EXPERIENCING EVERYDAY PREJUDICE OF A CONCEALABLE STIGMA: JEWS IN A NON-JEWISH WORLD.

by

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Abstract

Dion (2001) observed that being the target of stigma and prejudice has a “demonstrable, negative effect upon the individual.” While blatant prejudice has lessened there has been little change in the rate of subtle forms of stigma and prejudice (Wilson, 1996). Recent trends in the literature acknowledge the importance of everyday reminders of difference or prejudice for women, racial minorities and ethnic groups (Swim, 2003). Jews with a long history as targets of stigma, prejudice and discrimination are an excellent example of a modern concealable stigma. Previous research into the Jewish experience has been influenced by concerns about group survival and has not included specific investigation of the experience of the target of stigma in interaction with perpetrators. Using a qualitative life history methodology this research sheds light on the experience of minority group members with a concealable stigma. Jewish adults with diverse backgrounds were interviewed using a semi-structured life history approach. The first layer of analysis identified six overarching themes – unshakeable loyalty to Jewish identity; importance of belonging; living Jewishness in a way that is meaningful; concerns about visibility of Jewishness; concerns about personal and group vulnerability
including references to the Holocaust; and everyday encounters with prejudice. These themes share commonalities with Fiske’s (2004) social needs expressed in a Jewish context. The second layer of analysis developed a model of an encounter with everyday prejudice. This model identifies the overriding importance of contextual influences on perceptions of an encounter in turn influencing the reaction and response. Following the example of Miller and Kaiser (Miller, 2006; 2001b), these encounters are seen as stressful events which can be understood using the framework of the stress and coping model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The results show the subtle but important impact of everyday prejudice. As well as providing a means of understanding the experience of these individuals the results have implications for both therapeutic and psychoeducational interventions.
Acknowledgements

Researching and writing a dissertation is often considered a solitary endeavor. In truth, an individual engaged in this endeavor cannot be successful without the support of others. I have been truly blessed with people who have come into my life at the moment I needed them. Some have been part of my doctoral journey for a brief time and others have supported me through the long haul. They are all very much appreciated.

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Table of Contents

Abstract........................................................................................................................................... ii

Acknowledgements................................................................................................................... iv

Table of Contents........................................................................................................................... v

List of Figures ................................................................................................................................ viii

Dedication ........................................................................................................................................ ix

Chapter 1 - Being Jewish in a Non-Jewish World................................................................. 1

   My Engagement in the Research Process ........................................................................ 3
   Purpose of the Study ............................................................................................................ 5

Chapter 2 - The Jewish Experience .................................................................................. 7

   Psychological Research on the Jewish Experience Before 1970............................... 8
      1970-1990 .......................................................................................................................... 10
   Contemporary Research into the Jewish Experience ................................................... 15
   Issues Specific to the Jewish Experience – Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust .......... 23
      Legacy of the Holocaust ..................................................................................................... 25
      Jewish Self-hatred and Internalized Anti-Semitism ..................................................... 32
      Managing a Stigmatized Minority Membership ............................................................ 36
      Christian Privilege as a Contextual Influence ................................................................. 38
      Jews and Multiculturalism ............................................................................................... 40
   Definition of a Jew ................................................................................................................. 44
   The Geographic and Historical Context of this Study ................................................... 46

Chapter 3 - Review of Psychological Literature.............................................................. 52

   Stigma, Prejudice and Discrimination .............................................................................. 53
   Dimensions of Stigma .......................................................................................................... 54
   Cost of a Concealable Stigma ............................................................................................ 57
   Groups as a Basis for Human Experience ........................................................................... 59
   Belonging and Attachment .................................................................................................. 61
   Ingroup and Outgroup ......................................................................................................... 62
   Stereotypes ............................................................................................................................. 63
   Shift From Blatant to Subtle Prejudice .............................................................................. 65
   Everyday Prejudice ............................................................................................................. 67
   The Experience of Everyday Prejudice ............................................................................ 68
   Everyday Prejudice and Minority Group Membership as a Stressful Experience ...... 75
   Stress and Coping Theory as a Model for Minority/Ethnic Stress ................................. 78
List of Figures

Figure 1 – OVERVIEW OF LAZARUS & FOLKMAN (1984) STRESS AND COPING MODEL ................................................................................................................... 80
Figure 2 - OVERARCHING THEMES FOR PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWS AS A GROUP .............................................................................................................. 125
Figure 3 - CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF AN ENCOUNTER ................................. 155
Dedication

I dedicate this work to my grandmother, Rose Topp z’l, who was fiercely loyal to her Jewish values and was a true “woman of valour”. She encouraged and loved me unconditionally. Her spirit continues to be an inspiration to me.
Chapter 1 - Being Jewish in a Non-Jewish World

It is said that we choose research topics that have a personal resonance (Moustakas, 1990). I am drawn to this story because it is my story. I have always puzzled about how to live my life as a Jew in the non-Jewish world that I inhabit. As an undergraduate student of psychology I was fascinated by the study of identity. Concurrently, in my life outside the university I was teaching Judaism to children in a weekend synagogue school. At the time I saw these as two separate parts of my life, separated because that was the way they “should” be. Without any consideration I assumed my career should be in the secular world of psychology with my personal life within a Jewish frame. I had no idea at that time that these threads would begin to intertwine and take me to the present analysis.

Fast-forward a decade to life in a Jewish community smaller than Toronto where I had grown up. I arrived in Vancouver after a year in France during which incidents of anti-Semitism including violence had been on the increase and Jews as a community felt under siege. Police in bulletproof vests guarded the entrance to Jewish institutions and one had to identify oneself to gain admittance.

Until this point being Jewish and the celebration of Judaism were sources of enormous joy and meaning for me. I was active in my community in a variety of ways – social action, synagogue participation, education – and my life was in tune with the cycle of Jewish holidays and life cycle events. I had no sense of discomfort identifying myself publicly as a Jew. Suddenly, or so it felt to me, my Jewishness was a potential source of danger and needed to be hidden.

Vancouver was a less sophisticated environment on the issue of multiculturalism than I was accustomed to and I was forced to reconsider my reactions and expectations of the non-
Jewish world. My work as a counsellor in a community college in British Columbia and one of few Jews on faculty presented me with some new and unexpected experiences that challenged my perspective on the question of life as a Jew in a non-Jewish world. The most remarkable period was during the 1991 Gulf War. Leading up to the war there had been a rash of anti-Semitic and homophobic incidents on campus. The war added to these tensions. I felt isolated and uneasy. The events on the television and the events on campus seemed to be coming together in an unsettling way. To cap it off a stranger left an anti-Semitic voicemail on my office phone. This really brought it all home in a very personal way. My reaction was to be frightened and overwhelmed. After some thought a number of options for response became clear to me. As will become evident, these options were similar to those used by participants of this research to deal with similar encounters.

I come to this research with a lifetime of experience as a Jew living in a non-Jewish world. There has been a layering of experience from the safe secure existence of my childhood and young adulthood to dealing with life in places like France and then Vancouver where I learned to feel threat on a personal level. All of these experiences have had a profound influence on my perceptions of life as a minority.

Until recently I would have answered that I had not experienced much anti-Semitism nor had I learned any specific lesson from my parents with regard to life as a minority. I had even wondered whether anti-Semitism actually existed in Canada anymore. Now I would say that I understand this differently. I had not considered that separating the Jewish part of me and isolating it to certain times was a self-censorship and a way of fitting in. My perspectives were examples of how I coped with these experiences through avoidance and selective awareness.
Writing this thesis has been a journey of learning about my own experiences as a stigmatized minority. In turn this has enabled me to see the experiences of my participants more clearly. Choosing to do this research has felt risky and exhilarating. Initial attempts to engage supervisory input were discouraging. There was puzzlement about the topic and whether it fit into the field of counselling psychology. On my part there were concerns about what others will think of me because of my choice of topic. What if I encounter anti-Semitism in the faculty judging my thesis? Choosing an advisor and committee members triggered these fears and I felt myself choose cautiously.

With time I found a more supportive academic environment. I then had to deal with my own internalized doubts about the worthiness of the project. Over the course of conducting this research I have become more confident speaking about this experience and its meaning to me. I have become clearer about the forces at work.

My Engagement in the Research Process

One of the first and strongest feelings I had conducting this research was the feeling that by doing this research I am breaking an unwritten rule. I am telling a secret. What’s the secret? That there are Jews, that Jews have a different way of doing things, that many Jews enjoy being Jewish and finally that I am Jewish and I like being Jewish despite times of threat and anti-Semitism. This is, of course, not a secret, but the emphasis here is on the words “feels like.” To begin, as the investigator I needed to unpack this feeling of breaking a taboo. Certainly stories of anti-Semitism or “daily hassles” for Jews are not widely told and most often are told about Jews elsewhere, outside of North America or at another time in history. The silence suggests either it is not happening here, or it is not “acceptable” to speak
about it. Certainly, compared to the events of the Holocaust, anything experienced today as a daily hassle is relatively benign but to be taken seriously nonetheless.

As well, Jews are not typically included in the conversation about multiculturalism in Toronto or Canada. That conversation tends to focus on visible minorities or recent arrivals to Canada. The assumption is that the experiences of Jews, who for the most part are not new immigrants and are well integrated into Canadian society, are not relevant to conversations of diversity. The result is a devaluing and invalidating experience for Jews.

Bell (2003), in her article *Telling Tales: What Stories Can Tell Us about Racism*, addresses stories of race and racism told by individuals. Her conceptualization helps my understanding of my own experience of telling this secret and of bridging the gap between my own idiosyncratic notions and the experience of Jews as a group. These stories are not only the experiences of individuals but “draw upon and reflect culturally and historically constructed themes that reverberate, often unconsciously, in individual accounts” (p. 4). In illustration she contrasts the picture of history typically told by Whites as one of history being progressive, a U.S. society that is basically fair and meritocratic, and assum[ing] a trajectory of forward progress in which injustices are eventually recognized and rectified over time. … In contrast, People of Color more often understand their experience through an awareness of past and continuing discrimination that affect every aspect of their lives in this society. They see history continually repeating through oscillating cycles of progress and retreat on racial issues. (Bell, 2003, p. 4)

Bell’s example clearly highlights the impact of context on the perceptions of events. The historical experiences of a group become part of the lens through which individuals
experience and interpret their lives as lived through moments of prejudice and stigmatization. This thesis then is a journey of making conscious the themes found in the “tales” told by Jews about their experiences living in a non-Jewish world. Part of the process of making these themes conscious is acknowledgement of the context or contexts influencing the individual’s perceptions and meaning of situations.

In an echo of Shelton and Richeson’s (2005) work on pluralistic ignorance, Bell clearly states the impact of these differing views of historical context.

As Cose notes, “Built into almost every interaction between Blacks and Whites is the entire history of race relations in America” (1997, p.185). This historical and social positionality produces a situation in which Whites and People of Color tend to hear and tell very different stories about race/racism. (Bell, 2003, p. 4)

A similar set of circumstances exists for many Jews and their perspective on Jewish/non-Jewish relations in times of stress. For Jews incidents of prejudice and stigmatization are seen through the lens of many generations of oppression culminating in the Holocaust and have a different meaning than it does for non-Jews.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate from a psychological perspective the experience of living as a Jew in a non-Jewish world. This examination answers a number of questions. Do individual Jews think about their social identity as a minority group member and when? What are the moments when this experience is most salient? How do individual Jews understand these salient moments? How do they respond to the experience of being a member of a minority and what role if any does context play in this experience?
In order to answer these questions, I conducted semi-structured interviews using a life history frame of reference. Themes from these interviews are analyzed, as are participants’ accounts of everyday prejudice. This information is situated in the psychological literature to develop a framework for understanding moments of encounter between Jews and non-Jews referred to elsewhere as everyday hassles with prejudice (Swim, Cohen, & Hyers, 1998).

This exploratory research sheds light on the experience of stigmatized minority group members, particularly concealable stigmas, and is an opportunity to integrate the existing literature with this qualitative examination of one group’s experience, that is, Jews. For clinicians such an examination provides an important opportunity to understand these experiences in order to address them therapeutically. It also provides information that contributes to the efforts of those who plan programs that address healthy functioning in a multicultural society.
Chapter 2 - The Jewish Experience

Jews have 3,000 years experience as a vulnerable stigmatized minority group. This includes both a long history of anti-Semitism as well as attempts to successfully participate in the dominant culture. From these experiences comes a wealth of knowledge about coping with this reality. Jewish cultures have, over time, been strongly influenced by these realities and the highs and lows of Jewish existence at times of tolerance as well as oppression. It is noteworthy that examinations of the Jewish experience from a psychological perspective have been relatively few. In this chapter I review the psychological examination of the Jewish experience and draw on other contemporary work on the Jewish experience to deepen the description. The chapter ends with information specific to the context of the participants as residents of Toronto.

For the most part, research exploring the Jewish experience has been in the field of sociology and even then published almost exclusively in Jewish journals (Davidman & Tenenbaum, 1994). The focus of research between 1945 and 1990 has been on the size of Jewish communities, patterns of affiliation, rates of intermarriage, rates of synagogue attendance and friendship patterns. Jewish identity and identification have typically been defined within a religious framework (Rosen, 1995) and research questions have been driven by concerns regarding Jewish “survival.”

Most of this research follows a positivist paradigm and its goal has been to isolate factors influencing the outcome of a strong Jewish identity. Some of this research was directly funded by organizations within the Jewish community such as the American Jewish Congress and began immediately following World War II (Glenn, 2006). Framing their results in this paradigm is a direct response to the concern about “Jewish continuity” or
survival, and the desire for conclusions to be based on hard evidence. In reviewing twenty
years worth of sociological research into the Jewish experience Davidman and Tennenbaum
(1994) found the field to be small and largely dominated by male academics. Questions of
survival of the Jewish community overshadowed all other lines of inquiry. Laudable as this
goal is, it maintains a narrow definition of a Jew and ways to be Jewish.

**Psychological Research on the Jewish Experience Before 1970**

On the whole the amount of investigation of the Jewish experience from a specifically
psychological perspective has been limited. The few psychological examinations of Jewish
experience before 1970 focused on exploring links between Jewish identity, mental health
and self esteem (Langman, 2000). Overall, findings from studies before the 1970s were
mixed and did not find a clear link between being Jewish and psychopathology. Specifically,
factors such as anxiety and internalized anti-Semitism, depression and religiosity,
marginality, and generations since immigration were examined (Langman, 2000).

These studies were few and isolated and were not part of any ongoing research
program (Sanua, 1959, 1962). For the most part Jewish psychologists in the post World War
II period until the 1970s focused their concerns with prejudice and stigma into more general
universalistic research programs (for example, Milgram, 1974). As Glenn states in her
description of the “Jewish Cold War” between those focused on Jewish loyalty and those
concerned with a universalist approach,

[There was] a contentious public debate revolving around the question of
Jewish group loyalty, Jewish group “survival,” and Jewish nationalism. This
debate – a struggle between advocates of Jewish particularism and nationalism
and defenders of liberal universalism and cosmopolitanism – was the latest in
a succession of longstanding disagreements about the relationship of Jews to the wider non-Jewish society. (Glenn, 2006, p. 100)

Keeping one’s Jewish identity separate and apart from other identities, often hidden and devalued, is a widespread and time-honoured coping strategy. Langman (1999) points to Erik Erikson as a good example of this approach.

Erik Erikson, perhaps the best known writer on identity (and the man who coined the phrase ‘identity crisis’) went to great lengths to hide his Jewishness. His original last name was Homberger, but when he came to the United States [in 1933], he gave himself a non-Jewish-sounding last name – Erikson. Also it was not until late in his life that he publicly revealed that his mother was Jewish. Perhaps Erikson’s interest in identity was a result of his own ‘identity crisis’ regarding his Jewishness; it is certainly interesting that such an expert on identity issues virtually ignored the issue of Jewish identity. (Langman, 1999, p. 277-278)

Kurt Lewin (1948) was one of the first noteworthy psychologists to give attention to the Jewish experience in relation to living among other groups. Not surprisingly, given his personal history as a German Jew transplanted to America, writing during and immediately post World War II and the Holocaust, he focused on Jewish self-hatred and questions of belongingness. Lewin’s work was amongst those funded by the American Jewish Congress - Commission on Community Interrelations (Glenn, 2006). His field theory attempted to understand the place of minority groups, including the Jews. His position was that belonging simultaneously in many groups is a fact of life that must be balanced to avoid problems. Lewin felt that Jews often overemphasize or underemphasize their belonging to the Jewish
group as a reflection of feelings of inferiority related to seeing the world through the eyes of the non-Jewish majority, which was at that time unfriendly to Jews (Langman, 2000). “They often think they no longer belong to the group, especially if they endeavor to avoid the disagreeable facts connected with this membership” (Lewin, 1997, p. 109).

The conflict which leads to the restlessness of the Jews in the Diaspora centers in the individual’s feelings about his [sic] belonging to the Jewish group. As a general rule, individuals who try to cross the boundary to a socially higher group face a nearly unavoidable inner conflict. Members of the socially higher groups are proud of belonging to their group and feel free to judge and act in accordance with the ideals and standards of the group. On the other hand, the person who tries to enter the higher group has to be especially careful not to show connection with the ideas of the group to which he once belonged. For this reason too his [sic] behavior is uncertain. Achad Haam [an early Zionist leader] has referred to this situation of emancipation as “slavery within freedom.” (Lewin, 1997, p.114)

1970-1990

With the rise of the feminist movement and increase in ethnic pride generally during the 1970s, psychology began to turn its interest to the psychological dynamics of minority group members. This resulted in attention to the Jewish experience as well. In the process of describing, defining and measuring Jewishness and Jewish identity it became unavoidable to also consider Jewish minority status and the relationship with the majority non-Jewish culture.
Research from this period tried to deal with the sticky question of what being Jewish means. Typically, being Jewish has been defined as a religious category. In practice, and confirmed by research, Jews have been found to relate to their Jewishness in a number of ways including culture and ethnicity as well as religion (Strauss, 1979). While religion has been shown to have an important relationship to Jewish identification, Safirstein (2002), in her development of the Jewish Group Membership Scale, found that Jews of all denominations and levels of religiosity expressed strong feelings of membership in the Jewish group, that is, the cultural and ethnic aspects of Jewishness in addition to the religion.

In her research to define Jewish identity and identify its dimensions, Zemlick (1977) found individuals had not one but many identities and defined their Jewish identity in opposition to the non-Jewish world. She found no relationship between Jewish identity and involvement in the Jewish and non-Jewish communities with individuals active in the non-Jewish world still feeling isolated from it. In her study a strong Jewish identity was not necessarily associated with a positive sense of self and/or one’s ethnic group.

Israeli psychologist Simon Herman (1977), whose specialty was research on Jewish and Israeli identity, emphasized the importance of studying Diaspora Jewish identity (Jews outside of Israel) in the context of the world these Jews live in. “The tendency has grown for Jews to see themselves as ‘a people dwelling alone’” (S. Herman, 1977, p. 42), that is, living in a society but not completely members of that society. This is a response to historical anti-Semitism and as such is a difference between Diaspora and Israeli Jews. In his opinion this sentiment keeps Diaspora Jews apart from the dominant culture of their home country.

Based on his research Herman (1977) developed nine dimensions of Jewish group membership. To have strong feelings of group membership one must perceive the Jewish
group as a separate group with religious rituals to follow and a cultural or ethnic entity. It must occupy a central position in one’s life, and feeling Jewish should be part of an integrated personality. Strong group membership is accompanied by positive feelings about the group whereby the individual derives strength or self worth from feelings of membership rather than shame, discomfort or embarrassment. The group should serve as a source of reference in significant spheres of the individual’s life such as marriage and raising of children. Those who feel a part of the group conduct their life in accordance with being Jewish.

Research exploring Jewishness during this time period also identified some more negative associations with this identification. These more qualitative and clinical explorations (Diller, 1980; J. W. Klein, 1976, 1980, 1989) found that self-hatred or self-denigration is an important element in some Jews’ self-concept. These may be examples of strategies to cope with a stigmatized social identity which themselves have negative consequences for the individual.

Diller (1980) focused his examination into rejection of Jewish identity. He reviewed case notes and small therapeutically oriented consciousness raising groups to arrive at his conclusions. He identified the revitalization of interest in Judaism during the 1970s as being the direct result of four factors, namely the legacy of the Holocaust, the establishment of the state of Israel and the experience of the 1967 war, a loss of faith in American moral structure, and a resurgence of anti-Semitism. Some of the ways these contextual factors responded to by the 20-something age group were aliyah to Israel, immersion in Hasidic sects, involvement in the creation of a Jewish counterculture based on liturgical innovation, and
informal community groupings called *havurot*. All of these actions experienced a surge in growth during this period.

Diller (1980) wanted to know why young Jews would move away from Judaism. Based on the comments of his participants he concluded that four patterns existed: 1. Intergroup conflict – If the individual grows up between cultures with limited access to the mainstream and insufficient satisfaction as a Jew, he or she may resent the Jewish part of their identity. If the individual has internalized the majority culture’s values, particularly its negative attitudes towards Jews then the individual may reject their Jewish identity and the self; 2. Quality of Jewish experience – In some circles, practice of Judaism has become “hollow and diluted.” This takes two forms – unfeeling and rigid orthodoxy of rule following or a blend of muted religiosity and affluence. Equating such experiences with what Judaism has to offer as a whole may lead to the rejection of Judaism; 3. Mistrust of religion and religious experience – Contemporary culture prizes rationality and logic over emotional, spiritual and religious sides of human experience, therefore, Jews learn to be suspicious of these aspects of human experience and their reflection in Judaism and reject all of Judaism; and 4. Relationship between Judaism and the drive for independence – Adolescence is a time to assert independence. In a culture where family and prohibition against intermarriage are so strong some individuals may equate their familial problems with their Jewishness and reject Judaism as a symbol of their drive for independence.

Diller had an interesting finding about some of the identity rejecting Jews. Rather than being totally negative they were typically in conflict over their Jewish identity, both drawn to and repelled by Jewishness in classic approach-avoidance fashion. The conflict itself created certain secondary emotions that were elicited in the presence of a wide range of
Jewish related stimuli. Anger, embarrassment and guilt were the most common. They felt anger at being internally torn apart, embarrassed at still retaining certain positive Jewish feelings, or guilty for denying an essential part of the self. Individuals were frequently unaware of the existence of these emotions and quite shocked when the repression was overcome and brought to consciousness.

Klein’s (1980) research also had a more clinical underpinning and focused on Jewish identity and self-esteem. It became clear to her that an important component of this was the relationship between Jew and non-Jew. She observed that “the conflict between assimilation and identification for Jews exacts a price in discontent, alienation, and various forms of self-hate” (J. W. Klein, 1980, p.6). She identified three types of Jewish identifications. The positive identifier was able to synthesize positive and negative associations with the Jewish ethnic group in order to form an attachment to the group. This individual showed high self-esteem and low self-denigration. The ambivalent identifier ascribed both their most valued and most despised traits to Jewishness. They experienced conflict and high self-abasement due to this lack of resolution. And finally the negative identifier showed the lowest self-esteem and highest self-contempt. They condemned themselves for stereotypic traits shared with the Jewish group and used denial, dichotomous logic, and splitting-off to achieve distance and to disaffiliate from the Jewish group. From this research Klein developed ethnotherapy groups addressing these issues particularly as they affected gender relations among young adult Jews.

Both Klein and Diller deal with the majority culture’s influence as it impacts on Jewish identity and self-esteem with negative consequences. They each provide models that acknowledge people’s diversity of experience and the impact of minority group membership.
They show a continuing connection to Jewish identity even in the rejecting or self-hating Jew and explore the negative consequences of having this stigmatized identity.

**Contemporary Research into the Jewish Experience**

The last two decades have seen both a renewed interest by Jews in their own experience as a stigmatized minority and a more nuanced approach to the academic conversation about Jewishness. Within this general subject area are growing bodies of research on the role of gender, internalized anti-Semitism and the ongoing impact of the Holocaust. Qualitative methods are now more accepted than before as a way to answer these questions, as are reflexive discussions. Finally, honest reflection on relationships between Jews and other cultures in the society are being expressed.

Beginning with the reflections of Jewish social scientists whose areas of specialization have been elsewhere, Marc Edelman (1996) notes the striking lack of reflexive discussion among Jewish anthropologists about their Jewishness. He examines this “neglected dimension of ‘the epistemology of the Jewish closet’” (Edelman, 1996, p. 268) through self reflection. Other academics have recently written autobiographical articles exploring their own Jewishness and its impact on their professional lives including the fact that they had kept their Jewishness separate from their other pursuits (Edelman, 1996; Goldberg, 1991; Marks, 1997; Packer, 1996; Weinrach, 1990). This echoes my own journey separating the Jewish from the professional arenas of my life. I too experienced a sense of sharing a secret or as Edelman puts it coming out of the closet (see my reflections in Chapter 1).

An informal review of these articles shows three strong themes common to them all. They are: 1. Managing relationship with non-Jews especially with regards to revealing
information about the self, 2. Concerns about anti-Semitism/the Holocaust/personal safety as a Jew, and 3. Evaluation/questioning/curiosity about Jewishness. These published remarks reflect an increased willingness to explore experience as Jews in a non-Jewish world.

Having grown up in North America as educated middle class individuals it is noteworthy that these Jewish academics continue to have concerns regarding belonging and safety.

These themes of interacting with the non-Jewish majority, wanting to belong, and the impact of anti-Semitism experienced directly or indirectly are woven throughout the literature on Jewish experience. Even if not directly the focus of the research, more recent studies of Jewish experience have touched on these themes.

In his comprehensive review of assessment issues with Jewish clients Langman (2000) concludes that the major issues for Jews today are internalized anti-Semitism and fear of visibility. Both of these issues are inextricably tied to a relationship with the non-Jewish majority. In turn, these issues have important implications for identity and psychological well-being in ways that are important for clinicians to know.

What might sound like paranoia to a non-Jewish clinician might be perfectly normal in American Jewish culture. Jews might be afraid to wear a *yarmulke* (head covering) in public, use Yiddish or Hebrew words in conversation, wear a Star-of-David necklace or clothes with Hebrew writing, and do anything that would reveal their Jewishness. One psychologist referred to what for Jews, is the most feared question: “Are you Jewish?” … This is a feared question because Jews have no way of knowing what will happen if they answer it truthfully. … This is a matter of prudence at the expense of self respect.

(Langman, 2000, p. 654)
Further evidence of the uniqueness of American Jewish culture and its influence on Jewish perceptions and experience are Schwartz’ comments. Schwartz (1995) identifies a number of therapeutic issues particular to Jewish clients and identified by Langman and others. They are rooted in the historical experiences of the Jewish people and include internalized anti-Semitism, chronic terror, grief and loss, and pressure to assimilate into the non-Jewish world.

Further information on the impact of minority status on Jewishness is found in the following studies. In an empirical study, Ressler (1997) found a strong connection to the community, as expressed by participation in Jewish organizations and religiosity, was related to well-being as defined by the factors of belonging, optimism, and self-acceptance. Consistent with Lewin’s theory, Ressler concludes that “feelings of psychological well-being were associated with individuals’ locating themselves unambiguously at the core of their social group” (Ressler, 1997, p. 517). This parallels observations in other minority groups that a strong identification with one’s minority group can provide a source of support and have a positive effect on well-being (see Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999).

Three recent studies are noteworthy because they use a qualitative methodology to explore the Jewish experience. Friedman, Friedlander and Blustein (2001) examined the diversity of Jewish identity in the United States while Sinclair and Milner (2005) focused on Jewish identity of young adults in Great Britain. Serlin (2004) used a grounded theory approach to build a model of Jewish American identity.

Friedman et al (2001) conducted interviews with six women and four men from a wide range of Jewish religious observance to explore the extent to which these Jews identified with both Jewish and mainstream American culture, and to what degree their
cultural identification corresponds with their religious observance of Judaism. A number of general themes emerged – the experience of discrimination which was sometimes minimized or doubted; cultural identity as being environmentally or contextually sensitive (that is, having two cultural identities, the situation dictating which was more salient at the time); sense of pride in being Jewish; cultural identity and religious practice as congruent; search for meaning and understanding of God, Jewish identity and heritage; strong opinions about and a connection to Israel; valuing interpersonal relationships with Jews as well as Gentiles including participation in a Jewish neighbourhood and Jewish organizations; and finally the importance of Jewish marriage including the conversion of a non-Jewish partner to make it a Jewish marriage and family.

Sinclair and Milner conducted 20 semi-structured interviews with Jewish men and women aged 18-27 in Britain. Their goal was to explore the experience of Jewish identity in the United Kingdom. Jewish identity was defined as both a social and a religious identity. Their data showed that the dimensions of social and religious identity were both overlapping and distinct dimensions of Jewish identity.

The three most important themes in terms of quality and quantity of data were kinship and connection, awareness of difference, and faith and observance. Kinship and connection refers to the feeling of connection with other Jews regardless of where they are. This feeling of belonging and connectedness was powerful and expressed through a network of family, friends, and community. Within this theme were the topics of bonding, mutual support and understanding, compatibility, common language, and shared history.

Awareness of difference refers to the feelings participants had that were rooted in their perception of being different from the majority culture in Britain. When participants
were in new situations or met strangers who were not Jewish this feeling was heightened. Examples of these situations were starting a new job or university. For those participants who were less secure in their identity as Jews this awareness of difference was accompanied by feelings of ambiguity, anxiety, and uncertainty about the reactions of others. Also part of this theme were some participants’ coping with multiple cultural identifications. Faith and observance means just that, the individual’s beliefs and observance of Jewish ritual. On this theme there was a wide diversity of personal practice.

Serlin (2004) interviewed 13 Jewish Americans with a variety of backgrounds and religious affiliations with the goal of defining Jewish identity. She found five primary categories that together become her model of Jewish identity. They were labeled Jewish history, being Jewish in a non-Jewish world, relations among Jews, family and being Jewish. She visualized each of these categories as concentric nesting circles from the individual level at the centre to the broadest category of Jewish history on the outer layer. Serlin’s contribution is the depth of detail given for each of these categories.

Of most interest to this research project are her findings with regard to contextual influences and relationships with non-Jews. Serlin’s participants felt that historical events, in particular the Holocaust, influenced how they understood current events. They identified three sub-themes within the broader theme of Jewish history. They were the influence of history on their own personal history, their family’s particular history, and the Holocaust itself. “For the participants, the Holocaust was not only a historical tragedy, but also something that they continually carry with them that impacts their lives on an ongoing basis.” (Serlin, 2004, p. 70). Within the theme of the Holocaust a number of aspects help explain the strength of its impact. These were the feeling that “it could have been me,” that is a strong
personal identification with the events, a responsibility to make sure the Holocaust is not forgotten, never say that it will never happen again, and a strong feeling of loss both personally and collectively as a people. There were comments that current day events would trigger the feelings related to the Holocaust, such as 9/11 or contemporary genocide of other groups.

Serlin’s participants’ Jewish identity was informed by their relationship with the dominant non-Jewish American culture. “They all stated feeling like they ‘fit in;’ however, they also addressed feelings of difference and feeling like outsiders at times.” (Serlin, 2004, p. 78). Within the broad category of Being Jewish in a non-Jewish world there were ten sub-themes. These were: anti-Semitism, stereotypes, feeling different, coping with difference, looking Jewish, geography, assimilation, [are Jews] white?, minority and intermarriage. Noteworthy within the sub-theme of anti-Semitism were feelings of its persistence, remarks that they had not experienced big anti-Semitism and the many challenges they felt in addressing anti-Semitism. Some participants expressed the concern that they had become “sensitive” to comments made or issues regarding Jews. There was a strong sense of confusion as how to handle anti-Semitism as well as uncertainty in identifying things as anti-Semitic.

These experiences of not knowing if something was anti-Semitic or being uncertain how to respond is important to identity. It caused participants to question themselves and their experiences. It appeared to cause them to be uncertain about what they felt and what their reality was, but also uncertain about their relationships with non-Jews and how they as Jews were perceived by others. (Serlin, 2004, p. 82)
While participants felt they had not experienced overt anti-Semitism they did feel that stereotyping was part of their experience. The impact of this was a reinforcement of their feeling of being an outsider. Even the positive stereotypes about Jews valuing education had a negative edge to them. In some ways this changed their behaviour so as not to reinforce stereotypes about Jews and left a number of them feeling some discomfort about seeing other Jews who did reinforce the stereotypes such as those about money, and Jews being loud and opinionated. The feeling of being an outsider was voiced by most of the participants. This was intensified at holiday times and those who asked for time off to celebrate the major Jewish holidays were especially aware of their difference and discomfort.

Another important theme in Serlin’s research was the ways that her participants coped with feeling different. Two primary themes emerged from these data, educating non-Jews and minimizing difference (Serlin, 2004). Educating non-Jews was a way to challenge the stereotypes and for the most part seemed to be a positive experience though participants did comment on how frustrating it could be. In dealing with feelings of difference, many participants made conscious decisions to either not focus on the experiences that contributed to their feelings of difference or altered how they presented themselves in order to minimize difference, with some participants wanting to not be Jewish at certain points in their lives because of the impact of feeling different. (Serlin, 2004, p. 93)

Haynes finds further evidence of the connection between Jewish identity and relationships with non-Jews. In a qualitative study of 22 Jewish women teachers from British non-denominational inner state schools Haynes (2003) explored their construction of ethnic identity along with their experiences of racism and anti-Semitism. In general these women
felt isolated because of their Jewishness. They worried about their visibility and belonging (or not) as well as a sense of being “other.” The context of their experience was an important influence on their experience.

Often passing as part of the white majority, they are also members of an invisible minority. They never know when their identity as perceived by others will change and when they will be forced to reassess their self-identity; when they will literally use the wrong password or behaviour and be othered. (Haynes, 2003, p. 53-54)

All of these studies show a multidimensional depiction of Jewish identity. Woven through all of the explorations of Jewishness described here, autobiographical writing of the social scientists, studies of Jewish identity using quantitative questionnaires and measures, and these qualitative narratives are similar themes. Jewishness is multidimensional including religion, culture and peoplehood. While important to the individual, being Jewish is only one part of an individual’s identity. Life as a Jew in the Diaspora regardless of degree or quality of connection to one’s Jewish identity includes a relationship with a larger and different majority culture with which the individual Jew must find a way to be in relationship. It also carries with it a loyalty to and relationship with the larger group of Jews.

The academic literature of the last two decades includes exploration of more specific topics relevant to the relationship between Jews and non-Jews. These include the impact of anti-Semitism generally and the Holocaust in particular, the phenomenon of internalized anti-Semitism or Jewish self-hatred, and the ways that Jews cope with their stigmatized minority status. Themes that were important to earlier research continue to have a place of prominence in this recent body of literature, that is the desire to belong and concerns about safety.
Issues Specific to the Jewish Experience – Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust

The strongest influence on relationships between Jews and non-Jews is anti-Semitism. Its most extreme example has been the Holocaust. The impact of this catastrophic event on the Jewish psyche is profound and not yet fully understood. In a different way, present day anti-Semitism, in various guises, is part of everyday life for many Jews. There is the everyday prejudice discussed elsewhere in this document (e.g., Swim, et al., 1998) and epitomized by anti-Semitic slurs and stereotypes, blatant sometimes violent expressions of anti-Semitism, and a “new” anti-Semitism that commentators have identified especially as it is formulated in its guise as anti-Israel sentiments and behaviour (Chesler, 2003; R. Klein & Bromberg, 2007; Schlosser, 2006).

Anti-Semitism can be defined as “hostility toward Jews that can manifest on an individual, institutional or societal level” (Schlosser, 2006, p. 428). Highlighting the origin of the hostility is important both in identifying its pervasiveness and with regards to understanding the comments of this research’s participants. Perhaps understanding the characteristics of the anti-Semitism facilitates determining the kind of effective response.

Recent commentary in the literature on anti-Semitism attempts to categorize types of anti-Semitism (Schlosser, 2006). These categories include the following:

1. *religious* (e.g., erroneous belief that Jews killed Jesus, and their refusal to accept Jesus as a messiah)
2. *social* (e.g., limiting Jews’ occupational choices, as well as admittance to social and professional clubs)
3. *political* (e.g., blaming Jews for Communism, or other political movements such as fascism)
4. **sexual** (e.g., stereotyping Jewish women as being both teases and prudes, the stereotype of the Jewish American princess)

5. **economic** (e.g., the myths that all Jews are rich penny-pinchers who control the banks, media, and the U.S. economy, blaming Jews for economic catastrophes such as the Depression)

6. **psychological** (e.g., the dominant culture’s desire to assimilate the Jew is projected onto the Jew as ‘the Jewish plot to take over’)

7. **racial** (e.g., Jews seen as biologically inferior)

Other recent examples of contemporary anti-Semitism include (a) labeling Israel as an apartheid state with no claim to Palestine, (b) denying the Holocaust, (c) asserting that Jews are overrepresented in academia, and (d) indicating that Jews are not a minority and do not deserve minority protections (Schlosser, 2006, p. 428). It is important to note that even if a Jew does not experience it first hand, hearing about these anti-Semitic events can still be quite traumatic.

The variety of ways that anti-Semitism and prejudice can be expressed makes the identification of an interaction as anti-Semitic challenging. This is compounded by the subtlety and ambiguity of the more common everyday encounters with anti-Semitism. Attempts to consider or understand anti-Semitism can be both confusing and overwhelming. One effect of this ambiguity is the belief by some that anti-Semitism of any type no longer exists in North America.

One way that modern anti-Semitism can be confusing is the concept of aversive anti-Semitism. This is a variation of the concept of aversive racism where individuals have conscious egalitarian values and unconscious negative feelings and beliefs about other races.
Discrimination is hidden as something else such as insufficient qualifications for a type of employment (Dovidio 2002). Gale (2004) investigated the effects of aversive anti-Semitism on hiring practices. He noted that while there has been a decline in overt anti-Semitic behaviour since 1995, anti-Semitic stereotypes and sentiments remain widespread and a problem in the workplace.

Unfortunately for Jews, as well as Hindus, Muslims and other minority religion-based groups, being American means observing the Christian religion. … Research shows that to succeed in the corporate world Jews must appear socially acceptable, that is, not have stereotype Jewish physiques, wear a yarmulke, keep dietary restrictions, or request time to observe the Sabbath. (Gale, 2004, p. 58-59)

This pattern of subtle, ambiguous expressions of everyday prejudice along with intolerance of difference continues to appear in the literature on stigma and prejudice.

**Legacy of the Holocaust.**

Relevant to this research project are the ways that the Holocaust continues to influence Jewish experience. Most of the examination of its legacy from a psychological perspective has been focused on the survivors and their offspring though even that is far from fully explored. Consideration of its impact on Jews not directly involved as survivors or their children has had almost no attention, though it too is important to consider as a key contextual influence on present day Jewish non-Jewish relations (Hammer, 1995). There is some evidence and reason to believe that in some ways all Jews have been traumatized by the events of the Holocaust (Weiner, 1995).
Hammer (1995) believes there is a generational transmission of a Jewish communal trauma response for all Jews regardless of their personal or family connection to the Holocaust. “The history of traumatic persecution has left unresolved psychological sequelae within the Jewish population” (Hammer, 1995, p. 200). She is one of very few who have broadened their examination of the impact of the Holocaust beyond the survivors themselves and beyond the boundaries of the clinical treatment setting.

The Holocaust was clearly a traumatic event of enormous proportions. The psychological aftermath of traumatic events has come to be labeled as Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (DSM-IV-TR, 2000). Not specifically created in relation to the Holocaust, this anxiety disorder was recognized in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) during the 1980s (Hammer, 1995). PTSD is “characterized by the reexperiencing of an extremely traumatic event accompanied by symptoms of increased arousal and by avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma” (DSM-IV-TR, 2000, p. 429).

The sudden destruction of one’s community and the murder of most of European Jewry is just such a traumatic event (Hammer, 1995). The textbook definition continues to say,

The symptoms develop following exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor involving direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one’s physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate. (DSM-IV-TR, 2000, p. 463)
As a trauma, the Holocaust was a national event. Generations of Jews born after World War II have felt a connection to the events through their recounting, the world’s response to the Holocaust, and various memorializations. For many it was easy to feel as if “it could have been me.” Research conducted in the United States after 9/11 to understand why individuals who were not directly impacted by the events of that day felt traumatized showed that there too the sentiment of “it could have been me” was an important factor in making the event personal and as a result traumatic (Wayment, 2004). Consideration of the impact of the Holocaust on Jews as a group is useful especially as it offers insight to present day communal behaviour.

Hammer (1995) takes three of the common symptoms of PTSD and compares them to typical Jewish communal behaviour. She hypothesizes that these behaviours are evidence of a secondary traumatization. The first group of symptoms is hyperarousal and hypervigilance. This includes irritability and exaggerated startle responses to low levels of or unexpected stimulation. The vigilance is about the possible return of the danger. Other symptoms often part of this are nightmares and psychosomatic responses. On a communal level there are a number of organizations whose purpose it is to monitor anti-Semitism locally and globally and respond to it as appropriate, for example the B’nai Brith of Canada League of Human Rights and Canadian Jewish Congress. There are numerous organizations in the United States who monitor the media, lobby politicians and provide education and information about Jews, Judaism, and anti-Semitism. This hive of activity is all with the purpose of preventing further outbreaks of anti-Semitism or another Holocaust.

The strong response of some individuals and organizations to events that may be seen by non-Jews as small and not worthy of concern is a good example of hyperarousal and
hypervigilance. Appropriateness of response in relation to an event is a matter of context and perception. Responses to current events can often be infused with the concerns of survival that reach back into Jewish history.

The worst fear of any traumatized person is that the moment of horror will recur, and this fear is realized in victims of chronic abuse. Not surprisingly, the repetition of trauma amplifies all the hyperarousal symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder. Chronically traumatized people are continually hypervigilant, anxious, and agitated (J. Herman, 1997, p. 86).

