

“Wanderers Yesterday--Americans Today”: Jewish Humanitarian Agencies and the
Americanization of Displaced Persons, 1945-1955

by

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Abstract

In the immediate post-World War II period, from 1945 to about 1955, more than 650,000 Jewish displaced persons (DPs) left European DP camps and immigrated to the United States. Guided by American Jewish humanitarian agencies, these DPs undertook the process of acculturating to American life. Under the 1945 Truman Directive, many of these organizations acted as sponsoring agencies for DPs and were required to guarantee that DPs would receive transportation, housing, employment, and would not become a “public charge.” Beyond these four specific guarantees, humanitarian organizations also partnered with the US government to turn DPs into naturalized US citizens. At the same time, American Jewish humanitarian agencies took advantage of the opportunity to engage the American Jewish community by fundraising and calling for volunteers. In addition to providing English and citizenship classes, as well as job training to help “new Americans” become acculturated citizens, humanitarian agencies provided space for DPs to develop an American Jewish identity.

This paper examines five American Jewish humanitarian agencies that assisted in the acculturation and Americanization of DPs in New York City during this period: the United Service for New Americans, the European-Jewish Children’s Aid, the Educational Alliance, the National Council of Jewish Women, and the Organization for Rehabilitation through Training. Each participated in the dual project of creating American citizens out of former DPs and also in strengthening the American Jewish community through their acculturation. This paper contributes to the growing trend towards transnational studies of the Holocaust, and places post-World War II Jewish immigration in the longer history of European Jewish immigration to the US.

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Dedication

For Grandma Esther and Grandpa Ben ז"ל

whose willingness to speak about their experiences set me on the path to asking questions, and who taught me never to hate.

Introduction



Figure 1: “In a Midwestern City, Their Dreams Come True.” Collection of American Jewish Historical Society. © With permission.

The text from this page of the United Service for New Americans’ (USNA) pamphlet *Wanders Yesterday--Americans Today: Photo-Story of a Family’s First Days in the U.S.A.* describes a family “resettled in a midwestern community” and living the American Dream: “The father has a job; the mother once more presides over a home of her own; the children are in school. Free at last from fear and uncertainty, they are forgetting their past under the Nazi terror and are beginning to build their future as New Americans.”² The accompanying images are a perfect complement to this narrative of the good American life--a little boy with a glass of milk

¹ *Wanders Yesterday - Americans Today: Photo-Story of a Family’s First Days in the U.S.A.*, n.d.; United Service for New Americans records; I-93; box 23; folder 12; American Jewish Historical Society, Boston, MA and New York, NY.

² Ibid.

and a puppy, a mother chopping potatoes, and two neat little girls in sweaters and pigtails playing with a wagon. However, the depiction of these new Americans is far too simplistic. What does this visual language hide? Missing from this story are the details of the family's resettlement from Europe to the United States and their trials through the process.

One significant trend in the history of the Holocaust is the study of the everyday lives of displaced persons (DPs) after World War II. Primarily focused on the European context, this scholarship examines the unique challenges that refugees faced at the end of the War. East European historian Tara Zahra's *The Lost Children* looks at activism for displaced and refugee children in the post-War years, Avinoam Patt and Michael Berkowitz's edited volume "*We Are Here*" collects essays on various aspects of daily life in the DP camps, Margarete Myers Feinstein's *Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany* examines Jewish identity and cultural life after the War, Atina Grossmann's *Jews, Germans, and Allies* looks at relations between Jews and non-Jews in German DP camps, and Holocaust historian Beth Cohen's *Case Closed* studies case files of young European refugees adjusting to life in the US. Though these texts focus on different issues--including nationalism, gender, and transnational connections--they share a chronological focus on the immediate post-War period (from 1945 to the mid-1950s) and humanitarian and philanthropic agencies that assisted refugees are noted in each. An analysis of these agencies' work can help to address many missing details in the story, featured above, of the newly-established midwestern American family.

Cohen examines these agencies more than the other historians. The central purpose of her book is to reveal the challenges that DPs faced while adapting to life in several communities across the US and the shortfalls of agencies in helping with this process. Cohen's work also contributes to the post-World War II scholarship by posing for the history of refugees to the US

the same questions that European historians ask of refugees in European DP camps: What were the daily experiences of refugees after the War? What were the roles of philanthropic and humanitarian agencies in the process of resettling? By bringing the analysis of daily lives of refugees to US soil, Cohen began the work of putting modern American Jewish history in dialogue with the history of the Holocaust.

Cohen's work, however, examines the post-War experiences of refugees in isolation, without the larger context of American Jewish history. Missing in the historiography is analysis of these humanitarian agencies that also considers the *longue durée* of American Jewish history. Such analysis should consider earlier waves of Jewish immigration to the US, the history of philanthropy, changing immigration legislation, and the concerns and agendas of both the US government and the American Jewish community in the mid-twentieth century. A study of Jewish humanitarianism after World War II that places humanitarian agencies--specifically those working in New York City, the main entrance point for immigration and where the majority of immigrants stayed--front and center is an opportunity to put these years into the larger context of American Jewish history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and especially to compare their work in the 1940s and 1950s to their earlier approaches.

Waves of Immigration in Comparative Perspectives

Scholarship on the so-called Great Wave of eastern European Jewish immigration from the 1880s to the 1920s, and specifically work that examines the reactions to this influx of immigrants by acculturated Jews living in the US, provides some of the context for the study of Jewish immigration after World War II.³ American Jewish historians Hasia Diner and Eric Goldstein offer useful overviews and analysis of this time period, with particular attention to the changing dynamic between the acculturated American Jewish community and their newly arrived eastern European coreligionists.⁴ Adding to this scholarship is Daniel Soyer's examination of the role of *landsmanshaftn*, mutual aid hometown societies, in the process of immigrants adjusting to life in New York City throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.⁵ These works in the field of American Jewish history provide the context for the meeting of acculturated American Jews and European Jewish refugees through philanthropic agencies in the immediate post-World War II years.

In many ways, the anxieties and tensions that characterized encounters between acculturated American Jews and newcomers from Europe at the onset of the twentieth century, were the same several decades later after World War II. The arrival of eastern European Jewish

³ By "acculturated American Jews" I am referring to Jews who were either born in the US or who arrived in an earlier wave of immigration (from the 1820s to the 1860s) and were already "Americanized" by the 1880s. This community is described as German, but included many Jews from Lithuania, Hungary, Prussia, and Russia, as well as Germany (Eric L. Goldstein, "The Great Wave: Eastern European Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1880-1924," in *The Columbia History of Jews and Judaism in America*, ed. Marc Lee Raphael (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 71). In naming the "American Jews," I am also referring to a specific community. Daniel Soyer argues that during World War I, Jews living in the US, including recent immigrants, "came to see themselves clearly as American Jews, a community distinct from those in the countries of Eastern Europe" (Soyer, *Jewish Immigrant Associations and American Identity in New York, 1880-1939* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 162).

⁴ Hasia R. Diner, *The Jews of the United States, 1654 to 2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), chapters 3-5 and Eric L. Goldstein, "The Great Wave: Eastern European Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1880-1924," in *The Columbia History of Jews and Judaism in America*, ed. Marc Lee Raphael (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 70-92.

