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“It’s a War on Love”:

***Intermarriage in Vancouver, British
Columbia’s Jewish Community***

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“IT’S A WAR ON LOVE”: *INTERMARRIAGE IN VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA’S JEWISH COMMUNITY*

Sara L. Jackson

ABSTRACT

Ethnic and migration scholars frequently use intermarriage as a measure of assimilation and integration into a society. The issue of intermarriage has particular resonance in Jewish communities across North America, where many religious and secular institutions consider it an anathema. Anxiety about intermarriage is also tied to the tradition of matrilineal descent and debates on the inclusion or exclusion of children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers. Vancouver’s Jewish community presents an unusual case in Canada as the intermarriage rate for Jews under the age of thirty is estimated to be as high as 80 percent and over 50 percent overall. In this paper I will argue that the fight against intermarriage – or the “war on love” – creates gendered racializations of Jews and in some circumstances their non-Jewish offspring. Exclusions

based on gender and blood reveal how race and gender are integral to the politics of being Jewish in Vancouver. The methodology for the paper includes interviews with secular and religious community leaders in Vancouver, participant observation, and a brief discussion of critical race and gender theories.

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Experience has told me, has clearly established, that in the majority of the cases, intermarriage leads to somewhat [of a] disruption of the Jewish community as a community.

Conservative leader A

I think intermarriage is definitely an issue here. The question of course always is what kind of an issue is it? Is it an issue that threatens the survival of the Jewish people? I don't really think so...Does it threaten families? Yes. Does it cause tension in communities? Yes. Is life a lot more complex for the family? Yes.

Alternative leader B

If there wasn't a taboo against intermarriage, Jewish life would die out. Successful Jewish communities are built on family structures, family units coming together to be a part of the Jewish community.

Orthodox leader B

It's an enigma. It's a hard, really tough one to answer and it's a very emotional topic. It's not something that's logical, it's emotional. So it's a tough one and you need to discuss it.

Conservative leader D

According to most Jewish leaders in Vancouver, their community has a problem: too many Jews, especially young Jews, are not "marrying Jewish." Instead, they are marrying non-Jews and disappearing into the laid-back anonymity that a city like Vancouver offers. Similar to many cities in North America, Vancouver's Jewish intermarriage rate stretches from 40 to 80 percent depending on the generation, in comparison to the Canadian national average of 22 percent. Between 1981 and 2001, intermarriage in Vancouver's Jewish community increased by 144 percent as the population grew and Jews emigrated from traditional neighborhoods across Canada to the suburbs and exurbs of lower mainland British Columbia (Gerber and Shahar 2006, 13, 15). According to a leader of the Jewish Community Center of Greater Vancouver (JCCGV), the cause of the exponential rise in intermarriage is a geographical

and generational disconnect, which in turn leads to anxiety about assimilation and the integrity of the Jewish (extended) family structure.

Vancouver's west coast, it's as far away from your parents in Montreal as you can get, okay? So a lot of people end up here and some people end up here if they're going away, because they're trying to get away or they're happy on whatever level to get away, but they don't want to move to the States. So Vancouver's kind of it for a lot of people.... What ends up happening though, as you lose the entrenched generations, and as you lose the grandparents and the great grandparents and that sense of continuity and roots and then legacy, as you lose the immediate threads of family connections, there's less awareness maybe of the roots. And so the newer, younger waves of people who come here are maybe less inspired because they don't have the same family customs that are keeping them in the loop. So you know, whereas they might have gone to their bubbies and zaidies¹ every Friday night or every yuntov² or something, they're here now, so that they don't do it because hey, we'll go for sushi instead.

This geographic analysis of intermarriage in Vancouver exemplifies the tensions among assimilation, intermarriage, family and what it means to be Jewish today. To plan for the future with a growing constituency of geographically dispersed families and individuals, Jewish institutions in Vancouver are re-considering interpretations of Jewish rules of belonging and inclusion to cope with intermarriage and to develop a more integrated concept of the Canadian (nuclear) Jewish family.

In this paper I will focus on the rhetoric of "the family" as a metaphor for the measure of the health and vitality of Judaism and the Jewish community. Using discourse analysis, this study considers how Jewish institutions in Vancouver (as well more broadly within the Jewish global Diaspora) view and cope with intermarriage. Interviews were conducted with ten secular and

¹ *Bubbe* and *zadie* are Yiddish for "grandmother."

² Jewish holiday or celebration.

nine religious leaders of Jewish institutions in the Greater Vancouver region during the winter and spring of 2006. Three of these leaders are women (two secular, one religious), and the paper also draws from the author's position as a young Jewish woman living in Vancouver. Questions addressed by this paper include: How do laws on intermarriage and matrilineal descent preserve the boundaries of Judaism and Jewishness? How is intermarriage discussed and discouraged? What are the values that intermarriage threatens? How does the geography of Vancouver affect community belonging and individual identity?

Ideas of race, gender and nation construct an image of the ideal Jewish family in Vancouver that limits the membership of intermarried couples and their children. Jewish identity, like so many other identities, is not a process of self-selection but is instead rooted in tradition and law that inscribe the boundaries of Jewishness in geographic practices such as the construction of home and community. Although the leaders interviewed are neither all against intermarriage or all in favor of reforms, the majority of Jewish institutions and their leaders in Vancouver identify intermarriage as a pressing issue that must be addressed in some way – be it through acceptance, rejection or a compromise that ensures the future and integrity of not only Jewish life but also the Jewish family. This critique of "the family" fits within broader literatures in geography, ethnic studies and post-structuralism that elucidate how assimilation and multiculturalism in Canada and elsewhere challenge and preserve religious and ethnic identities (Ley 2005; Abu-Laban 2002; Day 2000; Kobayashi 1994). An examination of Jewish institutions in Vancouver serves as a point of departure for further discussion on the cohesion and dispersion of ethnic communities across Canada, which begins at the scale of the family unit, where individual choices and institutional forces are often negotiated (Hill Collins 2000). Before exploring the findings of the study thematically, I would first like to present

some biblical and demographic context for the issue of intermarriage. I will then outline my theoretical critique of the family to prepare for a more in-depth analysis of how leaders in Vancouver interpret intermarriage.

BIBLICAL AND CONTEMPORARY INSTITUTIONS

In Jewish mythology, the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac illustrates how tribal lineage established the identity of a child based on the identity of the father. However, this definition changed some twenty-five hundred years ago when the Jewish elites returned to Judea from Babylonian exile. Upon their return, the prophets Ezra and Nehemiah witnessed high rates of intermarriage occurring among male Jews who had remained to tend the lands. Fearing the dissolution of the Jewish family and therefore people, Ezra and Nehemiah declared that gentile wives must be thrown out. To keep men from intermarrying, matrilineal descent became the accepted practice, giving women the power of descent to preserve the Jewish family and thus Judaism for generations to come. Today, according to Jewish law (*halakha*), you can only be Jewish if your mother is Jewish, unless you convert – something not frequently encouraged in Judaism.

In Vancouver, British Columbia, as in most of the modern Jewish world, the boundaries of Judaism are strictly maintained following the law of matrilineal descent. No rabbi with whom I spoke is interested in fully including a gentile mother or her offspring with a Jewish man without conversion. No rabbi with a synagogue in Vancouver will perform a marriage service if one partner is not Jewish. And no rabbi will allow a child whose mother is not Jewish to have a *bar* or *bat mitzvah*³ unless the child converts. These lines are

³ *Bar mitzvah* means son of the commandments and *bat mitzvah* means daughter of the commandments in Hebrew. *B'nai mitvoth* is plural for child of the commandments. A *b'nai mitvah* is a Jewish coming of age ceremony that usually occurs at the age of thirteen and is traditionally not held for girls, although this is

drawn, as will be seen throughout this paper, to maintain a clear idea of who is Jewish, what it means to be Jewish, and *where* one is Jewish in Vancouver, Canada, and the world. Although I attended community forums in Vancouver where individuals suggested that intermarriage could be a positive trend, not only increasing numbers but also bringing in a diversity of people and ideas to Jewish institutions, only a few secular leaders find this to be an acceptable alternative perspective. That the frequency of intermarriage is undoubtedly increasing in the Jewish community does not necessarily mean that Vancouver's community is in danger of disappearing. In addition to having high intermarriage rates, Vancouver, British Columbia is home to the fastest-growing Jewish population in Canada, with numbers estimated from twenty-five to thirty thousand and rising. The synagogues and secular institutions are thriving, and the 2001 Canadian Census witnessed a 20.4 percent increase in the number of individuals identifying as religiously Jewish from the 1991 Census (Davids 2003; Shahar and Gerber 2006). New Jewish buildings and institutions – both secular and religious – such as the Peretz Centre for Jewish Secular Humanism, King David High School, and the Jewish History Museum of British Columbia sprinkle the Oakridge neighborhood landscape, which has been the centre of Vancouver's Jewish community since the Canada Pacific Railroad opened up the area to development in the 1940s and 1950s. There is also a booming Orthodox community in the southern suburb of Richmond, growing Jewish institutions in the eastern suburbs and along the North Shore, as well as the creation of new synagogues and expansions of existing congregations in Vancouver itself.

The paradox of assimilation that comes from being *too* successful is alive and well in Vancouver, where it is both easy to not be Jewish and increasingly

now common in the Reform and Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Renewal denominations in North America.

easier to access Jewish resources and communities. Individuals now have more opportunities to choose Judaism and to follow the advice of institutions when it comes time for them to form families – if they choose to access those services and conform to certain norms.

I would next like to engage in a theoretical and empirically informed discussion on *the family* to elucidate the role and power of Jewish institutions in shaping Jewish life and lives in Vancouver. Despite recent criticisms of the use of anti-essentialism and post-Structuralism, most notably by Eagleton (2003), I believe that some deconstruction of the monolithic ideal of "a family" as an institution is instructive for the discourse analysis that will follow.