The long history of violent anti-Semitism and the trauma of the Holocaust are in effect chronic abuse on a communal level thus putting present day communal vigilance into context. The focus of Jewish communal leadership on safety and survival is a coping strategy in response to fears of anti-Semitism’s recurrence.

A second symptom noted by Hammer is intrusive thoughts about the traumatic event even long after the event. There may be fixation on the trauma, or suddenly feeling as if the traumatic event is recurring in the present along with intense psychological distress. Anniversaries of the trauma are a time where this happens. With regards to the Holocaust and deaths of individuals there is no one moment when this occurred since it stretched over years. The creation of Holocaust memorials and specific times of remembrance such as the anniversary of Kristallnacht and the Warsaw ghetto uprising and Yom Hashoah are all examples of memories of the trauma being kept accessible and acting as moments that trigger emotions. Reactions to Holocaust deniers are intense for this same reason. Any perceived threat to the survival of the Jewish people is seen within the context of the losses of the Holocaust.
The third symptom Hammer points to is a sense of emotional constriction. She notes avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma or a numbing of general responsiveness. Associated to this are the development of a lack of trust, difficulty forming loving attachments, emotional detachment, and internalized anti-Semitism. These are more difficult to identify on a group level.

Hammer (1995) follows her hypothesis about secondary trauma and suggests behaviour that she feels is evidence of a vicarious traumatization of the Jewish people. Specific examples cited by her include:

1. Foremost is the attrition in the Jewish population that becomes a threat to the very existence of the community itself.

2. The ubiquitous debate between those who deny that possibility, that is, that the community is shrinking and may disappear. This debate highlights the continual focus on the trauma.

3. The concomitant focus on community protection, as seen in the Jewish community’s support for Israel as the ‘safe haven’ where all Jews will always be welcomed, is typical of the trauma response.

4. Finally, the paradoxical avoidance of Jewish religious affiliation and then return to Judaism during times of increased anti-Semitic threat is an example of the dialectic of the trauma response.

Others have also tried to identify the psychological inheritance from the Holocaust for Jews in general. Roth (1993) presented his perspective at a conference held in Israel on this topic. While survivors of the Holocaust were initially met with silence when they wanted to tell their experiences at the end of World War II, over time the sadness and loss of those
experiences resonated with other Jews, and other periods of Jewish immigration and unresolved mourning. “This group psychological propensity, at times, locks specific Holocaust experiences with matching individual psychodynamics and induces an intense state of mind which might be described as ‘contagious pathological mourning’” (Roth, 1993, p. 40).

Roth (1993) comments on one incident which illustrates the difficulty in clarifying to what extent the reaction to an event is fitting for that event and how previous unresolved emotional issues can piggyback on the response. In 1988 a television journalist on a local Boston, MA news show revealed ignorance as to what the term “SS” meant. An editorial in The Boston Globe at the time remarked, “The special psychological savagery of the madness of genocide is not uppermost in many people’s minds despite their respect for the suffering experienced by the Jews” (Roth, 1993, p. 48).

The downplaying of the journalists’ ignorance of the terminology of one of the worst moments in Jewish history provoked a strong Jewish response and is an example of what some feel is the reality of the need to maintain vigilance. “Such episodes maintain suspicious vigilance in many American Jews, especially as they recall that during the height of the Holocaust, despite chilling information, their [American] government refused to act on behalf of European Jewry” (Roth, 1993, p. 49).

In this context trust is a difficult commodity to find and a further possible example of lingering symptoms of PTSD. It should be noted that the United States was not unique in denying refuge to Jews trying to escape Nazi Germany. Most western countries including Canada would not accept Jewish refugees before or immediately after the war (Abella & Troper, 1982).
In a similar vein contemporary Jews have been accused of being overly worried about anti-Semitism, even paranoid. In the context of recent history such an accusation may not be accurate. Roth (1993) comments on this accusation.

The question about paranoia is interesting. Although American Jews are perhaps less paranoid [than Israeli Jews], they are not in fact immediately threatened. But there is a confusion in America. … [Even though they are not immediately threatened,] the Holocaust forms a prism through which the opinions of American Jews are angled. … The Holocaust has an enormous impact on the current opinion of American Jews, on their view of themselves and their relation to Israel. (Roth, 1993, p. 74)

Schwartz (1995) also comments on the impact of a history of anti-Semitism and life in the Diaspora. This history of oppression and always being “other” has left a psychological legacy. “Much like the survivor of trauma, we too, are terrified of what we have seen and heard, frightened that it may happen again, and vigilant about protecting ourselves from that possibility” (Schwartz, 1995, p. 135). An example of this legacy is the fact that most Jews do not have any information about their family history earlier than their grandparents.

It would be unique to be a Jew in this day and age and not have some fear around getting killed, whether conscious or unconscious, given that the Holocaust happened only fifty years ago. In the words of Evelyn Torton Beck (1991): “In varying degrees and in different ways, the Holocaust has marked the psyche of every Jew the world over. I believe that most Jews, even the most assimilated, walk around with a subliminal fear of anti-Semitism the way
most women walk around with a subliminal fear of rape.” (Schwartz, 1995, p. 140)

With such a dark picture as an inheritance the question then becomes what are the ways that individuals may cope with this history.

**Jewish Self-hatred and Internalized Anti-Semitism.**

Having painted a negative identity of stigma and vulnerability it is not a surprise to see that some Jews prefer to distance themselves from their Jewishness. From a more clinical perspective there is commentary in the literature interpreting the psychological dynamics underlying this behaviour. I will highlight some of these trends as an illustration of current perspectives.

One way this distancing is expressed is through self-hated or internalized anti-Semitism. Internalized anti-Semitism refers to the “subtle and insidious process by which Jews come to believe the negative stereotypes about themselves promulgated by the majority culture” (Schwartz, 1995, p. 134). Individuals are not necessarily aware of the messages being internalized.

Another term for internalized anti-Semitism is Jewish self-hatred. In his book *Jewish Self-Hatred* Gilman (1986) articulates a detailed model of the dynamic of self hatred. Jews as a stigmatized minority are seduced by the desire to belong and to escape the cost of anti-Semitism. They look to the majority culture as the ideal. The majority group however has a stereotyped understanding of the Jewish minority. Some Jews in turn accept this stereotype created by the majority group as a reality. For example, one common stereotype is that Jews are smart, wealthy and cheat in business. This definition of the self contains an inherent conflict because it is not based on an authentic knowledge of Jews. That is, rather than
define oneself through one’s own self-knowledge, self-hating Jews accept the majority group's view of them, which is based on stereotypes and inaccuracies.

There is a conflicted double bind message embedded in this self-image.

On the one hand is the liberal fantasy that anyone is welcome to share in the power of the reference [majority] group if he [or she] abides by the rules that define that group. But these rules are the very definition of the Other. The Other comprises precisely those that are not permitted to share power within the society. Thus outsiders hear an answer from their fantasy: Become like us – abandon your difference – and you may be one with us. On the other hand is the hidden qualification of the internalized reference group, the conservative curse: The more you are like me, the more I know the true value of my power, which you wish to share, and the more I am aware that you are but a shoddy counterfeit, an outsider. (Gilman, 1986, p. 2)

Furthermore the Jew in this scenario senses a contradiction and feels the inherent inner conflict. “In one’s own eyes, one becomes identical with the definition of acceptability and yet one is still not accepted” (Gilman, 1986, p. 3).

This creates an untenable situation for the Jew. He or she desperately wants to become a member of a group that at its core will not accept him or her as a member. Since the acknowledgement of this unspoken and irreconcilable conflict is for most individuals an impossible notion, it becomes necessary at some unconscious level to shift one's perspective. The conflict becomes repressed and the individual comes to believe that the contradiction must be within him or herself since one cannot wish to become something that is flawed.
Furthermore the individual subconsciously integrates their rejection into their self-definition and that sense of rejection is projected onto the world.

“Even as one distances oneself from this aspect of oneself there is always the voice of the power group saying – under the skin you are really like them anyhow.” Gilman suggests that this results in a fragmentation of identity, which becomes self-hatred. In other words, “If I am ‘good’, I will be accepted, those who are ‘bad’ deserve being rejected” (Gilman, 1986, p. 3). And by not being accepted there is something wrong with me, and Jews as a group, defined stereotypically, deserve to be hated. In other words the anti-Semitism becomes internalized.

In examining self-hatred or internalized anti-Semitism from a feminist perspective Schwartz (1995) identifies the shortcomings for Jewish women of comparing themselves, and being compared by others, to the image of the perfect White Christian woman who is held as a North American ideal. Shortcomings for Jewish women typically are expressed as being too large, too dark, and too unrefined. Clinically Schwartz sees this self-hatred manifested in symptoms such as an eating disorder or body issues. A constant internal pressure to work at self-improvement may also be an effort to change from the Jewish self.

Ironically Ashkenazi Jewish women have as a historical model the image of a strong Jewish woman who takes care of her family both in the home and in the “business of making a living.” As the story goes, her husband spends his time studying and cannot be relied upon to support the family financially (Cantor, 1995).

In this image, the woman alone has to provide for her family in a hostile, gentile society where financial survival can be a tremendous challenge, as
Jews were frequently denied access to a variety of trades and professions which involved having real power. (Schwartz, 1995, p. 139)

This image of the strong woman able to provide for her family conflicts with the stereotypical image of success for women in North America as being married and sufficiently well off so as not to have to work. This conflict can create a tension for Jewish women and men with psychological implications. Sometimes a de-selfing (Schwartz, 1995) expressed as compulsively belittling and apologizing for oneself is expressing this conflict. Some believe that the mixed messages and tension between the model of ideal sexual roles in Jewish culture and North American culture result in Jewish men and women finding potential romantic partners from their own ethnic group unattractive (J. W. Klein, 1980).

Schwartz expands on her clinical observations associating the pressure to assimilate with a number of emotions. When an individual raised in a traditional Jewish environment chooses to leave that environment to participate more fully in secular society there may be a generalized grief and some guilt at leaving the Jewish people behind when Jews had suffered so much. The individual may also feel a sense of isolation by not having relationships with others like themselves. “She may be describing a sensation which would make more sense to her if she knew that many of us, at bottom, feel that we are visitors in a Christian world” (Schwartz, 1995, p. 143). Fears of rejection by others and a sense of alienation may also be part of this scenario.

There is an alternate perspective of the behaviour observed as distancing from one’s Jewishness. From a more constructive angle this can be seen as an act of self protection. Langman articulates this as,
This public avoidance of their Jewishness is not motivated by internalized anti-Semitism, but by fear of how people will respond to their Jewishness. Thus, while avoidance of public displays of Jewishness can be a result of shame or embarrassment, this is not necessarily the case. It can also be the result of fear. Thus, another question which is likely to be related to the public expression of one’s Jewish identity is: How safe do you feel as a Jew? (Langman, 1999, p. 283)

These more clinical observations and reports identify some of the impact and potential consequences of membership in the Jewish community. It will be helpful now to look at some of the ways Jews report coping with this stigmatized identity.

**Managing a Stigmatized Minority Membership.**

A number of the recent studies of Jewish identity have included participant comments about their relations with the non-Jewish majority and the ways that they manage these relationships.

Cutler (2003) conducted a qualitative examination of a Jewish social group in North Carolina. While the number of overt anti-Jewish events experienced by the participants were few Cutler reported that all of her participants felt uneasy living in “an environment in which a public Christian identity is normative and where few people were familiar with Judaism.” Participants expressed worry about overt anti-Semitic hostility regardless of its occurrence and expressed the need to remain vigilant against such an occurrence. The more common experiences were interpreted as ignorance on the part of others expressed as anti-Semitic language and stereotypes, such as ‘jewed down,” Jews picking up pennies, and that Jewish women were Jewish American princesses and Jewish men were emasculated. The
participants did worry about appearing “too Jewish” and thus confirming the negative stereotypes.

Based on her interviews Cutler identified three emotional management strategies (Cutler, 2003). They were emotional distancing, tactical humour, and active engagement. Her participants kept themselves emotionally distant from neighbours and colleagues at work by compartmentalizing their lives. Sometimes this meant hiding their Jewishness. It could also be seen, in some cases, as denial. Comments that felt like attacks on their Jewish identity were deflected with humour. Active engagement meant engaging with ignorant neighbours and colleagues to educate them about Judaism and counter the attempts by others to proselytize them.

In a qualitative study of Jewish women in the southern United States, Rosenbaum (2000) identified similar concerns. The women found their Jewishness the most prominent part of their identity and felt the need to act in a way that would help them fit in with the majority culture. They identified their reference culture as the White culture and articulated concern about how their evangelical Protestant neighbours viewed them. Their Jewishness was most salient when others made anti-Semitic comments, at public events when Christian prayers were said, at Christmas pageants in the public schools, and when they were excluded from non-Jewish organizations and social events. They frequently felt the need to do informal education of others by explaining Judaism.

Similarly in a study of adolescents at a Jewish camp in Texas, Cohen and Bar-Shalom (2006) found the campers dealt with being different from their friends at home in similar ways. They preferred to be surrounded by Jews. With their non-Jewish friends they avoided sensitive subjects, distanced themselves from many aspects of Judaism especially the
religious and cultural ones, and sometimes hid the fact that they were Jewish. Cohen and Bar-Shalom summarized that overall these campers dealt with the cognitive dissonance between their Jewish identity and the negative attitudes towards Jews held by their non-Jewish friends by hiding their Jewishness or being non-religious.

These three studies focused on Jews living in the southern United States where they were very much in the minority and living in a culture infused with Christianity and public expressions of its tenets. As such this provides a clear and pointed example of coping with a stigmatized identity.

Langman’s (1995) comments regarding typical Jewish coping strategies are relevant here. He identifies the separation of a public and private identity as a time honoured technique. The Haskalah or Jewish Enlightenment movement, which encouraged 18th century German Jews to leave the ghetto and take their place in Western society, identified their view of Jewish integration into modernity as,

“Be a Jew in your home and a man outside it,” as if a Jew could only make his way as a “man” by concealing his Jewish identity when associating with his non-Jewish neighbours (Jacobs, 1995).

Because Jewishness in America is a concealable stigma it is possible to be Jewish at home and American at work. The instruction passed on to each generation seems to be – keep a low profile and remain invisible.

**Christian Privilege as a Contextual Influence.**

The concept of Christian privilege (Schlosser, 2003) is important to include here as a strong contextual influence on Jews in North America. For many minority groups the reality of our multicultural society is that it is more one of a Christian majority with a strong
presence that subtly reminds other religious groups of their minority status. The impact of this reality is subtle and often unnoticed.

Schlosser (2003) describes the privileges and advantages of being Christian in the United States. A similar advantage can be seen in Canada. He begins with the example of the debate regarding the separation of church and state that takes as an assumption that non-Christian religious groups call their place of worship a church, which they do not. Similarly the inclusion of references to Jesus and prayer in political campaigns, more notable in the United States, also assume that this official policy includes all citizens. “Christian religious dogmatism contributes to persons from minority religious groups feeling that their religious identity is not valued, and, subsequently, they feel discrimination and oppression because of their religious group membership” (Schlosser, 2003, p. 47).

Some of the examples of Christian privilege given by Schlosser (2003) highlight its status as a “nonconscious ideology” meaning a set of implicit beliefs and attitudes that maintain a societal status quo. In his article he lists 28 examples of which the following are a few.

1. I can be sure to hear music on the radio and watch specials on television that celebrate the holidays of my religion.

2. I can be sure that my holy day (Sunday) is taken into account when states pass laws (e.g. the sale of liquor) and when retail stores decide their hours (e.g. on Saturdays they are open about 12 hours; on Sundays they are closed or open for only a few hours).

3. I can assume that I will not have to work or go to school on my significant religious holidays.
4. I can be financially successful and not have people attribute that to the greed of my religious group.

5. I can be sure that when told about the history of civilization, I am shown the people of my religion who made it what it is.

6. I do not need to educate my children to be aware of religious persecution for their own daily physical and emotional protection.

**Jews and Multiculturalism.**

Another contextual influence is the conspicuous absence of Jews from the conversation of multiculturalism in psychology. The last 20 years has seen an explosion in interest in what is now called multicultural psychology as well as the study of prejudice and stigma, so much so that the valuing and respect for different cultures within the study and practice of psychology is now widely accepted and multiculturalism is viewed as a fourth force in psychology (Pedersen, 1991). However,

Despite the claim of inclusiveness and the argument that ethical treatment must acknowledge each client’s culture, multiculturalism has typically not included Jews. … This is puzzling because there are many Jews in the fields of counseling and psychology. Repeatedly, however, books, journals, classes, and conferences make little or no mention of Jews, Jewish issues, or anti-Semitism. (Langman, 1995, p.222)

In an article in the *Journal of Counselling and Development* Weinrach (2002) builds a step by step case, including content analysis of professional journals and textbooks, supporting his argument that some members of the field of counselling psychology are anti-Semitic. It should be noted that articles discussing Jewish issues are unusual in this journal.
“For the most part, the counseling profession has failed to adequately respond to pleas, public and private, for over a quarter century, to address the needs of its Jewish members and the issues that concern them” (Weinrach, 2002, p. 301). … “In the aggregate, the compendium of incidents previously described [in his article] would suggest a pattern of widespread denial of the existence of anti-Semitism and a repudiation of the importance of Jewish issues to the counseling profession” (italics his, Weinrach, 2002, p. 310). This is a strong condemnation of a group strongly committed to cultural diversity and multiculturalism.

A similar assessment of the place of Jews in the field of Psychology is shared by Phyllis Chesler in her forward to the volume Jewish Women Speak Out: Expanding the Boundaries of Psychology (Weiner & Moon, 1995). She reflects on her own struggles as a Jew and a feminist Psychologist and observes that despite enormous participation in progressive movements, and attempts to assimilate and become invisible, it was necessary to create a Jewish caucus within the feminist organization, Association for Women and Psychology. She believes this parallels the continued need for the Association for Women and Psychology due to the enduring sexism and hostility to feminism within the field of Psychology more broadly. In her opinion, the resistance to including Jews within the developing field of Multicultural Psychology is further evidence of continuing discrimination against Jews. Despite economic and educational achievements, Jews as a minority are left with the knowledge that “belonging” does not happen automatically. One can hear within these remarks the outrage at the devaluation of the Jewish experience. This sends a message to Jews about the acceptance or lack of it for their culture in the diverse cultures that make up the multicultural community as a whole.
Looking more closely at reasons Jews have been excluded from the multicultural conversation and reasons they would exclude themselves provides a window into the assumptions and stereotypes of both Jews and non-Jews regarding the relationship between them. Exclusion from the multicultural conversation is often tied to stereotypes and incorrect assumptions (Friedman, et al., 2001; Langman, 1995). Others see Jews as an assimilated socio-economically successful minority group, in contrast to many other ethnic minorities and therefore not stigmatized.

Misconceptions about Jews include the size and influence of the community. The exact number of Jews is often misjudged. While Christians are 33% of the world population, Jews are only one third of 1%. In the United States, where the largest Jewish community lives, Jews are 2.5% of the population. This means that even assimilated non-observant American Jews feel their minority status (Langman, 1995). Also no matter how successful Jews may be they are by no means large enough as a group to have sufficient influence to change outcomes. This goes against one stereotype of Jews as influencing the spheres of finance, politics and the media. Another stereotype that all Jews are wealthy is easily disproved by the fact that there are poor and homeless Jews (Langman, 1995). This so called “success” at integration has not changed the intensity or prevalence of anti-Semitism.

Currently in the conversation about multiculturalism, Jews are assumed to be white even though there are Jews of colour. Their categorization as a religion conveniently eliminates them from considerations of ethnicity. Ironically, for centuries in Europe, Jews were seen as black and believed to have intermarried with Africans (Gilman, 1993). This has been described more fully by Gilman in a number of his books. “Being black, being Jewish, being diseased, and being ‘ugly’ come to be inexorably linked” (Gilman quoted in Langman,
1995, p. 225). This belief was held by the Nazis, and is maintained today by white supremacists in North America.

Lastly there is widespread ignorance of the history of Jewish oppression. Many of the major events of Jewish oppression are history and beyond direct personal experience especially for those under 40. Today “the oppression of Jews is not economic oppression, it is the dynamic of anti-Semitism. It is when anti-Semitism exists and people do not admit it exists and accuse the victim of paranoia” (from Pogrebin 1991 cited in Weinrach, 2002, p.300). “The discounting of anti-Semitism is itself anti-Semitic” (from Beck 1989 cited in Weinrach, 2002, p. 300).

On the other side of the issue is the question of why Jews exclude themselves from the multicultural debate. Here it is more likely a reflection of Jewish discomfort with visibility and an expression of internalized anti-Semitism (Friedman, et al., 2001). Langman (1995) theorizes the reasons Jews are not part of the multicultural conversation. Commenting on the Jewish side of this exclusion he observes that Jews create a separation between their public and private experiences of identity, that is, being American at work and Jewish at home. As described earlier in this chapter, there is a history of this as a Jewish coping strategy from the time of emancipation (Halpern, 1974).

Many Jews have felt an invalidation of their particularistic concerns as Jews. Thus it is common to see Jews active in the fight against racism and sexism but not against anti-Semitism.

The other causes were recognized as legitimate struggles and had the stamp of approval as politically correct. Jewish issues typically have not been perceived in this light. … Because of the lack of recognition accorded to Jews
as a minority, some Jews think that raising their voices as Jews is not appropriate and would be greeted with disdain. … To speak up as a Jew runs the risk of being perceived as a stereotypically unpleasant Jew. (Langman, 1995, p. 228)

Fear leads many Jews to keep a low profile and not call attention to themselves as Jews with the belief that “too many Jews have been killed simply for being Jews to take any unnecessary risk” (Langman, 1995, p. 229). Finally there is the factor of Jewish self-hatred. Embarrassed by their Jewishness some individuals reject the culture and do not identify as Jews. Ironically, this developed as oppression of Jews lessened and the possibility of assimilation opened up. To assimilate means to get rid of any sign of Jewishness.

**Definition of a Jew**

Any examination of the Jewish experience must identify who will be considered Jewish for the purpose of the research. The question “Who is a Jew?” is deceptively simple. Traditionally, from a Jewish perspective, a Jew is someone born of a Jewish mother or who has converted to Judaism through a process of religious conversion (Lamm, 1991).

Different movements within the religious community of Jews will draw the boundary around who is in, and who is not, in their own way. The debate centres on the aspects of the process of conversion deemed necessary for the conversion to be considered legitimate. In addition, the Reform branch of Judaism in the United States has decided to accept the Jewishness of someone with a Jewish father regardless of the mother’s identity. This acceptance of patrilineal descent as sufficient to consider someone Jewish is unheard of outside the United States (Stern, 2009).
The definition of a Jew gains political significance with regard to the State of Israel. Under the Israeli “Law of Return” any Jew is entitled to arrive in Israel and have automatic citizenship. Who is considered Jewish directly impacts the individual’s access to this right as well as the settlement assistance that goes along with it. Israel does not have complete separation of church (synagogue) and state, and not all branches of Judaism are recognized by the Orthodox establishment as conducting legitimate conversions. Therefore their members’ Jewish identity is called into question. This is a matter currently hotly contested in the Israeli court system.

For many Jews the possibility of immigration to Israel is held as being important even if the individual does not intend to move there him or herself. This is because of Israel’s role as a safe refuge and concrete remedy to anti-Semitism. When Jews were trying to escape Nazi Germany before World War II and Israel did not exist they had great difficulty finding a safe haven. Many tried to leave Germany only to be returned to face the death camps. It is not unusual for present day Jews to link these events together.

There has also been a change over time in the definition of a Jew by those outside of the Jewish community. At different historical times Jews have been referred to in public discourse as a race, a religion, or an ethnic group. Which label is used is often a reflection of the politics of the day (Gilman, 1993; Kaye/Kantrowitz, 2007). Racial definitions were common in Europe up until World War II. Many individuals were labeled as Jews in Europe during World War II because religious affiliation was a matter of public record and therefore Jewish lineage could be traced even if the individual had only one Jewish grandparent. Today the racial definition conjures up the Nazi definition of a Jew from the Holocaust and as such is avoided.
A racial definition of a Jew is inaccurate because Jews come from many parts of the world and physically resemble many racial groups. In the period leading up to the Holocaust Jews in Europe were seen as racially black (Brodkin, 1998; Gilman, 1993). Today North America classifies Jews as white. Further complicating the question is the fact that Jews are themselves a multicultural group including many races and cultures. “Thus, there is no such thing as Jewish culture, but a multitude of Jewish cultures” (Langman, 2000, p. 648).

Present day North America is a unique and even revolutionary moment in Jewish history. Identifying oneself as a Jew is voluntary. This voluntary nature of definition and membership in the community has only been possible in the post-emancipation modern era in North America (Halpern, 1974). The implications of the voluntary aspect of Jewish identification are that it is very easy for individuals to walk away from their Jewishness, or to redefine the term Jewish outside the definition used by the mainstream community.

Jews are a very diverse group of people and Jewish identity “defies simple social categories” (MacDonald-Dennis, 2006). Determining who is Jewish outside the religious definition is very muddy (Levitt & Balkin, 2003). For the most part individuals stick with the religious definition. For the purpose of this research a Jew is someone who self identifies as a Jew with the understanding of the traditional definition.

The Geographic and Historical Context of this Study

This study is rooted in the experience of Jewish life in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. It examines the experience of eight Jews living there in the early 21st century. Up until the middle of the twentieth century the picture of Toronto society was very different than its present make-up (M. Brown, 2005). It was a much less open society where it was not unusual to have open blatant prejudice and exclusion of Jews and other groups from places of power
and influence. In his history of Canadian Jewry Tulchinsky (Tulchinsky, 2008) describes many well-known twentieth century examples of discrimination against Jews in Ontario. One example of discrimination was the experience of Jews in medical school. In the 1930s the number of Jews attending medical school became an issue among both its senior officials and the general public who wrote letters to complain about it. One of them referred to the university’s ‘Hebrew’ problem. … [B]y the early 1940’s, … the faculty’s admissions committee was considering the serious problem of Jews in the medical school and adopted ‘discriminatory practices’ to limit their numbers. (Tulchinsky, 2008, p. 318)

The Jews who got into medical school and graduated then had great difficulty finding places to intern. No Jews were on staff at the Toronto General Hospital and only one Jewish intern a year was accepted. Jewish physiotherapy students were prohibited from clinical training at the same time (Tulchinsky, 2008). During the 1930s and 40s Jews encountered similar examples of discrimination in most professions and social circles.

While this was “foreboding” for Jews (Tulchinsky, 2008), they were well aware that things could have been worse as it was in Europe at the time.

So although their material conditions were not adversely affected by anti-Semitism, in the context of the European situation, Canadian Jews were understandably apprehensive and were subject to humiliations in Ontario where restrictive covenants (which were upheld by the courts) limited Jewish residency and places of recreation. (Tulchinsky, 2008, p. 326)

Discrimination continued even after World War II. The quotas in medical schools and difficulty getting internships continued. Mt. Sinai hospital was founded to give Jews a place
to intern and to receive medical care in a culturally sensitive manner. It was denied teaching hospital status at the University of Toronto until 1962 (Tulchinsky, 2008). It was not until the late 1960s, coinciding with Trudeau’s tenure as prime minister, that Herb Gray was appointed the first Jew to hold a federal cabinet position thus opening possibilities for other Jews to serve at high levels of responsibility (Tulchinsky, 2008). During this period it was quite common for Jews to be self-employed as a way of avoiding job discrimination and anti-Jewish bias in certain fields such as engineering, teaching and large corporations (Tulchinsky, 2008).

Brown (2005) reported that it was not until the 1980s and the adoption of the new Canadian constitution, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and legislation against hate crimes and hate speech that minority groups, including Jews, began to feel a change in climate towards one of inclusion and respect for diversity. Policies of multiculturalism came into being in the 1970s and were also an important influence in this climate change (M. Brown, 2005). However this is a short span of time for social change to take effect and means that, while present day Toronto encourages inclusion, this research’s participants grew up in a more prejudiced Toronto.

Present day Toronto is characterized by one of the most ethnically diverse populations in the world. Official government policies supporting diversity and multiculturalism provide the formal structure for the local environment. In the most recent census (2006) nearly half of the population of the Greater Toronto Area identified themselves as a visible minority (Statistics Canada, 2006). Almost every country is represented in Toronto through both new immigrants and those who have been here for generations. The
white Protestant Anglo elite, which historically put its stamp on the local environment, no longer dominates Toronto.

Despite this optimistic picture, an Environics Research Group poll commissioned by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in 2010 suggests a different perspective. One in three Canadians believe that Aboriginal Peoples and Muslims are the frequent targets of discrimination. About 28 per cent of the 2,000 surveyed … said Pakistanis/East Indians often suffer from intolerance, while 20 per cent said blacks regularly faced it. More than a tenth of Canadians surveyed said they thought Jews, Chinese and anglophones inside Quebec suffered from persistent discrimination. (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2010)

Including the category “sometimes face discrimination” as well as “often” the percentages increase noticeably. For Aboriginal Peoples and Muslims 72 percent of Canadians believe these groups suffer discrimination at least sometimes. Jews are believed to suffer discrimination at least sometimes by 50 percent of Canadians (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2010). Commenting on the significance of these data, the CBC report quotes University of Toronto sociologist Reitz as saying that,

if many Canadians feel discrimination happens on a regular basis, they may not feel it has a “pervasive, negative effect” on the ethnic groups. … Reitz also suggests that our perceptions of racism may be coloured by our pride in multiculturalism. (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2010)

The road to acceptance of diversity has not been as smooth or successful as sometimes painted.
The Jewish community of Toronto specifically is a small minority compared to some other minority groups. The 2006 Canadian census reports a total of 315,120 Jews in all of Canada out of a total Canadian population of 31,241,030. That means that Jews make up 1% of the population of Canada. The largest concentration of Jews is in the Greater Toronto area. The Jewish population in the Greater Toronto area was 141,685 (Arnold, 2008) and for the City of Toronto itself the Jewish identified population was 84,245 out of a total population in the 2006 census of 2,503,281. Therefore, in the City of Toronto, Jews are 3.4% of the population. This means that even in the largest city in Canada with the largest concentration of Jews, the number of Jews is a small minority of the population as a whole.

Ironically when non-Jews are asked to estimate the percentage of the population that is Jewish they suggest much higher figures. Quoting a survey done by the American Anti-Defamation League of B’nai Brith, Weinfeld (2001) states that 23% of the American population felt that Jews were 25% of the population of the United States. Another 43% felt Jews were between one-tenth and one quarter percent of the population. In fact, the Jewish population of the United States is 2.5% of the whole. Weinfeld feels a similar misconception would apply in Canada. He refers to this as a “double edged sword” – flattering to be noticed but worrisome with regards to anti-Semitic stereotypes.

The umbrella organization of the Jewish community, the UJA Federation published the results of a survey into Jewish life in Toronto including a survey of anti-Semitic experiences (Shahar & Rosenbaum, 2006). With regard to anti-Semitism 64.9% believed that there is “some level” of anti-Semitism in Toronto. At least 11% reported having had a personal experience with anti-Semitism in the past two years. Of the incidents in the two years preceding this report 39.1% occurred in the workplace or job related environment and
33.3% were in an area near their residence. The two examples given in the report were “several acts of vandalism at local Jewish cemeteries and an elderly Holocaust survivor had a swastika painted on her property” (Shahar & Rosenbaum, 2006, p. 12). These are excellent examples of everyday anti-Semitism. The concept of everyday prejudice or anti-Semitism will be expanded in the next chapter and is an important part of the analysis of this research.

Of the group surveyed 55.6% reported never having had personal experience with anti-Semitism. The difficulty with broad statistics is that there is no explanation given for the statement of never having had personal experience with anti-Semitism. As will be elaborated later in the analysis of this research’s data, some individuals report never having experienced anti-Semitism because they understand anti-Semitism as the blatant, sometimes violent examples. The everyday examples of this are often not recognized as such or normalized as a method of coping. If this were the case for some of the respondents to this survey then that understanding would be important to put alongside the statistical numbers. And if not, that too would be important to know. The everyday examples of prejudice have their impact as well.

The present day Toronto Jewish community is a numerically small minority in a diverse and multicultural metropolitan area. Within this environment some Jews continue to experience and worry about incidents of anti-Semitism.
Chapter 3 - Review of Psychological Literature

In this chapter I review the psychological literature relevant to the experience of a minority group member. While little psychological research is available specifically on the individual Jewish experience of stigma and prejudice, there is a growing literature on this experience for other minorities. Individuals have multiple social identities, some of which have the potential to make them targets of prejudice. Understanding the psychological impact of prejudice, discrimination and stigma is important to the well-being of both individuals and community.

Motivated by the tragic events of World War II psychologists began an empirical conversation to understand prejudice, discrimination and stigma, (see for example, Allport, 1954; see for example, Goffman, 1963; Milgram, 1974). The past half-century has also been a time of social change further increasing the need to understand these phenomena. Included in this are increasing diversity of ethnic groups through immigration, the growth of the feminist movement and rights for gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals to name a few. Each of these interest groups have given birth to subgroups within psychology. Consequently the topic of diversity and how groups can live well together has an increasingly important place on the agenda of social psychology.

Initial research focused on the perpetrator of prejudice. An important step in this subject area has been the shift to focus on the experience of the recipient or target of prejudice and stigma. Reporting on their research into the phenomenology of the target of prejudice, Dion and Earn (1975) observed that very little research had been done on the target’s experience. Almost 15 years later Crocker and Major (1989) made the same observation. The 1990s began to see a shift to address the experience of the recipient of
stigma and prejudice (for example Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Oyserman & Swim, 2001; Swim, et al., 1998; Swim & Stangor, 1998). This chapter reviews relevant literature in psychology on the target’s experience.

**Stigma, Prejudice and Discrimination.**

Stigma, prejudice and discrimination are all linked as parts of the same picture. Prejudice is defined as the negative attitudes towards disfavoured or stigmatized groups, and discrimination as the unfair behaviour or unequal treatment of others based on their group membership or some other arbitrary trait (Dion, 2001). These terms focus on the perpetrator’s attitudes and behaviour. Stigma on the other hand describes the recipient or target of the prejudice or discrimination.

The target’s perspective is when the focus is “on a stereotyped or stigmatized ingroup’s responses, experiences, and beliefs and the paradox of being both an active constructor of one’s everyday reality and an involuntary target of negative attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs that shape this reality” (Oyserman & Swim, 2001, p. 2). Perpetrator and target may have very different understandings of situations (Shelton & Richeson, 2005).

Goffman (1963) described stigma as a person’s “attribute that is deeply discrediting, and reduces him or her ‘in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted discounted one’” (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998). This devalues the stigmatized individual and makes him or her easily targeted. Goffman identified three types of stigmatizing conditions – tribal stigmas passed from generation to generation such as race, abominations of the body such as a physical handicap, and blemishes of individual character such as homosexuality (Goffman, 1963).
More recently this has been refined to a more precise definition of stigma that states, “stigmatized individuals possess (or are believed to possess) some attribute, or characteristic, that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular context” (Crocker, et al., 1998, p. 505). The significance of this definition is its acknowledgement of stigma as a social construct. The individual does not actually have to possess the attribute but only be believed by others to possess it and furthermore, the attribute’s negative valuation is also dependent upon the context. Both of these points are important in understanding the complexity of stigmatization. The stigma is not the person but rather a value-laden perception coming from others in a particular context.

This means that when the individual is with his or her own group, or others who value the “stigmatized” characteristic, the social environment and relationships are different. The feedback the individual receives and the cues for acceptance are different and based on not just one aspect of himself or herself. This subtle distinction opens the way to redefining the self and escaping the negative effects of a stigma. For concealable stigmas, the door is opened to choosing whether to be part of the minority group. It also means that the possibility of receiving prejudice exists regardless of personal status, accomplishments or achievements on the part of the stigmatized. It is tied to the context. As I review aspects of the experience of stigma the importance of these points will become clear.

**Dimensions of Stigma**

Many factors influence the variability of this experience. Swim et al (Swim, et al., 1998) suggest that relationships within the minority group and with others outside the group are influenced by the visibility of the stigma, the extent to which the target of the prejudice
identifies with his or her minority group and the extent of his or her agreement with the prejudice against the stigmatized group.

Crocker et al. (1998) highlight further aspects of the stigma experience. They are: 1. an ever-present possibility of confronting situations of prejudice and discrimination, which are threats to the self, 2. an awareness of one’s devalued social identity, 3. an awareness that others hold specific negative stereotypes of his or her social identity which makes the individual feel threatened even if they do not believe the stereotype, and 4. uncertainty about whether the treatment one receives in situations is the result of prejudice based on a stigma.

The factors identified by Swim et al (1998) and Crocker et al (1998) reflect a huge variability amongst stigmatized individuals regarding their feelings towards their own group. Even if one is not presently experiencing prejudice, the possibility of its occurrence is a constant stressor and can have a negative effect (Oyserman & Swim, 2001).

To understand the concept stigma some have focused on the dimensions of a stigma. These dimensions can include: concealability (can it be hidden), course (how it changes over time), disruptiveness (does it hamper social interactions), aesthetic qualities (does it make the person repellant to others), origin (how the condition was acquired and who is responsible), and peril (the kind and degree of danger it poses) (Crocker et al., 1998).

In their review of the field, Crocker et al. (1998) identify the research showing controllability and visibility of the stigma as particularly important influences. Controllability refers to the question of responsibility for the problem and its solution. It is not always clear who or what is responsible. Many assumptions are made by others and “individuals with stigmas that are believed to be controllable are more disliked, rejected, and harshly treated than people whose stigmas are perceived as uncontrollable” (Crocker, et al., 1998, p. 508).
Much of this research has focused on visible minorities such as African Americans, Hispanics and women.

With regard to Jewishness, controllability has a role to play both in the eyes of the perpetrator and the target. It is a matter of social construction and context. If one believes Jewishness is a racial or ethnic category then it is not controllable but rather biological and cannot be changed. On the other hand, if one sees Jewishness as a religious or cultural category it is completely controllable and can be changed.

In this way rejection of Jesus by Jews is used as a basis for some anti-Semitism and the solution of conversion is proposed. The route of assimilation may be seen by some Jews as a way to escape the negative aspects of this stigmatized identity. An extreme example of this option is those Holocaust survivors who chose to hide their Jewish origins after the war. This was often an act to protect their post-war family from potential danger.

While each survivor who took this route has his or her own narrative, one illustrative example was described in *The Globe and Mail* (Lorinc, 2008). Growing up in Toronto, John Lorinc believed that his parents were Hungarian immigrants and the family was Christian. One evening when he was 10 his father took him aside and told him in a very serious tone, “‘I have something to tell you,’ he said. ‘We are Jewish. … You musn’t tell anyone.’” His father had spent part of World War II in a forced labour camp. “After the war ended, my father, embittered by his experiences, changed his nose and Jewish-sounding surname, choosing an obscure Slovakian moniker.” Once they arrived in Canada his father was “determined to assimilate, … leaving their troublesome ancestry behind.” (Lorinc, 2008). This example touches on both controllability and visibility at the same time.
Cost of a Concealable Stigma

In addition to controllability, the dimension of visibility is an important influence on a target’s experience. Stigmas that are not visible or easily identified are referred to in the literature as concealable. Concealable stigmas “defined as a stigmatized identity that is not immediately knowable in a social interaction” (Quinn, 2006, p. 84), are unique in that they can exist without having a negative effect on the individual’s other social identities. That is, by “passing” or keeping his or her stigma a secret the individual does not have to experience its negative consequences. Examples of these concealable stigmas are sexual orientation, religion and illness. “Concealment may allow the person to proceed with acquaintance level relationships and activities with fewer burdens than a person with a visible devalued identity” (Quinn, 2006, p. 84). The problem arises when the relationship becomes more than casual.

While a concealable stigma appears on the surface to be more benign, the literature identifies some negative consequences of a concealable stigma (Pachankis, 2007; Quinn, 2006; Smart & Wegner, 2000). These include the worry of being discovered and the pressure to ascertain how others feel about the stigma. It also involves monitoring speech and behaviour and worrying whether and when to reveal the stigma. The impact of living with a “secret” has an impact on one’s comfort with new relationships and issues of trust (Crocker, et al., 1998). Personal relationships are affected as the self-disclosure that is an important part of these relationships is hampered and the individual is left with feelings of isolation, fraud and fear of discovery (Smart & Wegner, 2000).

Pachankis (2007) echoes these points by stating that concealing a stigma prevents the individual from internalizing feedback from others as feedback about the true self, miss the
opportunity to benefit from the protection of others in their stigmatized group and have
distress from not only possessing the stigma but the efforts to hide it.

Most of the research on the impact of concealing a stigma has been in experimental
situations between strangers. As a result it is less clear how and to what extent the findings
transfer to real life situations. The work of keeping a stigma concealed is seen as an
additional cognitive load on the individual. Experimental research has shown that individuals
asked to keep a secret in an experimental context had poorer performance on tests. After five
minutes stigmatized individuals were more likely to be paying attention to the partner’s
perspective, taking notice of the interaction flow and words used, rather than the
experimental task. They were more mindful of and on alert for signs of discrimination and
devaluation (Smart & Wegner, 2000). This is presumed to be the case outside of the
laboratory as well.