⁵ Daniel Soyer, *Jewish Immigrant Associations and American Identity in New York, 1880-1939* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

immigrants of the post-1880 Great Wave brought increased antisemitism--both in actuality and in a heightened fear of antisemitic backlashes--for the acculturated German-Jewish community living in the US, as did the arrival of refugees in the mid-twentieth century. Similarly, as German Jews responded in the late-nineteenth century to this influx of their Yiddish-speaking, working-class, and seemingly unsophisticated brethren by providing housing, training, and financial and medical assistance, these organizations were expanded, and analogous ones established, in the post-War era.⁶ For example, two agencies founded in the late-nineteenth century by acculturated German-Jews, continued their work of acculturating Jewish immigrants in the mid-twentieth century: the Educational Alliance (1889) and the National Council of Jewish Women (1893).

According to Diner and Goldstein, the Americanization of Jewish immigrants in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was of the utmost importance to the American Jewish political agenda and was an opportunity to “assert their hegemony over immigrant affairs and to thereby project the ‘proper’ image of *all* Jews to the non-Jewish public.”⁷ In the mid-twentieth century, aiding and assimilating European Jewish refugees also became an important political goal for American Jews. While there are clear parallels between these two periods, there are nonetheless distinctions that make the post-War group of immigrants unique, and the context surrounding their reception by the American Jewish community different from what came before.

Three factors contributed to the distinctiveness of the post-World War II immigration. First, the destruction of European Jewry during the War made the experiences of immigrants and the circumstances surrounding their departure from Europe unique. These refugees’ traumatic experiences made them distinct. Also, whereas their predecessors left for the US with plans to

⁶ Goldstein, “The Great Wave,” 70 and 84.

⁷ Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 173. Quotation from Goldstein, “The Great Wave,” 83.

have their relatives follow them, survivors of the Holocaust usually left Europe without this possibility. Understanding the horrors of the Holocaust and conditions in DP camps, made known by the 1945 Harrison Report and within the American Jewish community through correspondence with those working on the ground in Europe, affected both immigration legislation and the treatment of DPs in Europe and upon their arrival in the US.⁸ Second, the beginning of the Cold War, and heightened anxiety around Communism, made immigration and naturalization increasingly difficult for all foreigners in the immediate post-War period, despite efforts to provide allowances for Jewish refugees. Underlying antisemitism and the association of Jews with Communism caused DPs to receive the brunt of this tension.⁹ Third, the 1945 Truman Directive changed the status of humanitarian agencies in the process of immigration. Unlike the Great Wave period, the integration and Americanization of DPs in the post-World War II years was a large-scale, systematic, and coordinated operation organized by humanitarian agencies.¹⁰

⁸ For more on knowledge of, and responses to, the Holocaust by American Jews see Hasia R. Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945-1962* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 150-215, and Deborah Dash Moore, "When Jews Were GIs: How World War II Changed a Generation and Remade American Jewry," in *American Jewish Identity Politics* ed. Deborah Dash Moore (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008), 23-43.

⁹ For a political history of this period, see Leonard Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

¹⁰ Beth B. Cohen's book *Case Closed: Holocaust Survivors in Postwar America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007) examines some of the problems with this systematic approach. Mainly, that the result in some cases was a cold and insensitive treatment of DPs, especially considering their traumatic experiences during World War II. *Case Closed* highlights that agencies did not adjust their treatment of immigrants to accommodate their traumatic pasts.

Philanthropic Agencies and Immigration After World War II

Lyman Cromwell White, in his 1957 book *300,000 New Americans*, points to how the wave of European Jewish migration during and after World War II was handled in a markedly new way.¹¹ White specifically emphasizes the shift from small, fragmented agencies--such as the *landsmanshaftn* that assisted immigrants only from own European hometown and typically only at their initial arrival in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries--to large scale, systematic agencies that worked with immigrants from their first expression of wanting to emigrate from Europe, to their full integration into American life.¹² White claims that while formerly immigrants' integration into American life came slowly over time,

The greatest achievement of USNA, its predecessor organizations and cooperating agencies was the extent to which they speeded up the gradual process by which immigrants became active participants in the economic, social, civic, cultural, and spiritual affairs of America--the process by which they came to feel 'at home' and were Americanized to the points where *we* felt that they were no longer foreigners.¹³

That White calls the prompt Americanization of immigrants the greatest success of the USNA and its coordinating agencies highlights an essential shift in the work of these agencies in the mid-twentieth century. How, and why, did USNA "speed up" acculturation? What made USNA successful at facilitating this integration, simultaneously fulfilling the demands of the US government and the Jewish community?

American philanthropic organizations that worked with DPs who immigrated to the US operated within the confines of the highly restrictionist and nativist immigration climate after World War II. The US government's main goal was the creation of naturalized American citizens. To help achieve this, the organizations took on a didactic tone much in line with the

¹¹ Lyman Cromwell White, *300,000 New Americans: The Epic of a Modern Immigrant-Aid Service* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1957), 7-26.

¹² White, 10.

¹³ White, 23 (emphasis mine).

wider language of American immigration policy. They expanded and changed their programming to accommodate the citizenship goals of the government. However, beyond satisfying the requirements of the US government to help immigrants shed their foreignness and prepare to become naturalized American citizens, these agencies created space for recent immigrants to develop an American Jewish identity. Through social clubs, Jewish studies classes, and human interest stories about the tragic events experienced in Europe, American Jewish philanthropic organizations sought to include new immigrants in the American Jewish community. Further, agencies recruited acculturated American Jews as volunteers and donors to help newly arrived DPs. This patronage network between acculturated Jews and newly arrived refugees resulted in bringing new immigrants more firmly into the American Jewish community, and making the community stronger.

These organizations navigated between restrictionist and antisemitic immigration policies, a political atmosphere increasingly fearful of Communism, an American Jewish community eager to save the DPs, and a diverse immigrant community. Refugees were of different ages, from different parts of Europe, of different religious backgrounds, and experienced different levels of trauma under the Nazi regime. Addressing the interests and concerns of these three groups--the State, the American Jewish community, and the DPs themselves--philanthropic organizations provided various programs that changed according to US immigration policies. Ultimately, they first produced immigrants who could acculturate to American life, and then American Jews.

This study examines the role of philanthropic agencies in the process of Americanizing Jewish DPs and how individual refugees were acted on by these agencies. It focuses on the work of five American Jewish humanitarian agencies: the USNA, the European-Jewish Children's Aid

(EJCA), the Educational Alliance, the National Council of Jewish Women, and the Organization for Rehabilitation through Training (ORT). Because archival research for this project focused on the institutional records of these philanthropic organizations, and not on the individual accounts of DPs, this paper stresses how DPs were *acted on* by agencies, rather than how DPs themselves acted. Since my goal is to put two different fields of scholarship into conversation with each other, Holocaust aftermath research in Europe and American Jewish history, I pay particular attention to where the legacy of the Holocaust impacts the agencies' work and how these agencies operated in a similar or different way than their late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth century forerunners. I also highlight how humanitarian agencies adjusted their goals and programs to respond to US government requirements for immigrants, and where organizations pursued their own agendas beyond the requirements of the State. Beyond these topics, my primary research concern is to unpack the role of philanthropic agencies in the dual projects of creating naturalized American citizens, and shaping the American Jewish community. Interrogating the role of American philanthropic agencies in the Americanization process seeks to expand and deepen our understanding of the image at the top of this section and addresses questions left unasked.¹⁴

¹⁴ A note on terms: The approximately 650,000 individuals who immigrated to the US in the immediate post-World War II years had a wide variety of backgrounds. They came from many different countries across Europe and had drastically different identities as Jews - from Orthodoxy to no religiously Jewish affiliation. For these reasons, using the vague category of "Jew" to speak of the more than half a million individuals who left Europe for the US is not accurate. However, during World War II what these individuals had in common was that they were labeled for destruction as Jews regardless of their personal religious identity or ethnic origin. It was this category that dictated their experiences as victims of Nazism, that forced them to leave Europe, and that decided their status as "DPs" after the War. It is with this understanding that I use the term "Jews" or "Jewish refugees" to describe those who immigrated to the US in this time period, while keeping in mind the diverse identities and experiences inherit in the term. The make up of people who identified as Jews living in the US was also diverse in many ways. However, to distinguish between those who were living in the US prior to World War II, and those who immigrate to the US after, I use the term "acculturated American Jews" to refer to the former category, and alternatively newcomers, DPs, refugees, and other terms to refer to the latter.