THE FAMILY AS ORACLE: THE MEASURE OF SOCIAL ILLS

J.K. Gibson-Graham (1996) became central to the anti-essentialist debate with their book *End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy*, which extended social constructionism from identity politics to political economy. In the second chapter, they argue that Marxian political economy has failed to confront economics "as the fundamental, necessary or *essential* constituent of social systems and historical events" (24; emphasis in original). In other words, economics continues to dominate analyses of social life as essentialized and unchallengeable. To save social theory from capitalist infiltration, the word "economy" must be "explicitly written out, or until it is deconstructively or positively rewritten, it will write itself into every text of social theory, in familiar and powerful ways. When it is not overtly theorized, it defines itself as capitalism because it lacks another name" (39). That is, the economy comes to mean capitalism and capitalism the economy – leaving little to no room for the formation of alternatives to either economics or capitalism.

Extending Gibson-Graham's argument back to the social construction of identity, if the "problem" of intermarriage is accepted in the eyes of many Jewish leaders as a matter of faith in law (as is the hegemony of economics and capitalism), then the "problem" defines Jewish identity as an outcome of situated social, historical and geographical processes. The (re)production of Judaism as a religion and Jewishness as a racialized ethnicity proceed from these processes. Stuart Hall (1992) argues:

The term ethnicity acknowledges the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity, as well as the fact that all discourse is placed, positioned, situated, and all knowledge is contextual. Representation is possible only because enunciation is always produced within codes, which have a history, a position within the discursive formations of a particular space and time. (257)

Although intermarriage has been an issue in Judaism throughout its history, the manifestation of intermarriage as a "problem" in Vancouver has been constructed during a time and in a space where assimilation feels more like a threat than an antidote to oppression. This is a significantly different position for a Jew today compared to fifty to one hundred years ago when Canadian Jews faced far greater discrimination.

Another illustration of place-based identities can be found in the more-or-less similar landscapes and cultures of Vancouver and Seattle, where contrasting histories and traditions of the Jewish communities disrupt any notion of a seamless Pacific Northwest geography of Judaism. Alternative leader A sees the ambiguity of his position on whether or not to sanction intermarriage as a geographical dilemma that would be alleviated if he lived in another city on the other side of the border.

I want to say first and foremost I do have my own integrity as a rabbi. And then secondly I want to say, and I think this is an important point, is that I

am influenced by the environment that I'm in.... [I]n Seattle there's plenty of Reform rabbis and others ... then in a way it wouldn't matter whether I did or not [sanction intermarriage]. And I could be very comfortable not doing it because whoever wants to marry a non-Jew or a non-Jew wants to marry a Jew and they want to have a Jewish ceremony with a rabbi – they can do that. It's not up to me to make that happen. They'll do it, you know. I feel more responsibility to enable mixed couples here to start their married life Jewishly. And at the same time I feel more possibility of kind of delegitimizing myself in the Jewish community.

This ambivalence mirrors Hall's discussion of representation in time and space as well as the spatialization of identities – or the importance of place to identity formation (see Silberstein 2000). Because no Jewish religious leader in Vancouver will sanction intermarriage, the pressure to maintain Jewish boundaries is shared among (religious) community leaders. Despite the potential desire of members of a congregation and Jews throughout Vancouver for a rabbi to preside at a wedding ceremony between a Jew and a non-Jew, the preservation of the community depends on tradition produced by the formation of the Jewish family.

As Alternative leader A and several other leaders argue, once you begin to sanction intermarriage "all hell breaks loose" as the "vessel" that contains Judaism begins to crumble. The obligation of rabbis within Vancouver's community – as opposed to those in Bellingham or Seattle – is to maintain stricter boundaries of tradition because they are in Canada and Vancouver, both of which have their own particular norms. Geography and local histories explain some of the larger debates surrounding intermarriage, but why is intermarriage as a disruption of Jewish identity and the Jewish community significant?

The ways that gender, race and nation articulate or construct one another reveal how "the family" in Judaism becomes the foundation of Jewish life mate-

rially and spiritually. Families, as Patricia Hill Collins (2000) argues, "constitute primary sites of belonging," and if the boundaries of belonging to the family are destabilized, so too are the boundaries of the community (157). Although Collins sees the rhetoric of "the family" as useful for both the Conservative movement and marginalized groups in the United States, I am more interested in how "the family" can also be effective for groups that are challenging assimilation. More specifically I want to understand how intermarriage is viewed as "bad" assimilation in contrast to the "good" forms of assimilation such as economic and political participation and the "Judaization" of cultural forms. I chose to interview community leaders because they represent the institutions that work to mediate the "good" and "bad" assimilation in the Jewish community. To facilitate this exploration, I will draw from several of Collins' six dimensions of the construction of the ideal family and belonging. They are: 1) naturalized hierarchies, 2) meanings of "home," 3) blood ties, 4) privileges of membership, 5) genealogy and inheritance, and 6) reproduction.

Families are important to institutions on a variety of scales (local, national, and as a transnational Diaspora), which we see historically in the development of liberal societies. Jacques Donzelot (1997) argues that over the last two hundred years, the family, like an oracle, has become a locus used to uncover the collective consciousness of western societies, and that

it has become an essential ritual of our societies to scrutinize the countenance of the family at regular intervals in order to decipher our destiny, glimpsing in the death of the family an impending return to barbarism, the letting go of our reasons for living; or indeed, in order to reassure ourselves at the sight of its inexhaustible capacity for survival. (4)

The family is a source of both anxiety and comfort, as the future seems uncertain. For the purposes of this study, the family represents the vitality of

Judaism and the community's ability (or inability) to reproduce itself over time and place. As Conservative leader B remarks:

Family is the basic building block of the Jewish community and that's how we imagine the family – as the basic link. We imagine ourselves as one great extended family and that we are linked to other Jews around the world and we think about that in terms of family. And so we have holidays, which celebrate ... the family as the basic unit. So if indeed there is an intermarriage, there is a concern that indeed that commitment to Jewish life will not be there and we will be significantly diluted.

The community depends on the family for its survival. Without securing those basic elements of Jewish identity and belonging (social and biological), the integrity and future of Judaism are destabilized as the edges of Judaism begin to unravel. This makes family structures a prime target for intervention because they indicate the potential breakdown of Jewish life. Donzelot explains how the state in the nineteenth century identified the family as the primary site of social intervention. However, to understand how the Jewish family in contemporary Vancouver functions as a measure of the Jewish community's continuing vitality, we need to unravel how the "problem" of intermarriage became a hegemonic concept in Vancouver.

In her book *Crossing the Neoliberal Line*, Katharyne Mitchell (2004) explores how hegemony must be conceptualized spatially as well as temporally. Cities, she argues, are an important site to understand both dominant and subordinate/acquiescent groups. Mitchell understands hegemony as a "broken" process that constantly needs to be refreshed. "Hegemony is not so easily produced or maintained by conservative forces as its theoretical legacy seems to bear witness; the acquiescence of dominated groups by their own subordination is always uneven, fragmented and partial" (20). In Judaism, the hegemony of tradition, family and community are broken in Vancouver by

its geography: its distance from major Jewish centres, the size and dispersal of the community, high housing prices in the city that leads to suburbanization, and a laidback culture. Uneven acquiescence emerges not only within the city but also within the family and ethnic community. Mitchell urges us to investigate the difficulties of maintaining hegemony and the apparatuses behind dominant discourses, such as intermarriage, because they are inevitably more difficult to produce and reproduce than theorists such as Foucault (1990; 1995) contend. Jewish institutions rely on the Jewish family to interpret the strength and health of the community, but that oracle is difficult to manage, particularly in a city like Vancouver where even *finding* "oracles" can be problematic given the high rates of unaffiliated, spatially dispersed Jews.⁴

Although the goals of anti-essentialist critiques such as the ones briefly discussed in this paper are not to reduce analysis to essential social processes and historical events, it is important to remember that identities are powerful regardless of their social construction. Returning to political economy for a moment, Timothy Mitchell (2002) argues that the idea of *the* economy, which emerged in the mid-twentieth century, should not be described and theorized solely as a social construction as Gibson-Graham suggest. Rather, merely using a social constructionist critique "leaves the economists to carry on undisturbed, pointing out that they are not concerned with the history of representations, but with the underlying reality their models represent" (2002, 5). By inscribing boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, the "problem" of intermarriage is a means to create realities: the ideal Jewish families and by extension the healthy Jewish community. Of course, community leaders in Vancouver have their own ways of imagining, maintaining and challenging

⁴ One community leader discussed how there was hardly a reply received from a survey sent out to known Jews in the suburbs of Vancouver, illustrating the lack of interest of Jews living far from the more "Jewish" areas of central Vancouver.

dominant views of intermarriage and "the family," but the predominant discourse identifies intermarriage as the greatest threat to the integrity and reproduction of Jewish families.

The remainder of this paper is devoted to three themes assembled from interviews and theory that create a deeper understanding of how and why intermarriage is a problem that evokes Jewish racializations. The first theme explores the role of the mother in the social and biological reproduction of the Jewish nation. The second is violence – in both historical and contemporary interpretations of intermarriage. The third theme investigates some of the strategies (and controversies) adopted to cope with and challenge intermarriage. Together these three themes offer commentary on some of the major debates and issues that have made intermarriage such a hot topic in Jewish communities from biblical to contemporary times. I will end with some thoughts on future research and the policy implications of this study.

REPRODUCTION: WHAT RELIGION IS YOUR MOTHER'S BLOOD?

To those who worry about the number of Jews in North America, declining rates of affiliation and increasing rates of intermarriage threaten the production and reproduction of the Jewish religion and people because the future depends on a stable—if not growing—active population. In Vancouver, non-affiliation rates reach upwards of 60 percent and according to a recent study of census data by the Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver, low rates of affiliation correlate with high intermarriage rates (see Shahar and Gerber 2006). As I have hinted, there are two ways that Jewishness is produced and reproduced within the Jewish family: socially and biologically. *Social* reproduction is achieved through the practice of Judaism in the home and community. *Biological* reproduction occurs as the mother passes her Jewishness to her children at birth

because either her mother is Jewish or she converted.⁵ To be Jewish you do not have to be raised socially Jewish, but for *halakha* you must have a Jewish mother (or convert), and it is from the interaction of these two processes that the healthy Jewish nation emerges from the Jewish woman.