Keeping a stigma concealed is felt to have the effect of making that aspect of identity
less likely to be incorporated into the individual’s larger self-concept, possibly because the
work of keeping it hidden makes it more salient. This has the consequence of making it more
difficult to use certain coping strategies such as ingroup comparisons and external
attributions for prejudice to protect self-esteem (Quinn, 2006; van Laar & Levin, 2006).
Quinn also adds that, “to understand and predict the ramifications of different concealed
stigmas, it is important to not only know if the concealed stigma is salient, but also whether
the situation leads people to be concerned and wary of devaluation from others” (Quinn,

Finally Smart and Wegner (2000) identify two possible ways of dealing with
concealing a stigma successfully that are relevant here. First, through “situation
management” the individual can avoid having to engage in secrecy and suppression of information by avoiding situations where the stigma is devalued. The cost of this strategy may be isolation from others without that stigma. And second, there may be a “redefinition of the stigma.” That is, to redefine the stigma in such a way that it is no longer stigmatizing. This strategy may mean a redefining of what Jewish is, to make it more palatable to non-Jews. So by controlling the context or redefining the stigma the individual is no longer seen as a person with an identity that needs to be hidden rather as someone who has been active in shaping their experience.

**Groups as a Basis for Human Experience**

Prejudice is an outcome of relationships between individuals and groups. As a key concept in this research prejudice must be placed into the context of the role groups play in the lives of humans. Living in a group is an important aspect of human existence. In fact it is an unavoidable and necessary condition and provides many important functions connected to survival.

Fiske (2004) identifies five basic human needs influencing an individual’s experience in groups. These basic human needs are key to well-being and are the foundation upon which other social processes work. They clarify some of the forces driving interpersonal relationships. They are: belonging, developing socially shared understandings, having a sense of personal or social control, enhancing oneself, and trusting others.

Although they vary across cultures, the core social motives fit social evolutionary pressures that locate people in relationships, groups, and communities. People survive better if they want to belong, to develop socially shared understandings, to be effective and have some sense of personal or
social control, and to enhance themselves as well as trust others. (Fiske, 2004, p. 28)

These social needs play a key role in the experience of a stigmatized individual within their social context. They form a conceptual foundation for the analysis that follows. The human need to belong underlies the other social goals. It is the “need for strong stable relationships.” Essentially it is to be connected to others in positive supportive relationships. This need for affiliation or belonging is the “most basic and fundamental psychological goal” (Swim & Thomas, 2006, p. 112). The remaining four social goals rest on the groundwork of a sense of belonging. Understanding expresses the need for shared meaning. It is a cognitive goal that seeks explanation for others’ behaviour and in doing so helps us predict events. We are driven to have shared meaning with others, that is, we need to understand others and be understood by them (Swim & Thomas, 2006).

We need to have a sense of control over our environment. That means to see a link between our behaviour and what happens to us. If we are effective and our behaviour has an impact on events around us then we are able to exert some control over our environment and what happens in it. This encompasses a need for competence and autonomy. A feeling of being in control is enhanced through being able to do things our way and to perceive the world as we see it (Swim & Thomas, 2006).

An affective need is that of enhancing the self. We need to view ourselves as basically worthy or improvable. This is part of the desire to maintain self-esteem and to improve as an individual. Furthermore there is a natural desire to maintain those good feelings about ourselves and find ways of improving our view of ourselves as well as others’ perceptions of us. Finally the issue of trust is important. It is important to be able to see
others as basically benign and the world as a benevolent place where people will not purposely hurt us and that we can depend on others. The belief that the world is just and has justice based ideologies is essential to a sense of security in the world.

All of these needs were expressed in various ways in participant narratives. In the following chapter I show in broad strokes how these social needs were expressed. In subsequent chapters examining encounters with everyday prejudice these needs will again play a role.

**Belonging and Attachment**

The core primary social need of belonging provides a link with the concept of attachment (for example Ainsworth, 1989; Bowlby, 1988), as well as with Lewin’s work on groups (Lewin, 1948, 1997). While Lewin’s (1997) examination of “belonging” in social groups along with Jews’ problematic place in society, was written as the Holocaust was unfolding in Europe, his belief in the importance of “belonging” for mental health continues to remain valid. Writing before the establishment of the state of Israel he emphasized the importance for individuals, Jewish or not, to know clearly to which social groups they belonged. “The group to which an individual belongs is the ground on which he [sic] stands, which gives or denies him [sic] social status, gives or denies him [sic] security and help” (Lewin, 1997, p. 125).

Lewin’s remarks parallel the contribution of attachment theory and the concept of a secure base.

Attachment behaviour is any form of behaviour that results in a person attaining or maintaining proximity to some other clearly identified individual who is conceived as better able to cope with the world. It is most obvious
whenever the person is frightened, fatigued, or sick, and is assuaged by comforting and caregiving. … for a person to know that an attachment figure is available and responsive gives him [sic] a strong and pervasive feeling of security, and so encourages him [sic] to value and continue the relationship. (Bowlby, 1988, p. 27)

Fiske makes the link between the social needs she has identified and attachment thus underlining the importance of group membership.

Attachment fundamentally reflects the core social motive of belonging, and secure attachment reflects trust (Berscheid, 1994). Successful relationships depend on trust, expressed as seeking closeness, responding sensitively, and cooperating. … Thus, attachment returns us to the core social motives of belonging and trust. (Fiske, 2004, p. 308)

**Ingroup and Outgroup**

While membership in groups plays an important part in the human experience and well-being it also carries with it separation between groups. Research has shown that people are motivated by the need to belong, and that they seek inclusion and avoid exclusion (Branscombe, et al., 1999). There is evidence that when people are divided into groups they almost automatically, regardless of the context, or arbitrariness of the criteria for membership, create an ingroup and an outgroup (Suedfeld & Schaller, 2002). The outgroup is always seen as less than so that the ingroup can feel more secure and powerful.

Inclusion in groups is not necessarily straightforward. The intergroup prejudice which creates an ingroup and outgroups supports the observation that the ingroup works to exclude others, while the outgroup attempts to join the ingroup creating tension between the groups
Suedfeld and Schaller (2002) observe that the psychological processes that facilitate vigilant avoidance of the outgroup are also sensitive to differences between individuals within a group. These influences lay the groundwork for stereotyping and prejudice.

Major and O’Brien suggest that,

in order to avoid the potential pitfalls that accompany group living, humans have developed cognitive adaptations that cause them to exclude (stigmatize) people who possess (or are believed to possess) certain attributes. These are attributes that signal (a) they are a poor partner for social exchange (e.g. a convict), (b) they might carry parasitic infection (e.g., a physical deformity), or (c) they are a member of an outgroup that can be exploited for ingroup gain. (Major & O'Brien, 2005, p. 395)

This defining and contrasting is one way that ingroups and outgroups are defined. That is, the group members come to use exaggerated mental representations, in other words, stereotypical beliefs (Suedfeld & Schaller, 2002). These stereotypical beliefs also work against intergroup cooperation. There is evidence that prejudicial beliefs are triggered by cues signaling the potential for inter-group contact and inter-group threat (Suedfeld & Schaller, 2002). This plays an important role in laying the groundwork for stigma and prejudiced attitudes towards minority groups.

**Stereotypes**

The Oxford American Dictionary (Oxford Dictionary) defines stereotype as “a preconceived and over-simplified idea of the characteristics which typify a person or thing.” By creating these oversimplified pictures of groups, that is, stereotypes, it becomes much
easier to deal with “others” as impersonal objects. It also allows the kind of labeling which can easily stigmatize an entire group. The categorization through which we attempt to understand or simplify our complex world is more easily implemented using generalizations or stereotypes.

One explanation of the dynamics of stereotypes is the Stereotype Content Model (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). This model suggests that two pieces of information about outgroups are sufficient for the ingroup to evaluate those outside of their own group. What people need to know is: 1. Are the intentions of the other group good or ill towards me and my group, and 2. Are they able to enact their intentions (Fiske, 2004)? Intentions of the other individual or group are described as warmth and the ability to follow through on intentions are referred to as competence. Using these two variables the group can be judged as to their level of threat. This assignment of threat is not an either/or judgment, but a matter of degrees, and may involve mixed feelings.

The highest threat comes from groups that are “competent but disliked as not warm (e.g., feminists, successful immigrants, and minority professionals). The low threat example is when they are liked as warm but disrespected as incompetent (e.g., elderly people, disabled people, housewives)” (Fiske, 2004, p. 418). Groups falling in between reflect an ambivalent prejudice.

Using this combination of warmth and competence it is possible to identify which groups will be stereotyped as threatening. These are the groups that fall in the envious prejudice category having high competence and low warmth. This is based on their ability to do harm and the perceptions of the majority group as to the likelihood of the outgroup’s intentions. This group is socio-economically successful (i.e. competent-ambitious, clever), an
outgroup (e.g. foreign) simultaneously seen as lacking warmth (e.g. no concern for others) because they are competitors (Glick, 2002). In this “taxonomy of prejudices” Jews fall into the category of envious prejudice, and have been viewed by others with “envy, fear, resentment and hostility” (Glick, 2002). Fiske et al. (Fiske, et al., 2002) provide evidence of envious prejudice operating for women and Asians as well as Jews.

There is evidence that prejudicial beliefs are triggered by cues signaling the potential for inter-group contact and inter-group threat (Suedfeld & Schaller, 2002). While they don’t necessarily agree with the stereotypes, stigmatized individuals are usually aware of the stereotyped accusations against them and influenced by them (Crocker, et al., 1998). Having considered some of the origins of prejudice it is appropriate to consider the present day expressions of prejudice.

**Shift From Blatant to Subtle Prejudice**

It is widely believed that intergroup attitudes and relations, including anti-Semitism, have improved since the 1950s (see Wilson, 1996). Some have gone so far as to predict the eventual disappearance of anti-Semitism in North America (Wilson, 1996). Related to this are recent observations that prejudice has become subtler. These shifts in intergroup prejudice are confirmed by data from the 1990 National Opinion Research Center General Social Survey (GSS) “which measures stereotypes of four minorities, Jews, Blacks, Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans, as well as ‘whites in general’” (Wilson, 1996, p. 467).

Wilson analyzes this shift in stereotypes and prejudice. Two types of stereotypes were identified – malevolent and benign. Beliefs in malevolent stereotypes, including those of Jews, are blatant and have declined while levels of belief in benign stereotypes have remained constant. This leads to the impression that intergroup relations have indeed
improved dramatically in the second half of the twentieth century; however ostensibly benign stereotypes are potentially subtle expressions of prejudice (Wilson, 1996). And while malevolent and benign stereotypes may be held simultaneously, they are separate from each other. The GSS research showed that ostensibly benign stereotypes and blatant malevolent stereotypes are held simultaneously by substantial proportion of non-Jews (41.6%) (Wilson, 1996).

In an echo of Fiske’s stereotype content model Wilson notes that “any trait can be evaluated either positively or negatively by citing the clear parallels between certain positive and negative Jewish stereotypes: loyalty versus clannishness, success versus obsession with money, ambition versus pushiness” (Wilson, 1996, p. 466). That is to say, it depends who is judging the quality being evaluated. When it is the dominant group possessing the trait it has a positive valence and when otherwise the valence is usually negative. “Core American values are laudable when seen in the context of ‘us’ but are threatening when seen in the context of ‘them’” (Williams quoted in Wilson, 1996, p. 466).

Analysis of this data does not point definitively to a conclusion regarding levels of prejudice and their meaning. Clearly malevolent blatant prejudice has lessened but whether this means prejudice is disappearing or becoming subtler is unclear. The question of whether there has been improvement in attitudes as well as behaviour has also not been answered, even though prejudiced behaviour has become subtler and less socially accepted. The data examined by Wilson was specifically within the context of the United States. Differences between the United States and Canada regarding minority group experiences mean conclusions should not be automatically transferred to the Canadian context. However, these
trends are likely applicable to Canada as well. As a more common insidious expression of prejudice the everyday variety needs attention.

**Everyday Prejudice**

“The most significant insight in the past three decades of bias research is that everyday bias is often subtle, automatic, and unintentional, contrary to people’s commonsense intuitions about it as overt bigotry” (Fiske, 2004, p. 256). Fortunately events such as denial of employment and housing, and physical violence, are less socially acceptable in today’s multicultural society (Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002; Miller, 2006). As a result everyday prejudice has become subtle, ambivalent, and sometimes even unconscious. It is this more subtle form of prejudice that is the focus of my research.

The traditional clear markers of prejudice are less useful for understanding these ambiguous experiences. Consequently individuals have more difficulty reliably identifying incidents of prejudice. Interaction between members of different groups has become confusing and complex leaving lots of room for interpretation and misunderstanding. Individuals are left feeling uncertain about their understanding of social situations and doubting their judgments of these situations.

These subtle expressions of prejudice now more commonplace are referred to as everyday prejudice. Recent trends in the research literature have come to acknowledge the importance of these subtle everyday expressions of prejudice, the everyday reminders of difference (Miller, 2006; Swim, et al., 1998; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001; Swim & Stangor, 1998; Swim & Thomas, 2006). They are seen as the most common, personal and persistent way to experience stigma today in North America (Swim, 2003). They “are the everyday hassles that, although minor, accumulate over time. … Even these everyday,
'minor' forms of discrimination can be problematic because they may produce anger and anxiety among stigmatized group members” (Stangor et al., 2003).

Members of stigmatized minority groups find that they deal with subtle prejudice and discrimination on a regular basis. This everyday prejudice consists of “mundane comments or behaviour that reflect or communicate hostile, denigrating, or stigmatizing attitudes and beliefs about particular groups” (Swim, 2003). They can be casual events such as street remarks or glares, or more extensive contact. They can be verbal expressions of prejudice such as racial slurs, insensitive comments and stereotyping. They can be directed to an individual or to an entire social group (Swim, et al., 1998).

In a study of subtle sexism, Swim (2003) notes that subtle sexism “may be quite prevalent, and may have an insidious impact on its victims.” Examining everyday prejudice using diary records, participants reported 2-3 incidents of everyday prejudice per week (Swim & Thomas, 2006). Meyer (2003) in reviewing the literature on the experience of gay men cites examples such as hostile or exclusionary comments, poor service or treatment, unwanted sexual attention or harassment, or concerns about being outed. As frequent irritations they are part of the minority experience and accumulate to become an ever-present reminder of one’s stigma.

**The Experience of Everyday Prejudice**

Based on a review of his own and others’ empirical research Dion (2001) concluded that, “perceiving oneself to be a target of prejudice or discrimination has demonstrable, negative impact upon the individual.” Others have made the same conclusion (Crocker, et al., 1998; Swim, et al., 2001). Being stigmatized because of one’s group membership is a direct challenge to both the individual’s collective and personal identity (Crocker, et al., 1998;
Miller & Kaiser, 2001b). It is also a challenge to one’s self esteem. “Anticipation of prejudice and discrimination may affect people’s choices about what to say in certain interactions, how to present themselves, and where to socialize, live, go to college, and work” (Swim & Stangor, 1998, p. 39).

Many stigmatized individuals feel the need to be constantly “on guard” in many settings and ever alert or mindful of the possibility that others may be prejudiced (Crocker et al., 1998). This is regardless of the frequency of these experiences because the individual feels as if they are never entirely free of the possibility of encountering prejudice in others. They may also feel the need to be mistrustful of claims by the non-stigmatized that they are unprejudiced and well intentioned (Crocker et al., 1998). These concerns are magnified by the ambiguity of situations and subtlety of everyday prejudice.

Furthermore, both aversive racism and pluralistic ignorance contribute to the fact that interpretations of experiences and encounters differ for all those involved. Aversive racists have conscious egalitarian values and unconscious negative feelings and beliefs. Discrimination is hidden as something else, which sends a mixed message (Dovidio 2002). This refers to the fact that many individuals who do not subscribe to prejudiced beliefs may continue to have automatic or unconscious reactions to stigmatized members. Their well meaning intentions are not congruent with their behaviour (Dovidio, et al., 2002) and stigmatized individuals often see through this.

The difficulty for stigmatized people is that even people who aspire to be non-prejudiced may still (a) harbor ambivalent reactions to member of stigmatized groups; (b) experience negative affect when interacting with them; (c) have implicit stereotypes about them; (d) make judgments about stigmatized people
that are unconsciously affected by prejudice; and (e) experience difficulty in acting normally when interacting with stigmatized people, especially with respect to nonverbal and other subtle behaviors that sometimes communicate more than a person intends. (Miller, 2006, p. 25)

Shelton and Richeson (2005) point to individuals’ concerns about acceptance as part of the dynamic of intergroup relations. When asked why they would avoid intergroup contacts research participants explained their behaviour as reflecting fears of social exclusion but did not consider such fears on the part of individuals from other groups as a legitimate explanation (Shelton & Richeson, 2005). Continuing their reflection on differences between private and public attitudes and behaviour, they identify pluralistic ignorance as another way that private and public attitudes make intergroup relations confusing.

Pluralistic ignorance happens when people publicly express support for certain non-discriminatory norms, but do not actually accept these beliefs in private. Furthermore, though they subscribe to different public and private beliefs themselves they believe others’ public support of a belief is a reflection of their true sentiment.

Findings from other research Shelton and her group conducted highlight the difference in perceptions of events between the Blacks and Whites who participated in their studies (Shelton, Richeson, & Salvatore, 2005). Blacks who expected to be the target of prejudice were more likely to experience negative affect in an inter-ethnic situation. They found that Blacks in this situation used compensatory strategies to dispel the negative beliefs they assumed the White partner in the situation would have. These strategies included more self-disclosure and engagement in the interaction.
After this intergroup interaction they (Shelton, Richeson, & Salvatore, 2005) found that Whites described their experience as having been positive and Blacks felt more negative affect and less authentic because of their compensatory efforts. This was hypothesized to be the result of a reaction to initial expectations going into the interaction. Both groups expected not to be accepted by the other. The White participants experienced the self-disclosure and engagement as positives and the Black participant felt more negatively as a result of their compensation.

If the sources of much prejudiced behaviour do not construe their behaviour as revealing prejudice, then the stigmatized suffer a double indignity – they must not only endure the prejudice itself, but their interpretation of events is called into question. (Crocker et al., 1998)

Other influences on the experience of everyday prejudice have also been studied. These include elements of the social environment referred to by some as “threatening environments, which are environments that can activate social identities and the relevant negative stereotypes about them” (Inzlicht & Good, 2006, p. 129). Being outnumbered in a situation increases distinctiveness and self-consciousness, primes stereotypes and increases anxiety and arousal among members of stigmatized groups.

Cohen and Swim found a higher expectation of stereotyping for both men and women when they were in a solo status in a group (L. L. Cohen & Swim, 1995). Inzlicht and Good repeat the story told by Arthur Ashe, the successful Black tennis player. Tennis is a sport known as a mainly White environment. “Like many other Blacks, when I find myself in a new public situation I will count.” By this he meant “he counted the number of Black faces in
a room to determine how well his social identity was valued and represented” (Inzlicht & Good, 2006, p. 129).

An individual does not have to be present in person to hear communication that devalues his or her social identity to experience stigma. Nor does the prejudiced communication have to be aimed at him or her personally. Prejudice aimed at a group as a whole will have an impact on individual members of that group. In these situations it is quite possible to experience stigma vicariously.

Watching a commercial showing a woman getting excited about a kitchen cleaner, or even taking a class with a White instructor [when one is Black] are all ways the environment can conspire to make us think about our social identities. (Inzlicht & Good, 2006, p. 130)

The media plays a large role in individual feelings about social identity. Its pervasiveness makes it a powerful source of information and subtle judgments about various stigmas.

Christian privilege as described by Schlosser (2003) is a clear example of the power of social structures to reinforce feelings of stigmatization. Just as White men have been identified as holding a privileged position in North American society so too does Christianity, as the dominant religion, hold a position of privilege. This refers to the subtle yet powerful ways that individuals holding a social identity associated with the dominant group enjoy a level of privilege and advantage not enjoyed by other often stigmatized or stereotyped groups. Examples of the privilege include having public holidays include their religious ones such as Christmas and Easter, having the history of one’s group be part of the official public school curriculum, and not have to worry about the ramifications of revealing one’s religious affiliation (Schlosser, 2003).
Most discussion of diversity and privilege in the United States has focused on questions of race (Schlosser, 2003). Discussion of religion as a different social identity has been taboo and therefore not received much attention (Schlosser, 2003). “Christian religious dogmatism contributes to persons from minority religious groups feeling that their religious identity is not valued, and, subsequently, they feel discrimination and oppression because of their religious group membership (Schlosser, 2003, p. 47).

“Any environment that signals that the identity is not valued is likely to increase the negative effects of stigma” (van Laar & Levin, 2006, p. 6). Therefore the individual entering this kind of environment is walking in with the expectation that his or her social identity will be devalued, stigmatized, or discriminated against. Researchers have identified some aspects of the environment that signal this potential as well as ways that stigmatized individuals deal with this experience.

Most individuals are aware of the stereotypes relevant to their group. This knowledge and the expectation that a particular environment will trigger these stereotypes lead to a number of reactions on the part of the stigmatized individual. Stereotype threat refers to the concern that one will be judged on the basis of, or confirm stereotypes linked to their social identity (Major & O'Brien, 2005). This may lead to avoidance of such environments, or the anxiety in response may impair performance. Individuals may also fear behaving in a way which confirms a negative stereotype of the group and be uncomfortable witnessing someone else from their group behaving in a way that confirms the negative stereotype (van Laar & Levin, 2006). There can be a pressure of representing the group as if their individual behaviour will somehow reflect back on the group as a whole. This is referred to as self threat.
In situation threat the negative stereotypes are tied to a particular domain. For example African Americans and Latinos are negatively stereotyped in intellectual domains as are women in mathematics (Levin & van Laar, 2006). For this reason, these groups may downplay the importance of these domains as a way of coping and emphasize other qualities as a measure of success and self-esteem. If an individual cares about the domain tied to the negative stereotype, for example academics, they will be susceptible to stereotype threat (Crocker, et al., 1998). This concern can also have a negative impact on task performance in that setting (Stangor, et al., 2003).

Related to the concern about stereotype threat and particular environments is Branscombe’s rejection identification model (Branscombe, et al., 1999). “Perceiving prejudice as pervasive produces effects on well-being that are fundamentally different from those that may arise from an unstable attribution to prejudice for a single negative outcome” (Branscombe, et al., 1999, p. 135). In other words, expectations of consistent prejudice from the dominant group can lead to poor self-esteem. This lowered self-esteem can be countered by a stronger identification with the minority group. This highlights the importance of belonging for good self-esteem and the usefulness in choosing the group to which one aligns values as a way of coping with prejudice. “If one cannot gain acceptance in the group with much of society's power and prestige, the most adaptive response might be to increase one's investment in one's own group” (Branscombe, et al., 1999, p. 135).

Finally the stigmatized individual’s attitude toward the validity of the stereotypes about his or her group can be a factor in this experience. Knowing the negative stereotypes of one’s group raises the possibility for some that this negative evaluation is actually correct and the group is less deserving (Crocker, et al., 1998). In an effort to fit in socially and maintain relationships with those assumed to hold negative stereotypes the stigmatized individual may
perceive him or herself in a manner consistent with the negative stereotype (van Laar & Levin, 2006). Considering the impact of the rejection identification model interactions with ingroup members who hold negative stereotypes about their own group may actually be more harmful than interactions with prejudiced outgroup members (van Laar & Levin, 2006).

**Everyday Prejudice and Minority Group Membership as a Stressful Experience**

Being a target of prejudice or stigma is a stressful experience. So too is being the type of person who receives such treatment. This is true whether the prejudice is blatant or subtle, and whether or not the individual is conscious of the prejudice. Stressors of more blatant discrimination and prejudice include the impact on employment and education opportunities, health care, and housing to name a few (Miller & Kaiser, 2001b). These are more easily identified.

The subtler everyday prejudice defined earlier also has an impact on individuals though it is less easily identified. Psychological stress is an important result. Stress responses typically may include anger, anxiety, hopelessness, resentment and fear as well as physiological responses such as an increase in cardiovascular activity. It is not necessary for an individual to identify an experience as stressful for it to be experienced as such. It may be labeled as something else or seen as constant background noise because the stigmatized individual lives with it all the time. Also stress can be experienced without it having a name.

The literature refers to a number of ways that this stress, which is in addition to the usual stress of daily living, occurs. For example, Dion notes,

It is a stressor because it elicits cognitive appraisals of threat, such that victims impute stable, malevolent motives and intentions to the antagonist(s).

Moreover, perceived prejudice and discrimination are often unpredictable
social stressors entailing greater adaptation costs for the target than would a predictable or controllable stressor. (Dion, 2001, p. 4)

Thus stigmatized minority group members feel the necessity of always being vigilant to the possibility of threat against them or their group.

Determining whether ambiguous events are the result of prejudice adds to the stress and challenges the individual’s confidence in their judgment. Furthermore the ambiguity of these events allows others to question the stigmatized individual’s judgment and devalue their claims regarding prejudice and discrimination (Miller & Kaiser, 2001b).

The link between the individual’s personal and social identity in relation to his or her stigma also provides unique opportunities for stress. Since the stigma is part of their social identity, or membership in a group, unfair treatment to the group is experienced as stress. Even though they are not personally threatened, seeing other members of the group suffer can trigger a vicarious stress response (Miller & Kaiser, 2001b). Finally there is pressure to make a positive representation of the group to others and be a “credit” to the group (Miller & Kaiser, 2001b).

Core social goals are threatened by prejudice and stigma. The social goal most central is that of belonging. Its violation triggers other needs and psychological structures such as attachment.

Discrimination, perhaps via ostracism, may directly threaten or challenge a core need to belong by activating a belief that one is not accepted or valued by a group or does not fit in a group. For instance, when discrimination comes in the form of patronizing behaviour, low power targeted individuals feel marginalized. (Swim & Thomas, 2006, p. 113)
Prejudice threatens other core social goals as well. If the goal of self-enhancement is thwarted then self-esteem may be lessened. For individuals not identified with their group, experiences with discrimination can threaten self-esteem (Swim & Thomas, 2006). There is some suggestion that one’s public self-esteem can be threatened while personal self-esteem stays intact (Swim & Thomas, 2006).

Seeing oneself as a victim of prejudice and discrimination (Shih, 2004) can damage self-esteem. To protect their self-esteem individuals tend to deny or minimize their experience of prejudice. “Research has found that individuals consistently perceive a greater degree of prejudice and discrimination directed at their group than at themselves” (Shih, 2004, p. 179).

Any prejudice or discrimination perceived as blocking one’s ability to obtain important intrapersonal and interpersonal goals will impact the goal of control over the events in one’s environment. Regarding the goal of trust, research has shown that seeing antigay campaign materials made lesbian and gay individuals question their belief that the world was safe and that others were good (Swim & Thomas, 2006). This likely occurs with other stigmatized groups as well and is a good example of the media impact on individual feelings of safety.

There are many other ways that trust is shaken on a one to one basis. The need to understand one’s environment and human behaviour is threatened when events happen without an explanation thus prompting attributions to help individuals explain events. Situations of pluralistic ignorance and differences in perceived reality between dominant and minority individuals also put demands on the need to understand and control (see Shelton & Richeson, 2005; Shelton, Richeson, Salvatore, & Trawalter, 2005).
Another perspective on the subtlety of minority stress comes from “social comparison and symbolic interaction theorists [who] view the social environment as providing people with meaning to their world and organization to their experience” (Meyer, 2003, p. 675). However in the case of stigmatized minority groups it is the dominant or majority culture that provides the main organizing force. Often the dominant culture does not reflect the values and priorities of the minority groups (Meyer, 2003). There is therefore a “mismatch” between the minority individual and his or her experience of society (Selye and Lazarus & Folkman referenced in Meyer, 2003). As a result the minority individual can have the experience of being “out of step” or “not belonging.” This lack of fit between oneself and the larger society with regard to values and experience reinforces feelings of not belonging. This challenges the social need of belonging, explains differences in perspective between ingroup and outgroup, and sets the stage for the particular stress of being a stigmatized minority.

**Stress and Coping Theory as a Model for Minority/Ethnic Stress**

Since everyday prejudice is a stressful experience and the task of this research is to understand the experience of targets of everyday prejudice then an understanding of stress, and how people manage it, is important to an understanding of everyday prejudice. Miller and Kaiser (2001b) propose that the theory of stress and coping developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) can be used productively to conceptualize responses to ethnic stress.

Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) theory can be represented diagrammatically as:

\[
\text{INCIDENT} \Rightarrow \text{EVALUATION (primary appraisals and secondary appraisals)} \Rightarrow \text{COPING EFFORTS (pro-active and reactive)} \Rightarrow \text{OUTCOME (social and personal)} \text{ (Swim, 2003).}
\]

A stressor presents itself, the individual must assess the situation for both the demand on
resources and the capacity of available resources to respond, and there are one or more responses and a resolution of some sort.

Put simply, stress occurs when the demands placed on an individual exceed or tax the individual’s coping resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984); in other words, “an environmental demand on an individual’s psychosocial resources” (Swim, 2003). With regard to minority individuals, “Selye (1982) described a sense of harmony with one’s environment as the basis of healthy living; deprivation of such a sense of harmony may be considered the source of minority stress” (Meyer, 2003, p. 676). Other stressors of everyday prejudice have been outlined.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) acknowledge the importance of perceptions and the impossibility of concrete objective reality when it comes to human experience. They also see an interaction between the person (values, commitments, styles of perceiving and thinking) and environment whose characteristics must be predicted and interpreted. Context including the influence of culture and communal history are also part of the larger scenario.

*INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE*
A stressor = challenge to the individual’s psychosocial resources

**Primary appraisal** of the stressor: cognitive evaluation of the environment or stressor as a potential threat and in what way?

**Secondary appraisal** of possible remedies or actions and whether they will be sufficient

**Coping responses**
1. to manage or alter the problem with the environment that is causing distress (problem focused coping)
2. to regulate the emotional response to the problem (emotion focused coping)
Cognitive Appraisal.

Stress and coping theory is made up of two processes: cognitive appraisals of a situation and coping responses. “Cognitive appraisal can be most readily understood as the process of categorizing an encounter, and its various facets, with respect to its significance for well-being” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 31). In fact a number of things are being assessed. The primary appraisal is of the situation and the secondary appraisal is what can be done.

The primary appraisal is to determine whether the environment or stressor is a threat to the individual and in what way it might be threatening. In the case of minority individuals, is the environment one in which they are likely to be devalued, stigmatized or discriminated against because of their social identity (van Laar & Levin, 2006, p. 6)?

“Research reveals that the way in which individuals interpret and respond to a stressor determines the extent to which they experience a negative outcome” (Mallett & Swim, 2005, p. 412). A number of questions come to play in this evaluation. The individual needs to determine the potential harm to him or her or those with whom they are close. What is the level of personal threat and what goals may be blocked by any particular response? What resources does the individual have at his or her disposal and will they be sufficient for a positive outcome (Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986)? Finally in the case of everyday prejudice is this stressful encounter related to a minority or stigmatized status (Miller & Kaiser, 2001b)? Having evaluated the situation and consequences, the individual is ready to make a judgment on the encounter and a decision regarding a response.
A cognitive appraisal is not static. It can change as new information is encountered. It is influenced by the individual’s sense of power or control over the situation and it is possible to have different appraisals occur simultaneously and not be mutually exclusive. Any situation may have both positive and negative possibilities. These appraisals are not necessarily conscious and are sometimes made quickly depending on the situation. They include beliefs about one’s ability to deal with situations and expectations of the response from the other side.

Research has shown that when a stigmatized individual thinks that the other person is aware of the stigma there is an expectation to be treated as someone who is stigmatized and therefore in return treat the other person more harshly. For example, in Stangor’s research (Stangor, et al., 2003) women in an experimental situation who were led to believe that the other, male person in the experiment was sexist then treated him more harshly. Being stigmatized can also enhance the perception that the individual cannot effectively overcome the stigma even with lots of resources because there is no control over whether the stigma is applied (Mallett & Swim, 2005). When the stigma is not part of the situation the stigmatized individual shows a greater confidence in his or her resources and perceives a greater ability to overcome the stressor (Mallett & Swim, 2005).

**Response to the Encounter.**

The secondary appraisal in Lazarus and Folkman’s (1986) theory is the process culminating in the coping response. The responses themselves are the thoughts, feelings and actions that are the individual’s expression in reaction to an encounter. Coping is defined as “conscious volitional efforts to regulate emotion, thought, behaviour, physiology, and the environment in response to stressful events or circumstances” (Miller & Kaiser, 2001b, p.77).
There are two functions of coping: to manage or alter the problem with the environment that is causing distress (problem focused coping) and to regulate the emotional response to the problem (emotion focused coping).

Applying the stress and coping theory to ethnic stress, Miller (2006) identifies a number of additional elements, that is appraisal of stigma related stressors and coping responses, and, related to both appraisals and coping, the identification of prejudice itself. Miller further breaks down each of these components. The first component includes a primary assessment as to whether there is a personal threat that may exceed available resources, and then whether these resources can be called upon. Finally determination as to whether the stressful event is somehow related to the individual’s stigmatized status.

The second component is the myriad of coping responses or strategies. These include physiological, cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses which can be divided into primary engagement strategies which aim to change the situation, secondary engagement strategies which aim to adjust the individual to be more comfortable with the situation and disengagement strategies which aim to take the individual out of the situation in some way.

The third component of identifying prejudice relies on inference and is less clear due to the subtlety of most contemporary prejudice (Miller, 2006). A variety of cues must be used to make this identification, such as the non-stigmatized person’s intentions and the amount of harm suffered by the stigmatized person. It must also be identified to oneself, and to others. Sometimes stigmatized individuals do not recognize events as being the result of stigma even when they are and consequently attribute them to some other cause (Miller, 2006).
As discussed previously contemporary prejudice can be blatant or subtle, the subtle everyday prejudice being more common. Strategies to deal with blatant prejudice are more likely to be avoidance techniques. It is the subtler prejudice that is trickier to deal with.

Stigmatized people may simply not care to expend their resources to deal with an out-and-out bigot, but may be more willing to work to establish a better situation with a less blatantly prejudiced person. ... It may be very difficult to identify what is going on when a person is subtly prejudiced or ambivalent about the stigmatized person. This can leave the stigmatized person with considerable ambiguity about what precisely is happening in a situation.

(Miller, 2006, p. 25)

My focus here is on the voluntary coping responses individuals use. These fall into two groups, engagement and disengagement, that is, to move toward or away from the encounter with prejudice. The engagement responses can be further divided into those aimed at primary control, that is, changing the situation (e.g. problem solving, emotional regulation and expression); and secondary control, that is, adapting to a situation (e.g. distraction, cognitive restructuring and acceptance). The goal of these coping strategies is to enhance a sense of personal control over the environment and one’s reactions.

Miller and Kaiser (Miller & Kaiser, 2001b) name the following strategies as characterizing disengagement: physical avoidance, adjustment to social comparison, denial and wishful thinking. Keeping oneself out of environments that are likely to put an individual face to face with prejudice is an easy way to disengage prior to any encounter. This self-selective strategy suggests that a proactive thought process is operating. “Anticipation of prejudice and discrimination may affect people’s choices about what to say in certain
interactions, how to present themselves, and where to socialize, live, go to college, and work” (Swim & Stangor, 1998, p. 39).

An expectation of a negative experience can lead to disengagement (Shelton & Richeson, 2005). Avoidance is one response to oppression, both psychological and behavioural. This may take the form of passivity, psychological withdrawal, and insulation from the broader society. Individuals may come together to develop separate communities, migrate to less discriminatory locations, and reduce contacts with the majority (Swim & Stangor, 1998).

Whether subtle or extreme, such strategies may function as an active way of shaping one’s environment to avoid potential prejudice and discrimination, but also have the negative consequence of placing limitations on the lives of minorities while leaving majority group members ‘off the hook’ (Swim & Stangor, 1998, p. 40).

The other response to stressful situations and by extension to stigma and prejudice are strategies of engagement. There are numerous examples of strategies falling into this category for the purpose of changing the situation. Primary engagement may include some or all of the following strategies: exerting more effort at a task (being more persistent or assertive), using social skills (verbal and non-verbal self presentation, humour, smiling, being friendly, educating the other person), and paying more attention to the interaction partner’s behaviour (monitoring verbal and non-verbal cues) (Mallett & Swim, 2005).

Examples of secondary control include: increased attention to one’s own behaviour, psychological withdrawal from goal or domain, avoidance of potentially prejudiced people or situations, distraction, acceptance or positive thinking (Mallett & Swim, 2005). Selective

There are coping strategies aimed at dealing with situations proactively. These call on the individual to develop an awareness of when, where, by whom, and in what manner prejudice is most likely to occur in order to assess the likelihood of its occurrence and structure interaction to minimize its hurt (Swim & Stangor, 1998, p. 38). In order to predict potential prejudice in a particular context individuals use their expectations of the types of people most likely to be perpetrators. These are based on stereotypic cues such as gender, race, past knowledge about individual or group attitudes, age, political orientation, and religiosity (Swim & Stangor, 1998, p. 39).

A good example of a stereotypic cue is the composition of the group, in other words will the minority individual be a “solo.” This has already been identified as a situation likely to hold everyday prejudice and be avoided by some individuals. “Minorities avoid potential rejection and often decide not to pursue such opportunities [such as being in a particular occupation, workplace or neighbourhood] because they personally or vicariously know the performance difficulties and interpersonal stresses associated with being a minority in a context dominated by majority members” (Swim & Stangor, 1998, p. 40).

Finally it should be noted that sometimes one strategy might serve a number of functions and that no single coping strategy works well across all individuals or situations (Mallett & Swim, 2005).

**Individual Differences in Perceptions and Responses**

In addition to examining different responses to stigma and prejudice, researchers have begun to investigate individual differences in perceptions, reactions and responses to these
encounters with everyday prejudice. The first group of influences on an experience with stigma is the individual’s past experience with stigma and prejudice, including trauma and anti-Semitism. This means not only direct personal experience but also representations of their stigma in the dominant culture.

From these experiences groups develop “collective representations” or shared feelings, beliefs and expectations about their stigma and its potential effects. Those with previous experience of direct or vicarious exclusion, prejudice and discrimination are more likely to perceive and react more strongly to an instance of prejudice than those with little previous experience (Major, 2006). Another type of previous personal experience is that of other differences in identity, for example, sexual orientation. Someone with multiple stigmatized social identities may have an interactive effect or find that coping with one stigmatized identity influences their experience of a second stigmatized identity.

Various psychological variables have also been explored as influences on individual differences. In a study of the influence of psychological variables on perceptions of ethnic discrimination by Chinese, Indian, and Pakistani individuals in Glasgow (Cassidy, O'Connor, Howe, & Warden, 2005) a number of personality characteristics and beliefs about oneself and the world were found to determine, in part, whether experiences will be attributed to or interpreted as discrimination. These variables included self-esteem, depression, anxiety, need for social approval, and centrality of group membership. Depression, low self-esteem, and a need for approval predicted higher levels of anxiety, which in turn were related to higher perceived discrimination (Cassidy, et al., 2005). On the other hand both private collective self-esteem and public collective self-esteem were able to predict lower perceived discrimination.
Stigma consciousness speaks to the strength of ethnic identity or identification with the group. To be high in stigma consciousness is to have an expectation of being judged on the basis of one’s group membership (Pinel, 1999). Strong identifiers are more likely to perceive events as relevant to their stigma, be more attuned to such events and react more strongly when they occur (van Laar & Levin, 2006). A strong identification with one’s group may also provide protection against the negative effects of devaluation because of the practical and emotional support from the group and a framework for understanding and negotiating their social world (Branscombe, et al., 1999).

Stigma consciousness resembles stereotype threat, which is a concern about confirming stereotypes about their group. Stigma consciousness is about being stereotyped regardless of your behaviour. People high in stigma consciousness do not necessarily regard the stereotypes about their group as self-descriptive; in fact they may reject stereotypes about their group more than low stigma consciousness. Research shows that minority individuals do not all approach their stereotyped status with the same mindset and consequently have different cognitive and behavioural outcomes (Pinel, 1999). Individuals high in stigma consciousness were more likely to perceive discrimination directed to their group and to them personally, and more likely to avoid stereotype relevant situations.

Mental Models of Self and Others.

Attachment theory and individual attachment styles are another avenue to understanding individual differences in response to everyday prejudice. The experience of being stigmatized is an experience of rejection or potential rejection. An individual’s past experiences with rejection and expectations of future similar experience with others is part of their attachment history. “Attachment theorists believe that early experiences with
acceptance and rejection create relatively stable mental models about others and self. These mental models of others and self become the basis for the individual’s style of relating to others” (Miller & Kaiser, 2001a). By extension the individual’s expectations about others will influence both perceptions of events as well as appraisal of resources and potential outcomes.

Bartholomew and Horowitz defined four attachment styles influencing a mental model of self and others (1991). The securely attached individual is confident about being accepted by others and therefore comfortable about approaching others. The expectation is that they will be accepted for who they are and will likely receive a positive reception. If not they are confident they will have the inner resources to deal with that. The preoccupied attachment style is someone with a positive model of others but a negative mental model of himself or herself. Therefore they will expect others to be well intentioned but that others may not accept them because they are not worthy. The dismissively attached individual has a positive self-image but a negative expectation of others. They therefore avoid others because they expect poor treatment but are not distressed by this. Finally the individual with a fearful attachment style has a negative model of self and others, and deals with this by withdrawing to avoid pain.

Miller and Kaiser suggest that attachment theory can be used to clarify why some individuals approach and others avoid encounters with everyday prejudice. Research suggests that stigmatized individuals develop strategies to cope with rejection (Miller & Kaiser, 2001a) and that these strategies, influenced by past attachment experiences, are called upon as influences in developing coping strategies for encounters with everyday prejudice.
Rejection and stigma are often measured by social distance. The more intimate and close a relationship is the more likely that the stigmatized person will not be accepted. So it is more likely for someone to be easily accepted in work situations but not in close social contacts. “People may have a variety of mental models of relationship schema that may be evoked in different types of relationships” (Miller & Kaiser, 2001a, p. 192). Which models or expectations are activated may be influenced by whether the other person is a stigmatizer or member of the same group, and by how close the relationship is.