Post-World War II Immigration Legislation

On December 22, 1945, President Harry Truman issued an executive directive to address the problem of refugees, the first of several immigration statutes passed after World War II.¹⁵ Under this directive, the US admitted around 38,000 DPs, primarily from the American occupied zone in Germany, as quota immigrants between 1945 and 1948.¹⁶ Estimates are that approximately 250,000 Jews left from the American zone in Germany, and more than 650,000 European refugees left from Germany, Austria, and Italy in total, and arrived in the US from 1945 to around 1952.¹⁷

The 1945 Truman Directive gave specific preference to “orphaned children” and admitted about 1,000 Jewish children into the US.¹⁸ The 1948 Displaced Persons Act, the second major post-World War II immigration law, enacted on July 1, also focused on children and admitted about 3,000 non-quota orphans, under the age of sixteen, who had been living in the American zone prior to June 25, 1948.¹⁹ This “eligibility date” made it significantly easier for children to emigrate under the DP Act compared to adults refugees, who had to reside in the American zone by December 22, 1945--two and a half years earlier--in order to be eligible for entry to the US.²⁰ The US Committee, working with the EJCA, provided affidavits for “unaccompanied minors” between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one.²¹ The willingness of the US to admit individual children demonstrates whom the government saw as the ideal immigrant.

¹⁵ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “United States Policy Toward Jewish Refugees, 1941-1952,” Holocaust Encyclopedia. <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007094>. Accessed on October 5, 2011.

¹⁶ Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 235.

¹⁷ This number is very difficult to estimate. For more information on these statistics see Ngai, 235-236; Grossmann, 1-3, 132, 315-316 n8; and Dinnerstein, 183.

¹⁸ Cohen, 96.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Haim Genizi, *America's Fair Share: The Admission and Resettlement of Displaced Persons, 1945-1952* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 78-79.

²¹ Cohen, 96.

Children, especially without their parents, were able to easily adapt to their new environment in America, learn English, and grow up as model American citizens. Whether these children were joining distant family members in the US or going into the homes of foster parents, the government saw this as an opportunity to create new Americans.

For the first time, the Truman Directive allowed US humanitarian agencies to sponsor European refugees on a corporate affidavit, providing new opportunities for emigration from Europe beyond the individual affidavits that required sponsorship from an American relative or employer.²² Giving organizations authority to sponsor DPs marked a significant shift in American immigration policy and American Jewish history. First, it made emigration a reality for young displaced Europeans, who often did not have American relatives or connections to employees to serve as sponsors. Second, it placed humanitarian agencies in a central and active role in the process of immigration for many DPs. Government authority to sponsor DPs, symbolized a change in the role of Jewish aid societies from their autonomous *landsmanshaftn* origins.²³

Providing an affidavit required sponsors to guarantee to all DPs four measures: employment “without displacing some other person from employment;” housing; that the DPs “shall not become public charges;” and reception at port of entry to the US and transportation to destination provided.²⁴ Another requirement, part of the guarantee not to become a public charge, was that young DPs “would attend school to age 16.”²⁵ This mandate would require the creation of jobs, housing facilities, and a coordinated reception and transportation network across the country. Accepting responsibility as sponsors for DPs made American Jewish agencies

²² Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 68.

²³ See Soyer, *Jewish Immigrant Associations and American Identity*, for more on *landsmanshaftn*.

²⁴ Cohen, 32-33.

²⁵ Zahra, 68.

accountable to the US government and dictated their programs for years to come. Though not stated explicitly as a requirement of sponsoring agencies, the Truman Directive also emphasized citizenship.²⁷ Making sure that DPs became naturalized American citizens, and in other ways satisfied the requirements of their affidavits, became the work of a network of American Jewish philanthropic agencies.

Receiving Refugees and Creating Citizens: Humanitarian Agencies at Work

The USNA, created on August 1, 1946, was the central coordinating body among humanitarian agencies and the primary organization that worked with the government to help immigrants integrate into American life and become naturalized citizens.²⁶ According to Cohen, “USNA was a multiservice agency that supervised every aspect of resettlement, from port and dock reception to naturalization advice.”²⁷ The job of moving refugees from DP camps in Europe to small communities across the US was a massive administrative task. Resettling refugees outside of New York City, the Jewish demographic and cultural center in the US, was both mandated in the DP Act and supported by the American Jewish community that feared an increase in antisemitism if too many immigrants stayed in New York and other urban centers.²⁸ As a result, DPs were initially sent to 46 states, though many would later move to New York City. This experience of mobility--to and from urban and suburban, or rural, environments--was similar to the experiences of Jewish immigrants decades earlier who, through the Industrial Removal Office, were often sent out of New York City for jobs and to avoid urban overcrowding.²⁹

The extent of the USNA’s job cannot be fully appreciated without understanding the steps in a DP’s migration from the DP camp in Europe to a new home in the US. First, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (Joint or JDC), an agency that worked with DPs in Europe, would match an individual on a corporate affidavit with an American community and inform the USNA of the match. Then the Migration Services department contacted the local Jewish humanitarian agency that would work with the DP for the coming years. The whole

²⁶ White, 23. In this period, the process of becoming a naturalized American citizen meant taking an examination that demonstrated one’s ability to speak English and to answer basic questions about American civics.

²⁷ Cohen, 19.

²⁸ Cohen, 18.

²⁹ Diner, *Jews of the United States*, 186.

process could take months or years because, as stipulated by the DP Act, before leaving Europe refugees had go through a security, health, and eligibility screening, as well have secured employment and housing in the US.³⁰

The way that the USNA went about its operations, especially given the agency's central role, further illustrates the dual project of supporting the government's citizenship goals and strengthening the American Jewish community. As the first agency to meet DPs upon their arrival, in 1948 the USNA distributed "A Message to You from United Service for New Americans" to immigrants arriving at the pier in New York City.³¹ Combining both a warm reception and didactic directives, this "Message" (written in English only, a language most new immigrants did not know) included instructions on travel from the New York City pier to their new home community, on what support was in place for them, and on how to apply for their Alien Registration Cards.³² Most striking is the contrast between how the USNA introduced DPs to their new American Jewish communities, and to the US government. On one hand, the USNA explained that the Jewish community was available to provide support: "You will find that there are American Jewish citizens who are interested in helping you build a new life for yourself in every community in America. If you have any problems, you should discuss them with the Jewish welfare organization aiding immigrants in your community."³³ On the other hand, the USNA's letter instructed that "each immigrant in the United States must secure an Alien Registration Card promptly," with a mailing address and details for how to obtain a card through the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C.³⁴ Simultaneously, the USNA "Message"

³⁰ Genizi, 78 and Cohen, 19. See also Dinnerstein, 189-191, for another example of the steps necessary for a DP to immigrate to the US.

