edward Soltys, in his article about Polish youth, describes a gloomy history of relations between the Canadian Polish Congress and youth.

¹⁴⁷ Dubanski, Ryszard, 27.

¹⁴⁸ Dubanski, Ryszard, 20.

His review represents the period between 1945 and 1986. The author mentions sporadic successes of the CPC in the recruitment of youth into the organizations, although, in his observations, none of these efforts lasted more than a few years. CPC considered how to encourage young Polish - Canadians to become involved in community organizations, particularly those whose Polish was weak. Two of the most promising measures were providing space for youth groups and discreetly urging older leaders to allow youth groups greater autonomy. Nevertheless, the only success of the CPC was the scouting movement.¹⁴⁹ The lack of connection between Polish youth and the CPC is blamed on the youth, their passivity and refusal to volunteer time and effort, as well as on their unwillingness to pay membership fees and their demands for fast promotions within organizational structures.¹⁵⁰

A different interpretation of this problem can be found in the statements published by young Polish Canadians in the 1970s. During the 1969 National Youth Convention, organized under the auspices of the CPC, the Youth Committee was established, and its first goal was to improve the communication between young Polish Canadians from different provinces. As a result, *Echo Magazine* was created, and its formation was based on the belief that youth is interested in what is happening within the Polish community in Canada and that they are ready to exchange their ideas and opinions about such things.¹⁵¹

During the five years of regular publications, *Echo Magazine* became a voice for youth who had an opinion about their ethnic identity and who cared to bring this issue into a public debate. The editorial board began by publishing the resolutions of the

¹⁴⁹ Soltys Edward, "Youth" in Edward Soltys ed. *Half a Century of Canadian Polish Congress*. (Toronto: Canadian Polish Research Institute, 1994) p. 250.

¹⁵⁰ Soltys Edward, *Youth*, 253.

¹⁵¹ Opening article in *Echo Magazine* February, Vol. 1 No. 1 1970 p. 1.

National Convention and using them as a basis for discussion. Especially strong is the identity statement that reads: "A distinct Canadian identity exists, which arises out of a combination of varied national cultures; the Polish tradition is an integral part of that Canadian identity, and we as Canadian youth of Polish descent have a duty to uphold it."¹⁵² Following these statements, editors of the magazine as well as readers from across Canada held prolonged debate on how the 'Polish tradition' should be maintained within Canadian society. The resolutions written during that first Youth Convention endorsed the multiethnic concept of Canada, especially the new Canadian constitution, which represents the multiethnic character of the country; a call to publicly sponsored media to acknowledge the multicultural composition of society in their productions; the need for ethnic languages to become subjects taught at school; and a review of history textbooks so that the contributions of all Canadians in the development of the country were acknowledged.¹⁵³

For the three hundred young people who attended the convention at York University, the conference was not just another attempt made by the community elders to organize the youth. Krystyna Plewa from Winnipeg, in a letter to the editor, found the convention important and relevant to Polish Canadian youth. In her opinion problems discussed during various sessions "showed a great deal of foresight and advance planning."¹⁵⁴ Grażyna Gardziejewska, also from Winnipeg, wrote from the perspective of a scout leader, and she noticed that the convention could have been just an occasion to meet the people she had not seen since the last jamboree. However, this meeting was so much

¹⁵² Opening article in *Echo Magazine* February, Vol. 1 No. 1 1970 p. 2.

¹⁵³ Opening article in *Echo Magazine* February, Vol. 1 No. 1 1970 p. 3.

¹⁵⁴ Opening article in *Echo Magazine* February, Vol. 1 No. 1 1970 p. 14.

more than a social occasion. Gardziejewska noticed that people gathered at the convention were searching for answers to the questions ranging from the meaning of Polish - Canadian identity to the solution of organizational problems. She concludes her letter by saying: "By the end of that convention I was prouder of my heritage than I had ever been before."¹⁵⁵ The organized movement provided Gardziejewska and Plewa with a sense of unity with other Polish Canadians. It allowed them to create a framework for future development and build pride in their ethnic roots.

Another discussion that took place in the forum of the *Echo Magazine* demonstrates the position that the second generation took on the issues of identity, ethnicity, and the socio -political situation in Canada in the early 1970s. In the second volume, editor Jan Fedorowicz describes Canada as a mosaic where "the various component cultures continue to exist as distinct and separate units" and contrasts this model with an American melting pot which in his opinion blocks the strong points of ethnic traditions from enriching the main culture.¹⁵⁶ The editorial shows the awareness that the young writer has about social issues that were being negotiated in Canada at this time; furthermore, he does not want to be just a bystander in this process. Fedorowicz writes that the role of his generation is to select the best elements of their ethnic tradition and to promote those among Canadians. He calls for pluralism that should characterize Canadian national culture.¹⁵⁷

Well-informed and bold statements regarding Canada were made not only by the editorial board. Zdzislaw Gladki in a column called "Reader's Privilege" presents the

¹⁵⁵ Opening article in *Echo Magazine* February, Vol. 1 No. 1 1970 p. 15.

¹⁵⁶ Editorial in *Echo Magazine* February, Vol. 2 No. 1 Fall 1970

¹⁵⁷ Editorial in *Echo Magazine* February, Vol. 2 No. 1 Fall 1970

point of view of a person who is oriented in the scholarly discussion of the time on multiculturalism. Commenting on John Porter's *The Vertical Mosaic: an Analysis of a Social Class and Power in Canada*, Gladki writes that the problem with ethnic organizations is that "the leaders are generally members of the bourgeoisie while the membership is generally composed of working class people."¹⁵⁸ The leaders, driven by their economic interests and pressure from the ruling class, promote 'regressive nationalist consciousnesses among the membership, a position which results in the approval of the WASP elites. This constitutes a misunderstanding of the way that ethnic cultures can contribute to Canadian society, which, in turn, implies that the ethnic organizations should seek political power rather than pander to it. Gladki writes that the constraints placed on people come from the prejudices that the leaders of the community have against Marxism, and its negative outcomes in the Eastern Europe. In the author's opinion, the youth is indoctrinated with the only philosophy that is sent from the ruling class where "private enterprise is equated with freedom". Gladki proposes that youth of ethnic background take an important role, that of creating a counter culture. Its outcome will be a change in the material conditions of the society. As well as abandoning the cooperative and submissive methods of the older generation, "we must build a counter culture in which the cultures of all ethnic groups could exist side by side in which multiculturalism would become a part of an alternative to that grey specialized non-culture which looms over."¹⁵⁹ Gladki's protest against this form of cooperation between ethnic and Anglo-Saxon elites is a representation of Canada's social rights movement that began in 1960 and continued to be vital for the coming decades.

¹⁵⁸ Reader's Privilege in *Echo Magazine* , Vol. 2 No. 3 Spring 1971 p. 4.

¹⁵⁹ Reader's Privilege in *Echo Magazine* , Vol. 2 No. 3 Spring 1971 p. 5.

In the 1960s and 1970s people in Canada organized themselves on an unprecedented scale: in Vancouver the first Canadian gay rights group was established; women organized to discuss issues of abortion and equal rights; students demanded their inclusion in decision making about university matters; men and women protested against the impact nuclear testing had on the environment; and Aboriginal people became active in mobilizing on local and national scale.¹⁶⁰

As a response to the demand of organized groups, consecutive governments instilled changes to social policies; one such example is the introduction of a policy on multiculturalism in 1971. The Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau acknowledged that those of non-English and non-French origin are a vital part of the Canadian political community. However, the introduction of policy by the government was seen at first as a means to win the electoral support of ethnic elites for the Liberal Party, especially those who voiced strong disagreement with the preliminary findings of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. Together with the policy of multiculturalism, the government provided grants to the ethnic communities as well as bureaucratic system that allowed the communities to play the role of consultants in future policy making.¹⁶¹ These amendments guaranteed the support of ethnic elites for the Liberal Party and might have been a source of criticism as demonstrated by Zdzislaw Gladki's commentary. Howard Palmer presents a similar opinion, that the conclusions provided in the last volume of the report written by the members of Bilingualism and Biculturalism Commission did not convince Anglo-Saxon Canadians to support multiculturalism. However, the discussion