To refine this conceptualization even more Miller and Kaiser suggest the aspect of the model of self that is important here is the stigmatized person’s confidence about his or her ability to garner the acceptance of non-stigmatized others. It is their expectation of treatment from others combined with beliefs about their own inner resources that is operating here, in other words, how “worthy, competent, or efficacious the stigmatized person believes himself or herself to be in relationships with potential stigmatizers” (Miller & Kaiser, 2001a, p. 193).

Factors supporting positive expectations of the outcome of an encounter with everyday prejudice include interactions with minimally prejudiced persons, social norms that discourage expression of prejudice, equal status roles, and social support from other stigmatized persons. It does not require the non-stigmatized person to be non-prejudiced. Instead it relies on the stigmatized individual’s belief in his or her own ability to induce the other person to provide resources.

To deal with these relationships stigmatized persons may have one set of social skills and strategies that they use with in-group others and a different set of strategies to use with prejudiced others. Other researchers give the example of African Americans who speak “Black English” with each other and the switch into “Standard English” with European
Americans (Miller & Kaiser, 2001a). Another way these strategies may split is to use one set in intimate or close relationships with the ingroup and another set in more public, distant or formal relationships such as in the workplace.

**Summary**

In this chapter I have reviewed the social psychological research into stigma and prejudice. The last two decades have seen an increase in interest in these issues particularly from the perspective of the target of stigma and prejudice. While none of this research has specifically examined the experience of Jewishness or anti-Semitism, there is much that can be applied to my research to help in conceptualizing the experience.

A number of recent advances in the field contribute to the quality of this present research. The shift to an examination of everyday prejudice is one area of research that contributes to the ability to explore the experience of being Jewish in the current context. Psychology’s acknowledgement of the impact of perceptions on emotions and behaviour (Beck, 1995; Dobson, 2001; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Lyddon, 1995; Wiser, Goldfried, Raue, & Vakoch, 1996) already allows for the role of context in this experience.

The application of the stress and coping literature to ethnic stress provides an excellent conceptualization for understanding management of stigmatizing experiences. Broadening the view of stress and coping to include proactive coping as well as individual differences in perceiving and managing everyday prejudice are also important to my research. Others have broken down the components of the experience of stigma and prejudice in ways that are applicable to my group of participants (Miller, 2006; Stangor, et al., 2003). All of this lays the groundwork for the next chapters examining the experience of my participants as Jews living in a non-Jewish world.
Chapter 4 - Methodology

Having reviewed the literature relevant to my research questions – in this chapter I shift the focus to this present research project. In order to understand the psychological experience of individual Jews as members of a minority group I conducted a qualitative examination of this experience using a life history frame of reference. Eight self-identified Jews living in Toronto shared their experience and its meaning for them. We explored moments when their experience of being Jewish is most salient and their responses to the salient moments which I call encounters. I then analyzed the encounters and the participants’ responses to them both within the context of the individual’s life history and within a broader societal context.

The Qualitative Paradigm

Most psychological research is conducted from a positivist experimental orientation. It is built on the belief that there are lawful regularities between cause and effect in human behaviour and if research is designed and carried out according to scientific practice these lawful regularities will become clear (Donmoyer, 1990). Embedded within this paradigm is an epistemology which holds that knowledge is objective, held by researchers as experts in human behaviour, and best understood by breaking experiences down to their component parts. Its goal is to find universal principles or laws that will explain human behaviour in a generic sense. While useful in answering some research questions, this approach does have its limitations. With regard to understanding a human experience as a whole – cognitive, emotional and behavioural within a real life context – the qualitative paradigm is more useful. The qualitative paradigm is also more productive in addressing issues particular to subsets of people or where research is of an exploratory nature.
Qualitative research is “focused on discovery, insight and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied” (Merriam, 1988, p. 3). It is subjective, and values the knowledge of those doing the experiencing. Researcher and participant collaborate in this endeavour to explore the experiences of interest. It is in the interaction of the relationship between researcher and participant that meaning is formed and that one is able to access this understanding of human experience.

Individuals want to understand their world and are active in giving meaning to their experiences. This meaning in turn influences their perceptions of their world and the choices made over the course of their life. Furthermore, this act of construction is ongoing as individuals create, recreate and interpret the meaning of their experiences over the course of their lives. Qualitative research reflects this ongoing act of meaning making and the central role of the individual by starting from the viewpoint of the individual. It also views research participants as active agents in their lives. Rather than seeking universal general principles, qualitative research is a heuristic, suggesting possibilities not dictating action (Donmoyer, 1990). For this reason its strength is in its exploration of uncharted territory and in filling in the spaces between slices of knowledge gained empirically.

My research questions focus on an experience as a whole lived in a particular context. It is exploratory in nature and attempts to get at the meaning individuals make of their experience in interaction with their context. I do not expect to prove or disprove rules of human behaviour but rather suggest possibilities that will extend the understanding of the Jewish experience and possibly that of other stigmatized individuals.

A good example of an empirical investigation of the Jewish experience is the study by Dion and Earn (1975). In that study individual men with “Semitic” surnames and
subsequently identified as Jews participated in a laboratory task while being told the other participants were either Jews or Christians depending on the experimental condition. While useful conclusions were arrived at, one is left with many questions. The use of surnames to identify potential Jewish subjects, the restriction of Jewish to a religious category and finally the whole question of why these participants would find their Jewishness an influence on their behaviour were all neglected but important parts of the puzzle.

My belief is that there is more to understanding experience and behaviour than what can be observed within the confines of a social psychology laboratory. Therefore I have chosen a qualitative paradigm to approach my questions.

**Life History Approach.**

Within the qualitative paradigm there are many methodologies. One approach to understanding life stories is through the use of a narrative methodology. This focuses on the individual’s life experiences as a subjective experience made up of emotions, memories, and behaviour. It assumes that an important component of the analysis of the story is the reconstruction of the life “in the order in which it is lived” (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 19).

Narrative is the representation of a process, of a self in conversation with itself, and with its world over time. Narratives are not records of facts, of how things actually were, but of a meaning-making system that makes sense out of the chaotic mass of perceptions and experiences of life. (Josselson, 1995, p. 33)

Life history is a qualitative method that takes narrative one step further and pays particular attention to “the intersection of human experience and social context” (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p.9). The goal of life history methodology is to take the narrative account
and place it in within a broader context. By examining individuals within the various layers of the contexts of their lives it becomes possible to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of context as well as connecting individual lives with larger human and social phenomena.

The unique perspective of life history is that,

lives are lived within the influence of contexts as far ranging as cultural, political, familial, educational and religious spheres. … Whereas narrative research focuses on making meaning of individuals’ experiences, life history research draws on individuals’ experiences to make broader contextual meaning. (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 20)

Significant historical events as one contextual influence give meaning to lives in the present. Life history research draws on individual experiences to make sense of a broader context and vice versa.

Jewish experience is inextricably linked to events surrounding the individual. Religious observance has always been tied to the home as an immediate tangible expression of present and historical communal experiences. Since the beginning, Judaism and the Jewish people have had links to Jews in other times and places. This is expressed not only in the religion but also in present day acts to reach out to Jews in need regardless of their geographic location. This connection between Jews in both time and space is evidence that an understanding of life as a Jew in a non-Jewish world must include contextual analysis for it to have any credibility. Therefore going beyond the narrative of individual lives to a life history methodology, which makes room for contextual analysis, was the best fit for the research questions at hand.
The purpose of the study is to examine life as a Jew in a non-Jewish world. By definition this means an interaction between Jew and non-Jew and by extension the world surrounding them, a contextual perspective.

An individual Jew's minority experience is embedded in that individual's life experiences, their family experiences, and the social and cultural historical moment. Some of the contextual influences on present day Jewish experience include the Holocaust and its aftermath; the founding of the state of Israel; present day anti-Semitism; and oppression of Jews in other places. On a more positive note the forces pushing for peace and cooperation between diverse groups as expressed in policies such as multiculturalism are also an influence on individual experience.

On the level of an individual, influences on a participant’s experience would include being a child of survivors of the Holocaust, being the only Jewish child in a neighbourhood or growing up mostly amongst Jews. Finally, parents have an impact in this area and their experiences with anti-Semitism or discrimination also become aspects of the context.

The life history approach to qualitative research considers the impact of these influences and includes them in the analysis and interpretation of the data. They are used to understand the delicate balance individuals engage in as they mediate different cultures, contexts, and construct a sense of self, negotiate membership in groups and acquire a sense of belonging.

**Procedure**

**Participants.**

I recruited participants in a number of ways; posters, synagogue newsletters and “word of mouth.” In the end “word of mouth” was the only successful method of
recruitment. As the recruitment and interviewing proceeded, it became clear that, while participants had varying experiences, they discussed many of the same themes. Based on the concept of saturation (Josselson & Lieblich, 2003) I decided that eight participants were an adequate number to allow the depth of analysis required in this study.

Eight Jewish individuals, three male and five female, between the ages of 30 and 60 participated in this study. One was in his 30’s, one in her 60’s and the rest in their 40’s and 50’s. At the time of the interviews all of them lived in Toronto. None were visible minorities and all were heterosexual. The significance of this age range is that the individuals are young enough to have been born after WWII and old enough to have some adult experience negotiating their place in society as Jewish adults.

For the most part they were middle aged, married to another Jew and had children. With one exception (Avital) they grew up in Canada; and had siblings. Rebecca was an only child. Six went to public school. All of them had post secondary education such as a PhD, MSW, B.Ed, or M.A. All of the participants were employed and would describe themselves as successful active members of society.

Exceptions to these generalizations included Martin who does not have children, is not married, and in his thirties is younger than the others. Avital grew up in the Soviet Union and is divorced. Bill and Lyla are children of Holocaust survivors and Lyla and Hannah went to a Jewish Day school for their elementary education. Hannah’s family is financially well off. Rebecca is least like the typical description above. Her family was working class and she was an only child. She married an African American non-Jew and is now divorced.

There was wide diversity of adult Jewish identification and personal history. This ranged from individuals strongly committed and active in the Jewish community to
individuals on the periphery of the community in terms of behaviour and affiliation. The expectation was that their experiences would differ greatly from each other and would provide a richness in the narratives that would broaden the analysis (Polkinghorne, 1991b).

As volunteers all the participants were very interested in discussing their experiences as Jews and members of a minority group, as well as how they deal with the experience of being a Jew in a non-Jewish world. Some reflected that they had not had the opportunity for such discussion before and it was quite welcome.

The Researcher as Part of the Investigation

One of the differentiating characteristics between quantitative and qualitative research is the acknowledgement that the researcher has a relationship with the subject being investigated. The researcher is not an arm’s length objective individual but rather an instrument in the research process and provides an interpretive lens that must be acknowledged. The researcher then is an integral part of the research process. For this reason the relationship of the researcher to the research topic must be shared allowing readers to evaluate the researcher’s role in the collection and interpretation of data.

There are three ways that who I am and my relationship to the topic come into play. First is the choice of this topic. Second is its impact on me as I interacted with participants and engaged in interpretation of the material shared by them. And finally, the impact of my own feelings, reactions and experiences as a Jew on the data collection and interpretation.

The Role of the Researcher.

The role of the researcher in a qualitative paradigm can be tricky. Because of the subjective relationship with the topic and the participants there are both advantages and disadvantages that must be accounted for. Being a member of the community was
advantageous in providing access to participants and facilitating an environment of trust and mutual understanding. As mentioned earlier the experience of being Jewish and a member of a stigmatized minority group is not often discussed and can have the quality of being a taboo subject. The relationship I had with participants influenced their comfort in sharing their stories. A number of participants remarked that they appreciated the opportunity to discuss these issues in a confidential manner with a fellow member of the group. They remarked on how only another Jew could understand what they were talking about.

Because this work is collaborative between researcher and participant, a good working alliance is important to the quality and type of knowledge achieved. Qualities emphasized by Cole & Knowles (2001) as key to good life history research include intimacy and authenticity in the researcher-participant relationship, as well as depth of connection and interpersonal resonance. Essentially these are qualities that lead to a genuine empathy for the participants. My being Jewish with similar experiences supported this goal.

On the cautionary side, researching one’s own community raises concerns about investigating “one’s own backyard” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Some of the problems identified by Glesne and Peshkin are a confusion of role and uncovering politically risky or sensitive information. While the Toronto Jewish community is sizable, there remained the possibility of overlapping relationships. With this in mind I specifically asked participants during the process of giving informed consent about their concerns seeing me in other contexts. None of the participants expressed a concern about this.

Another problem comes from being too close to the material of interest. There is a seduction to see in the participants’ experiences those of the researcher. The researcher must be vigilant to keep the focus on the participant both in the collection of data and in its
interpretation. It is here that the reflective activities are important. In addition, I chose not to include myself as a participant because I felt it would make the task of standing apart and observing easier. I felt I needed some perspective to be able to see the participants’ experiences as their own.

There is an inherent tension between these advantages and disadvantages. For this reason experts in methodology advise that an important component in this research is reflexivity on the part of the researcher with regard to his or her own thoughts and feelings (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Polkinghorne, 1991a). Qualitative research maintains that it is impossible to remain objective and distant as the researcher. Therefore one must bring one’s own experience into the research. In doing so it is important to be aware of biases and potential assumptions that may interfere with the ability to hear the participants’ own voices (Polkinghorne, 1991a).

I achieved this awareness through reflexive activities and discussions aimed at clarifying and deepening my self-understanding. I used a number of techniques. I regularly wrote about my observations, ideas and reactions in a journal. This was done all through the process as I completed an interview and as I reviewed the transcripts. Another important tool was discussing my own process with a select few so as to maintain perspective and make conscious things I took for granted about my experience as a Jew. Throughout the process I made memos to myself. “Memos are an essential part of those (internal) dialogues, a running record of insights, hunches, hypotheses, [and] discussions” (Strauss in Polkinghorne, 1991a, p. 190). My reflections on this experience are included in Chapter 9.
Interviews

I gathered data through in-depth interviews framed within the life history methodology.

Interviewing provides access to the context of people's behaviour and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behaviour. A basic assumption in in-depth interviewing research is that the meaning people make of their experience affects the way they carry out that experience. (Seidman, 1991, p. 12)

I asked participants about their experiences as Jews, specifically in relation to those experiences dealing with life as a minority individual. I asked them to reflect on their experiences within their family, during childhood, and in present day social and work environments.

The semi-structured nature of the interviews meant that there was a set schedule of topics and questions from which the conversation began. In order to allow a comfortable and intimate environment within which to conduct the interviews the style was conversational. This supported my belief that the interviews were the coming together of two fellow Jews with the goal of making sense of a mutual experience. Questions were not necessarily asked in order and often the participant answered a question before it was asked simply by telling their story.

I interviewed all participants once for approximately 90 minutes. For four participants we arranged a second meeting to review and clarify or expand on information gathered. This second meeting lasted approximately 60 minutes. I took a collaborative approach to the interviews asking participants for their thoughts on the meaning of events in their lives.
Interviews were audiotaped and then transcribed by a professional transcriber. The location of the interviews was the home or office of the participant and was quiet and private so as to protect confidentiality and avoid interruptions. In essence the conversation became a time separate from everyday concerns without restrictions on what participants could discuss.

I began the interviews casually asking participants how they would describe themselves as a Jew. Since I wanted to avoid preconceived notions of who a Jew is I left this very open and also inquired as to what behaviour they felt defined them as a Jew. Participants’ answers were a reflection of their unique personal relationship with their Jewishness and did not follow any preset formula. As such it was a useful way to get to know the participant and their attachment to their Jewishness.

We then explored their experiences growing up as a Jew and whether there had been moments of discomfort because of their Jewishness as a child. I also inquired about their parents’ connections to Jewishness and whether their parents had given them any messages about being a Jew in a non-Jewish world. Most parents had given instruction either explicitly or implicitly on how to relate to and be with non-Jews. These included values such as participating in the broader society, becoming bilingual, keeping the Jewish part of their identity quiet, or expecting non-Jews to dislike Jews. In some cases participants felt their parents had not prepared them with the skills necessary to deal with specific encounters with anti-Semitism or discrimination.

Most of the participants had grown up with other Jews. Some had early experiences of anti-Semitism and those who were children of survivors shared quite clear memories of their parents’ concerns regarding the non-Jewish world. In this way the influence of family experience and the environment they grew up in were explored.
We then explored their adult experiences: their relationships with other Jews and non-Jews in both social and work contexts and how they saw themselves in relationship to the larger Jewish world. From here it was a comfortable transition to look more closely at experiences specific to being a minority. Questions of visibility, dealing with anti-Semitism, fitting in with others were all part of this conversation and are described more fully in the next chapter.

Understanding the experience of others involves gaining access to their subjective experience. Empathic listening to the individuals’ telling of their life story provides an effective access point to this experience and its meaning (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Josselson, 1995).

The combination of exploring the past to clarify the events that led participants to where they are now, and describing the concrete details of their present experience, establishes conditions for reflecting upon what they are doing now in their lives. (Seidman, 1991, p.12)

The introspection and analysis of their experiences as Jews and a minority within the context of this time in history is something the participants had done little of though expressed an appreciation of the opportunity to engage in.

By asking about experiences from different points in their life, in and out of the family environment, it was possible to develop a description of the context within which each participant lived. Becoming immersed in the interview transcripts and taking a collaborative stance with participants made it possible to see the influence of these contexts on their thoughts, emotions and behaviour.
Analysis

Analysis of the interviews followed the framework outlined by Wolcott (1994). Wolcott identifies three levels of working with the data. He labels them Description, Analysis and Interpretation. Description as the first engagement with the data shares or describes the information in close to its original form and content. Building on this first level, Analysis goes beyond a pure description to organize the data in some way and “identify key factors and relationships among them.” The third level referred to as Interpretation tries to make sense of what is happening by going beyond “the degree of certainty usually associated with analysis.” Here previous research and academic literature may be drawn on to suggest possible explanations for what has been found and place the explanations into a larger context (Wolcott, 1994). The following description of my analysis of the interviews will illustrate this process.

Once the interviews were completed and transcribed I began the analysis. The main goal was to understand and articulate the experience of these eight Jews living and interacting in a society that is not Jewish. To do this I needed to become so familiar with their stories that I felt as if I could see the events through the eyes of the participant (Cole & Knowles, 2001). I began by reading and rereading the transcripts of the interviews until all the nuances and information were familiar, until the patterns among the information began to be identified. As Seidman advises, “the researcher must come to the transcripts with an open attitude, seeking what emerges as important and of interest from the text.” (Seidman, 1998, p. 100)
Descriptive Phase.

I did the first reading of the interview transcript while listening to the recording of the interview. In this way mistakes were corrected and I was reminded of all aspects of the interview including the non-verbal communication. I then read the transcript a second time to mark sections that seemed relevant to the research questions and important to the participant. I made notes in the margin of the transcript of ideas and possible interpretations as they came to mind whilst reading the transcript.

A third reading of the interview transcript included identifying the information and quotes to be included in a summary of the interview and a profile of the participant. At this point I wrote a chronological summary of the interview for each participant along with a profile for each participant. The profile was written using the participants’ words as much as possible. These profiles are included in Chapter 5 and are the first layer of working with the data; in other words this is the descriptive layer described by Wolcott (1994). At the same time I recorded my ideas, thoughts, and feelings in a journal.

Writing the profiles allowed me to imagine the mindset of the participant. Based on this experience I identified several key themes for each individual participant that summarized their experience as a Jew in a non-Jewish world. Ultimately these themes were not formally included in the analysis but did serve to inform my understanding of the individual participants. This decision not to include these themes was taken because the emphasis of the analysis was on the participants as a group and to focus too closely on an individual’s unique experience might compromise the confidentiality of the participant.

Each participant received a copy of the interview summary and profile, and were given an opportunity to share feedback with me about its accuracy or any other comments.
they wished to make. Each participant felt that the summary and profile had accurately captured the information shared in the interview.

**First Level of Analysis.**

The purpose of this research and the research questions framing this project are strongly rooted in the balance between individual and group. As articulated in the introduction, the aim was to explore the psychological experience of living as a Jew in a non-Jewish world. Within this broad question are embedded questions regarding when individuals think about their social identity as a Jew and why, how they understand and respond to their experience of this minority status, and what role, if any, context plays in this experience?

Because the role of the group as well as context were important aspects of the goal of this research I decided to focus the analysis on the participants as a group, keeping in mind the individual narratives. Looking at the data as a whole, patterns and connections between pieces of information and participant experiences began to emerge. For each individual participant, interview phrases or sections related to their experience as a Jew were excerpted and put into a list without identifying the participant. These phrases were then clustered according to similar subject matter. The clusters of phrases were then examined according to topic and given a label and listed in order of frequency.

Six clusters rose to the top as referred to by all participants with sufficient frequency to be worthy of consideration. Once defined with select illustrative excerpts these clusters became the overarching themes characterizing the interviews as a whole.

While each theme stands on its own, there is an interconnectedness between them. The themes are: unshakeable loyalty, importance of belonging, expressing Jewishness in their own way, concerns about visibility as Jews, underlying feelings of vulnerability, and
numerous accounts of everyday encounters with prejudice. These group themes are the broad strokes of what it means to be Jewish in a non-Jewish society, in other words, Jewish identity contextualized. The themes are defined and discussed further in Chapter 6.

**Analysis of the Encounters.**

As a result of the identification of the themes it became clear that one theme demanded a closer examination. This was the theme of encounters with everyday prejudice. At this moment an additional layer of analysis took place. It was possible to analyze the data on two levels. First to understand what the experience of being Jewish in a non-Jewish society may be, and second to examine more closely and in a focused way specific moments of encounter between Jew and non-Jew which represent reminders of being a minority and being different. The first are the themes already named. The second is the in-depth analysis of encounters with the non-Jewish world where the focus is “everyday hassles.”

To this end, each participant’s narrative of encounters with non-Jews were copied and put into a separate document. Again as each step working with the transcript was taken, ideas, questions, and curiosities appeared. These were all recorded in a journal for use in the course of the analysis of the material.

Transcripts of these accounts of everyday prejudice were reread to identify contextual references, qualities of the encounters, and perceptions, reactions, and responses to the encounters. Each aspect of the encounter experience was put onto a list without reference to a specific participant. In this way a list of encounters, perceptions, reactions, and named contextual influences were created. As well, various categories of encounters were identified. I decided to restrict the focus to the immediate encounters between the participant and a non-Jew. Based on the breakdown of the encounters with everyday prejudice into the progression
of events it became clear that a model of this experience could be constructed. This led to the model developed in Chapter 7.

**Interpretation of Experiences of Encounters with Everyday Prejudice.**

It is at this point that the social psychological literature becomes part of the consideration of the data and the analysis moves to the level of interpretation. With the psychological literature in mind I developed a model of an encounter with everyday prejudice. Based on the participant narratives, I developed a flow chart of the encounters and found that there was a progression from the individual in their context encountering this moment, perceiving what has happened, reacting to the experience, attempting to make sense of it and then responding to it.

To formalize this unfolding of the experience I began with the life history emphasis on context as an important mediator of experience. Next, the perception of the experience as informed by context in turn influenced the meaning the individual made of the experience. This meaning drove the reaction and response. Framed as a stressful experience, the encounters were more easily explained within the framework of the stress and coping literature.

Chapter 7 describes more fully the pieces of this model. Each step in the encounter was based on the lists of encounters, perceptions, reactions, and responses taken from the participant narratives of their encounters with everyday prejudice. The model articulates the generic process embedded in an encounter with everyday prejudice.

The final piece of the analysis and interpretation was to return to the specific encounters shared by participants and select a number to be compared to the model. This selection of encounters was analyzed using the model for a deeper understanding of the
encounter and to see whether the model was in fact a useful tool in finding an understanding of encounters with everyday prejudice. The result of this piece of analysis is in Chapter 8.
Chapter 5 - The Participants

In the following profiles I introduce the individual participants. The focus of these profiles is their experience living as Jews and the contextual influences on that experience. This includes how they define themselves as Jews and interact with others. The purpose here is to become acquainted with the participants as individuals and to get a sense of the range of Jewish experience, personal histories and current stance on their place as Jews in a non-Jewish world.

Following these introductions I will present common themes from the interviews. After discussion of the themes common to all participants I will focus more specifically on their encounters with difference from the non-Jewish majority.

Bill.

Bill was raised in Toronto and finds being Jewish an experience filled with strong mixed emotions. As a child of Holocaust survivors he feels he has a particular childhood experience and “legacy.” He spoke of his childhood experience in the 1950s being beaten up by the other boys because he was Jewish.

It’s really unbelievable how boys survive at all considering how vicious they are with each other. Being Jewish, and I was smaller than a lot of the kids, I wasn’t that great at sports. I was an easy target. … I have many memories of just walking around, just whatever I was doing on my own and being attacked. You know kids jumping on me, kids just knocking the shit out of me. … they called me “dirty Jew.” … It was shameing, a tremendous amount of shame, and I think I probably hated being Jewish for that very reason, because it left me so vulnerable. I hated the vulnerability. … it confirmed their [his parents’] world view. So there it was. They said this would happen and it did.

Because of their personal histories Bill is of the opinion that his parents were “unable to present the joyfulness of being Jewish.” He also finds himself “unable to feel the joy.”
Growing up his family celebrated Jewish holidays but Bill did not have a Jewish education. In retrospect he feels an emptiness about these Jewish experiences.

His description of himself today is as a cultural or non-observant Jew. In fact, there are few things Bill participates in of a specifically Jewish nature. So while he is clear about being Jewish and strongly loyal to that identity his behaviour reflects a different sentiment. He believes that religion is at the root of many of the world’s problems and “at times I become a kind of rejecting Jew, but I have what they call a Jewish feeling…. that Jewish feeling.”

As an adult Bill spends much of his time in the larger non-Jewish community. “If anything, probably the closest friends that I have are Gentiles.” As a young man he visited Israel and found there, too, a distance from connection to other Jews. “I’ve been to Israel and I actually thought I would feel some kind of connection there, and I really didn’t. If anything I felt like a Gentile in Israel.”

This disconnected experience is balanced with another legacy of the Holocaust. He has a “survivor pride” which he expressed as “the belief that against all odds I survive and thrive and I beat out all the others. I actually am better than the others.” This is consistent with the messages Bill’s parents conveyed that “he was better than everyone else and that on the flip side much less than others.” This “survivor pride” has been a counterpoint to Bill’s childhood experience of feeling vulnerable and helpless as well as the adult belief that there is no protection from anti-Semitism and that another Holocaust can be expected. Another balance is his marriage to a Jew and the Jewish family they have built.
Hannah

Hannah grew up enveloped by a large, Jewishly identified, financially wealthy family. She went to a Jewish day school and participated in community events. In short, her childhood world was one of safety and comfort with a strong Jewish emphasis. As she explained, there was no experience of anything other than what she was. Being Jewish and family were one and the same for her as a child. She did not comment on any messages her parents may have given her regarding the non-Jewish world.

Her first experiences in the non-Jewish world were when she moved away from home to go to university. As a reaction to her insular Jewish upbringing she decided to attend a university with few Jewish students or faculty. This provided her first experience with anti-Semitism and came as a shock. I encountered “an incredible sense of anti-Semitism without even knowing that it was anti-Semitism.” For the most part it took the shape of anti-Semitic stereotypes and slurs.

The shock of this university experience demanded a re-evaluation of her self-definition and her values. Initially Hannah felt inarticulate about Jewish issues and Israel. She met this challenge by setting out to learn more about Jewish issues and be able to speak up about things she found herself caring about. She went from indifference regarding her Jewishness to a place of questioning her Jewish identity and how she wanted to express it. The result for Hannah was a journey that led to a more intentional and personal involvement in Jewish life. This really flowered as she had children and was able to involve them and her husband in this dialogue. She enjoys debate about Judaism and ideas and has her children engage in a dialogue as they make family decisions about their practice of Judaism.
She has come full circle and is now active in the community sending her children to Jewish day school, keeping a kosher home and observing the holidays and Shabbat regularly. She has made her home a place for others to gather and participate in these celebrations. Her pride as a Jew is reflected in her comfort telling others she is Jewish. “My husband would say [I tell others] within around three seconds. ‘Why do you have to tell everyone?’ I weave it into any conversation somehow.” She sees herself as an ambassador of Judaism. In a way this style is her response to the possibility of others’ prejudice. By knowing she is Jewish as soon as they meet they are informed of her identity.

Lyla

Like Bill, Lyla is a child of Holocaust survivors; however, this aspect of her experience was not as clear in her narrative. Rather it lurks in the background, ever present but rarely discussed. She grew up “in a neighbourhood where there were virtually no other Jews.” Her parents were suspicious of new people and saw non-Jews as “them” and not to be trusted.

She attended a Jewish day school and has retained a good Jewish education that she enjoys and makes use of as an adult. Being Jewish is important, “It’s paramount to my being” and she expresses this in many ways – synagogue attendance, ritual observance, raising a Jewish family and speaking Hebrew.

In spite of having a strong Jewish background and active participation in both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities Lyla continues to feel that she does not belong in either environment, that she “straddles both worlds.” Diversity and multiculturalism are important values to her and she makes a point of being open to new experiences. Maintaining her Jewish identity in the ways that would keep her apart from the larger community such as
keeping kosher and wanting her children to marry other Jews are equally important. This creates an ongoing tension for Lyla between the desire to be totally open and accepting of other cultures and the need to maintain some separation in order to keep Judaism distinct and alive. A good example of this struggle was her experience when her son was involved in a serious relationship with a non-Jewish woman.

My son was going with someone who wasn’t Jewish, and I didn’t realize the depth of my despair about it until I was in it. I mean he said to me, “I don’t understand, you brought us up to be accepting of everybody and non-judgmental and everybody is equal,” but I didn’t say to him to, you know, get serious. … I had serious conversations with him and one of the things I said to him was, “It is your choice, and you know ultimately I will learn to accept your choice in her.” But I mean the fact that I had to even say that, was very disturbing to him, because if he brought home a Jewish girl I wouldn’t say to him, “I’ll learn to accept her.”

In this moment Lyla is very aware of these competing values and the quandary they put her in.

Avital

Avital grew up in the Soviet Union where being a Jew was a difficult experience. Strict Soviet policies against the practice of religion meant that Jews were unable to learn about or practice their religion or culture. Institutional anti-Semitism existed everywhere and relationships with non-Jews were often strained and laden with anti-Semitism. Many institutions of higher education and certain occupations were off limits to Jews. People had their nationality stamped on their identity papers so it was a matter of public knowledge. For Jews the nationality on the passport was Jew rather than Russian or Ukrainian. “They would never let you forget who you are” and it would be impossible to hide being Jewish.

She described her father,

My father was a very religious person, but also he understood we are not growing up in a normal society. It’s not normal you know to be Jewish, and
not to be Jewish, [that is to have a Jewish identity and yet not be able to do Jewish things] you know, it’s very very difficult.

The message her parents taught her about being Jewish was clear,

You shouldn’t forget where you came from … And you have to keep your Jewish values in life. You have to grow and think about your education and your children. Education is the most important thing, even more than money. We understood that we were different and we can’t act as if we are like the others. On the other hand we shouldn’t bring attention to the fact that we are different.

While her father cared deeply about Judaism and was a cantor at the synagogue he also showed flexibility regarding participation in non-Jewish Russian holidays. He did not want his daughters to feel too different or too cut off. As an example of this approach Avital described their celebration of January 1st.

Every January 1st we had a vacation from school. There were so many activities for all the children, a celebration, and this tree. So he [my father] made a celebration for us too, because he understood that we would be missing something. We didn’t keep kosher, but until now we do not mix meat and milk and everything. Like he would never allow us to do this [mix meat and milk] and it just stands with me too. You know, I appreciate really that he made this tree thing for us.

After the 6-day war in Israel in 1967 Jews began to apply for exit visas in large numbers. They were refused initially and had to wait for years for their situations to be resolved. These individuals were referred to as refuseniks. This was during the Cold War and Jews were considered a security liability in addition to the rampant anti-Semitism they experienced (Tulchinsky, 2008). Applying for an exit visa to go to Israel became the beginning of ongoing harassment including being fired from work, and then the possibility of being arrested as a “social parasite” for being unemployed. Sometimes they were jailed or sent to Siberia. It often took many years for permission to be granted and they left the Soviet Union with few possessions (Telushkin, 1991).
For Avital and her family it took six years to get permission. She became a *refusenik* and was part of the movement to create groups to support each other and learn about Judaism and Hebrew. Avital referred to this as a difficult time for all of them. They left in 1977 first to Israel and then to Canada. They took with them few possessions and she told the story of not being able to take a girlfriend’s telephone number with her due to security concerns for the friend. She was not able to make contact with this good friend until just a few years ago.

Avital’s choice as an adult to leave the Soviet Union and immigrate to Israel was for her a clear choice based on not belonging in the Soviet Union and needing to be with “her people.” It was however a difficult choice to follow through based on the risks encountered waiting for permission to leave and the enormous changes that came with adjustment to life in another political system.

Given the lack of Jewish experiences or education as a child in the Soviet Union, it is understandable that Avital has difficulty explaining what being Jewish means to her and finding a way to concretize it in her life. The themes of “search for knowledge” and “belonging” have had a central place in her life. After 25 years in Toronto she feels that she still searches for her way to be Jewish in her current community.

**Martin**

Martin is the youngest participant and is in his mid thirties. He is not married and his current girlfriend is not Jewish. He himself was not given a Jewish education though he became fascinated with Jewish *Kabbalah* [mysticism] while he was in high school and has more recently taken some courses in Jewish *Kabbalah* and in Judaism. His knowledge of Judaism, however, remains sparse. Most of his Jewish experiences come from holiday celebrations as a child with his grandparents with whom he was very close. They had a
strong influence on him. These are happy memories and the motivation for wanting to maintain a connection to Judaism in his present life.

All of the High Holy days, they would put together parties and celebrate. In that way I would always be a part of the culture. … Passover, Hanukah. But not much was ever done in my home. [His parents never did any Jewish rituals at home.] … it's only through that experience [with his grandparents] that I got to learn about Judaism and celebrate it.

His parents divorced when he was young and Martin stayed with his mother. She had strong negative feelings regarding her Jewishness. As a result she did not give her children any Jewish experiences. She did however identify as a Jew and supported the close family experiences with her parents at Jewish holidays.

The “negative messages” she communicated about being Jewish are well described by an example Martin shared. When Martin moved out on his own and began to celebrate some Jewish holidays such as Hanukkah his mother gave him a menorah (candelabra).

She said, “Don't ever keep it [the menorah] in your window. You don't want anybody ever to know you're Jewish, because of the anti-Semitism. Take care of yourself first. If you need to hide your religion and your faith, do so.”

Ironically, Martin does not feel anxiety about being Jewish and being known as a Jew to others. This is in contrast to the other participants. He feels that this may be because he doesn’t “look Jewish.” He has light brown hair and blue eyes.

Unless I say that I'm Jewish, people 100 percent of the time will regard me as being Catholic or Christian or a non-Jew, simply because of my appearance. … So I never really felt threatened.

In describing himself as a Jew Martin found it difficult. His response sums up his connection to his Jewishness.

That’s hard for me to do because I’m not practicing. I see myself as being more Canadian than Jewish, and I certainly don't go out of my way to celebrate my religion, you know other than if I’m invited to a dinner or some sort of festivity. Non-practicing, if you needed a term.
The other experience Martin refers to often is that of being stigmatized by other Jews. He has been criticized by some Jews and accused of not being Jewish because he does not practice even though the determination of Jewishness is not based on religious practice. This leaves him feeling marginalized.

There is a strong theme of ambivalence running through Martin’s narrative. He wants to maintain a connection to his roots as a Jew through holidays and the occasional course but has a non-Jewish girlfriend and plays down his Jewish identity.

**Norman**

Norman was raised in “a very assimilated household.” He describes his parents as “really old communists. … I was weaned on bacon and milk, … but the values instilled in me and the cultural piece of it was very very Jewish.” In spite of his parents’ feelings about religion Norman did have a *bar mitzvah* and the Jewish education necessary for that event. With regard to the larger world Norman’s parents’ attitude was “certainly that we should interact with the broader, larger world. … It was an attitude of integration.” To this end his parents sent him and his brother to a summer camp with “old school WASPs” and no other Jews. They also went to great lengths to make sure Norman and his siblings became bilingual.

In contrast with his parents’ approach to their Jewish identity, Norman now describes himself as a fairly observant liberal Jew which he defines as keeping *kosher* [Jewish dietary laws], sending his children to Jewish day schools, membership in a synagogue and playing an active role in the synagogue by participating on committees and acting as a *parnass* [lay leader] at services. He has a very strong connection to Israel and most of his friends are Jewish.
The shift in Norman’s life came when he went away to a university with few Jews. He became friends with a number of other Jewish students and they celebrated Shabbat and holidays together. This became a turning point for him. A trip to Israel at that time in his life also helped him refine his thinking about how he wanted to identify as a Jew. Over time his connections to a religious expression of his Jewishness developed.

Norman’s work life has always been in the broader diverse community and he has from time to time been one of few Jews in his workplace. Dealing with non-Jews has never been an issue for him. However the war with Lebanon in the summer of 2006 became another turning point for him.

The war this summer [2006] was, I would say for me, the most difficult experienced yet only because I have been politically, I would say an extreme and at times naïve dove on this whole issue. … Historically I have been very against the settlements and frankly resentful of New York Jews who lived there for eight months and all of a sudden think that they own the right to take homes away from Arabs who have been there for generations. … But what the summer did for me, is it made me realize that, you know what, it doesn’t matter what we do, … we just are hated for our mere existence, and that it is naïve to think otherwise. I still think politically we have to do some practical things, but I do think it was for me a final realization that nothing has changed, you know, we may as well be back in ‘39 or ‘42, … like the world doesn’t care.

As an adult Norman has become more clear and assertive in his opinions regarding his Jewishness.

**Rebecca**

Rebecca grew up as an only child in a house shared with her parents and maternal grandparents. This helped them deal with ups and downs in their finances. They were working class and both parents and her grandfather worked. Her grandparents had immigrated to Canada before the Second World War and Rebecca spent a lot of time with her grandmother while the others were at work. Her grandmother had lost many relatives in the
Holocaust and these times alone together were when her grandmother spoke of her sadness and loss.

Rebecca had a strong sense of being from “the other side of the tracks.” She remembers her childhood as having been difficult,

It was really really really hard for a number of reasons. … We moved [in] with my grandparents, and we were in North Toronto in a very very WASPy area, and we had overt anti-Semitic neighbours. [My background] was an issue in the school that I went to at the time, though there were a few Jewish kids.

Growing up Rebecca had a mixed relationship with her Jewishness. Her mother worked in an industry that did not hire Jews and managed this by keeping her Jewish identity hidden. The message Rebecca got from her mother was that fitting into the majority culture is crucial and the means to this end was to not be obvious or “visible.” Rebecca feels this left her with an uncomfortable feeling about her own Jewishness.

Her father on the other hand said it was a hostile world and you cannot trust anyone so do not try to fit in. Two childhood experiences are illustrative of her father’s stance. She was once invited to a children’s birthday party at the Granite Club and was not allowed to attend because the Granite Club did not allow Jews as members. The other situation was not being allowed to join Brownies because it met in a church basement. So her childhood was filled with difficult messages about being Jewish and a strong sense of not fitting in.

While her parents were not observant and she did not have a Jewish education, her grandparents kept kosher and observed the holidays. Rebecca has fond memories of those occasions. Today she does not celebrate many Jewish rituals but feels her Jewishness deeply and has been exploring ways to return to this part of herself. This journey to find herself as a Jew began when she was a young woman and included some time interested in Buddhism.
Her search for a community of like-minded Jews took her to New York City where she pursued art focused on the Jewish experience and took her Hebrew name Rebecca as opposed to the anglicized one of her childhood. New York did not turn out to be all she hoped for. “I still felt very outside of the Jewish community, so it’s an odd feeling, a home not anywhere and I think that was the influence of how I grew up, and that was a hard place to be.”

While in New York she married an African-American man who is not Jewish. They have children but are no longer married. In thinking about the effect her anxieties about being Jewish has had on her, she identified a paranoia in close relationships, almost expecting the time to come when the other person will have an argument or become anti-Semitic. Her relationship with her ex-husband was one example of this. She described very well the anxiety of being in a relationship with someone who isn’t Jewish, and the inside fear, like the voice in the back of your head, is saying you know, there may come a time when this person is not going to understand what it is to be Jewish, or say something that will make me feel uncomfortable or threatened or whatever.

Rebecca thinks these concerns are directly linked to the messages and experiences she had with her parents.

How would she define herself as a Jew? Rebecca saw it as a personality trait, as a way of being in the world and questioning the status quo.

I think [my view of my Jewishness has] shifted over the years. I think I used to constantly be aware of being Jewish. It was like an anxiety almost of, you know, as if being gay, or, you know, knowing this homophobia, like always kind of wondering like am I going to be accepted, am I not going to be accepted, is somebody going to be anti-Semitic, are they not going to be anti-Semitic, are they going to understand, are they not going to understand kind of.

She articulates a concern common to other participants.
Susan grew up in a family that identified as Jews but did not participate in Jewish activities beyond family get-togethers. In a number of ways they had rejected Judaism. Her mother rejected her own Orthodox upbringing. Her father was already secular.

We did not belong to our synagogue, my father worked on Yom Kippur [Day of Atonement], there were a few Seders [Passover dinner] that we’d go to at relatives’ houses, but I don’t remember very many of them. I think we may have had one or two at our house over the years, but again I can’t really recall. There was very little emphasis on living Jewishly, other than having bagels and all the foods related to being a Jew, but as far as understanding what it meant or the language, the rules, the history, none of those things were conveyed. And for the most part the friends that I had initially in elementary school, it was so predominately Jewish that it was inevitable that I’d be with Jewish kids, but when I was getting into high school when there was a real mixture of populations, my tendency was to have a lot of non-Jewish friends.