Social Reproduction

Social reproduction takes many forms formally and informally within the family unit and community. According to many of the leaders interviewed, the basic foundations of Jewish identity begin in the home. The mother's role is largely domestic as she educates the children and maintains a Jewish home. This can mean following a variety of customs including keeping kosher food laws and celebrating holidays. When asked why matrilineal descent is a key tenant of Jewish law, leaders frequently highlight the mother's domestic role as crucial to the survival of the Jewish people.

The mother is the one who educates the children. It doesn't mean the father doesn't do it, but since the mum usually is the one who is home and she raises the children, she has this connection that he will not have. Therefore, if the mother is Jewish, she will transmit Judaism to her children. If she's not, there's going to be the father there. So that's where [matrilineal descent] comes from and that's what maintained Judaism for the last two thousand years since the temple was destroyed. If it [were not] for those Jewish mothers who spend their time educating the children we wouldn't be able to be sitting here today as Jews and proud of who we are.

Here, Orthodox leader A identifies Jewish mothers as vital to the Jewish people not only in Vancouver, but also over two millennia in Diaspora. Although articulated as a position of honor, the assumption of the Jewish woman's domesticity creates a gendered hierarchy in the Jewish family and community.

⁵ If a woman is not Jewish when she gives birth to her child, that child is not Jewish even if the mother later converts.

The hierarchy elicits the *assumption* of a heterosexual, two-parent household where the mother performs the majority of domestic tasks no matter the number of Jewish working women. The mother creates the safe, private space for Judaism to flourish protected from the intrusions of the gentile world. The home or private space is where difference is maintained "for members only" and provides sanctuary from the non-Jewish spaces of the assimilated lives of Jews (Hill Collins 2000, 161; Wendy Brown 2004). In this interpretation of matrilineal descent, the Jewish home and community are gendered spaces of difference where hierarchies are performed and maintained. However, not all the leaders interviewed agree that the role of the mother is a good explanation for matrilineal descent.

That was the classical explanation of how it came or why there was a change from father to mother, but there's no proof to that. It's a nice argument, it's nice, but is there meaning to it? Does it mean that my wife is only responsible and I have nothing to do with it? Nothing? ... Lazy thinking. [snap] Not real. I think the responsibility for education is mother and father... The argument goes even further because it seems to me that the mother was at home when the father had to travel somewhere else and come after three, four months. Everybody traveled? Ninety percent of the people traveled? ... I would say that the minority of the minority of the minority of people traveled in old times ... So you see that argument is not very appealing, convincing to me. I understand, but I don't buy it that easily. I think both, truly my wife and myself, I mean, we are a team and we deal with our kids and by the fact that we both, before our first kid came to this world, we made our minds of what type of education, what do we want for our kid, where do we want to go? ... Whatever we want.

So, although Conservative leader A believes that matrilineal descent should be upheld because of tradition, it is not enough to say that the mother is the one who makes all of the decisions regarding the child's Jewish upbringing. The historical explanations are ambiguous and for him, invalidated by his own

experience as a Jewish father who works in partnership with his wife to make decisions and educate their children.

Blaming the mother for the faults of her family is not only implied by an emphasis on domesticity but also echoes the ways that women and their behaviour are consistently transformed into symbols from family to community to nation (see Volpp 2000; Pettman 1996). Managing women and thereby managing the representatives and reproducers of the community is one way that laws on intermarriage and matrilineal descent maintain boundaries in Judaism. Building on Conservative leader A's experience and skepticism, Alternative leader B explains that the hierarchy of the family is addressed in the *Talmud*, whose commentaries remind fathers to participate in religious education and socialization.

One [of the reasons for matrilineal descent] is biological, right? That we always do know who the mother is and we don't always know who the father is biologically and so if you want to ascertain somebody's biological line you have to go with the mother. That was before DNA testing. And the other one being an assumption that the mother creates the home and that the mother educates the children. Because, you know, the Talmudic literature, again Talmud is ... one historical slice but it's full of these exhortations from men to educate their children in Judaism, right, why? Because you know they need the reminders, right? So the assumption is that the mums are naturally doing it because they're with them and creating that context up to a certain age.

In the traditional Jewish family, it is assumed that the mother by virtue of motherhood will socialize and educate the children to be good Jews (particularly at younger ages). Jewish mothers sustain Jewish traditions and peoplehood through their domestic role. However, the Talmud reminds men that they too must play a role in Jewish education. Despite the claim of many leaders that matrilineal descent comes from the domestic role of the mother, the

actual as opposed to the *assumed* role of the father in the family hierarchy is often overlooked and is an important part of creating a Jewish home and family identity.

For many leaders, the pathology of interfaith marriages in the Jewish home is also a reason to discourage intermarriage. Leaders frequently use polemics to describe intermarrying as "stupid, immoral, irresponsible" and causing "the children to have a split mind." Through such rhetoric, Jewish leaders identify competition from other religions within the home and community as a danger. Being not so much polemical as uncompromising, Orthodox leader B argues that religious stability is key to a stable identity.

Jewish tradition sees the home as the primary vehicle of Jewish education. You can't be a successful vehicle of Jewish education if one of the parents is not Jewish and does not see the importance of that agenda. And so intermarriage is simply a very challenging issue because it significantly threatens the success of the next generation of Jews.... Some people sometimes ask me, well is this racial, is this chauvinistic? And to me it's not. It's a very simple fact. If you want to create a home that educates Jewishly, you need two Jewish parents there. You can't even say "oh what about single parent homes?" It's not an issue of how many parents. It's an issue of how many frequencies are there. A home where they put Christmas lights on the house and light a Chanukah menorah only succeeds in confusing children. It does not succeed in promoting Jewish identity.

Again, we see how the Jewish home and not only the role of the mother but also the father will determine the strength of the child's Jewish identity. Assimilation, exemplified by Christmas lights, should not infiltrate the Jewish home if children are going to be raised Jewishly. The insinuation of racialization is an irrelevant argument to him because encouraging *intramarriage* through education is a positive spin on something that could be conceived as a negative – as racist or at least discriminatory. All Jews have the responsi-

bility to maintain the boundaries of Judaism within their own family, and if *intramarriage* is framed as a positive issue of education and consistency of tradition instead of one of ethnic purity, questions of race are circumvented. Nonetheless, despite the positive spin on the intermarriage taboo as the *intramarriage* choice, biological racialized Jewishness is key to learning why you should marry Jewish if you're Jewish.

Biological Reproduction

The racialization of Jewish bodies is nothing new, merely the continuation of a strategy used for centuries to cope with assimilation. Looking back at nineteenth-century post-Revolutionary France, Jewish bodies were becoming racialized as women's bodies were becoming increasingly sexed (Brown 2004; Gilman 1990). In twenty-first century Vancouver, Jewish women's bodies are both racialized and sexed. Although matrilineal descent is often touted as one of the few powers that Jewish women have in a traditionally patriarchal religion and culture, relying on women's sexuality also conceals power relations (Pratt 2004).

Matrilineal descent's blood ties racialize the gendered power relations of the "problem" of intermarriage. As Hill Collins argues, "Representing the genetic links among related individuals, the belief in blood ties naturalizes the bonds among members of kinship networks" (2000, 163). The salience of the mother's body in Judaism demonstrates how the cultural and the biological blur to naturalize gender and racialize Jews (Kobayashi 1994). Drawing on the naturalization of blood ties and Jewish women, Alternative leader A remarked that even "children of a Jewish mother who abandoned them when they were six months old and they were raised by their Catholic father – you know, okay, you're a Jew." Although no Jewish leader explicitly used the phrases "Jewish

blood" or "blood ties," it is the religion of the mother's body and her blood that determines the religion of her children. In this way women embody the racial ideal through "chastity, purity and as biological reproducers" (Bonnett 2000, 23). Despite the emphasis on the mother's domestic role in the home, her success at raising good Jews is not really what determines the Jewishness of her children. It is *only* the fact that she is Jewish that allows her children unquestioned membership in the Jewish community, no matter how she rears them. This reliance on biology also permits Jewish institutions, on the one hand, to claim anyone with a Jewish mother as a de facto member, and on the other hand, deny membership to an individual no matter how s/he defines her/himself based on their mother's identity.

The monitoring of women's bodies (and men's choices) as the sites of Jewish reproduction is not only measured qualitatively (who Jews marry and what kind of home they create), but also quantitatively. Foucault (1990) argues that a closer attention to demography facilitates the surveillance of citizens and the regulation of populations and births. In Jewish communities, fertility rates of women are measured alongside intermarriage rates and the Orthodox are often praised for their incredibly high birthrates. The non-Orthodox are lamented for their late marriages and low birthrates. Reform leader A describes this phenomenon and the future of Judaism in terms of the ethnic market.

The reality is, is that we are losing a market share in terms of our own people. We are a small people in the world and we are getting smaller primarily because of intermarriage. Now, there are other factors involved: people are not getting married to the same extent, they're not having children to the same extent. You know how many children you need to have zero population growth? Sociologists tell us, what, 2.1, 2.2 kids to have zero population growth because two kids replace mom and dad, your net growth is zero. In the Jewish community of North America right now, we're somewhere between 1.6 and 1.8 kids. So we're below 2, which means we're in

the negative territory, okay. So that's also contributing to a diminution of the number of Jews who are born today, okay. But the big reason out there today is intermarriage.

Put more bluntly: the majority of Jewish women are not producing enough children to maintain the population. Although scholars and community leaders often praise the Orthodox and Ultra Orthodox for increasing Jewish birth rates, many feel that they will be unable to make up for the larger part of the Jewish population who have lower birth rates (Weinfeld 2001). This has led community organizations to create and fund a variety of education and social programs to get young Jews involved with and meeting other Jews. However, many of these programs are met with mixed reviews, which I will bring up again later in this paper.