³¹ "A Message to You from United Service for New Americans," n.d., in United Service for New Americans Records 1946-1955; RG-246; microfilm MKM 24; folder 259; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

portrayed the American Jewish community as friendly and caring helpers available to aid the new immigrants, and reinforced the US bureaucratic barriers that DPs had been struggling against since the end of the War. As a representative of the government, the USNA was obligated to instruct new immigrants on naturalization protocol; however the organization also took advantage of the opportunity to set up a dichotomy between the cold protocol of the State and the warm hospitality of the American Jewish community.

In addition to providing instructions to DPs upon arrival, the USNA published a series of instructional manuals on Americanizing DPs for the larger American Jewish community. A close look at these manuals reveals how the USNA saw its role in navigating the waters of DPs becoming citizens. In 1947, the USNA called on communities to take an active role in helping newcomers find jobs.³⁵ Employment services were a continuation of previous work by Jewish humanitarian agencies, specifically the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigration Aid Society (HIAS) which opened an employment office in 1909.³⁶ The 1947 USNA manual noted some of the individual and cultural problems that DPs might be experiencing--having survived a war against European Jewry and been uprooted to a new country--and asked community members to consider that “an honest answer to the question, ‘How would I react in the same situation?’ will help one to understand the DP.”³⁷ This question served a crucial function in two ways. First it was a marker of the major difference between the immigrants arriving in the US in the post-War period, and those who arrived earlier in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, in that the trauma of the Holocaust made these immigrants unique. Second, the question posed in the USNA manual served as a reminder that integration of new immigrants into American life required

³⁵ Finding Jobs for Newcomers, manual for Community Job Placement Programs, 1947; United Service for New Americans Records 1946-1955; RG-246; folder 1738; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

³⁶ Soyer, 139-140.

³⁷ Finding Jobs for Newcomers, manual for Community Job Placement Programs, 1947; United Service for New Americans Records 1946-1955; RG-246; folder 1738; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

acculturated American Jews not only to volunteer and donate money, but also to welcome the DPs into their communities. This manual can be read as a strategic move on the part of the UNSA--which was responsible for helping DPs to find work--to increase the Jewish community's dedication to assisting new immigrants and to help the USNA meet its goals. Further, by recruiting acculturated American Jews into humanitarian work, the USNA was binding together American Jews and DPs in their communities through philanthropic networks.

In 1949, the USNA produced another manual that focused on the detailed administrative process of naturalization, including chapters on "Who May Become a Naturalized Citizen of the United States" and "Repatriation."³⁸ The manual included sample questions and answers from the citizenship exam, materials from a 1920 "Community Americanization handbook for workers," and a 1944 handbook for "I Am An American Day," indicating that the USNA understood its work in 1949 as a continuation of Americanization programs in the twentieth century.³⁹ Having literally written the book on how to naturalize, the USNA reinforced its important role in the successful and complete immigration of DPs.

In March 1953, the agency published its next manual on migration and naturalization, and in it directly addressed the most recent law that impacted its work and the lives of its clients. The USNA adjusted its programs to the relevant legislation, in order to both help the government achieve its goals and to protect the American Jewish community. Revised in accordance with the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, the manual's Foreword began, "The new Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 requires both a reorientation and an intensification of our efforts to

³⁸ Manual for Naturalization Services, 1949; United Service for New Americans Records 1946-1955; RG-246; folder 1753; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

³⁹ Ibid.

integrate the newcomer effectively in our American scene.”⁴⁰ The passage of the McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 marked a significant shift in post-War immigration legislation and, in some ways, how agencies worked with DPs. The Immigration and Naturalization Act was restrictive in terms of the number of quota-immigrants admitted per year and did not include allowances for refugees.⁴¹ Further, the 1952 Act made it more difficult to become a naturalized citizen and easier to be denaturalized--especially if one did not cooperate in testifying about “subversive activity.”⁴² This move highlights the powerful anti-Communist sentiment of the time and brings to the forefront the malleability of the notion of citizenship. In its 1953 *Manual for Communities*, the USNA responded directly to these aspects of the 1952 Act. The Foreword continued,

Our English language and Americanization programs must now be expanded to meet the law’s more stringent literacy requirements. Social integration services must be directed towards the prevention of immigrant involvement in situations unwittingly leading to jeopardy and denaturalization, ideas must be developed for reaching the alien, no longer a new arrival, who also needs the benefit of our knowledge, our advice, and our reassurance.⁴³

Clearly, the US had entered the early years of the Red Scare. According to historian Mae Ngai, Senator Pat McCarran, who introduced and sponsored the 1952 Act, was a “dedicated anti-Communist and Cold War warrior” who “saw revision of the nation’s immigration laws as a tool in the United States’ urgent battle against Communism.”⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Foreword, *Manual for Communities: Organizing a Community Americanization Program*, March 1953; United Service for New Americans records; I-93; box 23, folder 6; American Jewish Historical Society, Boston MA and New York, NY.

⁴¹ Ngai, 237.

⁴² Ngai, 239.

⁴³ Foreword, *Manual for Communities: Organizing a Community Americanization Program*, March 1953; United Service for New Americans records; I-93; box 23, folder 6; American Jewish Historical Society, Boston MA and New York, NY.

⁴⁴ Ngai, 237. See Ngai for a discussion of the implications of the McCarran-Walter Act in the long view of American immigration history (pages 234-239), and for an explanation of opposition of the Act (239-248).

Senator McCarran's views were not without support as there were many who opposed liberalizing immigration laws and believed that “the word ‘refugee’ is synonymous with *Jew* and the *latter* is synonymous with Red!”⁴⁵ The USNA's primary concern was that recent immigrants not be accused of Communist activities. Especially given the well-publicized trial and later execution of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, from 1951 to 1953, the USNA's anxiety was well-founded. Immigrants needed to be properly Americanized and socialized to prevent them getting mixed up in subversive activities that would lead to their denaturalization, or worse. The concern here was not only for the individual immigrants who were at risk of denaturalization, but also for the larger Jewish community. In other words, to prevent accusations of Communism against one Jew was to protect the whole community from discrimination.

Increased anxiety over the association between Jews and Communists was not a new concern for American Jews. Particularly during the Great Wave of immigration and the ensuing rise of Yiddish socialist culture in New York City, acculturated American Jews were nervous that their recently arrived coreligionists would impede their struggle towards accepted American life. In the mid-twentieth century, as in the late-nineteenth century, philanthropy was understood as a political response to immigration and “Americanization of immigrants ranked high on the American Jewish agenda.”⁴⁶ Despite increased antisemitism in the 1920s, by the 1940s Jews had entered the American middle class and the following decades were marked by significant shifts and adaptations as American Jews continued to negotiate their national identities as Americans, and religious identities as Jews.⁴⁷ Overall, the post-War period was a time of great gains for the American Jewish community, as more opportunities and choices become available to Jews. However, underlining anxiety and instability continued to exist among acculturated American

⁴⁵ Genizi, 66, quoted in Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors*, 133.

⁴⁶ Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 173.

⁴⁷ Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 229-230.