¹⁶⁰ <http://www.historyofrights.com/secgen.html>

¹⁶¹ Harles, John "Multiculturalism, National Identity, and National Integration: The Canadian Case." In: Francis, Douglas and Donald Smith ed. *Readings in Canadian History Post Confederation*. (Toronto: Thompson & Nelson, 2006) p. 512.

that prompted the investigation of other than French and English cultures made it clear to Canadian politicians that a group of non - Anglo-Saxons with economic and political power was not willing to “let themselves be defined out of existence by ‘biculturalism’”¹⁶²

Young Polish Canadians took the discussion about human rights and social changes in Canada and made it their own agenda. As texts written by Zdzislaw Gladki and Jan Fedorowicz demonstrate, further issues of *Echo Magazine* indicate that while they were searching for identity, youth did not avoid self criticism. Marek Brodski in the section titled “The Way I See It” wrote an article called “How Youth is Disorganized”.¹⁶³ The author begins with a statement that “the youth in the Polish community is stagnating.” The reasons for it are the following: within Polonia the youth organizations are prompted and sponsored by an older generation, which means that the aims of the youth organization are stated by the older generation and executed according to their will in a more or less direct way. Meanwhile, Polish Canadian youth has a completely different agenda. They do not look back to historical events such as Yalta (1945); rather they are interested in the current problems of Vietnam or the faith of the Canadian Aboriginal people. Brodski writes that young people want to be part of an organization that would reflect their own agendas. The lack of organizations created and served by youth was not only blamed on the dictatorship of the older generation. In the author’s opinion most of the second generation feels comfortable in a passive mood and only a few eager ones are ready to take charge and be creatively original. The rest are content to perpetuate existing structures and goals. Brodski criticizes the belief of young Polish Canadians that they

¹⁶²Palmer, Howard, *Reluctant Hosts*, 317.

¹⁶³*Echo Magazine* September, Vol. 3 No. 1 1971

can, by joining an old organization, change it from within. He writes that upon joining the organizations, the new members' "laziness and ambivalence" prevent them from action and turns them into complainers, unhappy with the old but unable to create anything new.¹⁶⁴

It is impossible to acknowledge how many young people of Polish descent had similar views. Nevertheless, the opinions published in *Echo Magazine* suggest that Polish Canadian youth were not negligent and indifferent towards their heritage, as described by Victor Turek or Edward Soltys. The research based on the oral histories from Manitoba as well as the knowledge gained through the youth publication presents the second generation as a socially and politically conscious group. These are people who are aware of their ethnic roots and not ashamed of them. Perhaps the biggest manifestation of the youth's allegiance to their ethnic roots was observed during the second Youth Convention that took place in October 1971 in Winnipeg. Local representatives of the CPC Youth Committee organized The Polonia of Tomorrow Conference that gathered delegates and guests from across Canada on the campus of the University of Manitoba. As they did during the first conference, young Polish Canadians debated the future of their generation and their role as leaders of the community. Historically, however, this conference had another meaning: during that time Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau was visiting Winnipeg in order to meet with the representatives of ethnic groups to celebrate establishing a multicultural policy. Delegates of the Polonia for Tomorrow Conference took part in that official meeting and later discussed it with the other delegates including

¹⁶⁴ *Echo Magazine* September, Vol. 3 No. 1 1971 p. 32.

a few of the interviewees from this research.¹⁶⁵ Creation of ethnicity is a “process of construction or invention which incorporates, adapts, and amplifies preexisting communal solidarities, cultural attributes, and historical memories. That is, it is grounded in real life context and social experience.”¹⁶⁶ This politically significant time created a unique momentum for the second generation of Polish Canadians, boosting their pride in their ethnic heritage. Their commitment to creating an identity that emerged from Polish and Canadian cultures is further evident in the decisions that the interviewees made in their early adulthoods.

¹⁶⁵ *Czas* Polish Press Ltd. October 20 (1971), p.4

¹⁶⁶ Conzen, *The Invention of Ethnicity*, 2

ADULTHOOD OF THE SECOND GENERATION

The early contact of the second generation with Polish heritage was in most cases a result of their parents' initiatives in maintaining a relationship with the Polish community or in celebrating the ethnic traditions at home. The decisive moment at which the subjects decided whether to continue the connection with their parents' ethnicity and acknowledge the Polish heritage as important in their lives can be observed in the decisions made by the interviewees in their early adulthood. Most of the Polish-Canadians from this research made conscious choices as adults to become Polish-Canadians, and their continuing relationship with the Polish part of their identities directly results from their childhood experiences. The recollections of the adult members of the second generation indicate the individual's relationship with being Polish and Canadian, as well as indicating a broad spectrum of preferences that shaped their identities, some that included institutional involvement and some that were based on personal contact with their heritage.

The narratives of the second generation of Polish immigrants are constructed around the chronology of their lives. Upon completing their secondary educations, the majority of the interviewees got married and started their own families. Regardless of the ethnic background of their spouses, most of the men and women of Polish descent chose to raise their children in the Polish-Canadian heritage. Five of the interviewees were members of Polish organization as adults and five were not; however, all but one of the ten interviewees developed individual ways of celebrating their Polish heritage. Another interesting observation is that most of the interviewees at some point in their adult lives

had a time that they describe as departure from their ethnic roots; again, all but one went back to them later on.

The first important decision made by the second generation about their futures was the choice of a spouse. Of the nine interviewees who got married, four chose a partner of Polish background, and five married into a different ethnic group. Christine Tabbornor says that her mother never pressured her to “marry Polish,” but she thinks that her mother was happy when she learned that her future son-in-law was a Roman Catholic. Tabbornor remembers that at one time her mother explained that it was important to have some cultural similarities with one’s prospective partner, be it religion, language, or heritage. Tabbornor’s father was also overjoyed with her decision to marry a professional soldier as he had, himself, been a soldier.¹⁶⁷ Barbara Kieloch also remembers that her parents never attempted to choose a spouse for their children, and she thinks that this ‘open ended option’ resulted in her and her siblings marrying partners of Polish descent.¹⁶⁸

Zofia de Witt says that her parents hoped that she would find someone of the same ethnic group; they even suggested a suitable partner for her. However, as she comments now, the choice of a husband was to her implicated in the way she would choose to live in other aspects of her life, such as the social class and ethnic enclave she would live in. During the time when she studied at the university, it came to de Witt’s attention that the circle of neighborhood friends of Polish background did not fulfill her expectations. This was especially true when she decided to marry a man of Dutch origin whose family had lived for four generations in Germany before relocating to Canada. Neither her friends from high school nor her parents accepted that choice. In de Witt’s opinion, this lack of

¹⁶⁷ Tabbornor, Christine, 33.

¹⁶⁸ Kieloch, Barbara, 11.

acceptance was due to a post-war stigma that was associated with Germans by immigrants who survived the war in Europe. de Witt noticed a further separation from her peers, for which she accounts as follows: “Maybe I outgrew them. I guess my interests, became different [...] on a social level or maybe [an] emotional level, my interests developed.”¹⁶⁹ de Witt explains that she “wanted to leave the North End” where she grew up; she wanted to achieve a higher status than that of her parents, and to do that she needed to complete her university degree and get a good job as a professional. These attitudes toward social advancement had to also characterize her choice of future husband, since in her opinion,

your husband’s profession did define your status, your class in terms of relationship, so I simply thought, you know, being an electrician or something like that wasn’t good enough [...] I don’t know if I was that calculating at that time, but I certainly knew that I wanted to have a better quality of life than what my parents had.¹⁷⁰

The desire for upward mobility was also a result of the change of social status that de Witt’s parents experienced as immigrants. She describes her parents thinking that the only way to feel socially comfortable in Canada was to be among Polish friends and family. Saturdays and Sundays were filled with social gatherings during which everyone was nicely dressed, followed the etiquette and respected others for who they were as a person; however, “they all knew very well, that come Monday they returned to their menial jobs on the line, whatever factory they were working in, that they were at the bottom of the social and pay scale, they certainly weren’t into the management positions.”¹⁷¹ In de Witt’s recollection her parents fell to a lower social status in Canada compared with their life in Poland. This is how her family understands its history, even

¹⁶⁹ de Witt, Zofia, 12.

¹⁷⁰ de Witt, Zofia, 15.