Along with the ethnic marketplace, Jewish citizenship is conceived as a natural process. Despite the lack of a geographic, physical origin, Jewish membership is described metaphorically using modern examples of nation-states. When I told Conservative leader C about my discomfort with the fact that the children of my non-Jewish sister-in-law will have to convert to be Jewish and that my children will in effect be "naturally Jewish," he drew upon the idea of national citizenship to explain Jewish law.

I don't know if this works in the situation, but it's the definition of who is part of the Jewish people and how it happens. If you come into Canada from the States and you have a kid and the country doesn't know it and you raise your child as a Canadian, the kid speaks Canadian, thinks Canadian, thinks he's Canadian. But unless the child has been naturalized or gone through citizenship procedure... legally the child is not Canadian, right? Looks, acts, thinks, identity, etc. So this for me, that's all we're talking about. What makes someone part of the people. What makes citizenship. The rule for the past twenty-five hundred years, except for Reform changes, but the rule, the standard rule is the mother. That's the citizenship rules so that you look

Canadian, act Canadian, think Canadian unless you've done it legally you're not Canadian. And so too the same here. It's arbitrary, so with that I'm agreeing with you, but every law is arbitrary at some point.

Belonging to the Jewish nation, removed from the territoriality of the Canadian example, is imagined as a process that inscribes belonging through the (different) pregnancies of the Jewish and non-Jewish mothers. In a Jewish family this so-called "arbitrary" law creates a hierarchy that privileges Jewish (female) in-laws not because of values or culture but because of their Jewish bodies. Perhaps if Judaism were more concretely tied to place than even the contemporary state of Israel, matrilineal descent would be less significant, but Jewish history lacks this territorial national identity.

Whether Jews are tied to a real or imagined place, through their "different" pregnancies Jewish women's bodies are transposed from producers of the family to producers of the national family. Hills Collins argues in reference to the controversies surrounding family planning that "Just as women's bodies produce children who are part of a socially constructed family grounded in notions of biological kinship, women's bodies produce the population for the national 'family' or nation-state, conceptualized as having some sort of biological oneness" (2000, 169). Similarly, Jewish women's bodies provide a cohesive idea of citizenship through a biological definition of lineage, continuity and community that non-Jewish women have threatened since matrilineal descent became *halakha*.

Biological "oneness" also plays a role in the history of Jewish assimilation and the idea of Jews as a chosen people. The formation and propagation of the idea of race worldwide, most notably through slavery, emerged not only from modernity but also through relationships between Jews and the governments where they lived in Europe and North America (see Arendt 1976; Gilroy

1993). Contemporary Jewish institutions such as the Reform synagogue and the modern state of Israel rely on the idea of the nation-state, national citizenship and Jews as a united "chosen" people.

[Intermarriage] has been an issue since the French Revolution, since Jews were allowed to become citizens in western countries. So once we became citizens, then this became an issue. This is the reason why we have the different denominations.... It's been an issue throughout our history. It goes back to ancient times.... So it's part of the whole idea of being chosen, right? We have this idea of being chosen, then a question of who is in and who is out becomes a big question, right? So I think it's related to that imagining yourself being a select people...and this whole sense of we are a family.... But conversion has been a part of Judaism since ancient times. We do welcome outsiders in, but there's the vetting process.

According to Conservative leader B, although intermarriage has been an issue throughout Jewish history, modernity in the form of Jewish emancipation for the last two to three hundred years has threatened the sanctity of Jewish marriages and Jewish citizenship. The dilution of a Jewish family is symbolic of the dilution of the chosen people. Conversions, on the other hand, complicate the "biological oneness" of the chosen people but do not threaten the boundaries of Jewish citizenship. If anything they reaffirm those boundaries because converts must prove their commitment to Judaism for themselves and future generations. To be Jewish for the convert and the intermarried requires a dedication to earning the privilege of Jewish membership that for those whose mother's blood is Jewish goes unquestioned.

Together the social and the biological construct the ideal Jewish family. The home environment and citizenship based on bloodlines create the building blocks for a successful Jewish family and therefore Jewish community. There is the potential for increased inclusion, but this also has the potential to threaten the potency and stability of the Jewish home and bloodline.

VIOLENCE: THE PAST THAT LINGERS

Jewish history and mythology are steeped in violence. From Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, to pogroms, to the Nazi Holocaust, to the Israel-Palestine conflict, violence in many ways defines Judaism and Jews. My strongest memories of Hebrew school and my family trip to Israel are of Jews overcoming oppressors despite great odds. And depending whom you talk to, contemporary Jews are just as subject to physical and spiritual hostility as our ancestors. Perhaps then it is not so surprising that aggression frequently came up in my conversations with leaders, who evoked violence both in reference to Jewish history and metaphorically.

The Violent Past

In Jewish history, both external and internal violence shape Jewish identities. Violence in Judaism is tied anecdotally to violence against women biblically and historically. A JCC leader explains how the realities of Diasporic life made matrilineal descent a practical solution in uncertain times.

Well historically, I mean, my understanding is because sometimes you didn't know who the father was. There were rapes, there were pogroms, there were pillages. I mean you know husbands went off and never came back, you weren't quite sure. I mean I'm pretty sure that that's what the reason is. You always know who the mum is. And the mum is the one who is going to take care of the kid when dad goes off and doesn't come back.

Rape, distrust of women and physical insecurity are the functional justifications for matrilineal descent. However, I noticed as I was conducting interviews that violence against women was an explanation that I received *only from female respondents* while male respondents talked more willingly about domesticity and reproduction. The reason for this evasion could be due to some discomfort

in talking about violence against women, which was easier for me as a woman to broach with other women. Then again, to many questioning the logic behind matrilineal descent, it is a non-issue because there are other ways to rationalize the switch from patrilineal descent.

For example, some leaders find that historical violence has little salience today in the practice of Jewish law. Orthodox leader B was not interested in legal origins when I asked him why definitions of ancestry changed after Ezra and Nehemiah returned from exile.

So tribal identification is a patrilineal issue. So a Cohen is only a Cohen if he's descended from Cohen. A Levy is only a Levy if he's a son of a Levy. And there's no question about that, but as far as I'm concerned that's what the Talmud says, that's what's law. I don't engage in legal anthropology on that level.... My assumption is, it's almost a religious assumption.... If that's the way it's reported in the Talmud, that's the way Moses got it at Sinai.

Numerous religious leaders argued that tradition is more important to maintaining a strong Judaism than creating new laws (which has been done in the past) to adapt to new attitudes. The fact that matrilineal descent has worked to preserve Judaism for thousands of years is for some reason enough to disregard historical (violent) explanations.

Nevertheless, mistrust of women as well as violence against women are a part of the histories, myths and contemporary concepts of who is Jewish. I do not want to characterize Jewish women as victims of historical circumstance, but silences or disavowals of violence against women in Judaism are dangerous. Then again, Judaism as a religion depends upon distinctions that can be seen as both empowering and disempowering. On the one hand, women determine the identity of their children at birth. They can marry anyone, Jew or Gentile, and their children will be welcomed (relatively) unquestioned into

Vancouver's Jewish community. On the other hand, it is the woman's body *not her choice* that establishes her child as Jewish. This empowered lack of choice is what Kobayashi (1994) distinguishes as the lasting power of patriarchy. "One of the reasons that patriarchy is such a complex and durable form of social relationship is that it contains much that women have traditionally viewed as positive; the major sources of women's happiness in 'traditional' terms have involved marriage, love, motherhood" (229). While elevating the status of women's bodies, biblical and Talmudic interpretations wash over the historical circumstances of violence that played a role in the formation of Jewish laws and that remain today as anecdotes and myths. What was once a necessity of physical survival several millennia ago today continues to evoke the Jewess' body as the carrier of the Jewish nation.

Modernization and the evolution of feminism in the twentieth century also changed attitudes towards women and intermarriage in Jewish families. As Jews successfully assimilated into Canadian society, some of the violent reactions to intermarriage subsided. The changes in attitudes over the last fifty years towards intermarriage have been a shock to Conservative leader D as he watches younger generations intermarry – including members of his own family.

It was a real shock, when my wife and I got married almost forty-one years ago, it was unheard, really. It was just no one talked about it. But that's not the case anymore. Most of our friends have at least one member of the family who has intermarried. I think it's perhaps because of that sort of drifting away from some of the traditional imposed laws – the old Judaic way of doing things.... my father in-law is a good example. "If my daughter intermarries, I'm going to go to the synagogue and then say a *kaddish*" – the prayer for the dead – "because she'll be..." we don't say those sort of things anymore.... So we encourage our children to be independent, like to think for themselves, to be self-sufficient and then I think sometimes we're a little

upset when they do exercise those options that we taught them and go the way we think they shouldn't go.

In this quote, he conveys a hint of nostalgia for the taboo of intermarriage: too much freedom is not necessarily a good thing for Judaism. Although the brutality of the *kaddish* recited for an intermarried child diminished in his circles (although not among all Jews), he expresses misgivings about how he helped to loosen the boundaries of Jewish life. Similarly, my mother, part of the first generation of Jews in the United States to intermarry in large numbers in the 1960s and 1970s, told me once that her generation had collectively "made a mistake." Some express guilt for the more liberal attitudes that have developed towards both marriage choices and childrearing. Despite their actions and those of their children and grandchildren, they express some nostalgia or longing for the violent rigidity that alienated the intermarried in the past.

Metaphorical Violence

Accompanying this sense of frustration, language choices often characterize interfaith families as a threat to the survival and continuity of the Jewish people. The use of historical examples to justify present practices and the expression of regret for current circumstances were expected outcomes of my conversations with leaders. However, what surprised me were the violent metaphors. Several leaders drew upon anxieties about the disappearance of the Jewish people to make a case against intermarriage. The allusions are both contemporary and historical and may strike a chord with Jews who identify with a sense of Jewish victimization.