Jews, and the arrival of DPs beginning in 1945 sparked anxiety about the “foreignness” of DPs and the possibility of a backlash of antisemitism.

To address these anxieties, in 1953 the USNA re-emphasized the three keys to American citizenship which had always been necessary but were now being enforced more strictly: English literacy, employment, and social and cultural integration.⁴⁸ The USNA’s direct response to the Immigration and Naturalization Act is an example of how the agency’s goals were fluid and its programming changed based on relevant legislation. However, responding to the government’s anti-Communist and antisemitic sentiments, which were implicitly written into law in the 1952 Act, can also be read as the USNA validating these concerns. In both cases, *A Manual for Communities* is a significant example of the USNA working with the government to reach its immigration and citizenship goals, even when their antisemitic undertones were impossible to ignore.

It would be a mistake to portray the American Jewish community as complacent in the passing of restrictive and antisemitic immigration laws. In 1946, the American Jewish Committee and the American Council for Judaism worked together to lobby for more liberal immigration laws that specifically helped Jews and other DPs migrate to the US.⁴⁹ The passage of the Displaced Persons Act in 1948 was met with criticism from the American Jewish community (and others) who found the Act discriminatory in its prejudice against Jews and “un-

⁴⁸ Table of Contents in *A Manual for Communities: Organizing a Community Americanization Program*, March 1953; United Service for New Americans records; I-93; box 23, folder 6; American Jewish Historical Society, Boston MA and New York, NY.

⁴⁹ See Genizi’s chapter “The Lobby for the DP Act, 1946-1948” and Ngai’s chapter “The Liberal Critique and Reform of Immigration Policy.” The American Jewish community’s strong response against the 1952 McCarran-Walter Immigration and Naturalization Act was joined by many, especially amongst the liberal community. In November 1946, the Citizens Committee on Displaced Persons lobby group was founded to fight for more liberal immigration laws, and ultimately, President Truman vetoed the bill.

American” in its restrictiveness.⁵⁰ In 1952, the USNA also stood in strong opposition to the McCarran-Walter Act, and “sober appraisal and planning in light of the unprecedented and adverse circumstances brought about by legislative developments during 1952” was the main topic of conversation at the organization’s 1953 Annual Meeting.⁵¹

The USNA sought to navigate the new law through the mission laid out in their 1953 manual: expand and re-emphasize programming related to English classes, citizenship classes, job training, and social integration. Ten Jewish and non-Jewish organizations (including the USNA, HIAS, and US Committee for the Care of European Children) also came together to call for reform in response to the McCarran-Walter Act.⁵² The USNA’s manuals are evidence of the organization’s commitment to helping Jewish refugees in their immigration and adjustment to American life. This required the agency to adjust to the increasingly restrictive political environment during the Cold War, and to challenge popular ideas about how to protect America from Communist influences. The USNA’s renewed efforts to protect recent immigrants and bold opposition to the 1952 Act illustrate its dedication to protecting DPs, and the entire American Jewish community.

While the USNA took on a central coordinating role, the EJCA was the organization responsible for the supervision of refugee children. Like its predecessor the German-Jewish Children’s Aid, that started in 1934 to help German Jewish child refugees emigrate from Germany, the EJCA provided corporate affidavits to at least 1,000 Jewish children who came to

⁵⁰ Proceedings - Annual Meeting, p. 9, January 8-9, 1949; United Service for New Americans records; I-93; box 23, folder 1; American Jewish Historical Society, Boston MA and New York, NY. For more on the 1948 DP Act, see Genizi, *America’s Fair Share*, 78-79.

⁵¹ United Service for New Americans: Summary of Annual Meeting, January 17-18, 1953; United Service for New Americans records; I-93; box 23, folder 5; American Jewish Historical Society, Boston MA and New York, NY.

⁵² Joint Statement By Specified Agencies Concerning United States Immigration Legislation, n.d.; United Service for New Americans records; I-93; box 19, folder 1; American Jewish Historical Society, Boston MA and New York, NY.

the US during and after World War II.⁵³ These children were categorized as “unaccompanied minors,” a term Cohen calls “a benign designation that belied the Holocaust experiences, which had orphaned these few surviving Jewish children.”⁵⁴ The EJCA was responsible for these children until they were adopted, married, or turned twenty-one years old.⁵⁵ As part of their efforts to monitor and care for these children, the EJCA and the Jewish Child Care Association in New York, a coordinating institution, recorded biographical and medical information about them, as well as notes about their personalities, activities, and relationship with their guardians. These case files were useful not only to monitor the child’s well-being, but also served as a paper trail if the child was transferred from one agency to another--for instance, if he or she moved out of New York.⁵⁶ Given the Truman Directive’s preference for children, the work of the EJCA can be read as an example of coordinated work with the government in the immigration and care of Jewish children.

The EJCA’s operations reveal certain aspects of the daily experiences of children during immigration, and also some of the methods of acculturating children to American life. Twenty-one year old Golda--whose was referred to by her American name Jean--was living with her sister in a furnished room in a woman’s home, worked at the Delta Brush Company, was enrolled in evening high school, and was taking a course in ceramics.⁵⁷ Jean and her sister shared

⁵³ Cohen, 18 and 95. According to Cohen, “GJCA was a landmark: the first agency in the United States to be involved with the protection of the rights of alien children,” 95.

⁵⁴ Cohen, 95.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ According to Cohen, in 1941 the EJCA was given “sole responsibility for placing the small number of Jewish children that the U.S. Committee brought to [the U.S.],” and after the War “became the primary cooperating agency for the care of Jewish children in conjunction with the U.S. Committee” (95). Earlier in Cohen’s discussion of the USNA services in 1946, the EJCA is listed as one division of the national branch (18). However, the case files I discuss below, from the German Jewish Children’s Aid collection in YIVO, name either the “Youth Service Department” or “Foster Home Department” of the Jewish Child Care Association at the top of each form. I am working under the assumption that these organizations worked together to coordinate the care of Jewish children refugees.

⁵⁷ Golda T.F., December 27, 1948; German Jewish Children’s Aid (GJCA); RG 249; microfilm MKM 8.33; folder 617; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

the cost of their living arrangements, and Jean also received medical support from the EJCA. According to the agency, “Jean is a mature self reliant girl who has made steady progress in her adjustment to American life.”⁵⁸ Because Jean recently turned twenty-one, her file noted that her case was “awaiting EJCA suggestion for transfer to National EJCA or USNA,” perhaps for continued monitoring and support.⁵⁹ Jean was well on her way to what the EJCA, and the State, saw as an ideal immigrant. While Jean’s file does not say so explicitly, we can assume that because she was in high school Jean had probably learned English. She was gaining financial independence, earning her high school diploma, and pursuing her interest in ceramics that fit within acceptable activities for young American girls.

Another example is Rosa who lived with her brother in her aunt’s home, contributed financially to her board costs, worked in the needle trade, and had friends in her neighborhood. According to the EJCA, “Her adjustment has been very satisfactory...Rosa is religious and observes dietary laws and the Sabbath, however, she has readily become Americanized in her speech, dress, and interests.”⁶⁰ Weighing Rosa’s American “speech, dress, and interests” against her religious identity and activity, the EJCA distinguished between what they considered American and un-American actions. However, while religious orthodoxy was clearly viewed as an American quality, the EJCA still seemed very content with Rosa. Perhaps because Rosa had Americanized in her outward expressions--“in speech, dress, and interests”--her religious observances were not seen as a set back to her acculturation. The EJCA’s reaction to Rosa’s Americanization is useful in explaining what types of acculturation were most important to the

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Rosa S., December 27, 1948; German Jewish Children’s Aid (GJCA); RG 249; microfilm MKM 8.33; folder 620; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

EJCA: private religious observances were acceptable, so long as public displays of Americanism were also present.