¹⁷¹ de Witt, Zofia, 17.

though it does not accord with historical reality. Zofia's father was, in Poland, a machinist on a railway, and her mother stayed at home taking care of children; the family owned agricultural land that was cultivated and that yielded additional income. The working class status of de Witt's family did not represent significant downward mobility after coming to Canada, unless it is considered that land ownership allows a better sense of protection than insecure factory work. de Witt's story provides an example of the conscious decision that a child of immigrants made to better the quality of life for herself and her children.

The marital choices made by children of immigrants were not always that deliberate in the sense of wanting to escape their ethnic enclave's destiny. Sometimes choosing a spouse of a different ethnic background was just a natural result of living in a multiethnic society. Elizabeth Mogk met her future husband at college and after two years of courtship they got married. In her interview, she describes the negative reaction of her Polish family to the news that she chose to marry a man of German descent – and not a Catholic man at that. However, Mogk's mother came to accept her daughter's husband after a number of years. The special memory related to marriage that Mogk carried with her over the years is her mother's recollection of her own war time wedding. Elizabeth knew that her "wedding was more the wedding that mama never had because basically her and dad came from opposite ends of the city to the church, the janitor was the witness and the priest gave them half a bottle of wine and a can of sardines, and that was their wedding dinner."¹⁷² When she tells that story Elizabeth is moved to tears, and even though, she says with a sigh, her mother "got a lot to say about what my wedding

¹⁷² Mogk, Elizabeth, 14.

was,”¹⁷³ she got to understand her parents’ war story about wanting to make a commitment and promise to each other, and that understanding led her to allow her wedding to become the event her mother never had.

The connection that second generation immigrants had to the ethnic community in their adulthood was very often related to a decision about raising their own children in the Polish heritage. Being of Polish descent was projected from the parents to the children in a variety of ways in families from this study. Teaching the Polish language was a very important component of ethnicity and many parents found ways to substitute the lack of a natural environment by enrolling the third generation to Polish language classes, reading community newspapers and books, listening to radio programs, and participating in many Polish community events. Religion was the second most important aspect of ethnic identity.

The second generation replaced their extended families – who would have been extensively involved in their children’s lives had they been living in Poland – by becoming more involved in the Polish community. They did this, for example, by attending and helping to organize community events and maintaining a wide social circle. Christine Tabbemor has maintained her involvement within the Polish community as an adult. Like her parents, her strategy was to make language learning a priority. She spoke Polish to her children at home when they were young, later supplementing her teaching by enrolling her children in the Polish Language Saturday school and involving them in an ethnic dance group. She acknowledges there were difficulties in teaching Polish to the next generation. Tabbemor describes the strong influence of public school and the

¹⁷³ Mogk, Elizabeth, 15.

predominantly English environment, as well as a lack of effective teaching methods.

Her children went to Polish language classes with children of the more recent post-1980s, immigrants who, in most cases, already spoke Polish, so the classrooms consisted of students with a wide range of aptitudes and experiences.

Today, Tabbenor is involved in work at the *Ogniwo* Polish Museum,¹⁷⁴ together with her mother, and she values that activity as intellectually fulfilling and as a good social outlet. She is also very involved as a parent, helping with dance groups where her son and daughter practice. When she talks about volunteering, Tabbenor presents her views of the latest wave of immigrants, critiquing their lack of community involvement. The future of the Polish community depends, in her opinion, on the abilities of the local Polish ethnic organizations to “reengineer themselves.” She has been observing the evolution of organized life since her parent’s time, and says that, “if you [the organization] do not recreate yourself in a new environment, you will die.”¹⁷⁵

Krystyna Gajda also highlighted the language as a very important aspect of preserving her heritage. She became most involved in the Polish community when her children started going to Polish Language School on Saturdays. In order to provide for her children and others a modern means of language acquisition, she organized summer day camps where teachers of Polish spent time with the children, playing games, singing songs, and doing other activities.

Krystyna Gajda says that “culture can survive on many levels;” therefore, before she had children she was also involved in the National Multicultural Theatre Association.

¹⁷⁴ The Polish Museum *Ogniwo* was established in Winnipeg by post-World War II immigrants. Its goal is to collect and preserve artifacts related to Poles in Manitoba. The museum members also teach about Polish heritage both to the Polish community and Canadian society at large.

¹⁷⁵ Tabbenor, Christine, 51.

This included different ethnic groups that performed in their native languages, and once a year presented their works during a Multi-Ethnic Theatre Festival. She talks about the five years she spent managing the Polish Theatre with great pride, acknowledging the importance of both the unique ethnic aspect and the possibility of sharing cultures and experiences.¹⁷⁶ Gajda's experiences with the theatre were a reflection of the political decisions made by the government of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. In 1972 Trudeau appointed a minister of state responsible for multiculturalism and established the Multiculturalism Directorate within the Department of the Secretary of State. Gajda actively experienced the social changes in Canada during this time. She recalls that her role was to coordinate the work of the Polish theater and to acquire the government funds then made available to support their activities. This is an example of a second generation immigrant agency choosing elements of ethnic identity that merge with the goals of the mainstream society.

Gajda says that even though she functioned primarily in English and was never completely fluent in Polish, she took great pride in helping to run the local Polish language newspaper. She has been managing the paper for the last several years and sees it as the best outlet for the Polish community's activities. To her, the newspaper can also be a way to improve communication between different waves of immigration. Furthermore, it is another approach to promoting Polish language, history, and traditions. Gajda places great weight on the fact that there are many venues to experience such heritage: newspapers, dance, books, and art. She acknowledges that many Poles limit themselves "just to folk which is dated, neither realistic, nor contemporary in the world.

¹⁷⁶ Gajda, Krystyna, 31.

Children get the feel, the rhythm, passion of the music. They get the spirit of the culture through the music. It is positive, but I am disappointed that this is all there is to it.”¹⁷⁷

The principle of language learning¹⁷⁸ was also evident in the story told by Barbara Kieloch who, together with her husband Zbigniew, devoted many years to volunteering at Saint Andrew Bobola School, where Kieloch was responsible for fundraising to support the school’s operations. The education of her children about Polish heritage was not limited to the teaching offered by the school. Her Polish father-in-law also took an active part in teaching his grandchildren during his annual visits to Canada. Kieloch describes with great pride how her own and her children’s knowledge of the Polish heritage was enriched over the years. She remembers with delight her visit to Poland with her children: “[Grandfather] instilled a sense of history and knowledge in the children and they went back with lists of what they wanted to see, according to what grandpa would have shown them.”¹⁷⁹ In her description of the methods they used to encourage her children to learn about Poland, Kieloch emphasizes the fact that it was important that the children felt all of the positive aspects of expanding their knowledge, that the effort they put into the study was rewarded with both personal satisfaction and the pride of the whole family.

Kieloch points out another aspect of Polish community life that in her opinion is very important: that is, the community is ready to help and include new Polish immigrants. For

¹⁷⁷ Gajda, Krystyna, 42.

¹⁷⁸ Wsevolod Isajiw provides research results that show language loss between ethnic generations in “behavioral level”, however, on the internal level 50 percent of the second generation would encourage their children to study ethnic language. See: Isajiw, Wsevolod, *Understanding Diversity: Ethnicity and Race in the Canadian Context*. (Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, Inc., 1999), p.188.

¹⁷⁹ Kieloch, Barbara, 10.

many years, her parents rented apartments to newcomers, helped them find work, registered their children at school -- all the activities related with establishing new immigrants in Canada. Kieloch says that in the 1980s, when her husband Zbigniew immigrated to Canada, "people were very, very nice to him, both within the Polish community, and outside of the Polish community; and we always said we can give back to ten people to make up for it and get them to give back to ten people, than certainly things would be a lot easier for immigrants when they come here."¹⁸⁰ Helping the newcomers is in Barbara's opinion the best opportunity for her children to learn about their cultural heritage. The narratives presenting choices that Kieloch, Tabernor, Gajda and de Witt made in their private lives show that in "exercising greater control over their individual marriage choices and children, immigrants' daughters gradually assumed responsibility for maintaining, adapting, and transmitting ethnic identity through their domestic labour."¹⁸¹ These stories of the second generation immigrant women show how they reinvented the ways of living that guided their mothers, by including the ethnic and mainstream ideals.