One of the most striking metaphors – used, in fact, for the title of this paper – comes from Reform leader A and his portrayal of the danger of intermarriage.

What's the future of Canadian Jewry? We're involved in a war right now and it's a very, very difficult war. This is not a war with bullets. It's not a war with gas. Those wars we fought, those wars we sort of understand as horrific as they are. This is a war with emotion. And something called feelings. So how do you fight that? ...The love is that the Jew is in love with a non-Jew. I'm talking about emotional, romantic basis. That's the war that we're involved in.

The war in Vancouver's Jewish community is not a physical war but a meta-physical one. The terrain is deeply personal and rips through families and communities. But unlike past wars that were tangible, bloody conflicts, the "war on love" pits individuals and families against community and tradition. Intruders in the form of the non-Jewish other break the integrity of Judaism when families are founded upon the love of the individual instead of the love of Judaism and community.

Other leaders also evoked the love of the other as an ongoing palpable threat to Jews and Jewish life. According to Orthodox leader A, intermarriage, just like any physical threat, is a barrier to Jewish continuity – comparable to the most heinous acts against Jews in history.

I mean all rabbis from all denominations, even though we do disagree, I mean we have our disagreements on conversion how should we do it, what should be the process. But everyone will agree that intermarriage is, I would say, the holocaust of the twenty-first century, and pulpit rabbis deal with it on a daily basis and I tell you that we lament about it. Really it hurts us, it's painful for all of us. And I say from all denominations, it hurts us when we see a couple getting married when one of the partners is not Jewish. Now, don't get me wrong, it does happen that people convert and it's great. Not that we encourage conversion. Judaism is not a religion that proclaims and goes and says "you know what, become Jewish." But at the same time, when we see that the candidates out there, people who really sincerely want to become Jewish for the right reasons, we go through conversions. And then if they want to get married after that, why not? That's great. But

coming back to intermarriage, yes... definitely it's a problem all over North America. And it is something that we try to the best of our abilities to stop.

Jews are once again the victims of gentile violence, with innumerable Jewish collaborators – upwards of 50 to 80 percent. Although this leader is not opposed to conversions and any subsequent marriages, he casually links the racial dimensions of the problem of intermarriage to the racism of the Nazi Holocaust. In the twentieth century the Nazis took away the future of European Jewry; today non-Jewish partners in a holocaust of intermarriage are likely to do the same to North America's Jews. Conversion is a potential weapon against the onslaught of intermarriage, but it is not a solution. As the child of an intermarriage, I cannot help but feel this is a dangerous, exaggerated form of paranoia that at best, places blame not only on gentiles but also on reckless gentile-loving Jews and at worst, labels Jew and gentile alike anti-Semitic.

That being said, using the term "paranoia" is for many in the Jewish community too cynical a position to take on intermarriage in Vancouver. Alternative leader A warned me against using such strong language when talking about the racialization of Jews because there are typically justifications for concern, despite his sense that anxiety about intermarriage is prone to [dangerous] hyperbole.

I mean as you're doing this work and thinking about, and I'm not putting you down or anything, [but] using words like "paranoia." You know, just because you're paranoid doesn't mean that they're not trying to kill you. In fact it could happen quite a lot, and like I said, there's people who would do that today. The president of Iran trying to build an atom bomb. Wants to get rid of all the Jews in Israel. I take that seriously and heavily. But if my son wants to marry a Chinese girl, like I have to work with that, you know. It's not because somebody is trying to kill all the Jews over there that he shouldn't marry someone in his class in high school.

As I was warned against using inflammatory language, this religious leader highlights how tossing around phrases such as "war on love" and "holocaust of the twenty-first century" obfuscate other dangers to Jews. Norman Finkelstein, a Jewish American political scientist, has staked his career on the argument that some Jewish institutions frequently abuse the term "anti-Semitism" for their own political and economic gain. As Finkelstein (2005; 2003) argues, exaggerating the severity of dangers to the future of Judaism is not helping anybody inside or outside of the Jewish community and is potentially damaging to Jews. Equating the marriage of a Jew to, say, someone of Chinese descent to genocide or to even a war of survival for the Jewish people abuses the history of the Jewish people and creates even more hostility towards non-Jewish partners.

Finding solutions to the problem of intermarriage without making references to violence, however, creates a challenge to fundraisers who commonly use the histories of violence against Jews as a strategy to raise funds. According to several leaders, an institution's ability to raise money is directly related to threats against the physical survival of Jews. A leader at the Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver identifies fear as central to galvanizing support for Jewish survival.

When a Jew has a gun to his head or a knife to his throat, it's always easy to raise money for that, all right? Jews are being killed. Jewish survival on a physical level, everybody's there: vigils, rallies, they're there, right? Jewish survival on a spiritual level is very hard to sell, very hard to market, because that's where it gets involved with the personal or the personal, you know, is like political, right? People will say you know I'm intermarried. I don't feel comfortable with you looking at me and saying that I'm suffering a spiritual demise over here, right? So Jewish survival has many levels to it.... It's easier to raise money when Jews are in crisis in Israel because there's war, terrorism. It's not easy to raise money if I say that seven out of ten couples

who are below the age of thirty in this city are married to non-Jews, right? That's a lost generation. That's a lost generation that is never coming back. It's not easy to raise money for them.

Fear and violence sell. Although some leaders see Jewish intermarriage as a war and potential genocide, others just see it as a problem that simply lacks funding and initiative. Although communities across North America identify intermarriage as a major threat, the cause is too personal to successfully rally people to become involved. Quite possibly, intermarriage is a more painful cause to support than physical violence because it threatens families who may value their independence. The Federation leader bolsters the anxiety by naming the intermarried as part of a "lost generation" of Jews who, as victims of assimilation, may not be around to support Judaism and Jewish causes in the future. Combining a history of violence with rhetoric that instills fear is a negative way to rally Jews around Judaism. Symbolically transforming the intermarried from living to "dead," from being members of the Jewish community to being "lost" does little to encourage affiliation or increase participation and identification. Nevertheless, every leader I interviewed had ideas on how to reclaim these "lost generations" in order to expand and enliven Vancouver's Jewish community, which is the focus of the final theme of this paper.

COPING STRATEGIES: RELEARNING AND RECOVERING "AUTHENTICITY"

Of the religious and secular leaders interviewed, the majority identifies intermarriage as an issue in Vancouver and adopts a variety of strategies to manage this new/old threat to Judaism and the Jewish family. To maintain current member levels and to entice new members, institutions must balance between flexing their definitions of inclusion and maintaining a traditional (exclusive) stance. Because practice does not entirely define Jews, education, de-

veloping connections with Israel, conversion and even experimentations with Jewish law are used to encourage Jews to marry Jewish – or at least to make an effort to include those who did not.

The goal of these strategies is the reproduction of the Jewish people, the cohesive Jewish family, and the affiliated Jew. Guidelines are made more acceptable through education, conversion, and tiered but flexible membership rules. Mitchell (2004) clarifies how the rules became palatable in the first place: "[A]cquiescence is based primarily on the insistent and inexorable effects of numerous unequal institutional apparatuses in society that take on the characteristic of the self-evident, the normal and the correct" (20). Traditionally, Judaism is a patriarchy organized under the authority of rabbis who are the interpreters and arbiters of tradition and law. In Judaism, "the self-evident, the normal and the correct" is comprised of the rabbinical definitions of who is Jewish, contained in women's bodies. It is this understanding of what determines Jewishness that has fractured over the last two hundred years, but most significantly, over the last fifty. To be inclusive, leaders must reshape the boundaries of Judaism to include at least to a certain extent those who are *not* self-evidently Jewish, who are "abnormal" and not entirely "correct" because of their non-Jewish partner and/or mixed parentage. This can be a struggle because a large part of Judaism is maintaining difference *to limit* the inclusion of (hostile) non-Jews and to remind Jews that they are different – that they are chosen. However, some institutions are redrawing the boundaries of exclusion throughout the Jewish life cycle to celebrate rather than enforce difference.

As underscored throughout this paper, marriage is a historical instrument used to monitor the future of Judaism. Returning to biblical times for a moment, both Sarah and Rebecca discouraged intermarriage to ensure the purity

of their sons. Alternative leader A uses their story to explain contemporary practices.

Sarah didn't want Isaac influenced by Ishmael. Cast them out! You know, stay pure. And then the very next generation, Isaac and his wife had two sons, right. And when Rebecca heard Esau say he's going to kill Jacob because Jacob, you know, stole the blessings his father wanted to give him, "I'm going to kill him" in this kind of agony and passion, impulsive person that he was.... The way she dealt with it, she didn't go to her husband, the boys' father and say "you know, we've got a problem here, let's deal with it." She said "I'm worried that our son might marry one of the Canaanites around here. Let's send him back to the old country so he can marry somebody from our tribe." And that's what he did.

In this story we see how the role of the mother (Sarah and Rebecca) in raising her children with a strong connection to family and community is a way of ensuring the future of Judaism. The Jewish children (Isaac and Jacob) are protected by separation from their non-Jewish brothers (Ishmael and Esau). Rebecca uses intermarriage as a pretext to convince Isaac that Jacob must be separated from Esau to save his life, to save his family, to save his people – again highlighting the important role of mothers in social reproduction. Similar to Rebecca, some leaders and institutions in Vancouver encourage parents to send their children to universities with large Jewish populations, and many are involved with the creation of target programs for teens and young adults, as well as encouraging conversions and in some extreme cases, proselytizing. The following section reviews and analyzes these strategies of creative inclusion.