While Rosa's religious identity was deemed acceptable, in another case the EJCA considered emotional behavior an impediment to Americanization. Samuel was a very hard worker, had filed for citizenship, learned English, took night classes, and was financially independent. However, he was also extremely anxious and "[dreamt] very frequently about the concentration camp and the Nazis."⁶¹ From the perspective of the EJCA, Samuel's haunting memories and emotionality were an obstacle to his full adjustment to American life, despite his having followed the prescribed process of immigration. Samuel's nightmares are an example of the psychological trauma that many Jewish refugees experienced and how these immigrants were very different from their coreligionists who had arrived in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The EJCA's response to Samuel is an indication that while the post-War immigrants were different, the agencies set up to support them did not always consider their unique past experiences, and agencies' insensitivity added to the hardships of acculturation.⁶² Samuel's trauma stands in sharp contrast to the photographs published by the USNA and other agencies that depicted an easy and painless transition to post-War life, including the one at the top of this paper. The exclusion of trauma and emotionality from qualities associated with acculturation is evidence of the type of Americans the EJCA was shaping. "Unaccompanied minors" needed to display financial independence, English language skills, American cultural interests, and an outwardly positive emotional state to be considered successfully acculturated to American life.

Another organization that worked with the government to help immigrants become naturalized citizens was the Educational Alliance. Founded in 1889 by German Jews as a

⁶¹ Samuel B., November 30, 1948; German Jewish Children's Aid (GJCA); RG 249; microfilm MKM 8.33; folder 617; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

⁶² See Cohen, *Case Closed*, for more on this subject.

settlement house for Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, the Educational Alliance's original mission was to acculturate and educate new immigrants who were seen as an embarrassment to the highly acculturated German Jewish community of Washington Heights.⁶³ The Alliance's work in the mid-twentieth century can be understood as a continuation of its 1895 objectives of being "Americanizing, educational, social and humanizing."⁶⁴ Even the Alliance's partnership with the New York City Board of Education in the mid-twentieth century was an extension of their working relationship beginning in the 1910s.⁶⁵ Like White's analysis of the UNSA's work in the mid-1940s, the Alliance can be understood as continuing its long-term mission, but doing so in a more organized, large scale, and formal way. Establishing classes required substantial communication and strong cooperation between these two institutions.

A closer look at the moments when the Educational Alliance went beyond its obligation to the Board of Education, reveals its dual goal of teaching immigrants English and citizenship classes, but also creating space for building community. In this partnership, the Board of Education provided teachers, books, and supplies while the Educational Alliance was responsible for providing "suitable rooms, rent free, with heat and light and storage space for books and supplies" without charge to the students.⁶⁶ Several letters between these two institutions indicate the high demand for such classes. On July 5, 1945, Mordecai Kessler, director of the Educational Alliance, thanked Perry Schneider, Assistant to Director of Evening Schools at the Board of

⁶³ "Our History," Educational Alliance and NBC TV "Neighborhood Profiles Lower East Side" video, accessed November 21, 2011, <http://www.edalliance.org/index.php?submenu=OurHistory&src=gendocs&ref=History&category=AboutUs>.

⁶⁴ Rudens, S.P. "A Half Century of Community Service: The Story of the New York Educational Alliance," *The American Jewish Year Book* 46 (Sept. 18, 1944 - Sept. 7, 1945): 76.

⁶⁵ Jeannette B. Rosenfeld to Mordecai Kessler, April 5, 1946; Educational Alliance Records; RG 312; box 229; folder 3618; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research; Mordecai Kessler to Perry Schneider, July 1, 1947; Educational Alliance Records; RG 312; box 233; folder 3669; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research; Mordecai Kessler to Perry Schneider, July 5, 1945; Educational Alliance Records; RG 312; box 226; folder 3562; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research; and Rudens, "A Half Century of Community Service," 79.

⁶⁶ Jeannette B. Rosenfeld to the Educational Alliance, September 1946; Educational Alliance Records; RG 312; box 229; folder 3618; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

Education, for the announcement of the class schedule for the 1945-1946 year, and requested to expand the program:

As you know, [t]he Educational Alliance has for many years considered Americanization and citizenship work as an important part of its program. We are anxious not only to continue the Tuesday and Thursday classes but also to expand the classes so that we may use the same area on Mondays and Wednesdays and have a real community campaign to attract to our Center all adults who should be studying in our day classes.⁶⁷

Two years later, there was still a need for an expansion of the programs. In 1947 Kessler requested holding another evening English class, which he was confident would be well attended and “would prove a great help to many people anxious and willing to become American citizens.”⁶⁸ Kessler’s adoption of the language of citizenship and professionalization of classes at the Educational Alliance illustrates how the organization embodied its commitment to the Board of Education, and the larger mission of helping DPs become citizens.⁶⁹ Kessler also took on the goal of creating Americans who not only speak English, but also do not sound foreign. As a complement to English classes, Kessler proposed in 1946 “sponsoring special speech work activities such as public speaking and the correction of foreign accents.”⁷⁰ This proposition echoes the Alliance’s work in the early 1900s, when there was a community service speech clinic aimed at, among other things, “correcting” foreign accents.⁷¹

In addition to teaching English and citizenship classes, the Educational Alliance hosted a wide variety of social clubs and activities for its members. Such extracurricular activities are evidence of the Alliance’s second goal of shaping DPs into acculturated American Jews. The

⁶⁷ Mordecai Kessler to Perry Schneider, July 5, 1945; Educational Alliance Records; RG 312; box 226; folder 3562; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Mordecai Kessler to Hazel R. Clark, August 14, 1947; Educational Alliance Records; RG 312; box 233; folder 3669; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. In this letter, Kessler declines an offer for free English classes taught by volunteers for the Committee for Refugee Education, saying he prefers hiring paid teachers.

⁷⁰ Mordecai Kessler to Supervisor of English Classes, May 22, 1946; Educational Alliance Records; RG 312; box 229; folder 3618; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

⁷¹ Rudens, “A Half Century of Community Service,” 84.

leaders of agencies assisting immigrants, especially young people, understood that both instruction and socialization were necessary for successful acculturation into American life. Sarah, for example, arrived in the US in 1947 under the auspices of the Jewish Child Care Association of New York, and was referred to the Educational Alliance to not only take English classes, but also to “take advantage of some of the social activities available for young people at the Alliance.”⁷² In that same year, the Educational Alliance brochure highlighted the variety of activities available: “Whether you are looking forward to club meetings, arts and crafts, scouting, dramatics, gymnasium activities or the Game Room and Lounge, you’ll be sure to find what you want.”⁷³ Alliance members organized many different social clubs by interests, but also by age group including youth, intermediary, young adult, 25-35 year-old, adult, and older adult divisions. The Alliance’s appeal across all ages and interests was a continuation of its original approach to organizing immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century of creating “a real *alliance* with the people.”⁷⁴

These club activities were mostly secular and varied according to age groups. For example, intermediary club members were offered sports, hikes, arts and crafts, concerts, dance classes, and photography, while “Guys and Dolls,” a club for single men and women between the ages of 25-35, sponsored movies, social dancing, roller skating, and lectures and discussions.⁷⁵ The inclusive “something for everyone” nature of the Educational Alliance’s social clubs reflects the effort of Kessler, and the Alliance in general, to strengthen the American Jewish community, and specifically to make new Americans a part of this community.