The decision to take part in organizational activities was not always connected to the second generation's need to educate their children. An important example of a personal need to volunteer for the ethnic organizations comes from the narratives of de Witt and Chris Lorenc. Both interviewees spent over two decades being involved in the Winnipeg

¹⁸⁰ Kieloch, Barbara, 22.

¹⁸¹ Gabaccia, Donna, *From the Other Side. Women, Gender and Immigrant Life in the U.S. 1820 – 1990*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. XVI

Polish community's endeavors; both choose not only to do their part within the community, but also to showcase their ethnic group in Canadian society as a whole.

After getting married and establishing herself as a teacher, de Witt decided to move on with her life, leaving the North End Polish community behind. She spent the next ten years, until 1981, working; then she was asked by the president of the Canadian Polish Women's Federation Mary Panaro to give a speech at the annual celebration of Polish Constitution Day (May 3rd).¹⁸² That event brought de Witt's focus back to the Polish community; she joined the Federation and from then on her biography becomes thickly woven with great achievements. When she describes her involvement as an adult in the Polish community, de Witt often uses the word 'first.' She was asked to accept the position of vice president – and then of president – of the Canadian Polish Congress, Manitoba Branch: "Now, that was very unprecedented, uncharted waters, up until then they never had a woman president of Congress, they never had somebody that wasn't part of SPK,¹⁸³ because SPK had a very strong pull on the Congress and the other organizations felt almost like a second class."¹⁸⁴ When she was in charge of the CPC de Witt realized that it is not enough to manage the internal affairs, in her opinion there was a great need to join efforts with the other ethno-culture communities of Manitoba, which she did by becoming a member of the Manitoba Multicultural Council. Involvement in

¹⁸² Mary Adamowska Panaro received the Order of Canada. A member of the Welfare Council of Winnipeg, she played a significant role in bringing Polish refugees to Canada after World War II. She has been a leader of the Canadian Polish Women's Federation Branch # 7, and she is known as "International Mother" for her role in establishing the International Center of Winnipeg.

¹⁸³ SPK (Stowarzyszenie Kombatantow Polskich) – Polish Combatants Association.

¹⁸⁴ de Witt, Zofia, 30.

government-established structures such as MEAAC¹⁸⁵ in Zofia's opinion "increased the profile of Polish community externally, we started to be sort of considered as one of the groups to be reckoned with, we were being invited to consultations on issues and policies."¹⁸⁶

The connections she made with local institutions in Manitoba lead to de Witt's involvement with CPC on a national level and again the reflection of being 'first' comes from the two appointments. In 1988 de Witt became the first woman to chair the national CPC convention in St. Catherine's; it was a bold decision that Zofia describes without hesitation as follows: "At that time it was very much the old boys club, the average age was usually sixty five plus, so I was considered like a *dziecko*,¹⁸⁷ they looked at me as somebody to advise, to guide, some of them made a mistake of not giving me enough credit to have an opinion of my own, and also to know how to get my opinion out and not necessarily follow."¹⁸⁸ Her second prominent appointment was to the presidency of the Millennium Fund.¹⁸⁹ She was the first woman and the first person from outside the Toronto area to hold this office.

Zofia de Witt tells the story of her involvement in her ethnic heritage with great pride in her achievements; she recognizes the fact that she crossed the boundaries of ethnicity, age, and gender when she dealt with institutions. de Witt says that while she was serving as a member of many committees and advisory boards, she always had in her mind that

¹⁸⁵ The Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council provides guidance to the government on behalf of Manitoba's multicultural communities.

¹⁸⁶ de Witt, Zofia, 30.

¹⁸⁷ dziecko - child

¹⁸⁸ de Witt, Zofia, 31.

¹⁸⁹ The Canadian Polish Millennium Fund was established in 1966 by the CPC to commemorate the millennium of Christianity in Poland. The resources gathered in the fund are awarded to people and institutions who promote Polish culture in Canada.

her contribution came from experience. In her opinion, “it is important not to just have learned about certain things from literature, but to having actually live through it, and you can relate to people on a totally different level than you do if you are a bystander sort of looking in.”¹⁹⁰ That view guided de Witt through her future years of work for the Polish community. When she was asked about her best memories related to volunteering she lists her favorites on a public and personal level. In 1990s, while she was in charge of CPC Manitoba, de Witt undertook the effort to unite the Polish community in support of establishing the Polish Fund at the University of Manitoba. After nearly ten years of tireless fundraising, the Polish ethnic group became visible in the university by establishing a permanent Polish Studies program; it was a success because of the participation of the whole community, but to de Witt it was a lifetime achievement that she describes in a very personal way: “That was sort of my baby, so I never walked too far away from it [...] [The Fund] is still very dear to my heart and I wouldn’t let anything happen to jeopardize it, not as long as I am around and can do something about it.”¹⁹¹

The same first-hand understanding of immigrant experiences resulted in de Witt’s second memory related to work, which relates to the large wave of Polish political immigration in the 1980s.¹⁹² Zofia de Witt recalls that “it was amazing to see the many

¹⁹⁰ de Witt, Zofia, 33.

¹⁹¹ de Witt, Zofia, 39.

¹⁹² In Poland during the second half of the 1980s, the trade union Solidarność (Solidarity) gained public support and reached ten million members. Among the many amendments that Solidarność wanted to implement were requests for better economic conditions for the people as well as political freedom. As a result of the government’s declaration of martial law and their de-legalization in 1981, many people fled Poland seeking a better economic and political life abroad. From 1981 to 1991 Canada allowed Polish citizens to immigrate with refugee status. 95,202 Poles came to Canada from various refuge camps in Europe. Many individuals and families were

people that volunteered their time, energy and money to help refugees as they were coming to Canada, and also the relief effort that was mobilized, in terms of sending food, medicine, and clothing to Poland.”¹⁹³ This transnational connection that de Witt was part of brought a momentum for many people from the Polish ethnic group to identify with their cultural heritage. Even though the post-World War II immigrants did not support the communist government in Poland, there were always personal connections between Polish Canadians and their relatives in Poland or associations organizing relief programs run by the Roman Catholic Church.

Chris Lorenc also remembers the early 1980s, when he was on the board of directors of the Polish Combatant’s Association and the vice president of the CPC, as a very important time in his life. Lorenc describes the events with enthusiasm:

When the circumstances in Gdansk gave a rise to Solidarność, I was involved in putting together the mass rallies at the legislative buildings, and I remember it was on a Sunday and we needed to get people out to the legislative buildings; so myself and another went to each of the parishes and in the middle of the mass we took a note to the priest who was celebrating mass saying you must announce that we’re having a rally in support of Poland and Solidarność.¹⁹⁴

The support for the Solidarność movement that Lorenc describes did not end with rallies and public demonstrations. Between 1983 and 1992, he was elected to the Winnipeg City Council, and during that time, even though he resigned from some positions within Polish community, Lorenc supported the cause of the Solidarność movement by lobbying the

sponsored by Polish Canadian families or institutions. (See Encyclopedia of Canada’s Peoples entry *Poles* by Henry Radecki.)

¹⁹³ de Witt, Zofia, 41.

¹⁹⁴ Lorenc, Chris, 13.

Canadian government agencies and convincing them that the changes happening in Poland need to be supported and acknowledged by other countries.¹⁹⁵

In his recollection Lorenc connects his enthusiasm to aid the Polish democratic movement with the views of his parents, who, as political immigrants, spent their lives condemning the Soviet-backed government in Poland. He says that his parents did not go back to Poland until the country regained its independence in 1989. For Lorenc, then, political involvement was a continuation of a proud legacy, and he talks with great pride about his visit to free Poland with the Saint Boniface Hospital Foundation, which awarded Lech Wałęsa the Man of the Year Award.¹⁹⁶ As he describes the experience: “I acted as a translator for Don McCain who was the chairman of the board, and that was just an incredible experience, to have met Lech Wałęsa, to be in the same room as that individual and to be talking to him about what was going on in Poland, and to share his experience.”¹⁹⁷ While he describes his involvement in Polish-Canadian politics Lorenc shares the passion and conviction that guided him for many years. He talks about consecutive visits to Poland and his assistance with cooperation between Polish institutions and the government of Premier Garry Filmon, each time highlighting how proud he was to be able to support the just, democratic Poland that his parents fought for during the World War II.