THE EDUCATION DEBATE

To rear a healthy Jew, formal Jewish education goes hand-in-hand with the creation of the Jewish home. According to leaders in Vancouver, Jewish education is the primary strategy that not only encourages higher education but

also religious reproduction. Both secular and religious leaders cite education as the best way to ensure the future of Jewish organizations by encouraging *intramarriage*

We teach our children about this world and about society and that we are part of society, but at the same time, they have to know the difference: we are Jews and as Jews we don't intermarry. So the child grows basically with a balance. Yes, I could have a profession. Yes, I could become whatever I want to become, but at the same time I want to keep my tradition. My home is going to be a Jewish one. I'm going to get married to someone who is Jewish, I'm going to raise Jewish children exactly like my father and my mother did. So this is something that we are trying to build.

For Orthodox leader A, part of being a Jew and receiving Jewish education is learning that tradition requires you to marry Jewish just like your parents did – at least for some Jews. In Vancouver, formal education occurs through religious or secular afterschool and weekend programs as well as Jewish day schools.⁶ Whatever the format, Jewish teachings help children navigate the "good" and "bad" aspects of assimilation.

Arguably, enrollment in Jewish day schools is one sign of the strength of Judaism in Vancouver. As the Jewish population in Vancouver increases, so too does the number of students attending Jewish day schools. Increasing access to Jewish private schools that also demand a high level of secular education greatly increases youths' daily exposure to Judaism. Since King David High School opened their new building in the fall of 2005, applications have multiplied several fold. One administrator argues that the building is a positive development in the fight against intermarriage and cited research suggesting Jewish high school attendance encourages Jews to marry Jewish.

⁶ Day schools are private schools with a portion of the curriculum devoted to Jewish studies, including history and religion.

Research tells us that there are three important factors as far as the assimilation of Jews. One is a summer camp experience, two a connection with Israel, and three ... Jewish high school experience. So we believe that the kids who graduate from here, if the research is correct, have a much better chance of not assimilating. When we say assimilating, we mean not intermarrying if they graduate from us. They say that your high school connections last much longer than your elementary connections do and it makes sense, so we're hoping that in fact this is true... If we had every Jewish teenager in our school, we expect that the intermarriage rate would probably plummet. That won't happen of course.

Increasing children's exposure to Judaism and other young Jews on a daily basis, according to many leaders interviewed, will have a positive effect on intermarriage and affiliation rates. In cities with larger Jewish populations such as Toronto and Montreal, there are greater concentrations of Jewish kids, which may be helping to curb intermarriage in those cities. However, in Vancouver, despite their potential, there are too few Jewish high schools or day schools in the area to make a dramatic difference.

As in any community, class and other tensions underlie formal and informal, secular and religious education, and there is disagreement about whether or not day school attendance is a reliable predictor of marriage choices. In addition to his surprise when I mentioned the skyrocketing intermarriage rates of young Jews, ("Are people under thirty getting married?") Conservative leader B regards the success of Jewish days schools as mixed. He believes that increased attention to education is important for the continuity of the community, but he is uneasy about investments in Jewish education "fueled by anxiety over intermarriages" if intermarriage rates fail to decline in the next ten years. He is also worried about the effects of strong socio-economic divides on the experiences of children in the day schools. When given the option, many

youths leave the day schools for a more secular environment. He argues that the way to decrease intermarriages

... is to build the kids' positive view of their Jewish self-image and be involved in the Jewish community. I think that's the challenge.... It's a small community, it's not that small a community, but it is a small community, small and sometimes very small-minded. I think that filters down to the kids. There are real social economic divisions in the community; I think that lends itself an issue.... Well I think half the kids that go to the Talmud Torah ... get some kind of scholarship. The other half live in another world economically. And you can see the SUVs lining up to pick these kids up every afternoon.... Somehow I think that contributes. I'm not sure how, but it does.

Class divisions within the community fuel tensions for kids – something I also experienced in Hebrew school.⁷ Being connected to Judaism is not only related to the education itself, but the experience young Jews have with each other and the social pressures everyone experiences growing up. Although some Jews may dislike their minority status in public institutions, alienation can also occur within Jewish institutions along axes of power other than religion and ethnicity.

In addition to Jewish day schools, education for *b'nai mitzvot* is a significant event in the Jewish life cycle and socialization. *B'nai mitzvot* are a rite of passage for young Jews traditionally performed around the age of thirteen, giving youths the opportunity to study *Torah*⁸ and to lead their congregation in prayer. The Peretz Centre for Secular Judaism offers a secular *b'nai mitzvot* experience that focuses on Jewish culture, history and Yiddish. Particularly popular with interfaith families, the program is also attractive for financial reasons.

⁷ I grew up in a working class suburb and my classmates at the largely upper middle class synagogue where I had my *bat mitzvah* were often snobbish towards those of us from 'A-town.'

⁸ The Jewish bible.

Now the reason why we have such a large *bar* and *bat mitzvah* group is ... traditional *bar mitzvah* at any one of the synagogues is ultra, ultra, ultra expensive. I mean, I know many people are quite prepared to go into debt in order ... for their child to have a *bar mitzvah*. But mainly it's large because we're very accepting of mixed marriages. I think our motto is anyone who really wants to be Jewish, we consider that they are and so ... it's a wonderful service for a lot of families. And they're all wonderful events from every single, you know, point of view. But, and this is something that we share together with the synagogues, once a kid has a *bar mitzvah* and he's off to college or university, you know, forget it. There's so many competing interests even before they get to the university stage.

Religious ceremonies can be expensive, placing a financial burden on families to meet expectations for a great party in addition to paying synagogue and tutor fees. Choosing where to educate children for *bar* and *bat mitzvah*, how much they should cost, and whether or not to even have one are often more difficult to make for intermarried families, particularly when the mother is not Jewish. For interfaith, secular, and lower income families, the Peretz Centre offers an alternative to religious interpretations (and their costs) while maintaining Jewish cultural traditions. However, like religious institutions, they face the challenge of maintaining interest in Judaism as youths have more and more choices of activities. Despite the divisions that exist amongst the Jewish community between secular and religious, between denominations and political perspectives, all the institutions identified in this study face competition from non-Jewish programs and are in a constant struggle to increase their programmatic and geographic scope.

The funding structures of the community also affect access to Jewish education. Religious and secular institutions face different challenges as they reach out to non-affiliated as well as active Jews in the area. As a JCC leader

argues, religious and secular institutions do not encounter the same obstacles to increased community education.

See, with the synagogues, they have a bit more of a challenge because they can educate the people who aren't afraid to walk into their building. But there are lots of people who are still interested in being Jewish but are afraid to go back into a *schule*⁹ for a zillion different reasons. So we're aware of that and one of our challenges as an institution in this city is to get understanding and awareness and buy-in... But it's been formal education and until [funders] see the validity of the informal education that we can do, we're not necessarily going to get the funding in that envelope for those programs. So we see a huge need to reach out to the unaffiliated sections of individuals within the community. But we don't always necessarily get the funding for that and it's a constant challenge.

Secular and religious institutions conduct their education programming in very different ways. The secular institutions are designed not only to create space for religious Jews, but also for those who either identify themselves as secular, belong to a mixed family and risk being excluded in synagogue, or who have anxieties about religion. The JCC representative and Conservative leader C argue that the community needs "champions of the cause," but that there is a lack of leadership. Enticing non-affiliated Jews to get involved in the Jewish community is a struggle greater than just ensuring that the affiliated population has access to education and programming – it is also about being attractive to non-Jewish partners.

Informal secular institutions also play an important role in reconsidering what it means to be Jewish. A secular leader for youth and young adult programs does not see Jewish education as necessarily the solution to intermarriage. Instead, he argues that just getting Jewish kids together creates a posi-

⁹ Synagogue.

tive environment conducive to *intramarriage* in Vancouver and will increase the number of affiliated and perhaps even practicing Jews in the near future.

Our goal is to limit the number of intermarriages. That's how we view it. Our goal is to get, is to create an environment here where Jews are meeting Jews and part of our mandate is Jews doing Jewish with other Jews, okay? Whatever that means to them. If that's sports, if it's an environmental project, if it's a social event, as long as they're together, meeting each other, doing things together. But being Jewish transcends all ethnic lines, okay? So you can be an Afro-Canadian Jew [etc.] It's a peoplehood or religion, okay? So we want Jews marrying Jews regardless of whatever ethnicity they come from.

For this youth program, how one defines what it means to be Jewish is not important, just that Jewish youth are active with other Jewish youth. Providing a space for Jews to coordinate activities and participate in Jewish groups will if nothing else build relationships (romantic or otherwise) among Jews. Nor does it matter what kind of Jew you are as long as you self-identify with Judaism. Your parents and partner choice are irrelevant as long as you are participating as a Jew on the basketball court, which will hopefully lead you to meet the young Jew of your dreams.

Key to the formal and informal education of young Jews is Israel. According to the above youth leader, travel and identification with Israel (especially if you visit as a Jew with other Jews) will build lifelong ties to Judaism. The transnational dynamic to his solution to the intermarriage "problem" simultaneously territorializes Jewish national identity in both Canada and Israel through the development of emotional and real connections to Israel.

We find that once a student has gone to Israel, they're inadvertently connected to their Judaism, however they define their Judaism for the rest of their life. It's an experience that just never leaves them, having been to Israel. And so I would be interested to see the rate of assimilation five, ten

years from now. I think it will have dropped. I think we're doing a very good job now at meeting students on their terms. So I think there's a lot more opportunity for Jews to meet Jews than there was before... We believe that every Jew is born with an umbilical cord attached to Israel, okay? So Israel is a very strong component of who we are and we believe that Israel is the foundation of Jewish life worldwide.

Having traveled to Israel as an adolescent, I cannot say that I disagree with the enduring connection that the trip forged. The umbilical cord metaphor is compelling in light of the discussion of biological definitions of Judaism in this paper with Israel emerging as the "motherland." Although the youth leader is not defining Jewishness as a racial identity *per se*, this connection or *birth-right*¹⁰ must be cultivated in young Jews to ensure the survival of the Jewish people. Considering Canadian Jewry's strong Zionist history, this is a powerful way not only to create links with the past but also to ensure future connections – social, political, cultural and economic – through a transnational hyphenated but not necessarily legal "Canadian-Israeli" identity.