⁷² Alexander Fishman to Mordecai Kessler, February 7, 1947; Educational Alliance Records; RG 312; box 233; folder 3669; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

⁷³ “Going Our Way?” Educational Alliance activities brochure, September 1947; Educational Alliance Records; RG 312; box 18; folder 255; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

⁷⁴ Rudens, “A Half Century of Community Service,” 74-75 (emphasis in the original).

⁷⁵ “Going Our Way?” 1947-1948; Educational Alliance Records; RG 312; box 18; folder 255; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research and Guys and Dolls club announcement, 1952; Educational Alliance Records; RG 312; box 94; folder 1157; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

Another way that the staff of the Educational Alliance helped to foster a strong sense of community among its members was by continuing in an informal way the *landsmanshaftn* tradition of bestowing honors on individual members.⁷⁶ For example, in November 1950, a staff member from the Alliance wrote an informal note to a member sending good wishes for a *simcha*: “I send you my warm congratulations and pleasant greetings [on this happy family event], and hope that I shall be able to share with you and the other members many such glad tidings.”⁷⁷ The meaningful way that the Alliance staff reached out to a member to recognize, and thereby share in, her significant occasion is evidence of the agency’s effort to build a solid community.

Though most of the programming at the Educational Alliance was secular, the Alliance did include some religious programs. Inclusion of specifically Jewish social and educational programs are another indication of the Alliance’s continuation of its original mission in the post-War period. At its founding, the Alliance was unique in its commitment as both an American and a Jewish institution, which included providing Jewish education.⁷⁸ This continued to be the case in 1947 when the Alliance founded the Jewish Institute and the began teaching classes on Jewish studies including Beginners Hebrew, Introduction to Jewish History, The Bible as Living Literature, and Contemporary Jewish Life and Problems.⁷⁹ According to the Alliance’s newsletter, “the purpose of the Institute is to enable Jewish youth and adults to strengthen their Jewish education and re-learn it in the light of present problems and conditions. Also invited to take these courses are those who have never had a chance to acquire a background of Jewish

⁷⁶ Soyer, 109.

⁷⁷ Harold Murray to Mrs. Bernstein, November 21, 1950; Educational Alliance Records; RG 312; box 31; folder 424; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

⁷⁸ Rudens, “A Half Century of Community Service,” 77.

⁷⁹ *Highlights: The Voice of the Intermediates*, January 28, 1947; Educational Alliance Records; RG 312; box 18; folder 255; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

knowledge.”⁸⁰ These Jewish studies classes show that the Alliance was working towards building a specifically Jewish community, in addition to satisfying the naturalization goals of the State Department.

Another organization that both worked with the US government to help immigrants obtain citizenship and used its position to strengthen community ties was the National Council of Jewish Women. Founded in 1893, the Council was part of the late-nineteenth century Progressive reform movements and the expanding role of women in the public sphere. Originally the Council’s goal was to support Jewish religious life in the US. During the twentieth century however, the Council shifted its focus from a specifically religious agenda to social welfare and gained international recognition as a social services agency.⁸¹ Its extensive support services for immigrants and leadership role in the network of aid in New York City earned the Council the distinction as “the only agency at the time which followed through from reception on arrival to Americanization.”⁸²

One example of the Council’s attempts at Americanization was a short-lived program designed to teach recent European immigrants how to be American. Conducted in Yiddish and run weekly at the Council Club of Older People, “the scope of the program [was]...to include discussions of American foods and ways of preparing foods, with emphasis upon dietetics; marketing most effectively in stores in our city; American institutions and Government and our way of life.”⁸³ Although discontinued due to lack of attendance, this program serves as a straightforward example of the Council’s method of acculturating newcomers to American life.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Faith Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993*, (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1993), 14 and 130.

⁸² White, 30.

⁸³ Committee on Service for Foreign Born, New York Section of the National Council of Jewish Women Annual Report - 1950, by Sonia S. Smick, p. 13-14, n.d.; National Council of Jewish Women, New York Section Records; I-469; box 45; folder 7; American Jewish Historical Society, Boston, MA and New York, NY.

Another aim of the Council was to construct relationships between recent DPs and volunteers. Recruiting volunteers was not only a necessity to ensure that the Council's programs continued and that they were successful in helping to shape new Americans, but by including volunteers in their work, the Council also created systems of reliance and aid that strengthened the American Jewish community. The Council's Service for Foreign Born committee often published calls for volunteers to help new immigrants in the Council's newsletter, *The Bulletin*. In 1953, at the request of the New York City Board of Education, the Council asked for volunteers to visit "the houses of newcomers to the United States residing in selected neighborhoods. ... [To] acquaint them with courses provided by the Board of Education in citizenship, English, and other subjects which will help them in naturalization and in adjusting to their new environment."⁸⁴ Similarly, in 1956 the Council announced that the New York Association for New Americans, a local chapter of the USNA, "has asked Council to provide volunteer teachers to go to the homes of 15 handicapped Jewish persons" who needed help in preparing for the citizenship exam.⁸⁵ The announcement continued, "If you have a command of German or Yiddish, won't you give this extra measure of devotion? Won't you volunteer to help these people whose one hope is to become not only Americans in spirit, but in legal fact?"⁸⁶ Two important actions are articulated in these examples of the Service for Foreign Born's call for volunteers. First, by participating in helping newcomers become citizens, the Council was aligning itself with the goals of the US government. Second, by giving its members an opportunity to become philanthropists, the Council was extending its patronage network between

⁸⁴ New Service for Foreign Born Project, *The Bulletin*, vol 32, no. 39, February 1953; National Council of Jewish Women, New York Section Records; I-469; box 79; folder 5; American Jewish Historical Society, Boston, MA and New York, NY.

⁸⁵ Service for Foreign Born, *The Bulletin*, February Issue, n.d.; National Council of Jewish Women, New York Section Records; I-469; box 79; folder 5; American Jewish Historical Society, Boston, MA and New York, NY.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

members and immigrants. Providing opportunities for its members to volunteer was an appeal to middle-class, American women's values, of which American Jews had become a part throughout the mid-twentieth century.⁸⁷

The Service for Foreign Born also worked to make the American Jewish community stronger by asking for volunteers in ways that appealed to the memory of the Holocaust, that drew on their Jewish religious identity, and that gave members an opportunity to fulfill their obligations as both Americans and as Jews. The Council asked for members who were comfortable with the elderly and could speak Yiddish or German to help with an urgent task: "There are several elderly and non-ambulatory displaced persons whose citizenship depends upon their meeting the educational requirements for naturalization. They must have instruction in English and American history and government."⁸⁸ The call for volunteers continued: "What better way can we give thanks for the privilege of being Americans than by helping these old people who cannot leave the little space their families are able to afford them, these inmates of old people's homes, these victims of concentration camps!"⁸⁹ This call for volunteers was far beyond what could be expected from a common appeal to benefit the State Department's naturalization goals, and it specifically targeted Council members' sense of obligation as American Jews to help their coreligionists who survived the Holocaust. Another appeal directed at members' identity as Jews was a message from the new Council president on occasion of the Jewish New Year. The message wished members "and her family health, freedom and peace in the days ahead, and for our Section the continued devotion of every woman in it to the service of

⁸⁷ See Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, "A Golden Age?: 1948-1967" for more on mid-twentieth century American Jewish history.