There is only one disappointment in his narrative that he takes very personally, which was the lack of understanding that the new 1980s immigrants had for the Polish

¹⁹⁵ Lorenc, Chris, 27.

¹⁹⁶ Lech Wałęsa was one of the organizers and a leader of Solidarność, the free non-communist trade union in Poland. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983 for his role in negotiating democratic freedoms for Polish citizens. In the 1990 election he was elected the President of Republic of Poland.

¹⁹⁷ Lorenc, Chris, 22.

Canadians they met on their arrival. The issue of separation between these two waves of immigrants had an impact on the interviewee, visible in the emotional statement he gives about the self-imposed isolation of the ‘Solidarność immigration’ from his parents’ or his own generation: “There was almost antipathy by the new generation [sic] which in some cases bordered on contempt, the conclusion almost being that the old Polonia¹⁹⁸ hadn’t accomplished anything and that they weren’t worthy of our association, and to me that was a real, real disappointment because they had frankly no basis upon which to come to any of those conclusions.”¹⁹⁹

John Bukowczyk comments on the Solidarność era refugees who did not fit with older Polish Americans. In his opinion, the 1980s immigrants, who were assimilating as soon as they mastered English, had a different middle class lifestyle and often criticized Polish-American ethnic leaders for having a completely different agenda. The Solidarność refugees thought that the struggle for democracy in Poland was the only significant issue. Once that was resolved there was no reason to gather within ethnic communities to celebrate cultural events that had little relevance to their new American lives.²⁰⁰

Reflection about adulthood life provided by interviewees in this project consists of two steps: the first is finding the answer about their ethnic identity, and the second is describing the relation between them and the Polish community in Winnipeg. As the stories told by Krystna Gajda, Christine Tabernor, Kieloch, Mogk, de Witt, and Lorenc demonstrate the narrator use as a reference point to the ethnic heritage of their parents.

¹⁹⁸ Polonia is a term commonly used by Polish immigrants to describe the Polish Diaspora.

¹⁹⁹ Lorenc, Chris, 26.

²⁰⁰ Bukowczyk, John, *And My Children Did Not Know Me: A History of the Polish Americans*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 123.

Schooling their children in Polish or English and deciding whether to marry inside or outside the Polish group - these were the important choices that reflected the interviewees' positive attitudes towards their parents' ethnicity. Both their affirmations of the Polish-Canadian heritage and their conscious departure from it are carefully explained and justified in all of the recollections which shows that there was no indifference towards the issue.

The cases of Ryszard Dubanski, Bogumil Gajda, Ron Romanowski, and Raymond Dolny show how some representatives of the second generation chose to sever their formal ties with the Polish community. However, in all of these cases again, as in the cases in which the interviewees embraced active roles in the Polish community, the interviewees speak of a search for their personal stand on ethnicity, and a way to describe themselves in terms of their heritage.

During his adult life, Bogumil Gajda has continued to have an intellectual interest in his heritage, even though he says that he "never had any formal knowledge of Poland. Never read anything particular in Polish."²⁰¹ He explored the culture by going to concerts, buying a dictionary, and occasionally reading newspapers. For many years, Bogumil's mother corresponded with family members still in Poland, and he picked up this tradition, maintaining contacts with his generation of relatives. He went to Poland only once, but is planning to do so in the near future, because now he sees his own son's recent visit to Poland as a way of maintaining links with the family.

²⁰¹ Gajda, Bogumil, 32.

Bogumil Gajda has never felt the need to belong to any Polish organization as an adult. In his opinion, the community's organizations are self-serving,²⁰² which he feels can lead to situations where there is nothing to offer to people who are already established in their new lives. He also sees a need for these organizations to make changes, saying that "organizations should reach out and see where the next generation is going to come from."²⁰³ Personally, Bogumil replaced the organizational life with new "technology" (such as the internet and the telephone). These have allowed him to connect with people in Poland and assist him in expanding his knowledge on subjects related to that country.

Ryszard Dubanski talks about his childhood in a Polish household in Winnipeg that reflected a mostly negative impression of Polish history and the very challenging life of immigrant parents. He also went through some turbulent years in his youth, trying different schools and looking for a place in which to settle. However, he says in retrospect that he was never ashamed of his Polish roots and had no difficulty admitting to them publicly. In his thirties Dubanski became very interested in Polish culture and history, celebrated traditional Polish holidays, learned to cook the cuisine, and reinstated his first name from Richard back to Ryszard. Dubanski mentions meeting other people of Polish descent who "didn't seem to have a very traumatized view of themselves, as sort of second class citizens or something, because they were Poles, in fact we all had saluted that."²⁰⁴

²⁰² Bogumil explained that the Polish ethnic organizations are still functioning mainly as aid societies without long term programs that would attract future generations of immigrants.

²⁰³ Gajda, Bogumil, 54.

²⁰⁴ Dubanski, Ryszard, 29.

Dubanski's emotional connection with his heritage is also evident in his plans to visit Poland, plans that he had in the past but which never came to fruition due to reasons beyond his control. Now that he is at a point in life when he could go there without a problem, he says that "maybe I have a kind of avoidance problem with it, because of my mother especially, so maybe it's just a psychological hurdle for me now."²⁰⁵ The theories pertaining to the departure of the second generation from their ethnic heritage are not supported in qualitative studies such as this interview. Careful examination of the immigrant's life story not only contradicts the theory but shows that the subject was not discouraged by his parents' negative experiences and continued to discover what the heritage means to him. Even though his parents' pasts keep coming back in his memories, Dubanski uses them to create his new identity as a writer whose fictionalized stories based on biographical material serve as catharsis that helps him explain the past and present.

The search for a narrative that can make sense of the past and present is also one of Ron Romanowski's foci. Through the act of writing poetry he constructs an account about his life that allows him the feeling of rootedness. Romanowski describes his connection to his Polish ethnicity: "My first language is Polish, so the modern theory is that poetry comes from your mother. Because the mother talks to you, takes care of your needs and gradually, because poetry is about loss, that's replaced, she becomes less important and you are always trying as a poet to get back to that state when you had perfect symbiosis with your mother."²⁰⁶ He lists Polish poets such as Wisława

²⁰⁵ Dubanski, Ryszard, 28. Dubanski's mother for many years tried to go back to Poland to visit her relatives, but was denied access to the country as a former DP by the communist government.

²⁰⁶ Romanowski, Ron, 29.

Szyborska and Czesław Miłosz as his inspirations, and he continues with his answer by discussing the role of poetry in Poland and in Canada: “I feel more, more freedom in poetry, because in my imaginary world, in Poland, they still love poetry and that’s a poetry culture. And Canada isn’t, Canada is not poetry culture, you are on the edges here, you’re on the edge of society.”²⁰⁷ Poland, the country of Romanowski’s parents’ origin, serves as a model on which he bases his emotional maps. Romanowski identifies with a Polish sensitivity that is all the more powerful when his narration switches into first person plural: “If you think of yourself as a part of a people, Polish people, you know, we have done pretty well lately and yet we were so oppressed for so long, now that could be that’s part of my upbringing, that feeling that you have that triumphant side and the melancholy side.”²⁰⁸ Returning to his parents’ origin helps Romanowski create an identity where the Polish culture is an element of artistic uniqueness; it gives him roots, a background, defines him as a poet and a person and he prefers that to the Canadian “fragmented” identity.²⁰⁹

In his writing, Romanowski takes the Polish Romantics’ role of a poet as the voice of people and merges it with the Canadian self-creating continuity. When he is asked about the title to part one of his book, *Sweet Talking*, “After considering North End Winnipeg as a template with which to measure the world,”²¹⁰ Romanowski points to the physical place in the city where in his opinion his life took shape. Describing his views about these formative years from the adult point of view Romanowski says,

²⁰⁷ Romanowski, Ron, 29.

²⁰⁸ Romanowski, Ron 33.

²⁰⁹ Romanowski, Ron, 34.

²¹⁰ Romanowski, Ron, *Sweet Talking* (Winnipeg: Augustine Hand Press, 2004).