Reversing the transnational lens, as Vancouver's population of Israeli and Jewish Russian immigrants grows, parents and their children face the same choices as Canadian-born Jews. Israeli immigrants in particular encounter challenges like any other immigrant group as they balance their desire to take advantage of Canadian society and politics with their status as a minority. A social worker described the options that Israeli immigrants weigh when defining their children's education options:

I think most of them are here to stay...You know, you come with kids who are five years old and then they become eighteen and all of a sudden you see that I know some of them are afraid of assimilation and they don't want

¹⁰ Birthright also happens to be the name of a Jewish organization that pays for Jewish youths 18-25 to take tours of Israel.

them to marry *goyim*¹¹ and things like that so they go back to Israel. But it's a small percentage.

While Canadian Jews may want to send their children back east or to the United States to a university where there may be more Jews, a few Israeli parents choose to send their children home to Israel. This highlights how the Diasporic experience of Israeli Jews is different from that of the Canadian-born. Israelis send their children back to Israel to meet someone who will most likely be Israeli whereas North American tour programs such as *Birthright* will connect young Jewish Canadians to other North American Jews. Nevertheless, most Israelis do not return to Israel. Perhaps marrying a non-Jew is less of a threat than the violence that pushed them to leave Israel in the first place.

Education and forging connections to other Jews is the prevalent strategy that institutions employ to cope with intermarriage. However, the focus is not necessarily to understand why one should consider *intramarriage* but to learn about life and the world through shared experiences as Jews. By positively creating new ways to share experiences while teaching young Jews about Judaism, institutions hope to maintain a stronger, more vibrant and youthful community.

Conversion and Adaptations

In a city with a growing intermarriage rate, there are many interfaith couples seeking Jewish leaders who will include their family in religious ceremonies. Due to their strict adherence to what are for some, arbitrary laws, frustration and anger is sometimes directed towards institutions. Partial inclusion rather than total exclusion plays an important role in negotiations between leaders, institutions and individuals. Frequently, religious leaders discuss how mem-

¹¹ A derogatory term for non-Jews.

bers of the Jewish community who want to intermarry react to Jewish law and its enforcement.

Some people are threatened and turned off if they find out that I can't perform their wedding or that ... any of our previous rabbis couldn't perform their weddings. Other people will say we'll do our wedding elsewhere, and then I'll come and participate in the community. It's not a big deal. I think for children of interfaith families studying for *bar* and *bat mitzvah*, the biggest thing that I've found ... is they just want that to be acknowledged. They're not looking for any special teaching, but they just want to know from me and from their classmates that we don't marginalize them or think of them as weirdoes.

As Alternative leader B describes, Jewish law discourages the participation of intermarried couples and their children in synagogues, but from my discussions with community leaders, there is no strong desire to ostracize those who intermarry. Despite the number of secular institutions that do not define who is or who is not Jewish, there is no obvious reason why so many Jews in the Vancouver region have little to no interest in participating in the Jewish community, aside from geographic factors such as distance from family, strong Jewish institutions and neighborhood concentrations. Nevertheless, negative opinions on intermarriage (and by extension the interfaith family) continue to shape Judaism and what it means to be Jewish in Vancouver, which could be discouraging individuals who may otherwise participate.

Next to Jewish *intramarriage*, encouraging conversion without proselytizing is the preferred solution to the "problem" of intermarriage.. Conversion redefines the Jewish community and individuals as well as a family's sense of belonging and acceptance. Not only does it legally satisfy the institutions that are trying to juggle traditionalism with the realities of modern society, but it also resolves identity issues for individuals seeking membership. Alternative

leader A explains how conversion before *b'nai mitzvoh* is about self-perception as well as institutional inclusion.

Okay, out of the ninety percent that bother to do it, I would tell you a hundred percent of them feel very rewarded, enriched and actually Jewishly empowered by it. They're no longer kind of straddling, no longer kind of like maneuvering, hoping that they'll be okay and screw the ones that don't buy their ... no they're there and it's like, okay, that's resolved, you know. No more issues, no more ambivalence.

Community institutions (especially the religious) predictably prefer conversion to non-affiliation or disenfranchisement because it enables individuals and families who feel as though they are on the borders of Judaism to (finally) become included. Because Jews do not proselytize, it is up to religious leaders to decide how far they are willing to press families to choose conversion. For the most part, those interviewed saw conversion as key to the identity of the children and the family as a whole, but not necessarily for spouses who convert. Another important point to consider is that asking a woman to convert has a different purpose than asking a man to convert. The man converts to help better educate his children and to create a more religiously and culturally cohesive family and home. A woman converts not only for these social reasons, but also to convert her body into a vessel of Judaism.

That is not to say that attempts to change Jewish law by removing the constraints on interfaith families have not been attempted. A radical alternative to conversions for children of non-Jewish mothers was adopted in the 1980s. The Reform movement, which is much larger and stronger in the United States than in Canada, began to accept patrilineal descent. The choice to honor the heritage of the Jewish father was made to reduce the feelings of discrimination that come from the law of matrilineal descent.

The Reform movement in the 1980s ... came with an alternative to try somehow to solve the problem of assimilation and all that by introducing patrilineal. It is true that in the Bible, just the Bible ... a Jew was based upon what the father was, not the mother. But later, with the oral tradition for the last two thousand years, it was matrilineal and that's how the Jewish community has been organized. For whatever reason, which is not important. But once the community has accepted that principle and it worked, and it worked perfectly for two thousand years. Why change? Now today the Reform movement who introduced it, admit that they failed, that nothing changed. Absolutely nothing changed for the better. That the same problems there were in 1980 we have in 2006.

Here, Conservative leader A articulates how this solution has done little to alleviate the "problem" of intermarriage. Rather, matrilineal descent has "worked perfectly" for over two thousand years. According to logic, the continued rise in intermarriage is neither a problem of tradition nor gendered interpretations of descent. In the last twenty-five years, changes to Reform Judaism have made little to no difference for Jewish numbers in North America, although many synagogues, especially in the United States, continue to practice patrilineal descent.

Beyond breaking with tradition, sanctioning patrilineal descent can lead to confusion for some children because the Reform changes were also not *halakhic*, which means that no other denomination of Judaism would accept the children of gentile mothers and Jewish fathers as Jewish. Conservative leader C describes the tensions caused by one denomination accepting patrilineal descent in a story about a religious trip in the United States.

We put our teens together, took them up to New York for a New York Jewish experience. We went to a Labovitcher¹² or some Hassidic place. Boys put on *tafilin*¹³... and all of them were asked what's your mother's name, what's your

¹² Labovitchers belong to a branch of ultra Orthodox/Hasidic Judaism.

¹³ Tafilin are used in prayer (*davening*) by Orthodox Jewish men along with the more commonly used prayer shawl (*talit*) and skull cap (*yarmulke*).

father's name, what's your Hebrew name. So one boy said my mother's not Jewish. They said did you convert? No. And they, they just stripped the *tafilin* off the boy. He was shattered and shocked and I spoke to him, actually the Reform rabbi wasn't around right then, but I said that the Reform rabbi made a huge mistake. That he didn't educate, that he didn't either by his own tradition he's not going to insist on conversion, but he didn't tell him and that was a mistake. The kid had to know that while he and his family and the synagogue, their temple, may consider him Jewish, he's going to be out there finding that he's not in other people's minds. And it's sad, very sad.

The trip that ended in disaster for one boy demonstrates how breaking with tradition can cause heartbreak and humiliation within Jewish society. The dilemma of the Reform experiment is that while trying to be more egalitarian, it broke with one of the most strongly held Jewish definitions of who is Jewish. Secular institutions that do not emphasize Judaism as a religion or as an ethnic group also stray from strict interpretations. However, because matrilineal descent is a question of faith, unless the Orthodox reconsiders its salience to Judaism, undoubtedly children of non-Jewish mothers – without conversion – will continue to be excluded and even stripped of their Jewish identity within religious spaces.

Although the Reform experiment has largely been condemned as ineffective, exploring new categorizations is a popular solution to include non-Jews who are normally excluded from participation in other life cycle events. As Jews continue to intermarry, religious institutions must also decide how to respect those relationships in death as well as in life while preserving Jewish practices. Including non-Jewish partners has become an issue for one synagogue as they are building a Jewish cemetery.

Well, we're in the process of building a cemetery so we're in the process of trying to figure out what to do with the intermarried. There's a whole book put out by the Conservative movement recently. Rather than calling them

"non-Jews" to call them *crovay yisrael*, which means "people who come close to the Jewish people." It's not a no – it's a yes. So changing the nomenclature can be significant. And so where do you bury someone who is not – right, if someone is involved with their church, they're not going to be buried in a Jewish cemetery, they belong elsewhere. For someone who is not churched, someone who does not want a minister [Christian] burying them, someone who has been coming in as a part of the community except they never converted, that's who *crovay yisrael* is in the terminology book. I'm trying to figure out exactly what they're doing, but it sounds like they're burying them but it's in the Jewish cemetery.

Conservative leader C wants to accept the realities of intermarriage in life and death for the community, while maintaining Jewish boundaries. Jewish law includes strict rules for burial grounds and the Conservative movement is attempting to work within the confines of the law to include the intermarried. Adopting alternative terminology is an example of how some Jewish leaders are reshaping Jewish structures to be more appealing to unaffiliated Jews and their children in order to open new avenues of inclusion.

The cemetery adaptation illustrates how tiered memberships develop within institutions to accommodate non-Jewish partners and family members. Generally non-Jews are excluded from participating on boards of organizations or from saying prayers on the *bema*.¹⁴ Along with encouraging education, changing terminology is a positive way to welcome Jews and their non-Jewish partners into traditionally exclusive spaces. Although the Reform experiment demonstrates how conversion continues to be the most accepted strategy for dealing with interfaith couples and their children, becoming more inclusive is important not only for outreach to the intermarried but also for proselytizing to the disaffected Jew.