Susan described her mother’s attitude being that it was better not to be Jewish or at least Jewish on the outside, as a protection from anti-Semitism. The Holocaust was not far from her parents’ and their friends’ consciousness.

It’s [the Holocaust] certainly contributed to my image of myself. My mother was always complimented about having three daughters who did not look Jewish, and that was a source of pride. Also I think based on the fact that this was in the early ‘50s, the fact that you were not easily identifiable was your savings. That was your safety net, that if you had been in Europe and you had been identified easily, then you would have ended up in a concentration camp.

As a young adult Susan chose to live in remote parts of Canada where she would often be the only Jew. At the time she was comfortable being the only Jew in these locations. She dated non-Jewish men and could not remember experiencing specific anti-Semitic incidents. She did always feel different, like an outsider. This feeling of being an outsider was true growing up in her large Jewish community as well as when she lived in small towns.

When she moved to Toronto with a sizable Jewish population she realized how comfortable it felt to be among Jews again. This seems to have been a turning point in her
sense of herself as a Jew. “I have had the experience of living in towns or places where I was one of three or four Jews, and I never want to have that experience again.” Over time she has come to value many of the things being Jewish means such as direct communication, humour, a love of family and education.

Susan has given thought to being Jewish and a minority in the last few years. More recent terrorist and anti-Semitic events have sharpened her awareness of her Jewish identity as has raising a Jewish child. These more recent events such as 9/11 and the murder of Daniel Pearl have brought home the reality of anti-Semitism and its proximity to her life. She identified that she had denied the existence of anti-Semitism. The desire to not know about anti-Semitism is a potent way of managing life as a minority for a number of participants.

Reflecting on the Daniel Pearl event Susan commented that here was a liberal Jew who was very inclusive and just doing his job as a reporter for the Wall Street Journal. He was kidnapped on his way to interview a Muslim fundamentalist leader in Pakistan in 2002. News of his murder was delivered by videotape showing him reading a statement emphasizing his Jewish American identity and then being beheaded in front of the camera ("Daniel Pearl," "U.S. journalist Daniel Pearl is dead, officials confirm," 2002). This drove home the point for her “that there are people out there that will hate me because I am Jewish” and only because of that fact.
Chapter 6 - Thematic Analysis

In the previous chapter I described each participant’s unique narrative of experience as a Jew living in a non-Jewish society. It was an opportunity to hear individual voices telling his or her life story. In this chapter I take the participants’ information and present the themes common to all in order to understand the experience of Jewishness from a broader perspective.

It is noteworthy that while participants as a group were quite diverse with respect to their personal histories and relationships to their Jewishness, there were strong commonalities in their experience as a minority. It seems that for these Jews the differences among them are outweighed by the similarity of the contextual influences within which they have developed their understanding of themselves as Jews and their present day experiences. It is these commonalities that form the basis for the thematic analysis of this chapter. Six topics or themes were present in the interviews of all participants with sufficient frequency to consider them important to the experience of Jewishness. I describe them as:

*INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE*
**Figure 2 - OVERARCHING THEMES FOR PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWS AS A GROUP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unshakeable Loyalty</td>
<td>An unshakeable loyalty to his or her Jewish identity regardless of personal practice or specifically Jewish behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>Comments regarding the importance of a sense of belonging to a group, in particular a sense of belonging to the Jewish group. Some participants spoke of not belonging to any group and finding this problematic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized</td>
<td>Having engaged in a process to find a way of being Jewish in terms that are meaningful to them. This may have included study, experimentation with different lifestyles, or rebellion against parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewishness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility</td>
<td>Expressed concerns about their visibility as Jews, whether they think they are visible or not, including comments about a “Jewish look.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerability</td>
<td>Expressions of an underlying feeling of vulnerability or concern about their own and their family’s safety. This included references to anti-Semitism and the Holocaust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyday Prejudice</td>
<td>Numerous accounts of encounters with everyday reminders of their difference from the majority culture because they are Jews.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Counting the frequency of reference to a theme for the purpose of analysis does not fit with a qualitative epistemology. For this reason I have not counted these references and inserted them in the table above. The themes were chosen because every participant referred to each during the course of his or her interview. In defining themselves as Jews each participant made some comment on their inability to walk away from this part of their identity. The prominence of the sixth theme is detailed further in chapter 7 and 8.

Of the remaining four themes an informal judgment of the frequency of remarks related to the themes show a prominence of the themes of belonging and vulnerability. While there appears to be a logical interrelationship amongst the themes, this group of participants showed a concern about their place in the world defined as belonging or a search for belonging, along with an ongoing concern about vulnerability made concrete in discussions of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust.

At its core these themes are about social relationship. Each theme stands alone and is simultaneously inter-related with the others. To be visible is to be more vulnerable. Vulnerability triggers concerns about belonging. Belonging raises the question of what they belong to. Experiencing or hearing about encounters with everyday prejudice or anti-Semitism prompts concern about vulnerability. The themes expressed by the participants as a group are also a reflection of the social needs identified by Fiske (2004) and described in an earlier chapter. I will discuss their relevance at the end of this chapter after describing the themes.

**Unshakeable Loyalty**

In spite of the diversity among participants regarding affect towards the Jewish people, participation in Jewish activities or connection to Judaism, all the participants
expressed a deep connection to Judaism and being Jewish in a way that reflected it as a core part of their identity. Some had difficulty articulating how they defined themselves as a Jew. Others were quite clear about who they were as Jews. Regardless of these differences it was notable that every one of them spoke of this loyalty. The following quotes illustrate this diversity and strength of connection.

I’m really more of a, I guess a cultural Jew than I am a religious Jew. Meaning that I have a sense of being Jewish and coming from a Jewish background, but I don’t attend shul [synagogue], I’m not sure if God exists, and I sometimes think that the cause of most of the major problems in this world are because of religiosity. So if anything at times I become a kind of rejecting Jew, but I have what they call a Jewish feeling…. that Jewish feeling.  

Bill

Being Jewish is important; it’s paramount to my being. I express this in many ways – synagogue attendance, ritual observance, raising a Jewish family and speaking Hebrew.  

Lyla

They [the Soviets] would never let you forget who you are and it was impossible to hide being Jewish. … When the first opportunity was there, we decided to leave because we knew that we didn’t belong there. We knew that our place was with the Jewish people.  

Avital

I am a fairly observant liberal Jew … I'm theologically liberal, but I think relative to the population at large I'm probably more observant and do more in terms of my everyday life, than do most liberal Jews.  

Norman

It’s a personality trait. … I feel like there’s something about the way I am in the world that’s particularly Jewish. … It’s always seemed like something that got passed on to me through my family that just had to do with … feeling this love of questioning.  

Rebecca

I have come to value many of the things being Jewish means such as … a directness and openness, a humour, a love of food, a love of family, a love of education, you know we treat our kids for the most part really well.  

Susan

Irrespective of their self-definition of Jewishness each participant expressed an unswerving belief that being Jewish is an integral part of who they are and as such,
unchangeable. Participant comments such as the following were typical expressions of this deep-seated loyalty to their Jewishness.

“I never questioned it.”

“It’s part of who I am.”

“I can’t walk away from it.”

“It’s a part of our lives and we can’t leave it [being Jewish]. It’s a part of my identity.”

Some participants went through a period of questioning their connection to being Jewish. Typically this was during adolescence or young adulthood, a time of questioning identity and allegiances (Erikson, 1968). Ultimately, severing this identity and connection to the community in a broad sense was a step they could not take and all of them came to a commitment to being Jewish. Part of this commitment was an acknowledgement that they would never be able to stop being Jewish or give up their connection to the Jewish people, in other words, an internal unshakeable commitment to being Jewish. The theme of Jewishness on their own terms is related to this theme and is a reflection of the questioning period of their lives.

An unshakeable commitment to being Jewish is significant because identifying oneself as a Jew is completely voluntary. The community may feel that someone born Jewish remains Jewish but an individual who decides to break that connection may simply walk away from it. In fact one of the unique qualities of North American Jewry is this voluntary aspect of group membership (Halpern, 1974). This loyalty sets the stage for the remaining themes.

Embedded in the theme of unshakeable loyalty is the belief that the history of Jews as a group is significant and that it is also extremely important for the Jews as a people, and
their children in particular, to continue into the future. For Norman this was expressed as living in a Jewish neighbourhood and sending his children to a Jewish Day school. Lyla confronted this when one child was dating a non-Jew.

I didn’t realize the depth of my despair about it [the potential intermarriage] until I was in it. … He said to me, “I don’t understand. You brought us up to be accepting of everybody and non-judgmental and everybody is equal.” but I didn’t say to him to, “Get serious.” I mean it was so painful for me that I couldn’t talk about it.

The topic of intermarriage is currently a hot topic in the Jewish community. The rabbinical leadership sees it as a threat against the continued existence of Judaism and the Jewish community. This is echoed by the lay leadership of the community who fund a number of programs aimed at encouraging young adults to remain Jewish and marry other Jews.

For Hannah this commitment means having Judaism infuse the daily life of her family. Bill was pleased to have his child find the joy that he was unable to find in Judaism. “There’s a joy around traditions and all the rest of it, and I don’t experience that. It’s been nice to do some of those things for Linda.” Avital emphasized that maintaining Jewishness was something her father had prioritized and she had with her child.

Martin clearly voiced his loyalty when missionaries came to his door. “I outright said you can come in and we can talk but you have to know I'm Jewish, and I'm proud of it and you're not going to convert me.” Avital’s unquestioning belief in the centrality of her Jewish identity became the basis upon which she decided to leave the country of her birth. “It’s a part of our lives and we can’t leave it [being Jewish]. It’s a part of my identity. … We knew that our place was with the Jewish people.”
Those who are children of Holocaust survivors have an extra intensity to this loyalty. Part of their intensity of connection to Jewishness was on their parents’ behalf. Bill as a child of survivors is an example of someone who has been a recipient of clear anti-Semitism and for whom being Jewish has often been a very negative experience. He expressed this in his inability to feel the “joy in Judaism.” Yet he would not walk away from his Jewishness. His parents’ experience as Holocaust survivors is part of his worldview as he says that to leave Judaism would be to give in. “No I’ve never been tempted by it because it would be giving in. … It would suggest that there is something wrong with me and that I need to get rid of it.” His “survivor pride” is key to understanding his unshakeable connection to being a Jew.

Emil Fackenheim, an important Jewish philosopher of the 20th century and himself a survivor of the Holocaust, coined the phrase “Hitler’s posthumous victory” to refer to the obligation of the Jewish community in a post Holocaust world to make sure that the Jewish people survive (Fackenheim, 1994). To disappear as a people and to have the size of the community continue to shrink would be to allow Hitler this victory since Hitler’s intention was to get rid of all the Jews. When Bill refers to his parents’ legacy and the other participants speak of a difficult to articulate need to stay Jewish, this attitude may be what they are referring to.

Another perspective on this unshakeable loyalty comes from the social psychological literature. The rejection-identification model (Branscombe, et al., 1999) describes the phenomenon of stigmatized individuals shifting the group with which they do social comparison. The research initially showed that stigmatized or minority individuals tended to have lower self esteem and other mental problems in higher number than members of the dominant group (Crocker & Major, 1989). It was found that when they shifted their focus of
comparison to their own group, or valued domains where their group typically succeeded this effect disappeared suggesting that self-esteem could be influenced by where individuals situated themselves and with whom they compared their achievements (Branscombe, et al., 1999).

By situating themselves solidly within the Jewish community in terms of reference group and loyalty these participants were acting in a way that would support their self esteem and value their attributes. They would also have a shared understanding and level of trust with others similar to themselves (Fiske, 2004). They also valued the domains where Jews typically are successful such as intellectual pursuits.

For these participants loyalty to their minority group is high. In other words their stigma consciousness is high, which likely means that their awareness of others’ judgment based on their membership in the Jewish group is also high (Pinel 1999). They may not agree with generally held stereotypes about Jews but they have a high expectation of these stereotypes providing the basis upon which they will be judged.

One of the stresses of contemporary life for Jews is the balance between loyalty to their minority group and the desire to belong and participate in the dominant culture. Belonging to the ingroup is a pervasive desire (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Suedfeld & Schaller, 2002). Examination of the participants’ self-defined as Jews suggests that they are using a coping technique identified by Smart and Wegner (2000) as stigma redefinition. Each participant defined himself or herself in a unique way. This redefinition suggests an adjustment to their Jewishness making it meaningful for them and simultaneously allowing them to see themselves as participants in the dominant culture.
Belonging

Fitting in or belonging to a social group is often described as a basic human need. Fiske includes it as a core social goal as well as describing it as the underpinning for the other social goals she identifies (Fiske, 2004). Attachment theory also emphasizes the importance of a sense of belonging to well-being. Having a social group to belong to provides a place that gives a sense of safety, somewhere to be understood without having to translate or explain oneself, or be watchful of one’s behaviour. In this way the theme of belonging is both a key social need and closely connected to the other themes participants articulated.

Most of the participants discussed belonging as a feeling of comfort with other Jews, a sense that other Jews would know what they were feeling and thinking. Norman summed it up,

It has to do with the comfort level. I think it has to do with an understanding. My take is that there is a shared understanding that happens at an almost unconscious level. And that because it happens really almost at an unconscious level it's not so much an awareness, but there is a sense of being, feeling understood, or a similarity of experience at some level that provides a different sense of comfort, and trust I guess.

It feels like there’s a comfort in being able to say certain things or disclose certain things, there’s a safety in being in a Jewish neighbourhood. So I can say or do or be various things Jewish without concern or worry.

Norman’s comments succinctly show the interconnectedness of Fiske’s (2004) social goals. Here he comments not only on belonging but the intertwining of belonging with shared understanding, control over events, self-esteem, and trust.

This general sense of belonging to the group along with feelings of comfort, trust and safety was more salient for some participants during periods of change or stress. Attachment theory specifically indicates that times of stress will trigger the need to be with people who
give one a sense of security (Bowlby, 1988). At those times some participants sought the company of other Jews.

Particular examples were told about situations while traveling or being away from home. When Hannah and Norman went away from home to school they found their new surroundings with few Jews sparked a desire to be with other Jews. These examples were situations where they found themselves “solo.” The literature shows that this is a trigger for increased awareness of stigma and prejudice (L. L. Cohen & Swim, 1995; Inzlicht & Good, 2006).

I just remember feeling very very different from the rest of the population, and not being interested in doing a lot of the activities that they would typically do. Hannah

[There were] very few Jews at that school and at that point [I] became much more aware of being different, and I also ended up becoming good friends … [with] two women from Glace Bay, Nova Scotia, who were Jewish, who were also living in Ottawa, who had grown up in much more traditional homes than I did, and who had Shabbat dinners every Friday. That's actually the point at which I started becoming more interested in some kind of traditional observation, and at the same time aware of how different that was from the rest of the environment that we were in. Norman

Sometimes this comfort was sought out specifically in new or unsafe situations. For example, Hannah’s comments when she was traveling in France and ran into trouble with the authorities:

It was that experience of being in a place that you really couldn't be protected, and then having a Jew walk in, who recognized you as a Jew, and was able to say you're going to be safe now, it's okay. That was an amazing experience.

Or Martin’s comments when he lived abroad for a year:

When I was [overseas], the whole culture and the whole religion [Judaism] strongly drew me in. I was reading a lot about Judaism, I was practicing more, and all my friends, other than the [Japanese] acquaintances, all of them were Jewish.
While all participants discussed having a sense of belonging, some participants found the question of belonging was something with which they struggled. Having a place to belong felt important, but finding that place was elusive. Their comments reflected this tension. Lyla was one who expressed this. Concerns around belonging have been a lifelong companion for Lyla. Her first nine years of schooling were in a Jewish day school. These were “very formative years.” At the time she lived in a neighbourhood where there were virtually no other Jews. … And then I went to school from I guess grade 5 on, alone on the bus, two buses, from this Gentile neighbourhood to this all-Jewish school. So I was a bit of an anomaly. And all my friends at school, obviously were Jewish; nobody lived near me. So I had really both worlds. I was straddling both worlds. … I felt on the outside of both worlds.

One example she shared expresses her experience of not fitting in as a child:

I went to this dancing school, and there was only one other Jewish person there. And I was just – I felt different. I went there from the time I was three or four, to the time I was about thirteen. So I spent a lot of years there on Saturdays. I don’t know if I was stigmatized but I always had this heightened awareness that I wasn’t like them and they weren’t like me, and they certainly, their mothers who used to bring them certainly, were not like mine.

Her description of living in a Jewish neighbourhood as an adult is in stark contrast to her feelings of being different:

It was kind of nice. You know I always sort of felt a little proud when it would be Rosh Hashanah or Pesach and I’d look out on the street and there would be cars and cars and cars, you know people coming for dinner. I like that feeling. It’s just a private feeling.

It conveys the sentiment that when she belongs it is comforting and special for her.

Bill was another participant who struggled with finding a place to belong. His description of a trip to Israel as a young man summarizes his expectation of fitting into Israeli society and the disappointment of feeling like a Gentile or outsider there. Before his trip to
Israel he felt like an outsider in Canada because he was Jewish, and then in a country with a strong Jewish identity he still felt like an outsider.

I’ve been to Israel and I actually thought I would feel some kind of connection there, and I really didn’t. If anything I felt like a Gentile in Israel. It was a great experience and I had a wonderful time, but I have no great desire to rush back. … I made some great friends but they were non-Israeli friends. … I felt like an outsider. It was funny because I had always felt like an outsider here, and I think part of my reasoning for going there was to see what it would be like there, and that I would feel different but I didn’t.

So even though finding a sense of belonging was not successful he was still drawn to it.

Individualized Jewishness

All participants had a period in their life when they re-evaluated what being Jewish meant to them and how they wanted to express it. For most of them this coincided with young adulthood, a period generally known for its questioning of societal rules and establishment of one’s adult identity (Erikson, 1968). Some participants specifically named this as a turning point in their life. It involved questioning the way their parents identified as Jews and how they would include being Jewish in their life.

Each had his or her unique resolution to this questioning. For a number of them it evolved into a stronger attachment and expression of their Jewish identity based on making Judaism more meaningful to them. They decided they wanted to do it differently than their parents had. They chose the aspects of being Jewish that were meaningful to them.

University, especially going away from home, was the catalyst for this period of questioning. Hannah described her shift from Jewish being “everything good and beautiful” to pulling away.

[As an adolescent] I became more alienated from my Judaism. I didn't like the education. … It didn't resonate with me in any way. I was actually uncomfortable with it. … I didn't love it, and I don't think it taught me in any sense a love of Judaism, but it gave me some great friends. I think that going
to *shul* was something we did in a bored sort of way. We waited to get finished with so we could go to my grandmother's for lunch. But also, the minute I realized that I could say no and my father wouldn't be hurt, I said no.

University, where there were few Jews, became a life changing experience for Hannah, “a turning point.” It made her stop and think about things that she had taken for granted, “All of a sudden I became other and I think the experience of other allowed me to define and appreciate and kind of figure out my Judaism.”

What I encountered was an incredible sense of anti-Semitism without even knowing that it was anti-Semitism. … All of a sudden I became in a position where I was the Jew, I was defending Judaism, I was explaining Judaism. … There was one time I'll never forget. We were in some history course, and somehow Israel came up, and the whole class started saying you know Begin was a terrorist and Israel was created based on terrorism and I tried very weakly to defend Israel's position. I didn't have the knowledge to defend it, and I felt attacked. … I never had to define or explain the right for Israel to exist, …

[Later] I spent seven months in Israel, where I took a semester at Tel Aviv University, and I just took courses that interested me. Whether it was the politics of the Middle East, or the history of Israel, or the – but just things I wanted to learn. So that in the future if I want a debate I was better equipped to debate, that I really knew more information.

Today Hannah has a renewed interest in her Jewishness based on an active engagement and dialogue with it.

It’s very much how I define myself. … we create spaces in our house where we live that are Jewish. We follow the holidays. We have Shabbat every Friday night. We go to shul, … I think another way that we define our Judaism is that the kids see me actively participate at adult education classes, … [Even with] decisions around Judaism … we were talking about the Bar Mitzvah, and you know being very conscious to make a process rather than an event, and taking it very seriously. … Most of our friends are Jewish, but very committed Jews who struggle with their Judaism and where they are on the spectrum.

Norman had a similar turning point in university:

That’s actually the point at which I started becoming more interested in some kind of traditional observation, and at the same time aware of how different
that was from the rest of the environment that we were in. … I have to say that the Ottawa experience [at university] was the beginning of my Jewish identity. He described his upbringing as having little that was Jewish in a religious sense. While the values and culture instilled in him were Jewish his family also strove to assimilate. He took this cultural connection to Judaism and shaped it into a more religiously active adult Jewish life. The turning point was befriending other more religiously observant Jews and an introduction to some observances. From this he evolved to an adult life active in a synagogue, sending his children to a Jewish day school and observing kashrut and Jewish holidays.

Rebecca became actively engaged in her redefinition of her Jewishness. Her early experiences were characterized by her parents’ and grandparents’ struggles with finances and extreme mixed feelings about their own Jewishness. She described this as being painful and restrictive for her.

So I had this split because the Jews in my family who were kind of the accepted ones were the ones who treated us [her nuclear family] really badly. So I went looking for a place that I could be as Jewish as I wanted to be and own my Jewishness, … I became very Jewish identified, I went to New York because I thought that somehow I would find myself in New York. I’d find other Jews like myself in New York. … My art work was about Jewish experience, and when I moved to New York in my 20’s I took my name Rebecca [her Hebrew name], so I wasn’t trying to hide that I was Jewish. Like I was almost in my mother’s face for all of her fears and said, no I’m going to own it and I’m as Jewish as I am and that’s who I am.

In Rebecca’s case her turning point not only included a re-evaluation but a name change symbolizing that turning point.

Similar accounts can be given for most of the participants. Beginning with dissatisfaction with their experience of Jewishness as children leading to a moment or period in young adulthood when they re-evaluate and then embark on a path of Jewishness more
accurately expressing their needs and situation in life. Diller’s (1980) exploration of Jewish identity in twentysomething individuals highlights a similar process of evaluation and redefinition.

This theme expresses the coming together of a normal developmental task with the added layer of minority group membership and stigma. While participants were defining themselves they were also dealing with awareness of their stigma heightened by being “solo” and encounters with everyday prejudice. Their social goals come into play as well, motivating them to seek out places to belong, ways to enhance their self-esteem and share understanding with others. By taking control over their life choices they are active in making the stigma work for them. They are redefining Jewishness to fit into the context within which they live, which was different from their parents’ circumstances.

This can be seen as a constructive coping strategy. Negative experiences in relation to their Jewishness were a catalyst for a redefinition of their relationship with that identity. Almost as if to say, “If I’m going to be the target of prejudice because I’m Jewish I’m going to make sure it is a Jewishness which has meaning to me, which is worth the everyday prejudice.”

**Visibility**

The notion of Jewishness being visible or the existence of a “Jewish look” is quite controversial. Hidden within it is the assumption of Jewishness as a race. As discussed earlier Jewishness is not a racial category since Jews come in many different colours and one can become a Jew even if not born a Jew. Stereotypes of a “Jewish look” are a social construction (Gilman, 1991) and highly inaccurate in identifying who is Jewish. This “look” is typically defined as a swarthy complexion, big nose, a cunning look and certain personality traits.
Stereotypes are one way that dominant in-groups deal with a stigmatized out-group. Anti-Semitic stereotypes have been around for centuries. They turn a suspicion or envy of Jews as “foreign” and a competitive threat into a set of prejudiced beliefs. These can then be used as the rationale for discrimination and oppression.

The controversy about a “Jewish look” stems from historic anti-Semitic depictions of Jews in Europe that assume a racial characterization and found their most dangerous expression by the Nazis. The ultimate step in making Jews visible was the Nazi policy forcing Jews to wear a yellow “Jewish” star during the Second World War. Memories of this anti-Semitism with horrible consequences are well known by Jews and explain why the question of visibility is an emotionally charged subject for Jews. For example, most Jews do not feel comfortable marking themselves as Jews the way Christians would by wearing a cross or crucifix (Schlosser, 2006).

Whether a stigma or devalued social identity is concealable is an important factor in an individual’s experience (Crocker, et al., 1998; Quinn, 2006; Swim, et al., 1998). Members of invisible or concealable minorities can choose whether to reveal their identity or “pass.” This choice itself can have its stresses but on the whole is an experience quite different from those whose identity as members of a stigmatized group is visible and therefore not concealable. If identity can be hidden a choice must be made as to when and how to reveal it along with the stress of keeping it hidden (Smart & Wegner, 1999). It becomes something that can be manipulated to one’s advantage. The consequences of being part of a group that is not liked may be avoided and one can become privy to information that may not be shared if one’s identity were known (Smart & Wegner, 2000).
While all participants referred to the topic of visibility there were differences in opinion as to whether Jewishness was visible and what they were referring to as visibility. The first set of references to visibility were not to clothing or jewelry that could be worn as a sign of Jewishness but rather the concept of a “Jewish look” or particular physical characteristics.

Susan and Bill’s comments illustrate a perspective on a “Jewish look.” Susan’s comments come from a place of not fitting the stereotypic look and reflect an awareness of the historical consequences of visibility.

My mother was always complimented about having three daughters who did not look Jewish. That was a source of pride, I think, based on the fact that this was in the early ‘50s [and] the fact that you were not easily identifiable was your savings. That was your safety net. If you had been in Europe and you had been identified easily, then you would have ended up in a concentration camp.

Bill, however, thinks that he does “look Jewish” and finds this visibility a source of discomfort:

[Clients] will say, “You don’t celebrate Christmas do you?” … I never brought it up and there was no discussion in our relationship that I don’t celebrate Christmas, but it just comes up. … Well probably under the irritation it’s a discomfort, it probably just leads to a fear, a fear of being found out, that here I am trying to pass [as a non-Jew] and I’m found out again, that they always know.

So being able to pass feels safe and being identified as Jewish by others without control carries a sense of fear or vulnerability. Both Susan and Bill refer to visibility as a physical characteristic that is unchangeable and has unspoken references to negative consequences and the Holocaust.

Another aspect of visibility is one where there is choice, where the individual chooses to be visible as a Jew or not. Here the notion of “passing” or keeping one’s Jewishness
hidden is discussed. Some participants shared conscious efforts to minimize the visibility of their identity as Jews. This was captured very well by the parental advice to “keep a low profile” that is, keep your Jewishness quiet, in order to avoid being a target of anti-Semitism. This is not to say, “Don’t be Jewish” but rather “Keep your Jewishness quiet.” By hiding your identity as a Jew you would not be subject to discrimination because of your Jewishness and hence be safer from anti-Semitism.

The contrast between Rebecca’s parents is a good illustration of the dilemma many Jews felt during the early part of the 20th century and immediate post World War II period. Is one safer or more apt to have success in the non-Jewish world hiding one’s Jewishness or is that a lost cause?

My mother worked in insurance, at a time when insurance companies didn’t hire many Jews. And so my mother had a lot of … stuff about “Be quiet don’t let people know that you’re Jewish.” When I was growing up, … I was being told by my mother fit in and don’t tell anybody, and I was being told by my father that this is a hostile world and that you can’t [fit in, so don’t try].

Rebecca herself spoke of Jewishness as a personality style that enjoyed questioning and debate. It was as if she was saying that having this trait marked you as a Jew. It was something that she was proud of.

This very very upper class WASPy woman said to me, but not in a derogatory, or the way that would make me sick. But she said something to me about, I don’t think you recognize what a Jewish mind you have. Okay like what talk is that – I was quite young at the time, and she said you think like a lawyer. And it was interesting because I didn’t see that a certain kind of pragmatic … reasoning, … questioning way of being, [was so Jewish]. That’s something that feels really Jewish.

Hannah’s approach to the question of visibility is different again. She assumes that her Jewishness is not visible and she takes the initiative to make sure new acquaintances are apprised of this information. In fact it has become a joke with her husband and friends.
My husband would say [I tell people I’m Jewish] within around three seconds. “Why do you have to tell everyone?” I weave it into any conversation somehow; you know whether it's my shul, my kid's school, they go to Hebrew school. Well we can't go it’s shabbos. You know it always ends up there. Probably without realizing it [I want people to know I’m Jewish]. … It's a label I wear, as I wear other labels.

Other ways that Jews would manipulate the visibility of their Jewishness included a range of behaviour such as avoiding wearing clothing or jewelry with Hebrew, wearing a yarmulke, or jewelry with a magen-david. One participant told of his concern for his children’s safety participating in a Jewish rally in support of Israel.

The connection between visibility and safety in the minds of participants is made very clear. The incentive for many participants of keeping their Jewishness less visible is the peace of mind of feeling less vulnerable. Examination of the encounters will explore this way of coping further. Discussion of visibility and how to manage it are ultimately coping strategies.

**Vulnerability**

Feeling vulnerable because of one’s Jewishness was another thread running through many participants’ remarks. At its essence this is a fear of being the target of anti-Semitism and was expressed in many ways reflecting the impact of context on their experiences. The contextual influences have left these participants with an expectation of interactions with non-Jews having the potential for anti-Semitism. In turn this heightened vigilance influences perceptions of encounters. This parallels the findings in the psychological literature of heightened vigilance amongst stigmatized individuals irrespective of the frequency of prejudice (Pinel, 1999).
For some participants the Holocaust and the potential of a repeat were specifically named. This includes references to being hidden by non-Jews and who they think would take that risk for them in the present.

My “legacy” is my parents’ experience and its negative impact on me, my anger, and that the world is a dangerous place. You can’t trust anyone. There is going to be another Holocaust. Bill

You know all his [my brother’s] efforts to assimilate and to hold on to these Waspy friends and everything is really, I guess in this sense maybe I have been paranoid. I think it’s a joke because I think to myself, if the Holocaust were here tomorrow they [the brother’s non-Jewish friends] would not be your friends. These are not people who would empathize and you can pretend to be as assimilated as you want, you're always going to be, in these people's eyes, a Jew. Norman

I have really close friends that are quite, I’ll use the word ignorant, but they are two of my very very very, I mean [they’ve done so much for me when I was in crisis]. … I had no doubt that … if I phoned Bob, and I did, [he would do anything to help me]. At the same time, if I talk Jewish he'll imitate me. He’ll make comments, … and he’s ignorant, but I know that he would hide me [if there was a Holocaust]. I know it in my gut… Rebecca

These comments and the concrete-ness of present day concerns illustrate the power of the trauma of the Holocaust. None of the participants was alive during that time to be personally threatened; however, the characteristics of their comments indicate a vicarious trauma felt by them. The Holocaust, for many, is always there in the background as a strong contextual influence on their perceptions.

In some cases participants had not believed that anti-Semitism existed anymore in North America. They reevaluated this stance as a result of more recent events such as 9/11 and the war between Israel and Lebanon in 2006.

What the summer [of 2006] did for me is it made me realize that, it doesn't matter what we do, we just are hated for our mere existence, and that it is naïve to think otherwise. It was a final realization that nothing has changed, we may as well be back in '39 or '42, but the world doesn't care. … When I would read the Globe and watch the news and see the position and how many
people I thought were disproportionably against what Israel was doing. I thought we only have friends at all because of Israel's political utility, and the Americans would care less either if it didn't serve their political ends, or if we didn't have a crazy Christian Evangelist who was pro-Israel because he wants to eventually come and convert us all. … I think part of me felt that the world was a friendlier place towards Jews than it really is. Norman

These events and others like them are examples of the power of the media as a contextual influence on top of whatever impact the event itself has. Some of the participants had strong feelings of personal vulnerability in response to these contemporary events and their depiction in the media. This vicarious experience of vulnerability highlights the strength of the group experience on individual members even those not personally involved in the events.

Finally some participants expressed feelings of vulnerability that were more immediate and based in personally experienced situations, such as Rebecca’s experience with her ex-husband.

There was always that fear of, could it turn? [Would her husband become anti-Semitic?] Or if it didn’t turn, (pause) I mean some of the things … were him [her husband] having people over that would say things that were either anti-Semitic, or guised anti-Semitic, and then me not knowing how to deal with it because if I challenged it and these were his [her husband’s] work colleagues [what would the consequences be?]. Rebecca

Another example was when Hannah and a friend were traveling in Europe they felt personally threatened:

We were traveling, my friend and I, … and there was a mistaken identity. We got pulled off the train around midnight, coming from Spain into the south of France, … my friend had an Israeli passport and the police started saying in French “fuckin Jews” and “you know you're Jews” and I remember the experience of, they had us in jail for around 24 hours, and I kept on saying in French we want to speak to a Consulate, but there was no Consulate in Perpignan. So what they did is they brought in the British Consulate, who after 24 hours – it was a terrible experience. … When the British Consulate came, I saw that he had a Jewish star on and he looked at our passports and he said, "Fine Goldstein, mah nishmah?" and at that point I burst out crying. …
“I’m sorry this has happened but we’ll get to the bottom of it.” … It was that experience of being in a place that you really couldn't be protected, and then having a Jew walk in, who recognized you as a Jew, and was able to kind of say you're going to be safe now, it's okay, And that was an amazing experience.

Some participants observed that their concerns about safety had become more salient in the last few years. This was tied to world events becoming more immediate through the media and increased post 9/11 tensions. Susan reflected on this. As a young woman she was not concerned about living close to other Jews and had many close relationships including boyfriends who were not Jewish. With marriage and motherhood her Jewishness and the accompanying concerns about vulnerability have become more salient. When there are ambiguous negative experiences with non-Jews, Susan’s Jewishness now becomes one possible explanation.

I don’t remember having these kinds of worries or experiences that much in the past. I think that my anxiety has definitely been heightened. It could be because I live with someone who, … his parents survived the war and there was certainly that element that he grew up with, and it could be that just reading the newspaper and hearing these various stories has contributed to my fear.

Susan is aware that her emotions surrounding these encounters are based on perceptions and assumptions more often than actual personal experience with anti-Semitism.

… It’s becoming more real to me, that there is a tangible anti-Semitism, and I think that for the first fifty years of my life I was very much in denial about it, because I didn’t experience it first hand I figured that well maybe people deserved something, because they had said something, or they were being arrogant, or they were being aggressive, or they were doing something.

… And now when I read certain things or hear about them, you know no matter who you are, no matter what you do, no matter what you – you know Daniel Pearl I think is an excellent example. He was a very liberal Jew who tried to be very inclusive in what he did and who he dealt with, and you know because he was born a Jew, he had his head cut off. So that really made it quite clear that there are people out there that will hate me because I’m
Jewish, and if they should know that I am Jewish, it’s a *fait accompli* that they’ll hate me.

Susan like many others dealt with stories of prejudice using a strategy of denial supported by stereotypes about the target of prejudice. Her growing acknowledgement of the existence of anti-Semitism shows how confusing it is for individuals dealing with the more subtle experience of everyday prejudice.

Bill shared a couple of perspectives on the topic of vulnerability. First is an attempt to understand why Jews would be hated in the first place.

Being Jewish in the society on some level, and the way that I was taught is that there’s a specialness to it, but there’s a danger to that specialness, and people dislike you for that specialness. Because it’s certainly not unusual [for] Jews [to be] very good in their fields, they’re high achievers, … and it tends to create a lot of problems, I think Jews have over achieved because of this need to somehow compensate and deal with being different and they’re not part of – … I think it’s not even a matter of being accepted. It’s a way to cope with it and not really – if you’re really successful you’re not going to be accepted. People may be envious of you but they’re not going to love you for it. But it’s a way to make up for the pain and the insecurity you might feel.

Bill is echoing the stereotypes of Jews as described in Fiske’s (2002) Stereotype Content Model. Because of these qualities, magnified in the eyes of the dominant group, Jews are the recipients of “envious prejudice.” That is, they are seen as competent but lacking in warmth and therefore treated as a threat.

While Jews may be better in Bill’s eyes, the vulnerability and powerlessness is not far from his thoughts. A good example of this is his feelings about comic book heroes.

Superman was a character I loved as a little kid. So I was thrilled that Superman was created by Jews, and also Jews from Toronto. … All the major comic book heroes were created by Jews, Superman, Batman, all of them. And it’s fascinating. It’s really fascinating, and there’s a lot of great articles written about it. It’s Jews dealing with what it’s like to be a Jew and feeling so powerless, and having this need to somehow, to have a hero, create this hero that has the powers.
Through these types of concrete comments Bill expresses his self-perception, that is, “against all odds I survive and thrive and I beat out all the others. I actually am better than the others.” He is also aware of his use of these ideas as coping techniques.

The theme of vulnerability is strongly tied to anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. All of the participants were born after the Second World War. I did not specifically ask about the Holocaust and yet each and every participant referred to it in some way. This indicates that the memory of that trauma is very much a part of middle-aged Jews’ experience and consciousness. When they think of their place in society and their relationships with non-Jews part of that equation is their relationship with this trauma. Visibility increases the concern about vulnerability and belonging to the group expressed as strong loyalty acts as a positive counterforce to these fears. There is also enormous pressure to become part of the dominant culture (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Gilman, 1986; Suedfeld & Schaller, 2002). The cost of not joining and retaining one’s distinctiveness is a feeling of vulnerability.

**Everyday Prejudice**

The last overarching theme running through the interviews reflects everyday encounters with difference. These are accounts of moments when the participants felt uncomfortable in situations as the only or one of few Jews, heard anti-Semitic remarks and/or felt stigmatized. They were reminders of being different, not belonging to the larger group and had an edge of stigma. Elsewhere in the psychological literature these kinds of moments are referred to as encounters with everyday prejudice (Swim, 2003; Swim, et al., 1998; Swim, et al., 2001; Swim, Mallett, & Stangor, 2004; Swim & Stangor, 1998; Swim & Thomas, 2006).
These accounts were the response to my inquiries about whether there had been occasions when they felt uncomfortable because they were Jewish. None of the participants had difficulty listing a number of occasions both in the past and present day. In fact there were numerous examples given by each participant.

There was no preconceived expectation on my part about the participants’ answer to this question. Given the current emphasis on multiculturalism in Toronto and the participants’ status as educated professionals for the most part speaking English as their mother tongue, my guess was that participants would say there had not been any of these moments. Thus the present day examples were noteworthy.

These encounters were seen as reminders of the stigmatized social status of Jews. Ordinarily they did not spend time worrying about these encounters but they had no difficulty calling them to mind in the interview. The significance seemed not in the individual situation but rather the fact that there was some frequency to them and the quandary the participant was put in deciding how to respond.

Some participants also seemed resentful that these situations happened altogether. These encounters appeared to be intrusions into the belief that anti-Semitism in Toronto had disappeared or at least should have. The general media supports this expectation by lauding Toronto’s multicultural strengths.

It was not clear to what extent the participants consciously defined these encounters as stressful. There seemed to be an unspoken feeling that, in comparison to the anti-Semitism experienced by Jews at other times and places, most notably during the Holocaust, these everyday kinds of experiences were insignificant.
For the most part the situations described by participants were of the everyday kind of hassles to be analyzed more closely in the following chapter. Another quality of these encounters was their ambiguity and commonplace nature. This reflects the empirical evidence cited elsewhere of a shift from blatant to more subtle forms of prejudice (Wilson, 1996). They were, for the most part, verbal statements. They were not physically violent or threatening but left the participant feeling uncomfortable, upset and, in a number of situations, angry.

These everyday encounters touched on a number of types of situations often referred to elsewhere as typically anti-Semitic (Booker, 1991; Edelman, 1996; Gilman, 1986, 1991, 1993; Gold, 2004; Weinrach, 2002). There were the stereotypes about Jews as being pushy and obnoxious; being overly focused on money by being greedy, cheap, and wealthy; being lazy by taking too much time off for holidays; and a “Jewish” look such as having big noses, curly hair and beards. In addition to verbal expressions of these stereotypes there were verbal slurs such as “dirty Jew” or “don’t Jew me,” “you’re such a Jew” as well as anti-Semitic and racist jokes. Wearing clothing or jewelry with Jewish symbols was a source of concern.

Specifically religious themes of encounters included pointed comments about Jewish dietary rules and proselytizing Jews for Jesus and other missionary groups specifically aimed at Jews. Christmas was a time universally fraught with tension for the participants. Encounters included being pointedly made to feel excluded at Christmas through teasing, references to being a “scrooge,” and a more general feeling of exclusion through the pervasiveness of Christmas and the assumption that everyone participates.

In addition to face-to-face encounters, participants spoke of situations where they were upset because of the treatment of Jews or Israel in the media. A number of interviews
took place during the summer of 2006 when Israel and Lebanon were at war. Needless to say many of the participants interviewed during this time expressed greater anxieties about anti-Semitism in Canada and around the world. Even though they were not personally affected in an immediate way by events elsewhere the participants felt as though they were.

In a subsequent chapter I will focus on these encounters to more clearly understand their significance. They play a central role in the experience of Jewishness in a non-Jewish world and as such demand focused attention.

Summary

Here are eight individuals each with a unique personal history. Some have had numerous clear anti-Semitic experiences while others feel their experiences were more ambiguous. Some live in the mainstream of Jewish culture and others remain happily on the periphery. Yet they all describe their experience living in a non-Jewish world with the same consistent threads running through their lives. Furthermore these themes fit easily with those identified elsewhere as typical of North American Jewish experience (Edelman, 1996; Gilman, 1986; Gold, 2004; Langman, 1995, 2000; Weinrach, 2002). From this I conclude that the participants in this study are not idiosyncratic individuals but more likely voicing a commonality of experience for Jews as a minority.

These six themes are an important entry into the internal experience of these participants. Regardless of behaviour they maintain an attachment to being Jewish which plays an important role in their sense of belonging or place in their world. They have not accepted their Jewish connection without putting their own stamp on it. While they are fiercely loyal as Jews it is a source of some anxiety or concern about their and their family’s
safety. Each theme touches on the others overlapping in many ways. They also act as a lens through which the participant is deciphering the meaning of their experiences as a Jew.