I got that sense that [the] world will work, will work out, if you read enough, or if you run fast enough, if you play hockey well enough, you will be as good or better as those South End kids in River Heights. That's what that is, it's a challenge, and also a lament in a way because North End Winnipeg is looked on in a different way now... and I don't think it has changed that much, it's still the land of opportunity of education and cultures mixing. When cultures mix there is sometimes conflict but there is also often a wonderful symbiosis that happens... that's what North End Winnipeg as a template means.²¹¹

This nostalgia for a childhood spent in a neighborhood populated by immigrant families shows that Romanowski identifies with a particular group of working class Canadians. These are the people whom he represents in his poetry. Their lives became "as good or better" a subject for his poetry than the educated, well-off people from the South End of Winnipeg.

The invention of identity can be made through different strategies. The one chosen by Romanowski and Dubanski is described by Wsevolod Isajiw as "bringing the two worlds together" and further described as the 'creative approach'. Isajiw writes that "Examples of this approach are the creative writers, artists and scholars who try to understand their experience of doubleness by writing about it or by expressing their understanding of it in an artistic or intellectual form."²¹² Writing about ethnicity helps not only the author address the subject of their ethnic identity, but also makes the findings relevant to the readers and helps them in resolution of their problems.

²¹¹ Romanowski, Ron, 24.

²¹² Isajiw, *Understanding Diversity*, 196.

DEFINITIONS OF IDENTITY

The representatives of the second generation Polish immigrants chosen for this case study are fully incorporated in Canadian society. They all talk about the pride of being Canadian and how that feeling was readily acknowledged by their parents. Christine Tabbernor remembers that after the political changes in Poland in 1989 her parents had the option to receive Polish passports; they did not take it. Tabbernor knows how grateful her parents were to Canada for “taking them in and allowing [them] a pretty good life.”²¹³ She also calls attention to the aspects of Canadian tolerance, and pride in differences of race, culture and religion. Tabbernor defines herself as Canadian first, yet she adds “of Polish descent.” The strong ties to Poland that she maintains through her work in the museum are important to her. Nonetheless, she feels that she is a unique part of the Canadian community.

Krystyna Gajda’s identity also includes being Canadian first, listing the following reasons for that choice: “earning money, contributing to society, having freedom to be of ethnic background.” The statement of being “Canadian first” features in all of the narratives; the interviewees readily explain how they see their ethnic identity, using as a reference point a description of the laws and rules that govern Canadian society. Lorenc says, “Well, I am fiercely proud to be Canadian and fiercely proud to have a Polish background and I think that one of the beautiful things about Canada is that you can be Canadian and be enriched by your background, by your community, by the background that you bring to everything that you aspire.”²¹⁴ Bogumil Gajda’s view also highlights

²¹³ Tabbernor, Christine, 52.

²¹⁴ Lorenc, Chris, 33.

the social order in Canada: “I am Canadian but that includes the other rather than excludes. That is why I do not see the need to hyphenate.”

Barabara Kieloch tells me that as a child she described herself as Polish-Canadian and made a point in distinguishing herself from the Ukrainians. Kieloch wanted to be recognized for who she was and respected for her values. Kieloch notes that when she was going to elementary school there were children of different ethnic backgrounds in her class, but as she remembers, at that time there was no special attention paid to multiculturalism. School celebrations included Canada Day, “but there really wasn’t the distinction of the uniqueness and the richness that each cultural group brought forward.”²¹⁵ Leaving behind one’s ethnic roots in order to fit within the society at large was, in Kieloch’s opinion, expected within a public domain; however, the immigrants like her parents had never subscribed to this in their private lives.

Zofia de Witt has a precise opinion of how ethnic identity is created in general: “Your identity, who you are is made up of many things and one of the major things is, your ethnic group, your family, what values were instilled in you as you were growing up.”²¹⁶ In de Witt’s opinion, diversity is a value and should not be a threat; she sees equality in the fact that, with the exception of the First Nations, everyone else is an immigrant to Canada with a shorter or longer history here. Everyone has also the same rights and responsibilities: “The right to expect a quality of life, have the opportunity, choice as to their religion and culture, and sexual orientation, all these things that may be a little bit on the cutting edge to generations older than us, but that’s the reality today.”²¹⁷ As an

²¹⁵ Kieloch, Barbara, 19.

²¹⁶ de Witt, Zofia, 35.

²¹⁷ de Witt, Zofia, 36.

interviewee who immigrated to Canada at the age of twelve, de Witt describes the evolution of her views on identity: “When I first came to Canada, I guess probably the first ten years or so, I considered myself Polish, right through and through [...]; in my thirties when, I had my own kids and that’s when I started to feel Canadian of Polish background. Canadian in terms of my life being here, my loyalty being here, but Polish, there was a part of me, certain beliefs; certain traditions that were important and are until this day are part of me.”²¹⁸

Raymond Dolny’s definition of identity is an example of a completely different interpretation of the same principles that Kieloch and de Witt identified as formative for ethnic identity. Dolny explains that the values that he was brought up with by his ethnic parents are not uniquely Polish values; he says, “be a good person, be honest with people, treat people like, you know, basically the basic, you can view as basic Christian values. But if you look at the basic Christian values, those are the same thing in Hinduism, in Islam, in Zionism, Buddhism; basically those are the values that are more important than your national values.”²¹⁹ Dolny describes himself as Canadian, because this is where he ‘fits,’ where he belongs and shares the values of the society.

Elizabeth Mogk’s views are related to those of Raymond Dolny. She sees the Polish ethnicity as remnants of the past – memories that include language and the traditions celebrated at home -- but they are not greatly important in her life now. She describes herself foremost as a Canadian, adding after a moment of reflection, with Polish heritage.²²⁰

²¹⁸ de Witt, Zofia, 36.

²¹⁹ Dolny, Raymond, 29.

²²⁰ Mogk, Elizabeth, 20.

Ryszard Dubanski's definition of identity suggests the importance of this topic in his considerations. He noticed that searching for one's roots is "a kind of very middle class occupation, that people want to do that because they, they have time and money to do that, and it gives them another kind of, facet to their multicultural lives."²²¹ Dubanski admits to being part of that group. He wrote his book *Black Teeth* to state that he also possesses double identity. Furthermore, he attempts to decide what this dual state of mind means to him, carefully explaining that even the order of hyphenation is important because it balances his emotional connection: "I think my attitudes towards the Polishness are somewhat ambiguous because I don't know whether it's been such a particularly great thing for our family to have come here and live, as sort of Polish-Canadians, because, you know, certainly my parents never assimilated, and my brother has not had a positive experience of it. I on the other hand have had a positive experience of it [...]. If I could switch these words around, I might say Canadian slash Pole."²²²

Defining one's personal identity is, in Dubanski's opinion, a part of the Canadian national narrative. The debate about what it means to be Canadian has been triggered and supported by the mass media for some time now, and Dubanski's stand on the subject is that when people strongly hold onto their heritage, it is "rather culturally divisive instead of culturally blending."²²³ Dubanski says that the model created by public debate became a "very complex metaphor" of how different identities and cultures mix together.

²²¹ Dubanski, Ryszard, 31.

²²² Dubanski, Ryszard, 31.

²²³ Dubanski, Ryszard, 33.

However, “people do not want to blend ethnicity and mainstream, they want to be one or another.”²²⁴

That the interviewees continued to have contacts with the Polish heritage in their adult lives shows that this matter has stayed consistently important to them. Having a positive approach to their parents’ past did not stop the second generation from modifying the way they celebrated the old customs and adapting them to fit their Canadian realities. Bogumil Gajda chose to have intellectual contact with the culture, without organizational complexity. Tabernor sought cultural contact through art and history, which corresponded to her own personal interests. Romanowski and Dubanski creatively used their parents’ heritage to create a narrative about their own lives. de Witt and Lorenc took their parents’ ideals further and connected Polish immigrants with ethno-cultural groups in Winnipeg.