¹⁴ The synagogue altar.

Proselytizing

Proselytizing in Judaism, unlike in religions such as Christianity or Islam, largely targets its own members. Although outreach to the intermarried is in some respects a form of proselytizing, in Jewish communities the object is not to seek new converts per se, but to encourage Jews to be more (authentically) Jewish. At the forefront of efforts to increase the Jewishness of Jews are the Orthodox and ultra Orthodox institutions across North America and around the world. Their interpretations of Judaism and an authentic Jewish life are built upon "the authority of God, sacred texts, religious elites and/or communal religious traditions of the past" (Charmé 2000, 138). Authenticity comes from an adherence to the ways "things have always been" as life should be led according to the traditions that prevent "bad" assimilation and the practices that adapt for "good" assimilation – leaving the rest of us to lead "inauthentic" Jewish lives (Abella 1996).

Symbolic of the paradoxical fear of the disappearing Jew in Vancouver is the increasingly visible presence of Orthodox and Hassidic Jews. Despite anxiety about Vancouver's intermarriage rates, no leader gave me the sense that Vancouver's community is shrinking or even in danger of disappearing entirely through assimilation. The growth of the Orthodox (in particular the *Chabbad* movement) in Vancouver has changed the Jewish landscape in just a few years. As a high school administrator argues:

I can tell you that Vancouver is much different than it was even just five years ago. We have a much larger, stronger, more obvious Orthodox group here in Vancouver. We have various *Chabbad* synagogues around. We have more people in black hats than we ever did before.... We have a larger number of people who maintain a very, not only just a Jewish life, but a very Orthodox Jewish life. And so it is possible to maintain a definite Jewish identity here in town.... I really have to hand it to *Chabbad* because they've

come in and they've really done something to increase the identity of many Jewish people. And I think that they made it more comfortable to be an Orthodox person here in Vancouver.

Chabad is an ultra Orthodox movement that is quickly growing in North America and Israel. Many leaders see them as reviving Jewish communities and the Jewish spirit by making an "authentic" Jewish life more possible and acceptable in a frontier city like Vancouver.¹⁵

However, *Chabad* and their outreach methods are not without controversy among religious and particularly secular leaders. A JCC leader wonders what kind of community development *Chabad* sacrifices by offering free meals and opportunities for Jews.

The *Chabad* organization re-stimulates people in a way and offers them, like, free *shabbos*¹⁶ dinners. Come, come, come, come. Be part of it. So maybe it nourishes and reawakens part of people's lives that they sort of haven't had connections with for many years. But the flip side by offering all of these free, subsidized paid-for experiences, there's a whole chunk of that young Jewish population that doesn't understand that to be part of a community you need to pay your dues.

Traditionally in Vancouver and elsewhere, Jews must take ownership of institutions to make them flourish by paying dues and/or volunteering their time. There is no free lunch. Contrary to this tradition, *Chabad* offers a "free dinner" to help fill a void for a "lost" Jew while simultaneously developing the ultra Orthodox presence. Although this is an effective strategy to strengthen a movement, non-Orthodox institutions and communities must decide how or if they want to challenge the momentum of increasing Orthodoxy.

¹⁵ I attempted to interview someone from *Chabad*, but was unable to establish a contact possibly due to my gender and/or position as an outsider.

¹⁶ *Shabbot* or Friday night dinners.

The strict definitions of gender roles that *Chabbad* follows are another controversy in Jewish communities. Not only does this pose a challenge for Jewish women leaders who may not be able to participate in community dialogues as fully as men, but it also poses a philosophical dilemma for many. As a leader from the secular Peretz Centre describes:

On Saturday, I was so upset. I was just beside myself. I went to a bar mitzvah. An ultra, ultra religious, you know, *bar mitzvah*. The men walked in through the front door, but the women had to walk in through the back door. The men sat in one part of the room and the women sat in another part of the room, and in between, there was what's called a *m'chaytzah*. They put up screens so that the women can't see the men, the men can't see the women.... and it was, you know, the regular *bar mitzvah* ceremony with lunch. But in the evening, there was, you know, sort of a big, big party. They rented the Peretz School even though we're not kosher, but all of the food was kosher and in our kitchen, they even covered all the worktables with tablecloths. So even for that they had, halfway down the auditorium, they had a screen so that if you were sitting on the women's side, you could not see the men dancing and the men could not see the women dancing. I mean, this is what they believe in and they have every right to do so. But what still drives me crazy... and this is a very, it's a new sort of organization. It's *Chabbad*, which is, you know, part of the Lebovitcher, and they've already started a *yeshiva*¹⁷ here. But what I can't understand is young people who are well educated, intelligent, knowledgeable about everything, how can they still believe *so strongly*?

Chabbad's activities while strengthening the connections to the memories of Judaism before assimilation are simultaneously perceived as a force that can denigrate women's rights, secularism, and community ownership. For many Jews the goals of Judaism have been transformed from the traditions of the ultra Orthodox to the assimilation of Western familial values.

¹⁷ Jewish religious school.

The abandonment of traditional marriage arrangements is leading to growing extremes of Jewish behavior: the ultra Orthodox and the unaffiliated intermarried. The resurgence of *Chabbad* as an authoritarian, patriarchal form of Judaism is disquieting because it represents a look to the past before mass assimilation, feminism, and extermination in the Nazi Holocaust. Competing interests do not necessarily lead Jews and their families to entirely abandon Judaism but only to relinquish the practice of their ancestors, which is replaced by a glorification of ethnic heritage and family structure (see Glazer 2003; Deleuze's preface in Donzelot 1997). Drawing upon both practice and lineage, *Chabbad*, by claiming a return to the roots of (European) Judaism, seeks to fill a void that secular and more moderate religious institutions are struggling to address.

And judging from the Jewish landscape in Vancouver, their tactics are being met with some success.

CONCLUSION: A RETURN TO THE PAST IN THE FUTURE

SJ: How do you feel about fears of assimilation?

CLC: It's a shame. It's a fact. It's a shame. It's always happened. I'm tired of the constant, you know, banner headlines "Jews are disappearing" or "Jews are assimilating and going." All you have to do is look at the story of Chanukah and it's a near duplicate situation.

Conservative leader C

The traditional taboo against intermarriage is a powerful institution shaping Jewish demographics and landscapes in Vancouver. It is a marker used for millennia to distinguish Jew from gentile, enshrining the preservation of Judaism in Jewish women's bodies. When Ezra and Nehemiah feared the dilution of the people of Israel through intermarriage, they changed laws. Twenty-five

hundred years later, the future of Judaism in Vancouver mirrors the past: leaders accommodate traditions while looking towards an uncertain future. Despite this ambiguous outlook, leaders are cautiously optimistic as education, conversion and in some cases proselytizing – but not changes in law – create paths towards the reclamation of the Jewish family. In Vancouver most leaders want to include the intermarried. Even among some of the Orthodox leaders I interviewed, the intermarried are not completely excluded. There is an expanding climate of acceptance among most leaders that recognizes the reality of contemporary Judaism, which must include intermarried couples.

However, this study is also relevant beyond Jewish communities in Canada. What Jewish institutions face is similar to the challenges of any ethnic and religious community that is for the most part well past the early stages of settlement. Individuals and families are emigrating from core ethnic communities to peripheral regions, such as lower mainland British Columbia. How Jewish communities cope with these changes reflects how all immigrant groups (past and present) in Canada and elsewhere adapt to social boundaries within changing geographies and demographics. Most immigrant groups whose tight-knit communities erode as members migrate from city centres into the suburbs and away from settled communities witness tensions, debates and even battles over individuality, family, community, and nation (see Ley 2005; Beattie and Ley 2003).

Scholars such as Arendt (1997), Brown (2004) and Glen (2002) have gone so far as to argue that Jews both in post-emancipation Europe and contemporary North America use the language of discrimination to instill a more cohesive Jewish identity based on racial distinctions. In Vancouver, we have seen throughout this paper how the language of race, nation, gender, and religion are used to maintain a consistent and cohesive Jewish identity. Further research

is needed on how individual Jews, affiliated/non-affiliated, secular/religious, intermarried Jews and non-Jews married to Jews interpret the boundaries of the formal and informal Jewish institutions in Vancouver and Canada. Comparisons with other religious and ethnic communities would also elucidate how the challenges of assimilation and integration are being met across Canada.

This also study exemplifies how integration, discrimination and cultural maintenance continue to struggle against each other within the milieu of Canadian multiculturalism.

Further research on self-racialization is needed not only on Jews, but also on other ethnic and religious groups. The current anti-racism phase of multiculturalism policy demands increased attention and sensitivity to the racial identities of groups that are racialized from both inside and outside their communities (Chow 2003; Kobayashi 1993; Kallen 1990). If groups rely on racial definitions to differentiate themselves from other groups, then policy makers must consider how this process may complicate or even interfere with policies designed to eradicate racism.

Balancing assimilation with cultural and religious practice in both comfortable and uncertain times is the crux of the issue of intermarriage. Do we blend into the majority to avoid trouble? Or do we assimilate because there is less discrimination? Do I marry the person I love regardless of their background? Or do I marry for my family, for my community? Undoubtedly, most Jews end up somewhere in the middle, but there are always institutions, leaders, and members on the extremes trying to pull the community in their direction.

Like anyone else, Jews look to the past to help plan for and explain an uncertain future. A past riddled with violence and uncertainty makes change including (selective) assimilation a necessary although painful path to follow.

For Jewish institutions this means widening the lanes, but with restrictions. The Jewish birthright dominates discussions of the future as it has for thousands of years, but guest passes are increasingly becoming a part of Jewish life. And history shows us that when we break with tradition and allow them to, guests often stay and assimilate into *our* community, leading to a more vibrant and inclusive Judaism for all. As many leaders in Vancouver argue, the next ten to twenty years will reveal the answers to our predictions – at which time another set of questions will be asked of an uncertain future for generations of Jewish children and grandchildren to come.

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