Furthermore these themes bear a strong resemblance to the five basic human needs influencing an individual’s experience in groups as articulated by Fiske (2004). These needs are belonging, developing socially shared understandings, having a sense of personal or social control, enhancing oneself, and trusting others. As the bedrock underneath all other human needs belonging is a clear need as well as a clear overarching theme for the participants of my research. Visibility and vulnerability are the absence of trust in others as well as control over one’s environment. Unshakeable loyalty gives a sense of belonging as well as a venue for shared understanding. Individualizing expression of Jewish identity is connected to enhancing the self. Standing apart from the needs and themes are the encounters with everyday prejudice. It is in this theme that the others find concrete expression and can be interacted with to find understanding in the experience of Jewishness more broadly.

Finally, it is interesting that, in the present social climate that encourages diversity, these participants still feel the need to remain cautious about their visibility as Jews. They continue to be aware of their vulnerability. Their reports of encounters with difference in the present suggest this is not a leftover from an earlier more prejudiced Toronto but continues to be their experience today. Based on this there is a need for closer study of the present day-to-day encounters.
Chapter 7 – Encounters with Everyday Prejudice

I was in this exercise class … before Christmas and she [the teacher] decided to put on Christmas carols. One of the Jewish women in the class made a face, like, “Do we have to listen to this?” I think she made a face. So the teacher started talking to her and singling her out as being like a Scrooge, that she doesn’t like Christmas. She would play another song and then she would say – “Is this okay?” and she just went on and on. Lyla

In my summer course we decided that we were going to do a get together for the last class. … I said “Why don't we do a potluck, but why don't we just plan on doing it vegetarian so we can be respectful of everyone.” … No one said anything but the next class a student put up her hand at the beginning of class and she said, “I don't understand why we’re doing this vegetarian. What's wrong with my bringing pork or something like that and then you guys don't have to, if people don't want to eat it they don't have to eat it.” Then she looked up and said … “Can I see for how many people it really makes a difference?” Norman

There was a group of people … that I really thought I could come very close to and [be] very comfortable with. I was the only Jew there, and I remember going out with one of them to do some shopping. I bought a pair of shoes, and there was something wrong with the shoes and I made a bit of a fuss about it. And the person I was with made a comment about it. I can’t remember exactly what he said but it was along the lines of behaving in a Jewish way, you know suggesting that Jews are kind of picky about these things and always looking to get a special deal. Bill

These vignettes are typical of the accounts that make up the theme “everyday prejudice” described in the previous chapter on thematic analysis. These encounters with everyday prejudice were a focal point of the experience described by participants and, as such, crucial to understanding this experience. The themes identified in the earlier chapter set the stage for this second deeper analysis, as they identify the concerns of the participants and reference the context within which participants live. Analysis of the encounters brings a magnifying glass to the subtle forces at work in these moments.
As I read story after story of these relatively small but irritating situations, I became aware of my own rising irritability. Each situation on its own was an annoying but small encounter; however, as a group, these stories had the cumulative effect of triggering my own reactions to these types of encounters. This intensity made it easier to contemplate the impact of these encounters that typically would be spread out in time and place. It is clear that an important key to understanding the experience of Jewishness as a minority identity is held within these particular kinds of moments of interaction between Jew and non-Jew, specifically, the moments when a Jew feels uncomfortable and especially aware of being Jewish, being a minority and being stigmatized.

As described in the previous chapter incidents of prejudice and discrimination cover a wide continuum. Over the past few decades, expressions of prejudice have become subtler and interaction between members of different groups has become more confusing and complex, leaving lots of room for interpretation and misunderstanding. Because these more subtle exchanges are so persistent and pervasive they demand a closer look.

This chapter focuses on these less dramatic yet important moments referred to as encounters with everyday prejudice. To repeat the working definition, these are the more common everyday kind of hassles such as “mundane comments or behaviors that reflect or communicate hostile, denigrating, or stigmatizing attitudes and beliefs about particular groups” (Swim, 2003). They are reminders of being on the outside and different, and are part of the familiar background noise of everyday life for minority individuals.

What makes these common small encounters with everyday prejudice significant is the impact on the recipient, the minority individual. Over time the meaning of these experiences come to influence the individual Jew’s identity as a minority. To understand this
impact it is necessary to gain access to individuals’ understanding of the encounters and their process of evaluation and response to the encounters. I propose a framework for understanding the experience of an encounter using the psychological research reviewed in an earlier chapter and the particular experiences of the participants in this research project. In this chapter I describe this framework and, in the following chapter, I use the framework to analyze a number of encounters shared by the participants.

**Conceptual Framework of an Encounter**

In sharing accounts of these moments participants spoke of the encounter, their thoughts as to what had happened, how it made them feel and how they chose to respond to the encounter. I began to imagine myself in the shoes of a participant experiencing an encounter. Knowing the importance of perceptions and cognitions as an influence on experience I imagined the encounter as a whole in slow motion. I could visualize a flow of steps unfolding in a logical path each influencing subsequent steps. This could be a template for analysis of any encounter.

It starts with the participant, embedded in his or her context, encountering a moment of everyday prejudice. Information about the encounter is taken in and a cognitive explanation for the encounter is developed. This explanation is arrived at using past experience and beliefs about the world. Based on the understanding of the encounter there is a reaction, consideration of a response and then the response. These steps are displayed visually in Figure 1. It is a conceptual framework from which to examine individual encounters. I will briefly outline the framework and then expand on each step.

*INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE.*
Figure 3 - CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF AN ENCOUNTER

CONTEXT AS THE FILTER OF EXPERIENCE
- broader social and historical context
- family influences
- individual characteristics and experiences

ENCOUNTER
between individual Jew and non-Jewish world
(non-Jewish individual, institution, or media)

INDIVIDUAL JEW’S PERCEPTION OF THE ENCOUNTER

EVALUATION OF THE ENCOUNTER AND WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT

RESPONSE TO THE ENCOUNTER
- disengagement
- engagement to change the situation
- engagement to change the self

evaluation of the experience
At the centre of an encounter is a communication between a Jew and a non-Jew. Some aspect of this communication feels hurtful or insensitive to the Jew. Somewhere in the midst of the encounter the Jew “knows” that the unpleasantness is somehow connected to being Jewish, a feeling of being “other” and a sign of his or her stigmatized status as a Jew.

In fact, the encounter begins before this interaction between Jew and non-Jew. Individuals come to this moment already influenced by certain contextual elements. For the Jew these include aspects of their personality, their past experiences with prejudice and discrimination, information their parents have shared about such moments on cognitive and emotional levels, as well as an awareness of other Jews’ experiences in such moments both historically and in different geographic locations. Current social and political realities are also part of the context. The numerous aspects of the context of their life act as a filter, sensitizing their perception of an encounter and contributing to their interpretation of the event.

Greenberg, Rice and Elliott (1993) in their exploration of the role of emotion in therapeutic change identify the concept of emotion schemes. These schemes play an important role in guiding an individual’s “automatic processing of personal meaning” (Greenberg, Rice, & Elliott, 1993). They define emotion schemes as, complex synthesizing structures that integrate cognition (in the form of appraisals, expectations, and beliefs) with motivation (in the form of needs, concerns, intentions, and goals) with affect (in the form of physiological arousal and sensory, bodily feeling) and action (in the form of expressive-motor responses and action tendencies). Together these form complex internal models of self-in-the-world experience. (Greenberg, et al., 1993, p. 5)
From the complexity of these aspects of experience come the sense of “knowing” on a less conscious level the meaning of an encounter.

These perceptions and “knowledge” are synthesized to create an interpretation of the encounter. Has it been connected to their Jewishness? What are they feeling and thinking? These data are then evaluated to create the meaning of the encounter, which in turn has an impact on a response to the encounter. In this way contextual influences play an important role in the experience of the encounter as well as a part in the determination of the encounter as an expression of prejudice. The interpretation in turn influences the response (Miller, 2006).

Stangor et al (2003) provide a scenario for this happening and divide the process of identifying prejudice or discrimination into three stages. First is the initial asking of the question as to whether an encounter has been discriminatory or somehow tied to the individual’s stigmatized social status. The second stage is an attempt to answer this question. This takes into consideration which beliefs about the world are activated by the situation. Finally if the encounter is determined to be discriminatory the individual will need to decide whether to tell others. All through this process contextual factors influence an individual’s perceptions and consequently the judgments made based on the assessment of the encounter.

Before responding, the individual quickly conducts an additional assessment of the situation. Is there an element of threat to the individual? Does he or she have the resources necessary to manage the encounter and possible responses? What responses could be made? What goals may be thwarted as a result of a particular response, such as damage to self-esteem?
Once the individual has determined the meaning of the encounter, assessed his or her own reaction and the situation, he or she then chooses one or a number of responses (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In retrospect, the individual may have further thoughts as he or she evaluates both perception and response. There may be further consideration of the encounter and further reaction and responses. At the end there may be an evaluation from which lessons will be taken for the next encounter. The following sections unpack each of the steps in this framework.

**Context as the Filter of Experience**

Life history research relies on the principle that perceptions and cognitions are a powerful influence on emotions and judgments (Cole & Knowles, 2001). It is also an important principle in psychology (Stangor, et al., 2003). This principle is evidenced in the integration into analysis and interpretation of the variety of contextual layers of the researched. To fully understand an individual, the relationship between the individual and his or her context must be examined as a starting point. “Context becomes a reference point, an essential backdrop that helps us understand an individual’s life and experience” (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 79).

Participants often had a deep emotional reaction to their encounters with everyday prejudice. The depth of this emotion signaled that the encounter had a meaning beyond the specifics of the unique event. The clue to this meaning is rooted in the role of context on perception. The participant’s perception of an encounter filtered by contextual influences, determines a reaction, and by extension, the significance of the encounter for the individual. The question then is not what “really” happened in the narrowly defined moment of one encounter but rather what the individual perceives to have happened.
As described by Cole and Knowles (2001) there are many layers of context to inform understanding of individual actions. They list family background, ethnic and familial cultures, family and individual health and well-being, socioeconomic conditions of family and community, religious influences and practices, influences of gender, educational experiences, the state of local, national and international politics, and fundamental personal assumptions about the relationship of the self to the context in all of its forms (Cole & Knowles 2001).

I would add to this list some of the social psychological concepts reviewed in Chapter 3. Those universally experienced are concepts such as the core social goals of belonging, understanding, controlling, enhancing the self, and trusting others (Fiske, 2004), as well as the impact of mental models of self and others (Miller & Kaiser, 2001a). More particular to minority individuals are concepts such as stereotype threat, situational threat, aversive racism, and pluralistic ignorance. For Jews the impact of a long history of anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, and the founding of the state of Israel, are all important contextual influences (Langman, 2000). I will expand on all of these to provide the backdrop for the participants of this research.

Earlier I discussed the connections and similarities between the participant themes and Fiske’s core social goals. The individual’s success in reaching these goals is an influence on their perception of an encounter. Everyday prejudice that serves to remind one of not belonging or is confusing in such a way that the individual does not understand or is not able to trust in that situation, will serve to elicit a negative reaction to the encounter. Similarly past experience with attachment and rejection will influence expectations of the quality of the encounter. These will also influence the individual’s response to an encounter.
As members of a minority group that has been stigmatized, some participants exhibited a heightened vigilance for anti-Semitism. When they made decisions as to where they would live or work they were influenced by concerns of situational threat. That is, motivated by the desire to belong, and to experience their lives in balance with other social needs, they will choose environments where their social identity as a minority or stigmatized individual will be less likely to interfere with day to day life.

Another layer of context is that of the particular family the individual has grown up in. Here socio-economic situation, connection to neighbourhood and community, extended family, psychological health of the family and, for some of these participants, a personal connection to the Holocaust as children of Holocaust survivors are at play.

A final layer is the broader social and historical context surrounding the individual. In this case the experiences of Jews as a people, both globally and historically, are strong influences on the individual as is the local environment of Toronto, Canada. Toronto had historical examples of anti-Semitism and now, along with the country as a whole, professes an emphasis on multiculturalism. Unfortunately contemporary anti-Semitism continues to play a role as is evidenced in the B’nai Brith report (R. Klein & Bromberg, 2007) and the survey sponsored by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2010). Both reports are discussed more fully in Chapter 2.

**Contextual Influences Particular to Jews.**

Clearly the Holocaust and anti-Semitism have been strong, important influences and were frequently spoken of in the interviews. Jews have a long history of oppression that has become a part of their cultural and religious memory. The Holocaust is the most profound example of anti-Semitism within recent memory.
As a religion Judaism respects history and memory, and has developed rituals to mark historical events. Even participants without religious affiliation are aware of these. Holidays such as Passover, which marks the Exodus from slavery in Egypt to freedom as described in the Hebrew Bible, other minor holidays incorporating remembrance of escape from destruction, and semi-annual memorial services for loved ones which include prayers for Jewish martyrs and soldiers, are ways that these memories are kept alive. Feelings of personal connection to these events are encouraged, as is the use of these commemorations as the impetus for bringing an end to war, oppression and a better future in all respects.

Present day moments of anti-Semitism or threats to the survival of Israel as a refuge for Jews worldwide are seen through the lens of these historical group experiences and stir feelings of personal threat. Two recent examples of situations mentioned by some participants as important “encounters” for them were the beheading of Daniel Pearl in Pakistan in 2002 and the imposition of armbands for Jews in Iran in 2006 (later found to be untrue). Some of the interviews for this research were conducted during the summer of 2006 while Israel and Lebanon were at war. A number of the participants referred to this being a stressful time for them because of the war.

One of the important roles that Israel plays is as a refuge for Jews needing to escape anti-Semitism. The experience of Jewish refugees trying to escape the Nazis and the Holocaust is an example of this need. The state of Israel had not yet been established and consequently many Jewish refugees were unable to find a safe place and died as victims of the Holocaust. One of the more famous of these situations is the 1939 experience of the SS St. Louis, a ship loaded with German Jewish refugees, which was forced to return to
Germany after being refused entry in many countries including Canada. Most of those on board died in Nazi concentration camps.

It is in this context that the existence of a Jewish state where any Jew can find refuge, immediate citizenship and settlement assistance is important. The media plays an influential role in the impact of this aspect of context through its reporting of events that impact Jews globally and in its interpretation of Middle East events. All of these experiences are part of the influences on the participants of this study.

When confronted with a situation of everyday prejudice the individual is tapping into emotions tied to these other events. Sometimes this is conscious as when participants commented on the influence of other forces, for example, when Norman suggested that he was reacting to a situation more strongly because it was during the 2006 Israel Lebanon war, and Lyla’s explicit comment that her reaction to a work situation was rooted in her feelings as a child of Holocaust survivors. At other times it is an unconscious connection, reflected in increased emotional reaction to an encounter.

The strength of this influence varies for each individual. Here is where there is an interactive effect between contextual influences, which may not be separable into their individual parts. These influences are personality, past experience, and knowledge of the broader context. An individual with a strong sense of belonging may react differently than one who does not.

**The Encounter with Everyday Prejudice**

While there is a range of events that can be defined as an encounter, there seem to be particular occasions that are more salient or typical. They can be categorized in different ways. I chose to use the content of the encounter and focus largely on the “everyday-ness” of
the encounters chosen for analysis. I did not separate childhood encounters from this categorization.

The participants’ encounters fell into the following groupings. These were encounters based on racial slurs and anti-Semitic language; Jewish stereotypes; Christmas; well meaning others and inadvertent exclusion; food and Jewish dietary restrictions; Christian and other clearly non-Jewish environments; and finally topics related to Israel and Jews as a group. Some encounters were clear-cut anti-Semitism and others were quite ambiguous leaving the participant unsure and confused. This is the nature of everyday prejudice, varied and often subtle.

**Racial Slurs and Anti-Semitic Language.**

These encounters came up in many situations, both childhood and adult. They included statements such as “being jewed,” “Don’t Jew me” or “acting Jewish.” A couple of these encounters are analyzed in the following chapter. Other examples include Bill’s childhood memories from the schoolyard.

 Being Jewish, and … smaller than a lot of the kids, I wasn’t that great at sports. I was an easy target. … I have many memories of just walking around, just whatever I was doing on my own and being attacked. You know kids jumping on me, kids just knocking the shit out of me. … They called me “dirty Jew.”

And Norman’s camp experience,

 We did have a counselor fired one summer for making [anti-Semitic remarks], not at me, at the other kid. He made a comment at a sports game when he [the Jewish child] scored a goal, about that “fuckin Jew,” and we reported him.

A number of encounters took the form of a co-worker using language such as “being jewed.” This was often in combination with stereotypes about Jews. A couple of encounters
occurred on foreign holidays with the participant being the recipient of anti-Semitic comments.

> My friend had an Israeli passport and the police started saying in French “fuckin Jews” and “you know you're Jews.” Hannah

One participant shared accounts of listening to social acquaintances making anti-Semitic remarks and jokes:

> I worked for this woman who I really liked a lot but she had this horrific, … boyfriend who … would always come and either tell me a racist joke and tell me that his Black friends told me this joke or he’d tell me a Jewish joke, oh my Jewish friends told me this joke. Rebecca

**Stereotypes of Jews**

In a previous chapter stereotypes were discussed along with the role they play in keeping Jews separate and powerless. There are many stereotypes about Jews that stretch back through history and persist until today. Some of these have to do with Jewish physical characteristics such as large noses, and curly hair, sometimes referred to as a “Jewish look” (Gilman, 1991). It is this stereotype that was referenced in the theme visibility and causes discomfort for some Jews. Other stereotypes that became part of an encounter included the “Jewish American Princess” and characteristics of entitlement, pushiness and untrustworthiness. Being obnoxious, always looking for a deal, and picky, were other frequently named stereotypes.

Hannah had an experience while traveling that expressed the anti-Semitic stereotype of Jews as “Christ killers.”

> We were in Greece, we were caught up in Athens and there was a march of some sort. We said, “What is this?” And they said, “Jesus is resurrected,” and we said, “Why is he resurrected now?” and they said, “Why wouldn't you know this?” and I said, “Well we're Jewish” and this guy starts screaming, “You killed Jesus.”
Examples of other stereotypes expressed in passing but jarring the participant and leaving them uncomfortable were:

His comment was something to the effect of, “Well I assume she was supposed to be like a Jewish Princess,” … “to be like a spoiled Jewish woman.” And so it was something of that nature that he identified her behaviour as a Jewish way to behave. Norman

We were just having a discussion about things, and I’d shaved my beard off, just left a mustache, and she came and said “Oh you look very nice. I didn’t realize that you people could shave your beards off. I thought you were supposed to keep them.” Bill

He wanted a crescent roll, and he said, “I’ll take one of those, you know the Jewish nose.” Rebecca

There was one time when I had gone to pick up something from an Italian establishment, and a person made a generalized statement about Jews and how you can’t trust them. Susan

The everydayness of these examples along with the participant’s strong discomfort is characteristic of everyday prejudice as described in the literature.

Christmas.

Christmas is a time when most Jews are particularly aware of being different (Plaut, 2004). Comments from others such as “You don’t celebrate Christmas do you?” and constant inquiries about one’s Christmas shopping serve to make Jews who do not participate in the gift giving and partying feel left out. The holiday is so pervasive that it cannot be avoided and it appears as if everyone participates (Schlosser, 2003). It is not uncommon to be criticized and called a “scrooge” for not participating in Christmas.

The media in particular encourages this opinion through advertising, special charity drives, and many special features on the holiday. In the Jewish calendar the holiday Hanukkah often occurs at the same time of year but is considered a minor holiday and its meaning is much different than that of Christmas.
I find when I tend to forget that I’m Jewish someone reminds me that I’m Jewish. … It’s often not even in negative ways but I still find it irritating. Clients will say, at Christmas time, “You don’t celebrate Christmas do you?” And it’s like I never brought it up and there was no discussion in our relationship that I don’t celebrate Christmas, but it just comes up. Bill

She made up [a card], Happy Chrismukkah, and I was so upset. I thought, “That says it all.” … I felt kind of resentful. … Acknowledge our holiday. My holiday is Hanukkah, like I send Merry Christmas cards, some people send me Happy Hanukkah cards, but to make up a holiday, it’s almost like denying that I really have Hanukkah, we’re going to make it into partly Christmas.

Lyla

I'm aware of it [being different at Christmas] like whether we're up north on Christmas and everything is closed including Tim Horton's. I mean you're aware that everybody is celebrating and you're not. Hannah

**Well Meaning Others and Inadvertent Exclusion.**

There were times that friends or colleagues attempted to make the participant feel welcome when they were very much in the minority in a group. While well intentioned this had the effect of emphasizing the participant’s feeling of being different, part of a minority, and solo. For example, Lyla’s neighbour invited her to participate in a book club.

She brought people together to talk about [a book]. I'm conscious that I'm the only Jew there. There were about six, seven women, but they're more conscious of it, that I'm the only Jew there, and I don't bring it up but it always is brought up. I love my next door neighbour but, she'll say things to me like “You know when I lived in New York, we had this pediatrician, Dr. Cohen,” and she wants to make a point that he was Jewish, or they were talking at this book club, they were all Catholic by the way, about the priest and what was going on with him and then talking to me about the rabbis and [said] “At least they're married.” But they always point out you are different than us. Even if I want to just have a pleasant evening talking about a book, it will always come up.

**Food and Jewish Dietary Restrictions.**

Often non-Jews are unfamiliar with keeping kosher, that is following the Jewish religious dietary laws. Because of this lack of knowledge, participants who keep kosher found interactions around food were problematic. One of the principles of these restrictions is
separating foods made with meat from those made with dairy and not eating them at the same meal. This particular situation was the source of an encounter for Lyla.

We were having a pot luck party and everybody was contributing dishes. I was very conscious of ... (I still do keep kosher) my dishes and how they're going to mix with their dishes. ... Whatever I brought I had to have serving utensils too, because I couldn't have their serving utensils with my dish [because their food would not be kosher]. I remember one of the staff members, and I was trying to explain to her, ... and she said something like, “Oh well we wouldn't want our cutlery tainting your dishes,” or something like that. And I took that also very badly.

Explaining the rules of keeping kosher can become an uncomfortable situation.

Avoiding that explanation was one way to side step an encounter but still left Hannah feeling uncomfortable.

I feel different, because I keep kosher in the sense that I don’t eat meat [out of the home]. That always sets me apart when I’m with other people. So they’ll say, “Oh are you a vegetarian,” so I go “Yeah when I go out I am.”

**Christian and Other Clearly Non-Jewish Environments.**

There were several accounts of childhood encounters in school that reinforced the impression of it being a Christian environment (Schlosser, 2003). These took place in publicly funded schools and left the participant feeling awkward and wondering whether they should be part of the activity. For example,

We said the Lord's Prayer every morning, and we sang hymns.  Norman

We used to have to read Bible stories from the New Testament every morning. I don’t know if every class had to do that, I guess there were no regulations about that at that time. And I would go to the front of the class and I’d have to read from the New Testament, and then I’d be terrified that ... I was going to be struck down by God.  Rebecca

Other accounts shared by participants showed a clear awareness as children of Jews being in the minority. Lyla described being the only Jewish child in a dance class and feeling a persistent sense of otherness. Norman commented,
I would have to say that we were always aware of, in grade school there was always an us and them even though there was certainly no overt discrimination one way or the other. But there's no question that all the Jewish kids in my grade school knew who all the Jewish kids were and they knew who weren't Jewish and assumed that it was true the other way around as well, even though these were not questions that were asked or discussed.

Inflexibility or misunderstandings about Jewish holidays and customs was another source of discomfort. For example Martin’s comments regarding taking time for Jewish holidays as an employee of the public school board,

It’s part of the schooling schedule in the public system that we get time off for Christmas, and that's often how it's presented. … as Jews we have to ask for time off for the High Holy days and it's not granted automatically as part of the system. [If I ask for the holy day off] it will always be at my expense. … Meaning, for example, in a couple of months Easter will be here and we'll have time off and we won't be penalized with our sick days. We're given a [certain] number of sick days. But as a Jew, if I ask for a day off for Passover I will be docked a sick day because of my Judaism. That's not right. Something is amiss.

Lyla too had these kinds of frustrations.

I’d get a comment every now and then from those people like, “Where are you Jewish people?” or “Boy it must be nice to be Jewish, there’s a lot of holidays.”

I had taken off to go to a funeral, and my boss at the time made a comment, like “Boy you have a lot of funerals to go to.” And I took that kind of as a Jewish thing. I remember I was really mad at her, because I thought there was an underlying thing behind that. … Calm, almost like you Jews have a lot of funerals to go to.

**Israel and Jews as a Group.**

There was a group of encounters that illustrates the power of group allegiance. That is to say, participants had a strong emotional connection to events happening to Jews other than themselves. It was as if an encounter for Jews elsewhere was an encounter for them and they had a personal investment in the impact and outcome of the event. This happened most frequently regarding events in Israel and its coverage in the Canadian media. Such as,
She’s [Bill’s daughter] mentioned a few times … that her history teacher has made some weird remarks that the real name of Israel is Palestine and things like that. Bill

I would read the Globe and watch the news and see the position [of the media] and how many people I thought were disproportionally against what Israel was doing. Norman

Other examples of encounters aimed at Jews in general but experienced by the participant on a personal level included proselytizing Jews for Jesus, anti-Israel sentiments expressed in the media and insensitivity to Jewish suffering.

[There was] some kind of demonstration that got out of hand between Jews and Holocaust survivors, and some neo-Nazi. This police chief made a statement that was recorded in the paper that he thought that the Jews had over reacted and they were just too sensitive and over reacting. Lyla

There remain a number of situations that were so unclear, so ambiguous, that it was hard to determine whether they were actually an encounter. There are many interactions today that have this flavour of ambiguity. In these situations participants were left feeling unsettled or wondering whether there was another level to the encounter. Examples of these situations included a Muslim client not returning after meeting the participant, a car purchase with an Arab salesperson that ran into difficulties, being questioned by a German about the holiday Hanukkah while on vacation, feeling left out of a group once they hear the participant’s name. Again the key is the participant’s perception of the event and the meaning given to it.

Individual Jew’s Perception of the Encounter

The participants in this study were all born Jews and as such have spent their lives experiencing these everyday prejudices. The everyday encounters were the ones most likely to be seen as “not a big deal” individually but when added together became an irritation that
could not be ignored. Individuals were often left confused as to whether comments were meant with malice and to what degree they were aimed at them.

Often these everyday encounters were experienced as a reminder of difference, or not belonging, as the definition of stigma suggests, being “flawed in the eyes of others” (Crocker, et al., 1998). On a day to day basis participants likely do not make note of these encounters except when they are particularly uncomfortable or in some way unusual, or the contextual circumstances have shifted, for example, during war or having had their consciousness raised by other minority identities such as expressed in feminism or multiculturalism. This does not mean that these encounters are insignificant but rather that individuals have developed coping strategies such as learning to ignore everyday prejudice or push aside their feelings about them.

In reviewing the perceptions and reactions to the encounters it was difficult to neatly separate perception from initial reaction. This was because of the immediacy and speed with which these aspects of the experience happen as well as the degree to which individual participants are unaware of the process at work while they are engaged in the encounter. To the participant the encounter was often perceived as unexpected. For some reason this particular encounter with everyday prejudice caught their notice. It was not uncommon for the participant’s account to have an element of being taken by surprise by the encounter, as well as a sense of indignation.

I decided a productive way to analyze the perceptions and reactions to these encounters was to deal with them as a whole, paying attention to both cognitive and emotional aspects. These perceptions and reactions were wide ranging. One distinguishing quality about the expressed reaction was the level of threat the participant attributed to the
encounter. One end of the continuum was a slightly irritated indifferent perception of a situation of everyday prejudice. As if to say the participant noticed the everyday prejudice but was unconcerned. At the other end of the continuum the participant felt quite vulnerable and personally threatened. Lyla’s reaction to anti-Semitic comments at her workplace, analyzed in the next chapter is a good illustration of this. “I felt like really scared and panicky. Don’t forget I’m a child of Holocaust survivors.” Even though the encounter was the anti-Semitic comments of a colleague at work, emotionally she was transported to a place of fear and concern for her personal safety.

Interestingly whether the individual felt personally threatened did not seem to be connected to the details of the situation. It was more an expression of something internal to the participant, more likely the influence of the individual’s contextual knowledge brought by them to every situation and an expression of perceptions.

The following are a selection of participant comments that illustrate this range of reactions. They are paraphrases or descriptions taken from the participants’ accounts. Illustrative of the low threat/higher comfort end of the continuum are comments that convey a sense of feeling safe even though there is prejudice, or having the skills to deal with the encounter such as using reason. Another participant commented on this being an occasion to educate the perpetrator about anti-Semitism so they will re-evaluate their opinion of Jews. And finally a participant commented about feeling fine with questions about Christmas even though they did not celebrate it.

Up one step on the continuum of threat/comfort were feelings of irritation and cognitions that people are ignorant but well meaning. Examples of these include the position that anti-Semitic remarks are more about the other person who may be ignorant or
insensitive. “I didn’t feel hurt. This person is an idiot.” Or “My friend is ignorant but very supportive and loving, and would hide me in the Holocaust.” This comment reflects a clear connection between experiencing everyday prejudice and thoughts of a personal empathic connection to the Holocaust. Another angle on this grouping is surprise that people who are educated and bright would express anti-Semitic thoughts. “This is one more example of other people’s insensitivity and lack of understanding of Jews.” Or in another participant’s words, “The staff is ignorant but well intentioned.”

The next level of intensity begins to include worry or anxiety about the implications of anti-Semitism. Here I included questions about the intentions of the non-Jew, expressions about being uncomfortable about “not fitting in” or being treated like a stereotype. There were also expressions of insecurity as to how the person expressing the prejudice was going to behave once they made the prejudiced comments. Echoing a stereotype about Jews and money Bill said, “If I raise my fees people will think I’m money gouging and blame me because I’m Jewish.” When Hannah was on vacation she had an encounter with an older German resort owner. Her comments show a tension between vulnerability and open mindedness. “What was this German guy doing during the war? Why did he have to fight in the German army instead of returning to Costa Rica where he had citizenship? Am I being racist to make these assumptions?”

Finally there were the reactions of fear, anger, and shame, increasing anxiety and concerns about personal safety and the place of Jews in the world. These range from thoughts about the world hating Jews just because they are Jewish to worries about being personally hurt. Bill’s comment on being beaten as a child by other boys, “My parents said non-Jews hate us for being Jewish and will beat us up, and it happened.” Regarding an anti-Semitic
incident on holiday Avital remarked, “I felt fear [of this] anti-Semitism, [and thought] we will be hurt. How did they know we were Jewish?” Others comments included “I was terrified that something awful was going to happen” and “I couldn’t be myself. I felt cautious and needing to be careful of what I said.” For some like Norman the fear was expressed with cynicism. “The Canadian media are biased against Israel; we only have friends because of Israel's utility.” And others like Susan found that the feelings of deep vulnerability led to a re-evaluation of attitude. “I reevaluated my opinion. Yes there is anti-Semitism. Regardless of who you are and what you might have done you don’t deserve this.”

**Evaluation of the Encounter and What Can be Done About it**

I have summarized the variety of encounters described by participants along with their perceptions and reactions. The story of an encounter does not end here though. The final step in the experience is the participant’s response to the situation. As identified in the review of psychological literature, experiencing everyday prejudice and stigma is a psychological stressor. Lazarus and Folkman’s theory of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) provides a useful structure for understanding participants’ responses to the stress of an encounter. Details of a stress and coping approach are described in the chapter reviewing the psychological literature.

Before responding to an encounter the individual must make an assessment of the situation and what can be done about it, that is, what are the options for a response and the consequences (Miller & Kaiser, 2001b)? First the individual must determine whether the encounter is a threat and in what way it is threatening. Is it personally threatening and what is at stake such as social goals? Is this encounter a situation of everyday prejudice? Second the
individual must determine what resources he or she has in order to ensure a positive outcome. Having made this assessment the individual is ready to respond.

**Response to the Encounter**

Participants used a variety of responses to the encounters with everyday prejudice. I will describe the range of responses as well as relate them to the stress and coping model. The next chapter will more closely examine specific individual encounters and responses.

The responses are the thoughts, feeling and actions that are the individual’s way of coping with the stressor of an encounter with prejudice. In the review of psychological literature coping responses were divided into two basic categories of voluntary coping responses, engagement and disengagement, with the engagement responses further divided into those aimed at primary control, that is, changing the situation (e.g. problem solving, emotional regulation and expression); and secondary control, that is, adapting to a situation (e.g. distraction, cognitive restructuring and acceptance). Responses aimed at disengagement include voluntary avoidance, denial and wishful thinking (Miller & Kaiser, 2001b).

An ongoing debate exists in the Jewish community as to the best way to deal with anti-Semitism. Should it be confronted head-on and fought openly or should a softer approach be taken and deal with it quietly behind the scenes. On a community level this expresses the conflict individuals have in deciding how and when to respond and how to balance the fierce desire to fit in and get along with others versus the need to protect one’s right to safety and security.

Based on the previously defined social goals outlined by Fiske (2004) the desire to belong and be like others is a natural human need. Faced with current encounters with everyday prejudice and the awareness of a history of anti-Semitism it is to be expected that
individual Jews would want to make life safer for themselves and their families. To this end
the question of whether to engage or disengage is one that is answered on a general level
regarding lifestyle as well as on a smaller scale every time an encounter with everyday
prejudice is faced. Typically responses were a mix or were intended to meet more than one
goal.

Disengagement.

The clearest example of disengagement as a coping strategy is to hide the fact that
one is Jewish. A common expression of disengagement was for participants to avoid
confrontation with the other person. “I didn’t say anything because I didn’t want to harm the
relationship.” Or “I stopped going to that hairdresser.” This is consistent with a style of
avoiding or minimizing anti-Semitism. Not noticing, minimizing and denial of everyday
prejudice are ways to maintain the view that anti-Semitism has disappeared and the
individual is safer for its disappearance. It also allows the feeling of belonging in the
dominant culture. Whether this feeling is based on a firm base of reality is not important to
the individual using this approach. Their perception is the important influence on their
feeling of belonging and is evidence of the power of these strategies.

Examples of disengagement strategies include choosing a particular occupation based
on the number of Jews and previous treatment of Jews in that occupation; choice of residence
based on the predominant groups in the neighbourhood; and choice of social groups or clubs
to participate in.

Norman shared that when he was starting a family, he and his wife made a conscious
decision to live in a neighbourhood with other Jews and to send their children to a Jewish day
school. Susan shared that after living in areas where she was the only Jew it was enjoyable to
settle in a neighbourhood and city with a large Jewish population. She stated that she would continue to live in a Jewish area.

Other comments by participants refer to avoiding difficult situations, or choosing which battles one is going to undertake, or looking at the bigger picture to decide if a particular incident is worth the fuss. Bill, as one participant who did not shy away from speaking up when the situation demanded it, shared that after years of taking a stand he had become tired of it and decided to be more selective about the battles he took on. This was an example of selective disengagement.

Youth or inexperience was another reason participants backed off from an encounter. Hannah’s explanation for her lack of response during a university class that debated the legitimacy of Israel’s position was, “I was silent because I didn’t know how to refute it. They all seemed to have all this rhetoric and I wasn’t prepared for it.” Others remarked that if a particular encounter were to happen today they would deal with it differently. The implication was that as a younger person, perhaps just starting out in their career they had not yet learned the skills necessary for confronting an encounter. Walking away or not saying anything was easier.

The ambiguity of situations more often led to a disengagement strategy since it was unclear whether there was prejudice. If others did not see the encounter as prejudice a sense of isolation in dealing with the encounter was likely to keep the participant from responding. Participants also felt that the lack of clarity in an ambiguous situation led them to doubt themselves and it was easier to worry about the ramifications of making a complaint.

Some participants described a growing inability to ignore anti-Semitism as they gained more life experience. Susan eloquently shared her thoughts about moving from denial
to recognition of the existence of anti-Semitism. Her remarks are also a good example of the personal connection some Jews feel with events that do not touch them directly such as historical events or events geographically distant from the individual.

I was very much in denial about it [anti-Semitism]. Because I didn’t experience it first hand I figured that maybe people deserved something, because they had said something, or they were being arrogant, or they were being aggressive, or they were doing something. … Now when I read certain things or hear about them [incidents of anti-Semitism], no matter who you are, no matter what you do, no matter what you – you know Daniel Pearl I think is an excellent example. He was a very liberal Jew who tried to be very inclusive in what he did and who he dealt with, and because he was born a Jew, he had his head cut off. So that really made it quite clear that there are people out there that will hate me because I’m Jewish, and if they should know that I am Jewish, it’s a fait accompli that they’ll hate me. … That’s very distressing. For a very long time the Holocaust was something very separate from me. You know I would understand that it happened to Jewish people, but I couldn’t make that direct connection to that event. It was like an historical event and it didn’t really seem to have the impact that it currently has.

Recognition is a first step and does not assume any specific response.

**Engagement.**

The other group of coping strategies acts to keep the individual engaged in the encounter. There are a variety of ways to do this. Some of the participants attempted to change the tenor of the outcome and others focused their attention on themselves adjusting their relationship with the encounter.

**Primary engagement.**

The first or primary engagement strategies aim to change the prejudiced environment. Educating the perpetrator was a common strategy used by participants. Hannah’s experience in university has already been described as an example of disengagement; however, the ramifications of that experience were the impetus for her to make an about-turn and use an engagement approach as an adult. She took courses to prepare herself to be able to defend
Judaism and Israel when the situation would reappear. By educating herself she now addresses the prejudice by educating the perpetrator. A further strategy that she uses is a proactive one where she reveals her Jewishness upfront at the start of a relationship with someone new. In that way her identity is known and she has done what she can to influence the environment.

The proactive self-identification as a Jew has the same goal as the proactive self-selection of environments to participate in; however, the first example moves the participant into a situation and the second example moves the participant away from potential prejudice. The question of visibility and related dilemma of revealing one’s stigmatized social identity has already been identified in the thematic analysis. This was a significant dilemma for participants and wove its way through many of the situations. In a situation where they felt uncomfortable or vulnerable the decision to be visible as a Jew took on a greater significance. One perspective was to see it as an occasion to make a stand and be assertive and proud of one’s Jewishness. As Avital commented, I “always say I’m Jewish. In freedom you’re not supposed to hide anything.” Hannah’s comment about lighting Hanukkah candles while on holiday has a similar tone. “Defiant yes, like … you know we’re all Jews celebrating Hanukkah and we’re lighting the candles because we’re alive.”

A more subtle way of making one’s Jewishness visible is to wear jewelry or clothing with Jewish symbols. Lyla approached some Jews for Jesus proselytizers on the street corner purposely wearing a magen david or Jewish star to make the statement that she would not be converted. Avital also used a necklace with a magen david to signal to co-workers that she was Jewish.
While Norman tended not to reveal his Jewishness in some of his encounters, he was another participant who used educating the other as a coping strategy. He told his students that religion had nothing to do with the “role played” client’s behaviour of entitlement and pushiness. He explained Jewish customs to colleagues and continually challenged a staff member on anti-Semitic language and assumptions about Jews. As a young woman Lyla went to the trouble of writing a letter to the chief of police complaining about his statements suggesting Jews were overreacting to neo-Nazi demonstrators.

On occasion participants shared that they used humour or logic to change the other person’s mind. A couple of participants even commented that using a good argument was a “Jewish” thing to be good at. Rebecca often used humour as reflected in her accounts of cab rides and interactions with friends or employers. Lyla too found this a comfortable way to cope with an encounter. For example when she was at a Christmas party where another Jew acted as Santa and gave everyone presents she said to Santa, “gut yontiff” meaning happy holiday in Yiddish.

In summary the primary engagement coping strategies used by participants included educating non-Jews, making their Jewishness visible by telling others they are Jewish or wearing Jewish symbols such as jewelry, making statements to the perpetrator of everyday prejudice that their behaviour was prejudiced, using humour to make a similar statement but in a less confrontational way, and to regulate one’s emotions.

Secondary engagement.

Adjusting oneself in behaviour or cognitions is a secondary engagement strategy. The phrase “keeping a low profile” is a good example of this category. Or as Avital described her workplace strategy “If I do everything nicely they can’t accuse me of anything.” This acts to
avoid conflict. Other variations on this strategy include making one’s behaviour and appearance less noticeable, or changing one’s judgment of the encounter itself. This could be by not doing “Jewish” things or changing one’s expectations.

Norman’s description of his brother’s approach to coping with everyday prejudice illustrates a secondary engagement strategy that is fairly common in the community. His brother has taken the position of redefining himself, trying to be like the others, and fit in. Norman takes a cynical perspective that reflects this ephemeral and uncertain quality.

You know all his efforts to assimilate and to hold on to these Waspy friends and everything is really, and I guess in this sense maybe I have been paranoid. I think it’s a joke because I think to myself, if the Holocaust were here tomorrow, they would not be your friends. These are not people who would empathize. And you can pretend to be as assimilated as you want, you're always going to be, in these people's eyes you're a Jew.

Focusing on oneself as a tool to avoid uncomfortable situations meant using ways to avoid giving non-Jews reasons to dislike Jews or to believe stereotypes about Jews. Some of the strategies used by participants included Avital’s approach of buying sweets for Hanukkah, taking Jewish holidays out of her vacation allotment, and acting in a manner that would show colleagues Jews are different. “Jews are honest, do not take advantage, and are not lazy.” Avital also has a rule for herself that she feels helps her avoid problems. That is, at work do your job and not get involved in personal things. Bill’s concern about the Jewish stereotypes about money and his raising his fees so that he is often overly generous with clients is another example of this.