This study shows that many immigrants’ children choose to explore their Canadian, non-Polish identities before returning to identify with one form or another of Polish - Canadianess. The processes of searching for an identity are described by John Bukowczyk, who wrote on the second generation immigrants in America, primarily analyzing the choices of children whose parents immigrated before World War I. During the depression these young Polish - Americans had very few opportunities for social advancement. Mobilization during World War II pulled this generation from ethnic enclaves and created new prospects for them. The men of the second generation who came back from the war took advantage of the GI Bill that supported education, which allowed them to move into white collar jobs or into the skilled professions. The women

²²⁴ Dubanski, Ryszard, 35.

of the second generation were responsible for earning money during the war to replace the income brought by men and often continued to work after their husbands were demobilized.²²⁵

Together with upward mobility the second generation desired to move out of the traditional living conditions of their parents' generation. Choosing to live in suburbs and newer, bigger houses symbolized the better life that was postponed by the war. The economic advancement of the second generation went together with neglecting the Polish heritage. Bukowczyk writes that ethnicity disadvantaged young Polish-Americans of the second generation; he accounts for this situation in several ways. Among others is that in post-World War II America, workplace discrimination due to ethnic last names or ethnic affiliations was very common. Furthermore, an upbringing in a culture of submissiveness to the needs of an ethnic group that made immigrants' children less prepared to compete in 'individualistic' mainstream society. Another drawback of their visible ethnicity was the image of Poles that was prominent in mainstream society, which associated Poles and Polish-Americans with the Holocaust and anti-Semitism; this anti-Polish bias and stereotypes were promoted by mass culture, especially by motion pictures, and so-called 'Polish jokes' popularized by characters in *All in the Family* and *Laverne and Shirley*. In such an environment, even the Polish-Americans who did have significant careers were not able to improve the overall negative image of the group.²²⁶

In Bukowczyk's opinion the "cultural erosion" of Polish communities was a result of discrimination and fast integration into the mainstream society and economy. The second generation did not teach their children Polish considering it a "liability more than [an]

²²⁵ Bukowczyk, *And My Children*, 96.

²²⁶ Bukowczyk, *And My Children*, 112.

asset.”²²⁷ As a result of this cultural climate, the third generation had minimal contact with their grandparents who were the carriers of ethnic culture. Often a Polish sounding last name was changed to advance an immigrant’s professional interests. Lastly, war-time army service and intermarriage resulted in a greater degree of Americanization.²²⁸

Bukowczyk writes that it was not even the assimilation processes that threatened the Polish group, but the “homogenizing agent” of a mass-consumption economy in the 1950s. Better homes, filled with goods that simplified life and minimized differences and the mass culture transmitted by TV unified social experiences and created a strong American national culture that suppressed ethnic customs and traditions.

Complete disconnection from Polish heritage was not an option that was acceptable in the long run. Polish-Americans decided first to deal with the discrimination: they negotiated with Jewish community to resolve the accusations of anti-Semitism; battled Polish jokes by requesting the retraction of published jokes and protesting TV shows. Furthermore, Polish-Americans switched from actions that were just ‘reactive’ and began to dynamically build a more positive self-image by organizing Polish-American cultural clubs; formation of the Polish American Historical Association (1942/4); publishing *Polish American Studies* (1943) and *The Polish Review*, a scholarly journals devoted to research on Poland and Polish Diaspora; funding a chair in Polish studies at Harvard University; and launching a popular press campaign, “Project Pole,” that published ads about famous Poles.²²⁹ By the 1970s, Bukowczyk writes, an “ethnic revival was

²²⁷ Bukowczyk, *And My Children*, 113.

²²⁸ Bukowczyk, *And My Children*, 108.

²²⁹ Bukowczyk, *And My Children*, 116

sweeping America.”²³⁰ The changes were visible in the community identifying itself as Polish-American on the census, a renewed interest in Polish history, folklore, and culture, as well as returning to the original spelling of first and last names.

Changes in the attitudes towards ethnicity that were present in the United States in the 1970s were also predominant in Canada at this time. A wide range of social movements brought a new understanding of social diversity. The blue-collar second generation of Polish-Americans, after some experiments with assimilation into the American melting pot, ended up feeling alienated and confused. They were ostracized for their ethnicity on one hand but needed as partners when it came to World War II or the Vietnam War. The change of thinking also came from the African-American pride movement. Calls for “Polish Pride” and “Polish Power” were ways of defending their lives guided by traditional values. Bukowczyk writes, “these working people challenged both the anti-ethnic and the anti-working class picture that the American elite and mass culture had painted of them.”²³¹ Embracing the ‘new ethnicity’ was, in a way, a resurrection of customs and traditions that were already a part of the second generation. Interesting as well was a phenomenon within the third and fourth generation, who in this process “were becoming something they were not.”²³² Bukowczyk explains this trend with Hansen’s Law; however, even according to his research the departure from ethnicity of the second generation was never permanent, and, in many cases, it was dictated by a social and political context rather than by a conscious decision to abandon one’s heritage in favour of something better.

²³⁰ Bukowczyk, *And My Children*, 116.

²³¹ Bukowczyk, *And My Children*, 118

²³² Bukowczyk, *And My Children*, 118.

The theories that “ethnic identification is a process in which the individual participates” and that “this process is embedded in and influenced by a socio-historical context”²³³ yield the following: political and social circumstances, as well as class and education, can activate decisions that are common to different generations of immigrants. When one compares them, these two second generations -- one born of parents who immigrated before World War I and one born of DPs -- have collective experiences that can be noted: both generations experienced the prejudice related to ethnicity; in both cases people changed their names in order to fit in better with the dominant culture. Representatives of both groups, at some point of their lives, ventured away from their ethnicity, although they later returned to it on their own terms. The return in both cases can be summarized as a search for rootedness rather than ethnicity. As Bukowczyk writes, “Well educated, prosperous, upwardly mobile, ethnic Americans felt sure enough of themselves to accept a safely distant past and, in accepting it, found a powerful antidote to feelings of marginality that often came when they crossed class and ethnic lines.”²³⁴ These sentiments are visible in the narratives of the second generation of Polish immigrants from this research as well as from their counterparts in America. Bukowczyk goes further, saying that the third and fourth generations who also joined the ‘new ethnicity’ did so out of often non-verbalized longing for something in their lives that exceeded money, power, and status.

The similarity in their needs to maintain ethnic affiliation is more interesting when we take into consideration the fact that the interviewees from Manitoba placed a great deal of

²³³ Erdman, Mary, *Opposite Poles: Immigrants and Ethnics in Polish Chicago, 1976 - 1990*. (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), p.17.

²³⁴ Bukowczyk, *And My Children*, 119.

importance on the link between their parents' actions to preserve their heritage and their own interest in it. The post-World War II DP parents had different pasts; therefore, their children were raised differently. These parents' connection to Poland was stronger compared to that of immigrants who came from partitioned Poland. What unified the experience of these two second generations was the fact that they did not close themselves within ethnic enclaves. They modernized their ethnicity by both succeeding in upward mobility and valuing ethnic cultural norms.²³⁵

²³⁵ Bukowczyk, *And My Children*, 110.

CONCLUSIONS

The oral histories of the representatives of second generation Polish immigrants in Manitoba after World War II provide an understanding of the process of creation of ethnic identity. The history of Polish immigrants in Manitoba written to date focused mainly on political events and institutional development in Europe and Canada. The major role in the historical narrative was given to Polish organizations in Winnipeg after World War II, especially the Polish Canadian Congress Manitoba Branch and Polish Combatants Association No. 13. These two organizations, among others, devoted their primary attention to teaching Manitoba Poles about Polish history and helping to re-establish democratic rule in post war Poland. Even though sustaining a language and cultural heritage was always a part of their mandate, their story is largely political and refers to people in charge of these organizations, only sometimes mentioning cultural events and those who helped organize them.

These issues, important as they are, shed little light on the internal life of the Polish Canadian community in Winnipeg, especially on the youth who could maintain Polish identity or cut themselves off and integrate more fully into mainstream Canadian society. The present study reports and analyzes the statements of Polish Canadians, born or raised in Winnipeg in the post-war years, through their oral histories. Such oral histories fill in the personal side of immigrant stories, recognizing the individual experience in addition to previous conclusions drawn based on political and economic events. Writing a history of the second generation in particular, helps understand one's family history and recreate the roots that were lost due to immigration from Poland. Researching an immigrant

family history that included descriptions of memories passed from parents to children allows for observing the creation of family memories and recognizing why some elements were more important than others. Recollections about a parent's war experiences that are passed on to children and the effect these had on the second generation are normally not accessible through data gathered in a statistical manner. Oral histories allow the historian to create a social history and discuss issues for which written sources are lacking, such as the distinct ways in which immigrants' children deconstructed their parent's identity in order to reconstruct their own.²³⁶

Through the qualitative study approach, I was able to observe that the parents' heritage had an important influence on their children. All of the interviewees know their parents' past well; they recall stories told by parents about time spent in Poland, about the war, and the first years of immigration. The interviewees also describe and comment on their own memories of childhood, youth and adulthood spent within a Polish - Canadian family. Some interpret their current social values as influenced by their ethnic family; others choose to see their parents' principles as solid Christian beliefs that had nothing to do with their Polish heritage.

This familiar bond created strong relations between the second generation and their Polish heritage. In cases where parents used positive strategies, such as the Polish scouting movement, dance classes, joining in cultural events, among others, to teach about the ethnic heritage, their children continued their interest in ethnic culture or even

²³⁶ Isajiw, Wsevolod, *The Assimilation-Retention Hypothesis and the Second and Third Generations* (<http://hdl.handle.net/1807/70>)p.16“

followed the parents' footsteps and became more deeply involved in the Polish community's affairs. Even when memories passed by parents were negative, such as in Ryszard Dubanski's case, the need for rootedness did not discourage the interviewees from exploring and accepting their ethnic heritage.

There are other aspects of memories that can be better understood through oral histories, such as gender roles within the family and community. Models of social behavior granted by parents were further transformed by the children. This is especially visible in gender relations and the role of women that the first generation brought from Poland. The narratives of Barbara Kieloch, Krystyna Gajda and Christine Tabbernor provide a confirmation of the traditional roles of mothers as the bearers of heritage continuity in the family. What is unique in this research is the explanation of why they decided to continue to teach the third generation about Polish culture and how they modernized and adapted methods used by their mothers. As in the case when they decided that learning language in Saturday school was too difficult for their children and was discouraging, instead of abandoning the idea of learning, each came up with a way of making it more attractive.

Sometimes the gender roles were challenged as in the story of Zofia de Witt who embraced the patriotic goals of her parents but did not settle for the traditional role in the Women's Auxiliary League. She accepted community leadership positions, such as head of the CPC Manitoba Branch, which granted her power to achieve her goals. Woman's agency can also be observed in choosing a marriage partner; both de Witt and Mogk did not hesitate to explain why it was important for them to decide against their parents' advice in this regard.

Furthermore, in this research we can observe that the parents' past did not affect their children's social mobility. Through encouragement to succeed at school, the second generation was not held back by the working class identity of their parents. "Getting ahead" in life was defined by parents as an important goal and a measure of success, and all of the interviewees attained post secondary education and are working as professionals. Taking an active part in the ethnic community did not prevent the second generation from maintaining contacts with other middle class Canadians. They describe their interest in ethnicity as distinctiveness, something that makes their lives complete.

This research confirms the modern theories of immigrant adaptation as presented by Raymond Breton, Kathleen Conzen, and others, that ethnicity is created and constantly reshaped by interactions between the immigrants and the host society. The second generation immigrants from this study grew up influenced by the ethnic culture of their parents. Traditions such as observance of religious, cultural and historical anniversaries provoked them towards this reaction. In some cases, it was an affirmation, and in others a separation from parental ways. Conzen and her colleagues highlight the importance of this process: "The renegotiation of its traditions by the immigrant group presumes a collective awareness and decision-making as opposed to the passive, unconscious individualism of the assimilation model."²³⁷ The interviewees were not hesitant in taking steps to teach the Canadian mainstream about the importance of the Solidarność movement in Poland. The pressure exerted by the second generation on the Canadian

²³⁷ Conzen *et al*, *The Invention of Ethnicity*, 2.

government to support the democratic effort in Poland resulted in sharing the knowledge of their ethnic background and building transnational connections.

Time also influenced the outcome of this study. During this second generation's formative years, Canadian political and social policies were undergoing dramatic transformation. Social activism led to establishing different rights groups that were pressing the government to change; one of these included the introduction of the multiculturalism policy in 1971. The interviewees from this research were influenced by this atmosphere of acceptance of ethnicity and diversity; they took part in national debates on defining the future of Polish Canadians and joined a variety of organized activities which were encouraged and supported by government.

The outcome of any research depends on the choice of the generation that is the subject of a study as much as on the generation of historians who are conducting the research and the state of a scholarship that is devoted to the subject. Researching community history from an academic point of view is to present a story that might challenge existing knowledge accepted by the community. This objective is difficult to fulfill in the case of a community that does not have its own narrative. My project therefore has the additional benefit of giving a voice to the Polish community in Manitoba.

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Appendix 1

Topics for discussion.

1. Place of birth and nationality.
2. Parents' place of birth and nationality.
3. Reasons for leaving Poland (familial, personal, economic, political).
4. When and how parents immigrated.
5. Location in the city. Reasons for choosing location (in relation to work and neighborhood).
6. Parents' employment.
7. Expectations for children (schooling, careers).
8. Traditions and celebrations within family.
9. Sense of family identity: language spoken at home, sense of cultural difference.
10. Relation to family in Poland.
11. Role of relatives.
12. Description of core neighborhood: ethnic institutions, schools, and churches.
13. Language maintenance within community (language schools, church).
14. Prejudice encountered directly, at school, in neighborhood, or through children.
15. Community traditions.
16. Importance of community publications.
17. Relationship of community and the church.
18. Relationship between earlier and later immigrants.
19. Importance of local institutions in maintaining ethnic identity.
20. Relationship between immigrant and receiving societies and other immigrant groups.

Appendix 2
PHOTOGRAPH USE AND CONSENT AND RELEASE FORM
 Page One

Research Project Title: Poles in Manitoba

Researcher(s): Magdalena Blackmore

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

I, _____ agree to let Magdalena Blackmore copy and use the photographs, including photographs showing images of myself, and the stories told about these photographs in our interview of _____ at _____
 (date)

 (location of interview)

in her current project and in any further projects arising from that project.

Please describe any restrictions on the use of these tapes and other materials:

RESTRICTIONS (PLEASE INITIAL):

1. I agree/ do not agree to have the tapes and transcripts on the internet in due course so that future generations can benefit from my knowledge.
2. I agree/ do not agree to have the photographs on the internet in due course so that future generations can benefit from my knowledge.
3. I agree/ do not agree to have the tapes and transcripts deposited in a public archive in due course so that future generations can benefit from my knowledge.
4. I agree/ do not agree to have the photographs deposited in a public archive in due course so that future generations can benefit from my knowledge.
1. The recording (s) is (are) closed to researches for _____ years. During this period, the recording(s) may be used only with my written permission.
2. The photograph (s) is (are) closed to researches for _____ years. During this period, the recording(s) may be used only with my written permission.
3. I agree/ do not agree to have my real name used.
4. Other:

PHOTOGRAPH USE AND CONSENT AND RELEASE FORM

Page Two

Can you help us contact any of the other people in the photographs so we can make sure it is OK with them if we use their picture? Please give us their names, addresses and phone numbers if possible.

Due to the age of these photographs, we cannot seek permission from all the people who may be depicted in them. We are attempting to do so as much as possible by getting releases from those who had the photographs in their personal collections, and from any individuals in their photographs the owner could identify and locate. Should anyone whose image is in this photograph wish to have it removed from the archives collection where they are deposited, they can do so by contacting the archivist.

I would like to receive a copy of the audio recording/ transcript (if available).

To find out whether articles, books, etc. using this interview have been published and how to access them; I will contact Magdalena Blackmore at the address below.

I offer this consent with the understanding that should I wish to withdraw my participation, I need only to contact Magdalena Blackmore at the address below. She will then send all interview materials (tapes, transcripts, notes, digital copies of photos, etc.) to me.

Should you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact:

Magdalena Blackmore

Phone xxx

The collected material will be deposited at:

Ogniwo Polish Museum

1417 Main Street

Winnipeg, Manitoba R2W 3V3

Contact person: Christine Tabbernor

Phone (204) 586-5070

PHOTOGRAPH USE AND CONSENT AND RELEASE FORM

Page Three

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Magdalena Blackmore

Phone xxx

The Wayne Taylor, Chair Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board, has approved this research. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher and/or Delegate's Signature

Date