In addition to the already named responses, other strategies were to find actions that would compensate or bring a feeling of safety or comfort, such as when Rebecca put her hand behind her back and crossed her fingers while she recited the Lord’s prayer in elementary school. Norman’s recollection of his elementary experience with changing the
words of a song from “onward Christian soldiers” to “onward Jewish soldiers” is another good example. Reaching out and connecting with others Jews to celebrate a Jewish holiday while on vacation (Hannah) or asking if others had the same perception of an encounter (Lyla) were examples of this.

Summary

In this chapter I described a model for understanding the unfolding of events referred to as an encounter with everyday prejudice. These are the small, subtle, everyday kind of moments when an individual belonging to a stigmatized minority group is reminded of their difference. The model draws on the psychological literature to give a broader understanding of the particular experiences of the participants in this research. The importance of context is emphasized as a filter of experience in turn having an impact on the meaning made of the encounter. Encounters are framed within the stress and coping literature to understand both how they are assessed and then responded to (Folkman, et al., 1986; Miller & Kaiser, 2001b). In the next chapter I will take selected examples of encounters from the participant interviews and then analyze them using this model.
Chapter 8 – Analysis of Specific Encounters

In the previous chapter I outlined a model of the experience of an encounter with everyday prejudice. In this chapter I take a selection of participants’ encounters and examine them using that model. The examples chosen are the common everyday kinds of experiences referred to as encounters with everyday prejudice, the “mundane comments or behaviours that reflect or communicate hostile, denigrating or stigmatizing attitudes and beliefs about particular groups” (Swim, 2003). These incidents or encounters with everyday prejudice can be confusing for the recipient as the literature has suggested, “everyday bias is often subtle, automatic, and unintentional” (Fiske, 2004).

The everyday prejudice is aimed at the stigmatized social identity of a member of a minority group. In these participants’ encounters it is their identity as Jews that is being targeted. Stigma is defined as a social identity that is devalued in a particular context (Crocker, et al., 1998) thus highlighting the importance of context and the social nature of the experience. Both of these aspects are part of the framework for analysis of an encounter.

As noted in the chapter discussing overarching themes, participants described encounters with everyday prejudice with sufficient regularity to be seen as a theme demanding a separate analysis of its own. The number of distinct encounters for the participants in total matching this working definition was around 160. For individual participants this ranged from 7 to 35 with the average number of encounters described during the hour-long interview being 20. For a relatively short conversation that touched on a number of topics this frequency of encounters being described is notable.

From this pool of narratives seven were chosen as illustrative of typical person-to-person encounters. My strategy in choosing these encounters for analysis was to include a
variety of participants and different topics of encounters as described in Chapter 7. I focused on encounters having taken place during adulthood making sure a number of them were more recent. As a result the encounters analyzed in this chapter touched on racial slurs, stereotypes of Jews, issues around food as a concrete example of difference between Jewish culture and religion and the dominant culture, and finally the time of year most associated with Christian privilege and feelings of exclusion, that is Christmas.

Using the framework in the previous chapter this analysis starts with identification of the encounter itself followed by consideration of the participant’s context, then the participant’s initial reaction, assessment of the encounter and subsequent response. Context can include previous experiences with prejudice, social needs, aspects of Jewishness as a concealable stigma, aspects particularly important to all stigmatized individuals, family influences and finally the broader social and historical context. Some aspects of context apply to all the participants. I identify those specifically relevant to the encounter in question. Other aspects of context more broadly have been discussed in earlier chapters.

Since encounters are stressful events an assessment of the encounter from this perspective is included. Stress is defined as “an environmental demand on an individual’s psychosocial resources” (Swim, 2003). Here the participant’s response to the encounter is identified and commented upon. Responses to these encounters are viewed as coping strategies because they are “conscious volitional efforts to regulate emotion, thought, behaviour, physiology, and the environment in response to stressful events or circumstances” (Miller & Kaiser, 2001b).

Each encounter and the behaviour surrounding it will potentially have a number of meanings to those involved. There may be a number of meanings simultaneously. There is
the layer of “fact” as conveyed by the narrator as well as the narrator’s understanding of the meaning of the encounter. And then there is the layer of meaning or connections between pieces of the puzzle below their awareness that influence the unfolding of the encounter as a whole. The same can be said from the perspective of the perpetrator as well though I am not addressing the perpetrator’s perspective here.

Finally some contextual influences are so common and so subtle that participants take them for granted. These include the long history of anti-Semitism, Jews’ vulnerability, the Holocaust as an event, current anti-Israel sentiments from many sectors, a common practice of Jews to protect themselves from anti-Semitism by living in certain neighbourhoods, joining certain occupations and belonging to certain social groups.

Judaism has a different schedule of holidays and celebrations. Since it is a schedule quite on its own and not tied to any more common religious holidays, Jews are used to living in two time frames at once, their Jewish time and their secular time. This acceptance of their duality is so common that it too is taken for granted. Finally Jews have taken for granted that the cultural group Canadian Jewry is not one of the cultures that are part of multiculturalism as featured politically and in the media. They do not feel the need to comment on these aspects of context because either they no longer notice them or it is accepted as a given which will not change. These contextual factors act as a kind of background noise. If it has always been part of the person’s experience then it will be taken as a normal part of experience.

The Encounters

Jewish Customs Regarding Food (Norman’s class potluck).

I'll tell you where I actually had a strong reaction of interest. It was in my [summer] course [when we planned the] … get together for the last class.
I had said to the class, “Here's the time we are going to do it.” … I said “Why don't we just do a potluck, but why don't we just plan on doing it vegetarian so we can be respectful of everyone?”

I just thought that in this day and age there's bound to be some vegetarians in the class. There were three other students I figured were Jewish, I figured one of them might –

No one said anything but the next class a student put up her hand at the beginning of class and said, “I don't understand why we're doing this vegetarian. What's wrong with my bringing pork or something like that and then if people don't want to eat it they don't have to eat it.” And then she looked up and said, “Can I see how many people it really makes a difference?” Four or five people put up their hand, including me, and I was outraged. I was absolutely, I thought what is this about? Like for one, why make it an issue, why bring this up and why would you think twice about not trying to be respectful to everyone?

I didn't think it was appropriate and my role to say I keep kosher. It's neither here nor there. I was trying to be respectful. I would say I had a strong reaction to that because it really was like, “Why should we have to do something because some people have particular practices?”

[My reaction] really was kind of a rage. I remember thinking inside, “Fuck you.” I have to say there is that slightly paranoid, like is this towards the vegetarians or is this towards the Jews in the group? I say that because, she may or may not know about dietary restrictions, but she specifically brought up (pause) … she said either pork or a slab of, is something that she actually said specifically. Which made me, there were two I'm assuming, I don't know this but you know I can identify them by last names, probably two Muslim women in the group for whom that would also be a concern.

This was happening this summer. I think that my sensitivities were heightened because of everything that was going on [the 2006 war between Israel and Lebanon]. Part of my reaction may have been that. Probably at some level it was just, okay, this is just one more example of what people don't get, what they don't understand. I think it hits me harder because I was brought up to be respectful of – and not to feel in any way superior or that there was something special about being Jewish that put us as a “chosen” people.

Q: Your reaction to her was not just, why doesn't she buy into this, and make it easier for everybody, but why pork?
A: Yeah there's no question that [the reference to pork] was the piece that got me most.

Now that being said I have to say, if I am honest with myself, if there's any issues still with my parents it’s their seeming inability to not remember that I keep kosher.

….

I said [to the class] what we're trying to do here is be respectful of everyone and as inclusive as we can. It seems to me that the best way to do that is simply to have it vegetarian where we could meet everyone's needs.

… [In reaction to these ambiguous situations] I think it's pretty consistent. I think I usually get pretty angry inside and I think I'm pretty diplomatic outside.
Food is so often the focal point of social gatherings and provides the vehicle for individuals to form close bonds with each other. For Jews the restrictions concerning food as articulated in the laws of kashrut have historically had the effect of keeping Jews separate from non-Jews in social situations. It is often for this reason that contemporary Jews have searched for ways to navigate this barrier and participate in the broader community both in the workplace and socially. Short of ignoring Jewish dietary custom, food continues to be a way that Jews can become visible to others.

The encounter here is the behaviour of Norman’s student during the planning of their class potluck get together. She challenged the class and Norman by saying, “I don't understand why we’re doing this vegetarian. What's wrong with my bringing pork or something like that and then if people don't want to eat it they don't have to eat it.” She then further challenged the group directly by asking, “Can I see for how many people it really makes a difference?” Her behaviour was a direct challenge though not explicit as to the rationale of the challenge.

*Context.*

Beginning with Norman’s own narrative, he identifies a number of contextual influences on his perception of this encounter. There was the lack of respect for the needs of others and the timing of this during the summer of 2006.

In describing his upbringing, Norman identified his parents’ value of and behaviour supporting respect for diversity. They made a point of being fully bilingual while retaining their cultural and political ties to their Jewish identity. “It was an attitude of integration … I think you feel less threatened under those circumstances. I don't think my parents ever felt [threatened as Jews].” The references to Norman’s perception of his parents experience
suggests there was no direct discussion of anti-Semitism in the family. His parents grew up at a time when anti-Semitism was very much part of their environment and Norman shared a number of these examples in his interview. I suspect they were concerned about vulnerability and found a coping strategy that worked for them. This was the strategy of fitting in, becoming bilingual and becoming very respectful of others’ cultures.

Norman enters this encounter with an expectation of respect and reacts when it is violated. His parents were also not involved in the religious aspect of Jewishness and find it an irritation that Norman loyally keeps the Jewish dietary rules that amongst other things forbids eating pork. His antennae are already up. In other words, he is already sensitive to the possibility of an encounter because of his dietary needs and previous experience not having these needs accommodated.

Other contextual influences that Norman identifies are the fact that this encounter took place while Israel and Lebanon were at war [2006] and therefore his “sensitivities [to anti-Semitism] were heightened. … It's disappointing. When I would read the Globe newspaper and watch the news … I think part of me felt that the world was a friendlier place towards Jews than it really is.” This is a clear example of vicarious experience of stigma through the power of the media. This deep rethinking of his attitudes and assumptions regarding the place of Jews in the world had a strong impact on his experience of the smaller day-to-day kind of encounters between Jews and non-Jews. In this way his experience of the classroom discussion became framed in terms of anti-Semitism in a more global sense.

Using the model already described it is possible to highlight other contextual influences. During his interview Norman referred to an ongoing series of encounters with subtle everyday anti-Semitism or ignorance, such as ignorant remarks by co-workers and
coverage of Israel in the media. This particular one then becomes a part of that overall picture which he identifies with frustration. This is the background noise of his life as a Jew.

The student’s question challenges the social goals of shared understanding and a sense of control. She does not “get” the importance of respect and by her asking her question to the class directly, she disregards the already stated position of the teacher. She attempts to take control of the situation. Without the shared understanding and respect for others in the class the goal of belonging for each member of the group is violated.

Norman’s outrage is against the never-ending stigma Jews experience. It is an outrage that the world does not hold up its end of the bargain that some Jews assume is there. That is, if I am respectful of who you are, keep a low profile, do not impose myself or my beliefs and culture on you, you will do the same for me. It is an unspoken bargain that some individuals have that allows them to feel safe, and seems to fit with the values of multiculturalism (see Gilman, 1986). Norman has high stigma consciousness and is on guard against potential prejudice as he articulates, his “sensitivities were heightened.”

Assessment and response.

His response continued to be consistent with his values of inclusivity and respect. The internal monologue referencing anti-Semitism and his anger was at odds with his external response of diplomacy and respect.

While Norman suggested this exchange was an encounter with everyday prejudice he was confused as to who the target of the prejudice was. This was despite his “strong reaction.” Was the student anti-Semitic? Anti-Moslem? Anti-vegetarian? Or just short on social skills? It isn’t clear based on Norman's account what the student’s intentions were. Norman suggests that he may be slightly paranoid, in other words that he is making
something bigger out of this than was intended by the student, and that he was seeing anti-
Semitism in places where it was not. This indicates a second-guessing or mistrust of his 
judgement.

And yet his reaction, as he himself reports, was “strong.” In fact he also uses the 
words “outraged,” “a kind of rage,” “thinking inside, fuck you.” To the observer there is a 
disconnect between Norman's emotional experience of anger and his cognitive assessment of 
the event that says maybe it was against other groups, or “maybe I’m too sensitive,” or 
“maybe the student didn’t know about Jewish or Moslem dietary restrictions.” These are 
rationalizations that side step deciding whether the encounter was anti-Semitism.

On some level his experience is that there is anti-Semitism in this encounter and it 
makes him angry. Naming it as anti-Semitism is difficult because the encounter is subtle and 
because identifying the encounter as anti-Semitic was difficult for Norman and would 
unsettle his sense of security.

The concern over paranoia at identifying anti-Semitism is a common one in today’s 
world of subtle ambiguous prejudice. On one level it is tied to a concern over visibility and 
not wanting to make waves over every little slight against Jews. Another aspect of this 
concern is that it expresses the tension experienced during encounters with everyday 
prejudice that are so subtle and ambiguous. The resulting confusion and jumble of emotions 
for the stigmatized individual is well expressed here.

If Norman truly believes there is anti-Semitism in this and other encounters it 
challenges his belief that the world is a safe place for him and his family as Jews. Given 
recent history this is a difficult reality to accept and would demand a response from him that 
might feel very risky.
The level of personal threat as assessed by Norman appeared to be minimal. The class was ending and as the teacher Norman had a power given him by the institution regardless of his social identity. Norman is a confident person and had commented elsewhere in the interview that he does not easily become anxious so it is likely that he felt he had the resources to deal with this encounter.

Norman’s decision not to reveal his Jewish identity and his avoidance of pork is curious. He comments that he felt there was nothing to be gained by revealing this. It is not clear whether he considered the possible losses of revealing his stigmatized identity. The intentions of the student at the centre of the encounter were unclear as well. Unconscious motivation for maintaining his invisibility as a kashrut observing Jew is unclear but could be operating.

Overall Norman’s response to this encounter was one of engagement. He observed that there were likely others in the class who would have similar needs regarding food and announced a plan that would be inclusive for everyone. This has been observed to be a common practice for stigmatized individuals to anticipate problems and take action to deal with that possibility. This can be referred to as situation management.

The behaviour of the student at the centre of the encounter undid this preplanning and put Norman into the position of reacting to an encounter. By putting a firm end to the discussion of the menu and reiterating the vegetarian plan he engaged in a primary strategy to change the situation from the student’s plan to one of respectful inclusion. He did not make this an explicit teaching moment but felt that he had “made his point.”

Norman succinctly summarized his strategy in dealing with encounters as “pretty angry inside” and “pretty diplomatic outside.” Emotional regulation is part of his arsenal of
coping strategies. He does not go the extra step to educate students on the prejudice and does hold back information about himself in what can be seen as an act of disengagement. For example, Norman’s Jewishness is concealable so he has a choice whether to reveal this part of his identity. In this situation he has chosen to “pass.”

The dilemma of whether to make oneself visible as a Jew is a very common one. Norman holds an unspoken belief that it is more comfortable having his Jewishness remain outside his professional arena. To remain invisible is to protect oneself and is a coping strategy of disengagement and avoidance. This is a common strategy for Jews and one that Norman may be using without awareness.

This is a good example of how one encounter can demand a number of responses that serve various goals. Controlling the classroom environment is a primary engagement strategy. Emotional regulation and debating who the intended recipient was are secondary engagement strategies. Finally choosing not to reveal his Jewish identity is a disengagement strategy.

**Racial slurs and Anti-Semitic Language (Hannah at university).**

After high school I decided that I didn't like anything Jewish or anyone Jewish. I ended up going to a university where there were only two other Jewish people. It was where all the [wealthy private school] kids went. … It's a small college, and truthfully the education was phenomenal.

I remember the first day I got there. What I encountered was an incredible sense of anti-Semitism without even knowing that it was anti-Semitism. How often I heard “You don't look Jewish,” “I can't believe you're Jewish,” “You don't act Jewish,” and comments [such as] “Don't Jew me.” And all of a sudden I [was] in a position where I was “the Jew,” I was defending Judaism, I was explaining Judaism, I was talking Judaism. My world reality and my narrative were very different than anyone else's there.

I remember one girl that I'm very close with now that isn't Jewish. I remember we were walking, and she was also a real misfit there. She had come from a public school and she said to me, “If I say you're a Jew, is that insulting?” and I said, “Well why? I am a Jew.” She said, “But what do I call you if I describe it to someone.” And I realized that the only way she had ever
heard the term Jew was in a negative connotation “Don't Jew me,” “You're such a Jew,” and that she was confused because I called myself a Jew. So why would I call myself a Jew – … my point being that all of a sudden I became “other” and I think the experience of “other” allowed me to define and appreciate and kind of figure out my Judaism.

This encounter highlights the impact of common anti-Semitic slurs and stereotypes that are part of the English language. This is one of the most common types of encounters. It also highlights how prejudice and language are socially constructed. Hannah’s friend’s confusion over the meaning of the work “Jew” and its valence is evidence of this.

Gilman states, “language has played a vital role as a marker of Jewish difference” (Gilman, 1991, p. 5). The words in this encounter are so much a part of the English language that many versions of English dictionaries include phrases such as “jew someone down” as alternate definitions of the word Jew. The online Oxford American Dictionary includes this phrase defining it as “offensive, bargain with someone in a miserly or petty way” (Oxford Dictionary).

The stereotype is that Jews are materialistic and miserly. There are other stereotypes of Jews reflected in the language Hannah was encountering such as Jews having a certain look, and a certain way of behaving. The look is that of a darker skin with a large nose and curly hair. The behaviour would be untrustworthy and sly. These are age old anti-Semitic stereotypes dating back to the days of early Christianity (Gilman, 1991).

The Stereotype Content Model states that these comments reflect what Fiske (2004) refers to as “envious prejudice.” That is, that the majority holds a perception of Jews as cold or ill intentioned yet competent and able to carry out their intentions. This fuels negative stereotypes and mistrust, emotions commonly felt about those who are different. These stereotypes do not need to be based in truth. In fact, these particular stereotypes are rooted in
a historical context hundreds of years old and unrelated to the present day context. It is not clear from Hannah's experience with her friend that the individuals using the anti-Semitic language had ever met any Jews or understood the root of these terms.

The encounter in this narrative is Hannah being asked what she should be called in place of calling her a Jew since the friend believes the word Jew is a negative label. This is a fellow student from a small town who has become friends with Hannah, the first Jew she has met in her life. Previously this woman had only heard the word Jew in a derogatory context. So a dilemma is presented for Hannah's friend and she trustingly asks for guidance. In this moment Hannah’s experience as one of very few Jews in this environment is encapsulated. Hannah must interact with the negative stereotype of a Jew in the context of a trusting friendship. Typically friendships do not include confronting painful stigma.

Context.

Hannah was raised in a relatively sheltered environment with most if not all of her social interactions with other Jews and her extended family. She went to Jewish schools and vacationed with other Jews. Her experience as she described it was one of security, warmth and belonging. She did not mention any comments from her parents regarding the larger non-Jewish world nor did she mention childhood anti-Semitic experiences. Her family did not have a direct connection to the Holocaust by losing family members. She was totally unprepared for this kind of encounter with anti-Semitism.

Her expectations of others were positive, as is her self-image. For this reason encounters with hostility or anti-Semitism were unexpected. Thus she was naïve about anti-Semitism as she said, “I encountered … an incredible sense of anti-Semitism without even knowing that it was anti-Semitism.”
Another comment Hannah made was on the environment of this university as being one where Jews did not typically go, as well as it having many students from private schools Jews did not attend. This points to a specific historical context. Hannah attended university during the 1970’s. This was shortly after some restrictions against Jews and other minorities had been eased (government policy supporting multiculturalism, establishment of the human rights commission, and restrictive covenants deemed illegal) and before the Charter of Rights. Hannah’s fellow students went to high school when the realities of division between groups were still common. For these reasons Jews, as well as other minority groups, avoided places where they knew they would be unwelcome as a proactive situation management strategy (Swim & Stangor, 1998).

Hannah’s comments about not liking anything Jewish at the beginning of this narrative point to the contextual overlay of normal human development. As a young adult about to leave home she is feeling her way toward a self-definition as an adult separate from her parents. Deciding that she wants to experience life outside the Jewish community is part of this exploration of her overall identity. Her Jewish identity is not separate from her identity as a whole. In turn this encounter and others during university contribute to the adult identity she ultimately created.

Assessment and response.

This encounter is an example of experiencing stigma without initially identifying it as such. Entering this environment Hannah’s stigma consciousness was low. She had not had any previous experience with anti-Semitism and therefore did not expect these encounters with prejudice. She did not have an existing mental template within which to insert this experience.
Her identity as a Jew is concealable and her account does not include how others came to know she was Jewish. She did not say in her narrative that she was concerned whether people knew she was Jewish so I can guess that not expecting prejudice she made no attempt to hide it. These experiences consequently made this aspect of her identity much more salient for her in this environment and in the future.

In this specific encounter Hannah had to figure out what her friend was talking about. This question made her realize the only way her friend had heard about Jews was in a negative context and here was a Jew whom she had befriended, which created a dilemma for the friend. Hannah’s initial reaction was puzzlement and surprise. She needed to think through the deeper meaning of the interaction and how it should be responded to. In her retelling of the encounter she did not seem to have strong negative emotion or worry.

Hannah did not see her friend as anti-Semitic but rather trying to make sense of the anti-Semitism built into the language and the environment that she was now coming to question. While Hannah may not have had experience with this kind of environment she does not report questioning her own safety or her ability to find a way to deal with the situation at that time. It was also a situation where the prejudice and its source were clear. Perhaps on some level the existence of this kind of anti-Semitism was not such a surprise and as such required little commentary.

Her comment to her friend “Well why [wouldn’t I call myself a Jew]? I am a Jew,” suggests that she did not consider concealing this part of her identity. In assessing this encounter as a stressor Hannah judged the prejudice to be manageable and she believed in her own ability to handle the encounter. There were no major losses from it because of the friendship and helping her friend understand this bias in the language would serve to
strengthen the friendship. Hannah commented that they are still friends today. This encounter then is one of low threat but clearly related to her stigmatized social identity. The overall school environment may have felt more threatening at the time.

Support for this assessment comes from a few sources. The university was a temporary home. She knows she will return to a more positive environment in her home community where she is not stigmatized. She had friendships with other “misfits” and her social need for self-enhancement was fed through the education she was enjoying.

Hannah responded in a few ways and these appear to have taken place over a period of time. At first she seemed passive except to explain to her friend that Jewish was not always a derogatory label. She seemed surprised or confused as to what to do with this unpleasant experience. She did not run away from the situation nor did she adjust who she was to fit in. Explaining or educating the friend is a primary engagement technique.

With time the need to have some response to these experiences challenged her to redefine her Jewishness. “I think the experience of ‘other’ allowed me to define and appreciate and kind of figure out my Judaism.” Part of responding to this challenge was to study Judaism and Jewish history so that she could respond knowledgeably to the questions being asked. “I was defending Judaism, I was explaining Judaism, I was talking Judaism.” But at the time she felt she didn’t know enough to answer effectively. Elsewhere in her interview she shared that she has since taken many courses in Jewish studies both for interest and to become knowledgeable to respond to others’ questions. In this way she prepared herself to deal with encounters from a sense of strength and utilizing the primary engagement technique of education as well as being proactive.
After her university experiences Hannah’s stigma consciousness remained heightened. The literature (Pinel, 1999) suggests that this would make her more likely to have an expectation of being judged on the basis of her stigmatized social identity, that is, her Jewishness. The Rejection-identification model (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998) would explain her shift to using the Jewish community as her reference group. Together this is how the literature would explain Hannah's more active participation as an adult in things Jewish. In sharing this encounter Hannah said she continues to be friends with this woman who is “almost Jewish” (therefore ok). She sees her inner circle of friends as being part of her group and from statements like this that can be seen as Jewish.

As mentioned elsewhere individuals react in many ways to encounters, both conscious and unconscious, and may even use more than one technique at a time. Hannah’s account of her experiences had, in the retelling, a light almost upbeat quality. There were only a few encounters where she identified fear as one of her reactions to an encounter. This may be a personality style based on a secure attachment style or it could be a form of denial or minimizing where encounters are experienced through a filter leaning more heavily on the positive side.

In describing her current day coping strategies for such encounters she described a primary engagement approach. She often tells people she meets for the first time in ambiguous settings that she is Jewish. Her husband teases her saying she does this within the first few minutes. This may be a proactive or pre-emptive strike. It certainly puts her into the environment as an active participant.

From another perspective this approach can be seen as a way of averting what she knows will be an unpleasant experience for her. If this is the case then what looks like a
strategy of engagement may in fact be one of disengagement or avoidance. By saying she is Jewish she is using the social norm of politeness and keeping prejudice subtle to say, “Not in front of me; I don’t want to deal with your prejudice.” Hannah’s positive spin on her past experiences may be both a way of seeing things optimistically as well as minimizing the events. In this explanation Hannah’s original experience of the encounter and that university environment was a more upsetting negative experience than she articulated.

Hannah’s approach is similar to the findings of Serlin (2004) in her qualitative study of Jewish American identity where she found her participants relied on two themes in dealing with non-Jews. These were educating non-Jews and minimizing differences. These were at the same time acts of primary engagement and acts of minimization to underplay the importance or impact of encounters with everyday prejudice. Combined these strategies address a situation, which at its heart is profoundly hurtful and simultaneously unchangeable.

Christmas as a Time of Exclusion (Lyla’s exercise class).

I was in this exercise class … before Christmas and she [the teacher] decided to put on Christmas carols. One of the Jewish women in the class made a face, like, do we have to listen to this? So the teacher, I think she made a face, the teacher started talking to her and singling her out as being a Scrooge, that she doesn’t like Christmas. She would play another song and then she would say – “Is this okay Sandra?” and she just went on and on. It was like the theme for the class, and I was quite upset. I was thinking of complaining about her to management, but I didn’t do anything.

I saw Sandra later in the dressing room, and I said to her, “What did you think of that? I thought that was awful, she was singling you out, that you didn’t like to listen to Christmas carols, and she had a whole table of Christmas carols and she said this and this,” I can’t remember exactly the details. Sandra said, “No I don’t think she meant anything by it.”

I didn’t realize until recently that I stopped going to that teacher’s class. I purposely or subconsciously set up a training session at that very time. Today I saw the teacher. She was very unfriendly to me. Usually she was very friendly. I think she’s mad that I don’t go to her class anymore.

I realized that there’s a reason I don’t go to her class. I was really pissed off at her. She was totally inappropriate. I’m not saying she’s anti-Semitic. I don’t know that about her, but she just – the whole thing about
singling out the Jewish people in the class … . And Sandra didn’t think it was a big deal.

I second-guess because of my background. So I think, am I reading this right? But I know it happened, I was there.

…

[About complaining to management] it might not be only that complaining would get her into trouble but it may be that complaining will get that same kind of reaction [as from Sandra] from management. And if I’m not sure, where is it all going to get me?

Christmas is a time when Jews, and others who do not celebrate Christmas, feel excluded and particularly aware of being different, on the outside looking in. In this encounter Lyla has a close vicarious experience of an encounter with everyday prejudice. The recipient of the prejudice is actually Sandra, who is also Jewish. Even though Lyla’s role in this encounter is the observer she has a strong reaction. This is illustrative of the power of these everyday encounters to affect more than the individual directly targeted (Miller & Kaiser, 2001b).

The encounter to be analyzed here is Lyla’s experience as an observer to a primary encounter with everyday prejudice between a fellow Jew, Sandra, and the exercise class teacher. In other words, watching cohorts experience stigma and prejudice is a vicarious experience which is itself an encounter with everyday prejudice (Miller & Kaiser, 2001b).

Context

Christmas is a time of feelings of exclusion for many Jews. Based on the media’s focus on holiday activities, inclusion of the holiday into the work place, and the frenzy of activity in stores it feels as if everyone is celebrating the holiday. To not celebrate Christmas is to be very aware of one’s difference and exclusion. As such this is a good example of Christian privilege (Schlosser, 2003).
Christmas can be a difficult time of heightened sensitivity for Jews. As Plaut (2004) notes, it is a time of “seasonal marginality.” The season makes Jews feel displaced and like outsiders in their own neighbourhoods and workplaces. For Jews this holiday celebrated by so many is one that traditionally presents a deep theological conflict. “The theology and the folk celebration attendant to this holiday are at odds with the tenets of Judaism” (Plaut, 2004, p. 4). As a celebration of the birth of Jesus and as such the beginning of the historical tension between Judaism and Christianity expressed in Christian anti-Semitism, Jews have avoided any celebration of the holiday. It is only recently in North America that Jews have felt safe enough and sufficiently integrated into the larger society that they have begun to participate in the social elements of the holiday.

The holiday typically stretches out to a season lasting about a month during which Jews encounter reminders of their difference on a frequent basis. This accumulation of encounters with everyday prejudice adds to these heightened sensitivities. Jewishness is a concealable stigma but at this time of year it becomes much more salient. The sense of being solo or in the small minority also heightens these feelings. The media’s encouragement for everyone to participate, justified by the ethic of multiculturalism, further exacerbates the tension for Jews as well as feelings of exclusion.

This encounter is an example of vicarious experience of everyday prejudice (Inzlicht & Good, 2006). In this situation the prejudice aimed at Sandra made the environment a threatening one for others with the same social identity as Sandra. For Lyla this activated concerns regarding her stigmatized social identity. Seeing other members of one’s group can easily trigger a vicarious stress response (Miller & Kaiser, 2001b).
Finally Lyla is a child of Holocaust survivors and identifies strongly with her parents’ experiences. She has a strong stigma consciousness and therefore easily sees everyday prejudice for what it is. Many of her experiences are filtered through the lens of her parents’ experiences and her own highly attuned sensitivity.

Assessment and response.

Lyla’s immediate reaction is that this everyday prejudice is aimed at her as well. She experiences it very personally and states that she was upset. Her difficulty remembering details of the encounter may even be the result of her emotion at the time. She tried to create an alliance with Sandra who was the direct recipient of the everyday prejudice. “What did you think of that? I thought that was awful, she was singling you out…” Sandra had a different understanding of the event and took the position of minimizing it. This isolated Lyla even further, which did not soothe her nor reassure her that her instincts about the prejudice were correct. Her worries about being believed were activated and could have an impact on her subsequent response.

Sandra’s external response made it seem that this encounter was not serious or important. When asked about the impact of Sandra's perspective on her own assessment of the situation, Lyla felt it made her uncomfortable and that it might have had a role in her own hesitation to take the matter further. Part of Lyla wanted to pursue this matter further but she held back unsure of her judgment of the situation. Throughout the experience Lyla found it difficult to regulate her emotions and clarify cognitively what the encounter meant and how to deal with it.

Deep inside her intuition Lyla knew that this was a situation of everyday prejudice. While not directed to her personally, as a fellow Jew she experienced it as if it had been
directed to her. Vicarious experience of prejudice can be very powerful particularly when the individual is sensitized to these events through previous experience or the impact of their unique context. The literature makes note of a vicarious stress response when other members of a group see an individual suffer (Miller & Kaiser, 2001b). There was no doubt that their Jewishness was a part of this encounter.

Lyla’s initial reaction was that it made her angry. “I was really pissed off at her. She [the teacher] was totally inappropriate.” Lyla reached out to the other Jew involved to find a difference in perception which made her second guess her assessment of the situation and wonder about the level of her own sensitivity to these events. Was she looking for things that were not there? “I second guess [myself] because of my background. So I think, am I reading this right? But I know it happened. I was there.”

The ambiguity and subtlety of everyday prejudice means that second-guessing and lack of clarity are common experiences among stigmatized individuals. A disconnect occurs between their intuitive assessment of the event and the verbalized response filtered by other opinions. Lyla and others in her shoes learn to distrust their intuitive knowledge of events.

Confronted with an encounter with everyday prejudice individuals must assess its threat and their capacity to respond to it. In this situation the two are intimately connected. To the outsider the threat level is low but Lyla felt constrained for some reason in responding to the encounter. If she speaks up about the encounter she is quite likely going to be stigmatized or devalued in some way. She has already experienced this vicariously by watching the treatment Sandra received from the teacher, and then when Sandra minimized the encounter Lyla felt devalued again.
Having had experience with previous encounters with everyday prejudice Lyla knows she has the capacity to deal with it and already has some strategies at hand. Perhaps she feels that the potential losses from this particular one in this environment are not worth the risk. She loses nothing but her self-respect by not responding but should she decide to respond she could become labeled as the kind of Jew who reinforces negative stereotypes, which she would not want to do. For whatever reasons it was more important to support her sense of belonging and fitting in.

In this encounter Lyla decides in both a conscious and unconscious way to avoid dealing with the encounter, that is, to not respond. She used the disengagement strategy of withdrawal from the situation. She thought about complaining but did not and she avoided the exercise class from then on. “I didn’t realize … that I stopped going to that … class. I … set up a training session at that very time.”

Lyla’s comments at the end of her narrative of this encounter are an important insight into her motivation in this situation. She suggested that she did not want to get the teacher in trouble and then “It may be that complaining will get that same kind of reaction from management.” Her fears were that the facility management would minimize her concern or see her as a complainer, “a difficult loud Jewish woman.” She did not want to be seen as a stereotype and wanted to protect herself from the disappointment and hurt of not being heard by management. She had the experience of the teacher minimizing the concern and then Sandra, whom she expected to be an ally, minimize her concern. To have management not take her seriously would only have added to the hurt she was feeling (Quinn, 2006). She would have jeopardized her “belonging” in that setting. And as she asked, what was the point?
Jewish Stereotypes and Workplace Encounters (Lyla’s work experience).

I probably didn’t handle this as well as I would today. … I was in my twenties. There was one incident I remember [from a work setting]. There was a psychologist with a PhD … at a treatment center for pre-school children. And they [the clinicians] were talking about one of the kids that was – he was Jewish, and he was in foster care.

[The psychologist] was telling a story about how he [the child] had gone around the street trying to get some money. The psychologist used the term “and the kid jewed the neighbours.” And then he looked at me. There was a whole bunch of people in the staff room and he looked at me and he went “whoops.” I just remember saying “you know, I don’t find that,” I can’t remember what I said. I said something about I find that disrespectful and I stormed out of the room so everybody knew I was really mad.

Today I would have taken it to his supervisor. I would have taken it to the boss. I never did. I never took it further. I sort of acted out by walking out in a huff.

I was just feeling panicky I remember. It was a horrible feeling. I felt really scared and panicky. Don’t forget I’m a child of Holocaust survivors. That’s in my core, and that’s the ultimate us against them.

This encounter is an example of anti-Semitic language and stereotypes. It is clearly anti-Semitic, occurs in a work environment, and includes differences between the perpetrator and recipient in their place in the hierarchy of this environment. The encounter is the interaction between Lyla and the psychologist, and is exacerbated when the psychologist turns to Lyla knowing she is Jewish and says “whoops.”

Context.

A description of the context begins with Lyla herself. She is a child of Holocaust survivors and as their oldest child she identifies strongly with her parents’ experiences. She has strong stigma consciousness and her antennae are finely tuned to recognize and react to any level of anti-Semitic behaviour. She is also young in this encounter, and as she alludes not yet skilled at dealing with these kinds of encounters. She is also outnumbered, being the only Jew in this workplace meeting. Together these factors signal this as a “threatening” environment. Having others witness this encounter incresed Lyla’s upset, “There was a
whole bunch of people in the staff room.” All of these elements heightened her sense of vulnerability. Her goals of belonging, shared understanding, trust and self-enhancement were all violated.

As in other encounters highlighted in this chapter the concealable stigma of Jewish identity somehow seems quite visible. There is no mention as to how the others know Lyla is Jewish but she assumes they know and as such the environment has become threatening for her once these anti-Semitic stereotypes are in the air. Alone in experiencing this encounter, and having it drawn to her attention that the initiator was aware of the implications of his actions directly challenged her core social needs. She immediately felt she did not belong in the group, was not in control over events nor was there a shared understanding amongst these colleagues as to what was appropriate language and attitudes towards the client. Her trust in her colleagues was shaken. Her strong reaction to this encounter is fueled by this intense perception of vulnerability.

As a fellow Jew Lyla would feel a special connection to this child, perhaps more protective, but certainly a connection as a fellow member of a stigmatized minority group. As such the anti-Semitic slurs used against the child devalue Lyla as well as the child and make her angry. The child’s vulnerability as a youngster with mental health issues increases this feeling.

Her comments about the psychologist who is the initiator of the encounter suggest that she had expected a different kind of behaviour from him, more professional, less prejudiced or superficial. As a psychologist he was educated and more sophisticated in dealing with people and their emotions. Lyla’s assessment of his behaviour was that he should know better. He is also in a position of power in this group. As the psychologist in a
children’s mental health facility he is the top of the hierarchy above the social workers and other therapists. He is the one to whom they would go for supervision and consultations about their clients, the children.

*Assessment and response.*

Lyla’s initial reaction to this encounter was one of fear. “I felt really scared and panicky.” She was transported to an emotional state that clouded her thinking and indicated a high level of upset. It was hard for her to go beyond her own emotions in that moment, suggesting that she was overwhelmed. In fact she tied her emotional state directly to her status as a “child of Holocaust survivors.” She reminded me not to forget this information because it is key to understanding her experience and is the lens through which she experienced this encounter. “Don’t forget I’m a child of Holocaust survivors. That’s in my core, and that’s the ultimate us against them.” This is a good example of how one small incident can mean so much more to the individual recipient because of the influence of context and perceptions.

Lyla experiences this encounter as a serious moment of anti-Semitism during which she is alone and vulnerable. The weight of the Holocaust is part of her thought process as she assesses the encounter. For her this is clearly a stressful event. The emotion expressed by Lyla suggests that she perceived a high level of threat. From the perspective of being devalued or stigmatized because of her Jewishness this was true. She may also have felt the exclusion by the others. On a less conscious level her Holocaust connection would increase her sensitivity to feeling publicly marked, separated and made to feel stigmatized.

She referred to the fact that she was young and did not handle the situation well. Likely her perception was that she did not have the resources to handle this event, nor did she
have any power or control over the environment. As a young social worker she would be low on the hierarchy of this workplace. Therefore for Lyla this encounter was one of high threat.

Why did the psychologist focus on the anti-Semitic stereotype rather than the underlying pathology of the child that needed addressing and healing? The final consideration was the psychologist’s attitude and understanding of his young patient. This was a pre-school child with mental health issues. How a negative stereotype serves to help this child is unimaginable. Furthermore someone in a position of authority who can treat his patient with such disrespect is easily capable of other disrespectful actions.

Lyla felt unprepared to deal with this situation. She found regulating her emotions extremely challenging. Her response to this encounter was disengagement. “I stormed out of the room.” She actually did attempt to verbally respond in a manner that would educate the others and communicate to them the reason for and strength of her anger at their behaviour. She assumed that storming out of the room would communicate something to the others and that is just that, an assumption. This is an example of an occasion when an individual has difficulty regulating her emotions and overwhelmed by them is less capable of responding. The emotional reactions are working on an unconscious as well as conscious level. On the level of problem focused coping Lyla saw her best option as leaving the situation.

**Stereotypes of Jews and Money (Bill’s shoe purchase).**

This incident happened [a while ago]. I was doing my training … [in a small town]. There was a group of trainees that I really thought I could become very close to and very comfortable with. I was the only Jew there. I remember going out with one of them to do some shopping and I bought a pair of shoes. There was something wrong with the shoes and I made a bit of a fuss about it. The person I was with made a comment about it. I can’t remember exactly what he said but it was along the lines of behaving in a Jewish way, suggesting that Jews are kind of picky about these things and always looking to get a special deal. Obviously I was very offended by it and I let him know. This was a very bright guy, well educated, but there it was. And that has been
my experience throughout my childhood, throughout my adult life, there’s always something.

Some little fucking comment. Yeah, just out of the blue. It’s often when I’m starting to feel calm and connected. Then some stupid little comment about being “jewed” or something. I feel a lot of anger about [this]. It really pisses me off. I’m very offended – ‘what the fuck is this?’ But that is my reality … .

Being the field [of work] that I’m in, it’s more of a Gentile field, the majority of people that I deal with in my practice, and among colleagues are Gentiles. So no it [my past experience] doesn’t stop me, but the awareness is there.

This encounter goes beyond the prejudice embedded in language to stereotyped beliefs and is an example of the common everydayness of these encounters. It assumes more consciousness on the part of the perpetrator. This encounter also gives voice to the experience of another child of survivors. Bill was one of two participants who identified themselves as such.

The encounter in this narrative is the friend’s comments about acting in a “Jewish” way about the shoe purchase and subsequent problem with the shoes. It taps into stereotypes about Jews and money such as being materialistic and underhanded in business. This stereotype is expressed directly rather than embedded in the language as in the encounter between Hannah and her friend. The comment referred to the stereotype as if it were fact that everyone agreed upon, the way we might comment in passing on the weather.

Stereotypical beliefs are understood to facilitate the division of a large group into an ingroup and an outgroup (Suedfeld & Schaller, 2002).

Context.

A number of contextual influences are at work in this encounter. Bill is a child of Holocaust survivors and has had many personal encounters with prejudice and anti-Semitism. In his interview he shared childhood experiences of being beaten by other boys because he
was Jewish. He described his adult experience with less violent examples of everyday prejudice as common, in his words “there’s always something.” As the literature suggests, having had previous experience with everyday prejudice, Bill’s sensitivity to this experience is heightened. He has a strong stigma consciousness. This stigma consciousness is present even though Bill finds that his Jewishness is not a source of pleasure for him nor does he agree with the stereotypes others have of Jews.

As Holocaust survivors Bill’s parents were expressive in their feeling towards non-Jews and anti-Semitism. They believed there was no protection from anti-Semitism and that the possibility of another Holocaust was real. Bill describes both a “legacy” and “survivor pride” that he has as a child of survivors. On the one hand he has intense anger at the treatment his parents survived and the dark cloud that put over his life. On the other hand there is a sense of being better than non-Jews because they survived. Regardless of which side of this dichotomy is reflected upon, Bill’s experience is one of social isolation and disconnection from others both Jewish and non-Jewish. It leaves him with the need to always be on guard against threat.

Bill’s comment about this group of fellow trainees becoming close knit highlights how important belonging is for Bill. He is the only Jew in that place so the influence of being solo and the concern about stereotype threat becoming an issue with these peers who mostly had never met a Jew are very much on his mind.

Bill’s experience of social isolation also intensifies his social need to belong and to have shared understanding and trust with others. Every encounter with everyday prejudice is a poignant reminder of the absence of these elements. They are also based on an aspect of his social identity which he feels cannot be changed. In fact, not changing his identity as a Jew is
an important part of his expression of survivor pride. To walk away from being a Jew “would be giving in. … It would suggest that there is something wrong with me and that I need to get rid of it.”

Bill’s perceptions of these encounters are strongly influenced by his parents’ experiences as Holocaust survivors. It is as he says “his legacy.” This legacy includes his sensitivity to any hint of anti-Semitism and anger at having to deal with encounters like this. This encounter is typical of those Bill shared in his interview. He is aware “that there is an underlying expectation [on his part] of trouble. So probably with it there’s always a certain amount of defensiveness.” Anti-Semitism is always a strong possibility in exchanges with non-Jews.

He believes these encounters are a reminder of being different and not accepted. “A fear of being found out, that here I am trying to pass and I’m found out again, that they [non-Jews] always know.” This perception is a direct consequence of his parents’ messages, “that I was better than everyone, and on the flip side I was much less than others. So never really equal, never really part of.” Bill has a strong desire to fit in and be like everyone else, which is hard to reconcile with his belief that non-Jews will not ever really accept him. He even comments on how “Jewish” he looks.

Assessment and response.

Bill’s initial reaction is one of strong anger and shock. He had become close with this person and in doing so let his guard down. In this closeness there was a trust and vulnerability. This negative stereotype about Jews hurt him deeply. There is deep anger expressed in Bill’s language “Some little fucking comment” and “It really pisses me off. I’m very offended – what the fuck is this?” Based on Bill’s narrative this deep and intense anger
is a reaction not simply to the moment described in the course of shoe shopping but the accumulation of insults over time and perhaps his legacy as a member of a stigmatized group that has suffered greatly from its history of oppression.

Bill was bothered by the fact that his friend was educated, that somehow an education would inoculate someone against prejudice. Bill’s concern about stereotype threat has come true. His underlying mistrust of non-Jews is reinforced in this encounter. Here he is being related to not as himself but as an antiquated negative stereotype of Jews. This violates his needs for belonging and trust in others and fits into a mental template of the world being unsafe for Jews including him. This pattern identified by Bill as a lifelong experience has a feeling of inevitability to it.

In assessing the situation Bill is clear that his Jewishness is at the root of the encounter and that the level of personal threat in terms of being devalued is high. This comment already devalues Bill and reminds him that he has no choice about being Jewish. Regardless of how he is as a person he is also connected to this stigmatized group and subject to the everyday prejudices it receives. For Bill there is no ambiguity to this situation.

Bill seems confident in his ability to handle such situations. This is a social situation of equals and past experience has taught him how to deal with these encounters. He is however disappointed that they continue to happen and he cannot trust in other’s capacity to let go of prejudice and stereotypes. For this relationship in particular responding in a way that strengthens the relationship or at least does not harm it further is important since they are in a small group of colleagues and spend time together.

Bill’s response has a number of layers. First he must regulate his emotions by dealing with his deep anger. He does not want it to come out unfiltered. He is well aware of the force
of these emotions and has found a way of cognitively parceling out the anger so that he can behave in the moment in a way that he feels is appropriate. In this regard he is engaged but at a secondary level, that is, where he has to change or adjust himself in some regard to fit the situation, in this case regulate his emotions. He wants to have these relationships and is cognizant that to have positive, close relationships with others there needs to be a shared understanding and disclosure as well as the emotional regulation.

Bill let his friend know that he was offended and educated him about the stereotyped comments. This is a more primary type of engagement where he is addressing the situation and attempting to change it to work for him. The information sharing both of the inaccuracy of the stereotype and the impact it has on Bill are key parts in educating his new friend.

Finally Bill is coming to accept that others will not change the way they deal with Jews. While he does not avoid potentially threatening environments he does attempt to behave as others do to fit in and belong. Bill’s coping responses are very much like those described in the research by Serlin (2004) where participants tried to educate non-Jews and minimize differences and in Gale’s (2004) research where participants emphasized appearing socially acceptable in dress, food, and holiday observances.

**Workplace Culture and Subtle Prejudice (Avital and the receptionist).**

I have worked at the same place for 16 years. This situation happened when I began working there. We had a receptionist, who is still there. She is very friendly [and] she talks to everybody. She told me that we used to have consultants and those consultants were not doing a good job. …

But the conversation was [actually] really about one person, who happened to be Jewish. She made very derogative comments about him. And I didn’t know what to do. [Should I] go to my boss to let him know? My boss wasn’t Jewish, he’s German, and I felt that, (pause) I didn’t know what to do.

So the next day I found my _Magen David_, my star of David [necklace], and I put it on, and that’s [how and] why I showed them that I’m Jewish.
I always take the day off, for my holidays [Jewish High Holidays], not my days which I’m supposed to take [as holidays or vacation], but days from my holiday [allotment] for the High Holidays. So they know now [who I am], because I’m there for 16 years. And I always buy something for them for Hanukkah, like some sufganiyot [donuts], some sweets, and [that way] they know that it’s my holiday.

… I didn’t know what to do [about this situation]. I remember I felt at a loss, that I wanted to say that it was me too. [I’m also Jewish] I wanted to tell her, but then I realized that, … I will tell her that she made a mistake. She might think that I’m not Jewish or something.

That’s what I decided to do, and I don’t know if (pause). I know it’s not sincere but they are always saying to me “oh Avital, it’s a Jewish holiday, happy holidays, happy this, happy that.”

This situation is a good example of a subtle ambiguous encounter with everyday prejudice. Because of its subtlety it is easy to dismiss as the inaccurate perceptions of the recipient and thereby minimize or deny her experience; however, to Avital this is very real.

Examination of the influences on the identification of everyday prejudice will clarify the importance of this experience. At the centre of this encounter are the receptionist’s remarks. “She made very derogatory comments about him [the Jewish consultant].” Avital understood this to be an anti-Semitic comment and possibly a warning about the environment she was working in vis-à-vis her Jewishness.

Context

A number of contextual influences are at work here. The immediate influence is that this is where Avital works as an employee and is thus subject to aspects of the hierarchy of power. She was a new employee at the time of the encounter and thus concerned about fitting in and being successful. She did not yet know the others well enough to judge their attitude towards Jews. Avital is the only or one of few Jews in this workplace. Research on the impact of the environment on stigma reports that being solo or in the minority triggers the
perception of the environment as threatening and heightens the individual’s sensitivity to
their social identity and the possibility of prejudice (Inzlicht & Good, 2006).

Social goals as defined by Fiske (2004) also have an influence on the experience of
an encounter. Avital was particularly focused on the goal of belonging. Her narrative also
suggests that she did not feel she could trust the others in that environment (Pinel, 1999). Her
boss was German triggering the collective memory of the Holocaust (Major, 2006). Her
hesitation as she recounted bringing sweets to the workplace and the manner in which she
accounts for her taking the Jewish holidays as time off suggest a lingering concern about
trust and belonging.

Avital suggests that others will judge her as a representative of Jews as a group (self
threat) so she wants to make sure that they understand that Jews can be good people like her.
Thus her carefulness about Jewish holidays and the impression she makes. She also makes a
distinction between her personal relationships and friends and those in the workplace where
she has professional relationships that are more distant and less disclosing.

Stepping back from the immediate moment of the encounter, a wider lens including
Avital’s personal history, her family and broader social contexts help explain her experience.
Avital’s personal history includes having experienced frequent blatant anti-Semitism as a
refusenik in the Soviet Union, and being an immigrant to Canada. In addition to the
contextual information common to the other participants in this research she has had some
unique experiences.

Her childhood and young adulthood were spent in the Soviet Union where there was
pervasive blatant anti-Semitism. She and her family were strongly identified with their
Jewish identity and as a result of these experiences felt the need to leave the Soviet Union.
As Avital said, “We decided to leave because we knew that we don’t belong there. We knew that our place was with the Jewish people.” Clearly her stigma consciousness was high as was the expectation that non-Jews would not see Jews in a positive light. She became attuned to identifying anti-Semitism.

As explained in Chapter 2, Jews like Avital who wanted to leave the Soviet Union had to apply to leave and encountered much difficulty as a result of this application. The anti-Semitism and difficult experiences continued through the long waiting period until their application might be approved. During this difficult waiting period they were referred to as *refuseniks* because the government was refusing to let them emigrate. She experienced frequent blatant anti-Semitism both institutionally and on the level of individual relationships.

During her interview Avital explained that whatever prejudice she encounters in Canada is minor in comparison to her experiences in Russia. “[In Canada it’s] much freer” and one does not need to feel fear. She referred to the multicultural policy of the government as proof of this. Avital comes to this experience both as a Jew and an immigrant with a good command of English but not having the comfort of it being her mother tongue.

Avital spoke of her father’s experiences including World War II. This is another source of contextual influence for her. Her father was her source of whatever little Jewish education she received as a child. He acted as a cantor at the synagogue in Leningrad during the High Holidays and had a strong sense of his Jewishness. During the Second World War he worked in Leningrad while the city was under siege by the Germans. Avital remembers his stories of this difficult experience. His advice for being Jewish in a non-Jewish environment was to be quiet about it, “keep a low profile.”
In sum, Avital feels a strong connection to her Jewishness along with a desire for others to see Jews in a good light. She has a heightened awareness and sensitivity to anti-Semitism as a result of her past experience. This past experience also heightened her social goals of belonging and trust, which in turn influence her behaviour in this environment.

Assessment and response.

Avital saw this encounter with the receptionist as anti-Semitic and threatening, demanding some sort of response on her part. The question was how to respond and yet maintain good working relationships with co-workers so that her social needs would be met. In particular she wanted to support the goals of belonging and trust in others. As a former refusenik she was comfortable identifying herself as a Jew but needed to understand the social norms and decide how to do this. As she had described in her interview she feels a responsibility to represent the Jewish people in a good light so that non-Jews will think well of Jews. This is an example of self-threat in addition to stereotype threat (Major & O'Brien, 2005). Not only does she not want to confirm negative stereotypes, she also sees herself as a representative of Jews as a group.

While Jewishness is concealable and she assessed this situation as one in which she needed to be wary of devaluation as a Jew (Quinn, 2006), she did not want to conceal her Jewishness. This encounter had the potential to have high personal threat for her. An inappropriate response would hinder her success in this position. Determining what resources were available and could be used took some thought. Within 24 hours she had created a plan that would honour her desire not to be fearful or hidden, and at the same time establish a positive working relationship. This maintained her sense of control over the environment and ability to protect herself.
While Avital’s assessment of the encounter was clear-cut, her response was more nuanced. Revealing her Jewishness was an act of positive engagement by wanting those involved to know who she was; however, her means of letting others know was passive, that is, wearing a piece of Jewish jewelry, her magen david necklace. She did not say anything and assumed that what needed to be said would come through the non-verbal statement of the jewelry. It is difficult to judge whether subtle non-verbal statements as a response to an encounter have been understood by the other party in the way that they were intended.

As a general modus operandi to workplace relationships Avital keeps it “professional” and follows her father’s advice to “keep a low profile.” The low profile advice is a longstanding and common response by some Jews as a way of protecting themselves against anti-Semitism (Glenn, 2006). Her attention to professionalism works to maintain her good reputation as well as the image of Jews generally. Her ongoing response to this encounter is to take time off for Jewish holidays in a way that does not ask for special favours, and to bring sweets to share for Hanukkah. While wearing her magen david necklace is a response to the encounter, the sharing of sweets can been seen as a proactive attempt at coping that aims to support a number of social goals.

In sum she has not avoided the situation nor has she concealed who she is. She has chosen to focus her intimate and close relationships with others Jews, as the rejection-identification model would predict (Branscombe, et al., 1999). Workplace interactions are more formal and distant.

Ambiguous Situations and Feeling Vulnerable (Susan and her home repair).

Just last week we had these guys in to install an air conditioner. Both of them were from Iran, and one guy was very very friendly and did all the stuff as he should have, and the other one was not like that. He walked into the house without knocking. He didn’t take his boots off. He didn’t put down the mat
that he was supposed to, … and he seemed surly. I didn’t know whether or not as soon as they saw the mezuzah, he went into this surly mood, or whether this is his style. I’ve become aware recently, and certainly since 2001, of my growing understanding of the animosity and the anti-Semitism that exists, and I’ve become less secure about some of these people. … Not feeling as safe as I once did.

I think that [9/11] really started to open up my eyes to a lot of things that I was choosing to be oblivious to. Certainly there’s been a lot more reportage in the news since then about the Muslim community that I never knew of before. I remember reading something just recently where, I can’t remember exactly what it was, but that people were being taught that to kill a Jew was a good thing that would ensure their future life. This is … in another context [than the terrorists you read about]. I’m sorry I can’t remember exactly.

It all contributes to feeling more nervous about these things, and a heightened awareness.

Well in terms of answering the question how did I deal with it, there was in fact a form that I was asked to fill out about how this service was, and the thought crossed my mind, should I fill this out and say one guy behaved this way and one guy behaved the other way? I was worried about doing that, and I was worried for any repercussions that might come our way if I were to have done that. So I chose not to say anything. But every time I swallow that sort of stuff, it aggravates me. You know it’s possible that … anyways he did not do what he should have done. He should have put down a mat, and he should have taken off his shoes. And he should have knocked on the door before just barging in. He should not have done all those things, yes, and I didn’t say anything.

Q: And part of it, was that you were worried that his motivation was because he saw you were Jewish?
A: That’s right. I don’t remember having these kinds of worries or experiences that much in the past. I think that my anxiety has definitely been heightened [more recently]. It could be because I live with someone whose parents survived the war, and it could be that just reading the newspaper and hearing these various stories has contributed to my fear.

Susan’s interaction with the air conditioner installers is another example of a very subtle and ambiguous exchange. Here the encounter is the behaviour of the air conditioning installer with the surly demeanor. Her reaction shows her struggle to understand it and settle on an explanation that fits with her values. This encounter is also interesting because the exchange is between individuals from two minority groups, both of which are stigmatized. Knowing very little about these workmen except their identity as Iranians Susan sees them in
a stereotypical fashion mirroring to the way she is expecting to be treated (Major & O'Brien, 2005).

**Context**

Susan articulated the contextual influences on her perceptions that she is aware of. These are the historical event of the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, living with a child of Holocaust survivors, and the influence of the media with its particular view of events. At one point in the interview Susan referred to the fact that she felt she herself had not experienced anti-Semitism directly so was only recently coming to the awareness of the reality of its existence. Her awareness is influenced by the fact that many of the situations that may have had anti-Semitic undertones were subtle and she did not have the stigma consciousness to attend to these signals (Pinel, 1999).

Research into subtle sexism shows that it can have an insidious impact on its recipients because of the mixture of emotions and reactions and lack of clarity (Swim, 2003). It can be hypothesized that subtle anti-Semitism will have a similar effect on its recipients. The uncertainty that is part of subtle prejudice and leaves the individual confused as to whether the experience was a result of their stigmatized identity is part of this mixture of emotions (Crocker, et al., 1998). In the absence of clear markers explaining this situation Susan provides her own explanation based on the contextual lens she brings to these experiences.

Jewishness is a concealable social identity. The *mezuzah*, which is unique to Jews, is a small case attached to the doorpost of a Jewish home and contains a parchment with religious texts. Since it is a ritual object unique to Judaism having one marks the home as
Jewish and thus visible as such. Typically it is not commented on so it is not clear if non-Jewish visitors to a home notice it.

Having a concealable stigma and keeping it concealed along with concerns about visibility makes the individual more mindful of and on alert for signs of prejudice (Smart & Wegner, 2000). Ironically Susan’s mother used to comment on the fact that her daughters did not look Jewish and that this was a good thing. Susan’s thoughts about visibility and vulnerability began in childhood and have evolved since then. She may not have worried beforehand but certainly felt this personal information about her identity could come to be used against her once it became visible.

The traumatic event of the World Trade Center attack on September 11, 2001 and its aftermath left Susan with a heightened sensitivity. For many individuals in North America, both Jews and non-Jews, this is one of the first times that terrorism has been so real and close to home. This event became the concrete moment Susan became aware on a personal level of the possibility of others, in this case Moslem terrorists, coming to North America and carrying out violence against her; that it could very well touch her family. Some of the reports after the event included reactions in the Middle East of celebration of the success of these attacks. In the reports and video from the Middle East the United States and Israel became intertwined and for some Jews the attack felt doubly threatening.

Outside of the ongoing violence in the Middle East little is known by the general Canadian public about the cultures and religions of that geographic area including the diversity that exists among these cultures. Media reports have not shed much light on this subject and tend to highlight the sensational and negative aspects in the news. This serves to
increase individual’s anxieties, including Susan. Likely this fueled her response to the air conditioner installers.

The beheading of Daniel Pearl, which occurred after 9/11, is an event that Susan specifically referred to as a turning point in her understanding of anti-Semitism and the animosity of some Moslems towards Jews. All of these situations and the impressions Susan is left with are evidence of the power of the media as a source of information and subtle judgments about stigma.

In this encounter the social goals of control and trust are tested. This encounter took place in Susan’s home, which one assumes to be a place of safety and security. It is as well a moment when controlling disclosure of this concealable stigma suddenly goes out of her hands.

Assessment and response.

Susan’s initial reaction was one of worry combined with confusion over the ambiguity of the situation. She suspected that the installer who was surly and unprofessional was aware that this was a Jewish house and was behaving this way because of anti-Semitism; however, there was nothing concrete that she could point to as evidence of this. So she was also left feeling quite confused and second-guessing her reaction to the situation. She doubted herself yet felt uncomfortable and had an intuitive sense something was happening. These feelings were heightened by the fact that this was taking place in her home, which should be a place of safety and security. She referred to feeling unsafe.

Susan’s intuition told her that something was happening. She attributed the poor behaviour of the one installer to her Jewishness. This high stigma consciousness was the result of heightened awareness through the media and her husband’s experiences as a child of
Holocaust survivors. The ambiguity of the situation meant that she was unable to definitively assign the poor behaviour to her stigma; therefore, in her assessment of the situation this lack of clarity had an impact on the meaning she made of the situation as well as her response. In highly ambiguous situations where subtle everyday prejudice may be happening the individual is left without clear goalposts to give meaning to the situation. A high stigma consciousness means that the stigmatized social identity is available as a plausible explanation for the events and likely seen as such.

Because this encounter took place in her home Susan felt a higher level of personal threat. In terms of assessing her resources to deal with this threat she was disadvantaged because it was unclear whether this was indeed an example of everyday prejudice even though he felt uncomfortable. The question was could the discomfort be attributed to her Jewishness.

Susan is clear about her concerns about potential losses that may result from any response on her part. She worries about her safety and feels that if she complains to the company on the feedback card something negative may happen and if she were to confront the person directly he could react poorly. The positive of not responding has a negative side as well. This is her own anger at not speaking up, “Every time I swallow that sort of stuff, it aggravates me.”

This seemingly straightforward situation is clearly one filled with stress for Susan. She is working to understand this encounter that is so subtle it will never be completely clear. She is worried about her own and her family’s safety since the encounter is happening in her home. Her internal debate about this being an encounter indicates a concern about others
devaluing her judgment of the situation as being anti-Semitic. This creates considerable self
doubt and acted to silence her ability to respond.

Susan put a lot of thought into trying to understand what was happening in this
encounter and then assessing what she should do about it. She needed to think about the
problem as well as deal with her own emotions. Essentially she seemed quite concerned and
distressed about the behaviour of one of the installers and suspected but was unsure of the
reason for this behaviour. In the face of this she did not take action. She could have spoken
directly with him asking him to change his behaviour to take his shoes off and put down the
mat, which would have been a primary engagement action. She did not take this action. She
could have written up a complaint on the feedback card, which she was asked to complete
and would have been an act of some kind of engagement. But she did not.

Her response was one of disengagement. She did not say anything to the installers
and did not fill out the card. In retrospect she was angry with herself for not responding
however this had no impact on the situation itself. It may however influence future strategies
in similar situations.

The task of emotional regulation was harder for Susan.

Summary

The goal of this chapter has been to apply the conceptual framework of an encounter
with everyday prejudice to actual participant accounts of encounters, thus judging its
usefulness as a tool to understand these experiences. While a sample of encounters has been
analyzed using this framework it is possible to apply it to any of the 160 encounters
identified in the interviews.
Using this model of an encounter with everyday prejudice the reader is able to find a deeper understanding of the experience. This deeper understanding is important in a therapeutic context for both counsellor and client in order to gain perspective on the experience and facilitate honest unbiased communication. By analyzing numbers of encounters it becomes possible to see patterns. A global understanding of encounters with everyday prejudice is important to any attempts to address miscommunication between perpetrators and recipients of prejudice or stigmatizing behaviour.

The analyses in this chapter show that the conceptual framework of an encounter with everyday prejudice described in this thesis is, in fact, a useful model of the experience. As such it has the potential to assist an understanding of the experience of other stigmatized individuals, Jewish or not. Furthermore it is evidence of the importance of the component parts of the model to the overall experience of the target of everyday prejudice. That is, the contextual influences, the meaning of the encounter itself and the range of responses. In the last chapter I expand on these conclusions.
Chapter 9 – Discussion and Conclusions

In this chapter I provide an overview of the findings of my research, suggestions for application of the findings as well as future directions for research. I also return to the interplay between my experience and that of the participants. As I begin this last chapter I am reminded of my appreciation for my participants. They met all my inquiries with an openness and honesty that is much appreciated. Standing back from the work of analyzing these interviews it is my belief that the topic of experiencing and managing everyday prejudice is a rich and fruitful one. It is a subject of inquiry that still has much to tell all of us about stigma and prejudice.

The model I have presented of the experience of an encounter with everyday prejudice is an important framework for understanding this experience. It brings together disparate areas of knowledge to shed light on this experience. In the current environment where the subtle hidden forms of prejudice are more common than clear blatant ones, it is particularly important to pay attention to this experience. As prejudice becomes more hidden the need to understand its experience increases.

Coming into this research I was interested in whether individual Jews think about their social identity as a minority group member. What were the circumstances around these moments and what meaning did the individuals give to these moments? Finally how did they respond to this experience?

The answer to the first question is a resounding yes for the participants of this research. They do think about their social identity as Jews and have times when it is more salient. They were forthright about their reactions to a number of these moments or
encounters that made them uncomfortable and their Jewishness particularly prominent in their thinking. These encounters became the meat of the analysis.

Summary of Findings

Despite a diversity of life experience and self-descriptions as Jews the participants in this research project each spoke of similar concerns. The interviews showed an awareness of difference, stigma and vulnerability within an environment of comfort and successful integration into Canadian society. These concerns were prominent in the interviews and became the basis of the themes identified in Chapter 6.

The themes identified as consistent across the interviews were – unshakeable loyalty, belonging, individualized Jewishness, visibility, vulnerability, and encounters with everyday prejudice. Unshakeable loyalty expressed the position that regardless of their personal definition of Jewishness the participant was not prepared to leave the Jewish people and wanted their children to be Jewish. Belonging referred to comments about the importance of having a place to belong. Jewishness on their own terms referred to that fact that most of the participants went through a period of re-evaluation of their connection to Jewishness resulting in a way of being Jewish that felt more personal and genuine. While participants had differing opinions as to whether Jews were a visible minority they all discussed this topic. Being able to conceal one’s Jewishness was associated with a sense of safety. Related to references of safety were comments about feeling vulnerable. Participants made direct reference to feeling vulnerable in the face of anti-Semitism and at some point each raised the Holocaust in connection with anti-Semitism and vulnerability.
Finally, participants mentioned numerous occasions when they felt uncomfortable in a group or with another individual because they were Jewish. Retelling the account of the encounter was notable in the emotion expressed and the number of encounters.

These six themes had a striking but not surprising resemblance to the social needs or goals identified by Fiske (2004). These needs are a driving force in interpersonal relationships and include belonging, developing socially shared understandings, having a sense of personal or social control, enhancing oneself, and trusting others. They are discussed at greater length in Chapter 3. This suggests that the concerns of participants regarding their relationship with members of other groups resemble the concerns of other individuals who are not Jewish, that is, these are universal social needs expressed in Jewish terms. There were also particular Jewish concerns such as the kind of relationship to have with his or her Jewish identity and concerns about visibility.

It was in the thematic analysis that the importance of encounters with everyday prejudice was identified. Participants had many accounts of such experiences. It became clear that it is within the encounter with everyday prejudice that we find the core moment of an experience of stigma. Analysis of these moments resulted in the development of a model of everyday prejudice composed of contextual influences, the encounter with everyday prejudice, the individual recipient’s perception and understanding of the encounter, his or her evaluation of the encounter and potential responses, and finally the response.

Contextual influences play a key role in the participants’ perceptions of an encounter and subsequent response. Often a participant would make specific reference to elements of their context that influenced their experience, such as their upbringing or current events. As part of the context, previous experience and individual psychological characteristics such as
attachment history all filter the participant’s perception of an encounter. Family history and assumptions about the non-Jewish world are other layers of influence. Finally as members of a particular generation and minority group the participants were influenced by the group’s history and broader social context. These participants made specific reference to the Holocaust and anti-Semitism both historically and in the present. The role of Israel, and anti-Semitism aimed at Israel and Jews in other countries, were named by participants as important factors in their experience of everyday prejudice.

The types of encounters, such as slurs and negative stereotypes, were identified, as were the participants’ thoughts and behaviour in response. The stress and coping model developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and applied to ethnic stress by Miller and Kaiser (Miller & Kaiser, 2001b) was an extremely useful framework to deconstruct the experience of an encounter. Encounters with everyday prejudice clearly fit the definition of a stressful event by putting a demand on an individual’s psychosocial resources.

Using the stress and coping model the participants’ narratives could be analyzed to see a context within which to understand their responses. It was possible to imagine the psychological goals that were being addressed in the response as well as the influences on the choice of a response.

My Experience Through the Research

I introduced this research by noting that it is impossible to maintain a totally objective stance in research such as this. I shared that this choice of topic was a natural outgrowth of my own searching and curiosity, but that in choosing this topic there was also the sense of breaking a taboo by speaking about my personal experience as a Jew. While some of these feelings of caution remain I am increasingly convinced of my belief that it is important to
give voice to the experience of being Jewish in a non-Jewish world. My experience of
listening to participants’ experiences reinforces my belief that it is important for Jews to be
included in conversations about stigma and prejudice. In this section I reflect on my journal
notes made over the course of conducting this research.

I am struck by the complexity of the experience of a stigmatized minority social
identity. The reflections I share express this complexity and the intricate intertwining of
different threads. Many of the questions raised for me on a personal level remain unanswered
but now have a framework for further consideration.

The model I propose as a conceptual framework of an encounter is an attempt to
bring order to this complexity and as such is an important contribution to the consideration of
the experience of everyday prejudice. It has also been useful as a tool to reflect on my own
personal experience as a Jew. It enabled me to identify the contextual influences on my own
experience as well as the coping strategies that I use. In doing so I learned to listen more
carefully to my own intuitive reaction to the narratives as a means of gaining insight into the
participants’ experience. It also became an aid in distinguishing my personal experience from
the experience of the participants so as not to prejudice the data.

One of the threads in my journal was the feeling of being split between two worlds.
There is life as a Jew with its rhythm of Jewish holidays and connections to a particular
history and culture. On the other hand there is my identity as a Canadian, which has its own
set of rhythms, history and culture. At the outset of this research I commented on my
assumption that these worlds needed to remain apart. Listening to the participants I found
myself wondering about this division. It is clear that there are differences between these
aspects of identity. It is also true that individuals have multiple social identities. However I
kept asking myself whether it was possible to minimize this separation of identities. I do not have an answer yet.

One frequent reminder of the separateness is the encounter with everyday prejudice. Some of the strength of reaction surrounding these encounters is its function as a reminder that being different, that is being Jewish, means one cannot really fully belong to the larger group. This perpetuates Gilman’s (1986) position that no matter what one does to change, that person will never be part of the majority. Some participants echoed this sentiment. This is a difficult and pessimistic position. Belonging and fitting in are basic human needs. To hold both the messages of separateness and the need to belong at the same time creates cognitive dissonance. This demands further exploration as it has implications for emotional well-being.

As I analyzed coping strategies and reflected on my own handling of encounters in my life I see an exquisitely complex array of ways that the participants and I adapt and try to find a way through the tension between our identities. Jews are also not the typical Canadian ethnic minority. For the most part not immigrants, and often privileged by our middle class and educated status it is easy for us to be invisible and invalidated. And yet our difference in religion and the persistence of anti-Semitism mean that we remain a distinct minority.

A good example of a flashpoint for this tension is expressed in the concept of Christian privilege (Schlosser, 2003). My notes during the Christmas season more intensely reflected the theme of belonging and it was one category of encounter discussed by participants.
Is it anti-Semitism?

At one point in the analysis of the data I found myself enmeshed in what has become an ongoing debate with myself. Were the participants sharing stories of anti-Semitism or simply incidents of misunderstanding between groups? As the analysis comes to a close and the findings are now summarized it becomes clear that my debate is a reflection of the same debate voiced by the participants and the Jewish community at large.

When I stood back from the encounter narratives and tried to view them with the eyes of an outsider I began to question my previously automatic reactions. The subtlety of the encounters, the murkiness of the situations, the minimization by some and the overblown reaction of others all confused me. I wondered what is wrong with using such words as “jewed”? Why do some individuals go straight to panic or see anti-Semites under every rock in every corner? I felt myself swing from one extreme to the other at times, between strong reactions of anger at anti-Semitism and shrugging off accounts of everyday prejudice as minor. From here began the debate within myself as to whether these encounters were in fact anti-Semitism. I also struggled with the language to use for these moments of discomfort identified by the participants. Somehow the term anti-Semitism felt angry, overblown.

The term anti-Semitism had an immediate association in my mind with the Holocaust and all its obscene violence and destruction. Nothing that the participants or I had experienced could compare to those events. On the other hand the term everyday hassle or misunderstanding did not do justice to the experience. I was clearly struggling with familiar coping strategies of minimization and denial. To accept that anti-Semitic behaviour and beliefs are a here and now experience is a threatening idea to accept. It is to make real and put a name to the unspoken fears of vulnerability and safety. I settled on the label everyday
prejudice as a comfortable middle ground describing more accurately what these events were and allowing for the possibility of dialogue with other groups with similar experiences.

Despite settling on an accurate and functional term for these encounters I retain my unease using certain labels such as anti-Semitism and stigma. Is this anti-Semitism? The final answer is that subtle prejudice is difficult to pin down. That is its nature. And for this reason we cannot answer the question definitively whether a unique moment of subtle interchange has been prejudicial or anti-Semitic. The important questions are: What is the target’s understanding of what has happened? and What was the intention of the perpetrator?

**Legacy of the Holocaust**

Cheri Brown in her article *Beyond Internalized anti-Semitism: Healing the Collective Scars of the Past* (1995) reflects on the experience of the generation after the Holocaust - not just the children of survivors but all Jews born in the couple of decades after the Holocaust.

The internalized terror of the Holocaust generation has been passed on to a new generation shaping their personal lives, their politics, and most important, their ability as Jews to see the present as a fresh new moment filled with possibility. Yet the Holocaust is but an extreme of the two millennia of Jewish persecution, a pattern of suffering so enmeshed with our sense of peoplehood that it is incorporated into our religious ritual, the history we teach to our children, and our sense of our relationship to the non-Jewish world. (C. R. Brown, 1995, p. 44)

In addition to sharing memories of being in synagogue during memorial services for Jews who died of persecution Cheri Brown shared her experience of reading *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *The Autobiography of Hannah Senesh* as an adolescent and the impact of
this on her lack of feeling safe. I too read these books as a young teen and imagined myself in their shoes and wondered what I would have done. What would it feel like to suffer at the hands of the Nazis? I remember listening to accounts from the director of education of my synagogue school of his own experiences escaping the Nazis. I can still vividly recall his showing my class pictures of students who he had taught in Berlin before the outbreak of World War II and telling us who survived and who did not. Few survived.

Until now I did not give this experience much thought. Looking back I now know it had to have contributed to my worldview. In fact it is an excellent example of the power of context because a younger generation will not have this experience with first hand accounts of the Holocaust.

Looking back my conclusion is that we were taught an expectation of heroics at the same time as an awareness that we would never be completely safe as Jews. I also knew that there were certain social clubs and private schools in my hometown where Jews simply did not go because they were not welcome. It was a fact of life. It was also before the policy of multiculturalism at a time when Toronto was white and protestant.

Conducting this research I am reminded of this knowledge. Reading all the narratives of encounters with everyday prejudice I am not surprised that my concerns about safety and visibility intensified. This is about living with a stigma, and what it feels like at a deep level not to belong, to be different or have different concerns than the majority seem to. There is the desire to be noticed and yet if one becomes visible a feeling of vulnerability comes along with that.
What Next?

The results of these particular conversations scratched the surface of our understanding of these participants’ experience. In retrospect I would have asked more questions, listened more, spent more time with the participants. I would also have been more skilled at eliciting their articulated understanding of their experience. In spite of these shortcomings the research has merit as an exploration of the experience of everyday prejudice and as a signpost to further investigation.

Based in the qualitative epistemology this research has focused on the experiences of a set group of participants. Its purpose was exploratory based on the information shared by the participants rather than preconceived hypotheses. Therefore these findings cannot be generalized as a statement of the experience of other stigmatized individuals. Its purpose has been to get at the nuance and colour of this group’s experience with the hope that these findings will provide guideposts for further investigation.

Many questions remain about this experience. In particular the kind of unconscious knowing an individual brings to these encounters. Emotions schemes (Greenberg, et al., 1993) as a tool of “automatic processing of personal meaning” were suggested as a plausible explanation; however much more needs to be known about this layer of processing of an encounter.

The model holds the clues to therapeutic and educational methods to tackle difficulties individuals may have stemming from their experience as stigmatized individuals. It may help stigmatized individuals find a way to articulate their experience so as to help others understand it and find a way to communicate and understand each other. This is a possibility on a group level as well.
The importance of articulating and understanding one’s experience is crucial to self-esteem. The findings of Serlin (2004) in her research into Jewish identity reflect this. The experience of not knowing if something was anti-Semitic, or being uncertain how to respond was important to identity. It caused her participants to question themselves and their experiences. It appeared to make them uncertain about what they felt and what their reality was, but also to be uncertain about their relationships with non-Jews and how others perceived them as Jews (Serlin, 2004).

The core bedrock underlying this experience is the need to belong and how people negotiate that. That is the key for Jews and one of the principles that is transferable to other groups. Everyday prejudice challenges that and is a force working against belonging.

This leads directly into a consideration of the difficulties minority individuals encounter juggling both memberships in the larger society while maintaining their minority identity. There needs to be a way to inoculate younger generations against the negative aspects of the experience. Both the power of context and the range of coping strategies open the possibility of building positive Jewish experience from within and learning ways of being a minority individual, participating in the larger community, while responding from a positive constructive place to the stress of minority existence. This also highlights the need for a deeper understanding of the interplay of multiple social identities.

Over the course of the analysis a number of questions arose which point to areas for further investigation. The first pertains to the legacy of the Holocaust. Some researchers in this area take the position that all Jews, regardless of direct links to the destruction of the Holocaust, are inheritors of this experience and therefore survivors. The admonishment to bear witness to the Holocaust and not forget what happened, voiced by leading scholars such
as Emil Fackenheim and Elie Wiesel, perpetuates this position. From a psychological perspective the ongoing impact of the Holocaust is an important question. Related to this are concepts such as collective memory and inherited trauma. Clearly this affected the participants in this study. Our knowledge of this area is insufficient and deserves more attention. Other groups have suffered large traumatic events that have had the capacity to leave a painful legacy. Further study of the impact of inherited trauma on a group level such as the Holocaust on Jews will bear fruit more widely than for one minority group.

Another area highlighted by this research is the power of contextual influences. This case has clearly been made in the findings of this research. Since the participants in this research were all from the same generation a natural question is how the picture painted in these findings might differ for a younger generation. Given how quickly the world is changing due to globalization and shifting contextual influences, the experience of younger generations of Jews merits investigation. An informal impression of the different perspective on intermarriage and the variety of ways to connect with community evidenced by some members of this younger generation supports this.

Other aspects of context suggest fruitful lines of research as well. These could include geographic context, personality traits, etc. Understanding differences in context becomes clear when this model is used as a means of understanding the experience of other stigmatized groups.

In sum this research has expanded the understanding of a stigmatized minority by articulating and analyzing the experience of these Jewish participants. By listening to their experience it is possible to consider the experience of others. The model of an encounter with everyday prejudice described here is a tool that can be used as an entry into the experience of
others. Paying attention to the components of this experience offers ideas for both further research and ways to address negative aspects of the experience.

In a therapeutic setting context is a key part of any assessment of a client and their emotional difficulties. These aspects of the context framed as such could help mental health professionals to deepen their empathy and treatment options for the client. There are often many points of entry to address an individual’s emotional difficulties and gathering this information related to a minority status should improve those options. Furthermore the area of psychoeducational intervention can be improved by considering the parts of the model to develop educational programs to address points of the process of an encounter that are open to change.
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Appendix – Interview Schedule

A. Self-definition as a Jew-Jewish Identity

1. How would you describe yourself as a Jew? What activities do you do which define you as a Jew?

B. Developmental Picture of Jewishness and Experience of Minority Status

1. Tell me about how it was growing up Jewish?

2. Do you feel that the fact you are Jewish ever became an issue with friends or at school, growing up?

3. What messages do you think your parents gave you about being Jewish in a world that is largely not Jewish?

4. Do you feel being Jewish has influenced or affected you in any way? (prompt – positive or negative) give examples.

5. Have you ever felt uncomfortable as a Jew? Or questioned whether you would remain Jewish? Tell me more about that? How was it resolved?

6. Are there particular environments, situations where you are more aware of being Jewish and what is that like? Were you always aware of being Jewish or has it changed over time?

C. Connections to Other Jews

1. Tell me about your friendships – are many of your friends Jewish? How has that been?

2. Do you feel connections to Jews living in other places and does what happens to them affect you in any way?
3. What is your opinion of intermarriage, concerns about the Jewish people continuing as a group, taking in new members of the community as converts?

4. Do you feel a connection to the larger Jewish community? What about the official or establishment of the Jewish community such as Federation? Or synagogue spokespersons (rabbis). Do they speak for you? How do you feel about their efforts to combat anti-Semitism and make sure Jewish interests are taken care of? (Does it make you feel reassured?)

D. Experience of Being in a Minority and “Minority Stress”

1. Tell me about a situation where you were aware of being Jewish and those with you were not Jewish.

2. In what contexts do you feel different, a minority person, or particularly aware of being Jewish, or stigmatized because you’re Jewish?

3. Does being Jewish ever affect the kinds of relationships you have?

4. Are there work or social situations where you are or have been the only Jew? What did that feel like? How did it affect your thinking or actions?

5. Has being Jewish made life harder for you in any way? More stress? What about positives? How has it made life better?

E. Moments of Discomfort as a Minority

1. Have you been in a social gathering when someone says something that makes you, as a Jew, feel uncomfortable? What are you thinking? Feeling? How did you handle it?

2. Do you ever feel that people disagree with your assessment that there is prejudice against Jews, or do you feel uncomfortable speaking up? How do you handle that?
3. The literature talks about an awareness of devalued social identity and others’ negative stereotypes, feeling threatened by them, uncertain whether the treatment you are receiving is due to being Jewish or some other factor. Do you worry about what is happening?

4. The literature says sometimes people worry about their behaviour being a reflection on their minority group, not knowing whether reactions to them are because they are Jewish or another reason, etc.

**F. Invisibility and Telling Others About Being a Jew**

1. When you meet someone new and don’t know anything about them, do you tell them you are Jewish? How do you tell them? What is going on in your mind at the time? How do you feel?

2. Have you ever tried to “pass,” that is pretend not to be Jewish or just simply not bring it up? Tell me about that situation and what was happening.

3. Are you aware of separating your Jewish identity from the rest of who you are? Give specific examples or moments.

4. How do you feel about Jews wearing things that identify them as Jews e.g. yarmulke, t-shirts, star of David necklace, etc. do you wear them in public? How do you feel when someone asks you if you are Jewish? How do you handle that?

5. Being Jewish is typically seen as an invisible social identity. Is that how you experience it and in what ways might you use this invisibility?

**G. Being Out of Step with the Larger Community**

1. Are you in the habit of taking time off work to celebrate Jewish holidays? Have you ever had difficulty in getting the time? How do you deal with that issue?
2. Have you ever felt or do you feel “out of step” or “not belonging” with the general community? Tell me more about that.

3. Do you feel you belong, are a full member of society and that your concerns and needs are respected as a Jew here in Canada?

H. Anti-Semitism

1. Do you ever feel your personal safety is threatened because you’re Jewish?

2. What is your understanding of why a dislike of Jews persists?

3. How do you handle your concerns about anti-Semitism? Is this something you keep to yourself or do you share it with others? How often would you say you think about this?

4. Have you ever personally been the target of anti-Semitism? How did you handle it? What was that like for you? Do you worry or think about anti-Semitism?