⁸⁸ Service for Foreign Born, *The Bulletin*, Fall Forum Issue, n.d.; National Council of Jewish Women, New York Section Records; I-469; box 79; folder 5; American Jewish Historical Society, Boston, MA and New York, NY.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

the young, the old, the sick, the newcomers to America in our community.”⁹⁰ A call for members’ devotion to the service of the newcomers to America wrapped up in a *shana tova* message was a powerful appeal to members’ Jewish duty to aid the needy in their community. A close look at the Service for Foreign Born’s requests for volunteers makes clear the Council’s mission to aid immigrants, but to do so in a way that called on its members’ class and social status, and as their identities as Americans and Jews.

In addition to learning English and becoming a naturalized American citizen, another requirement of acculturation was employment. Founded on the importance of helping immigrants gain economic independence, the ORT sponsored trade schools in Europe, and provided job training for newly-arrived immigrants in the US. The New York ORT Trade School, opened in 1940, and the Bramson ORT Trade School, opened in 1942, were organized “to assist newcomers in their economic adjustment in America.”⁹¹ From their beginnings in the early 1940s to 1954, these New York schools offered courses for some 15,000 people, mainly recent immigrants from Europe, while ORT programs in DP camps in Germany, Austria, and Italy served an estimated 75,000 people.⁹² As migration increased throughout the late-1940s, ORT understood its role in rescuing displaced European Jews and gaining freedom for survivors,

The ‘assembly line’ that began with JDC and IRO [International Refugee Organization] in the DP camps, stretched across the Atlantic to community reception agencies such as UNSA and HIAS, terminated for many at the ORT schools. For a considerable proportion of those newcomers who settled in New York, the two schools were the means of passing finally out of the category of the displaced and into formal integrated living, a release from dependent and institutional ways to independence and earnings for themselves and their families. What cannot be given in statistical terms, but which nevertheless constitutes substantial value, is the revival of spirit and raised morale imparted by the training program to the newcomers.⁹³

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ The Making of New Americans, p. 1, January 9, 1954; American ORT Federation records; RG 380; box 29; folder 235; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

ORT saw its work in terms of transnational aid, from the European DP camps to the New York City garment district, and as the final stop for refugees in their process of Americanization. Given the specific mandate that sponsors of corporate affidavits provide employment for DPs, ORT was fulfilling a crucial role in terms of agencies' responsibility to the US government. However, ORT saw itself serving a critical function not only in satisfying this duty, but also in allowing DPs to complete the process of acculturation by becoming fully Americans in spirit, as well as legal fact.

Twenty-six year old A.R. was a typical applicant to the Bramson school. Originally from Romania, A.R. spent a combined eleven years in concentration camps and DP camps, and lost his family during the War. After 1951, he immigrated to New York and found unskilled work in the garment district. He was offered a job as a cutter, but needed training and applied to the ORT Bramson school to take a cutting course. "He does not mind working hard," A.R.'s ORT report reads, "but he knows that without a skill in hand he cannot get married and support a family nor can he feel that he has really become part of American life."⁹⁴ Without training from the Bramson school, A.R. was not only kept from a better job opportunity as a cutter, but he was also barred from access to marriage, a family, and membership in American life. Similarly, J.G. took an operator course at the Bramson Trade School in 1948 when he was twenty-three years old, after spending five years in concentration camps in Europe and losing his family, and was placed in a job. In 1954, the Bramson schools reported that J.G. "is married now to an American girl from Brooklyn, well settled, and very grateful to us."⁹⁵ The ORT not only provided job training for J.G., but also allowed him full access to an American life--in his case, settling down with a

⁹⁴ Who is Helped at the Bramson ORT School in New York, p. 7, January 9, 1954; American ORT Federation records; RG 380; box 29; folder 235; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

⁹⁵ Bramson ORT Trade School, February 8, 1954; American ORT Federation records; RG 380; box 29; folder 235; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

girl from Brooklyn. Like other agencies discussed, the ORT participated in the dual project of working with the US government and helping to fulfill the responsibilities of affidavit sponsors, and also helping immigrants to adopt American identities through economic independence. Though ORT did not stress Jewish identity to the extent that other agencies did, the organization did contribute to establishing sponsorship systems between the acculturated Jewish community and newcomers through fundraising appeals. Thank you letters from ORT students and success stories like A.R.'s and J.G.'s were circulated through the ORT's mailing lists as both evidence of the organization's success and as appeals to donors.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Letters from Students of the ORT Trade School, 1941-1951 ORT 10th Anniversary Journal, American & European Friends of ORT and the ORT Trade School, n.d.; American ORT Federation records; RG 380; box 30; folder 240; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

Conclusion

The USNA photographs of the refugee family that began this paper, like all promotional materials, portray a simplistic story. If once this family wandered in Europe, now they are resettled in the American midwest. What was needed has been provided for, and what was unsure has been secured. Missing in the photos are the details, the politics, the fears and anxieties, and the hard work that made this family's resettlement a reality. An examination of the coalition of agencies that worked on behalf of DPs and that structured their experiences throughout the process of Americanization begins to provide answers. American Jewish humanitarian agencies working on behalf of refugees were active political actors and pursued their own agendas in the process of acculturating DPs.

The USNA, the EJCA, the Educational Alliance, the National Council of Jewish Women, and the ORT worked with the US government to produce naturalized and independent American citizens out of recent DPs. At the same time, given the rising status of American Jews throughout the twentieth century and their admission into mainstream middle class American society in the 1940s, Jewish agencies were concerned with maintaining the status quo. Agencies prepared DPs to join their ranks in the mainstream middle class, and they avoided the risk of losing their social status because of recent immigrants appearing too foreign.

The process of acculturating DPs worked in favor of the American Jewish community. As the US became the worldwide center of Jewish life in the aftermath of the Holocaust, the arrival of DPs was an opportunity to ask Jews to invest in their community by donating money and volunteering their time. The result of their efforts is seen in the embrace of the "surviving remnant," and the central role that Holocaust remembrance and education came to play in American Jewish cultural and religious life in the following decades. During the dynamic years

after World War II, providing immediate relief to Jewish refugees became the primary goal. However, during this process of challenging increasingly restrictive immigration legislation, coordinating international relief and resettlement services, and on-going large scale fundraising campaigns, American Jewish humanitarian agencies were active agents in acculturating recent DPs into American life, and protecting all American Jews.

An analysis of post-World War II immigration reveals many similarities to immigration in the decades leading up to, and following, the turn of the twentieth century. Many of the same anxieties surrounding the behavior of arriving European Jews and about a backlash of antisemitism existed in both periods. The treatment of arriving immigrants was also similar in each period--in both, organizations were established to help newcomers find housing and employment, and to learn English and adapt to life in America. However, one noticeable change in the post-War period was the way that these organizations functioned and their relationship to the State. While in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries *landsmanshaftn* were fragmented and worked autonomously from the US government, in the mid-twentieth century humanitarian agencies worked in a central, professional, and systematic way, and in cooperation with the government. Another critical shift from the earlier period to the later one was in the immigrants themselves. DPs brought with them traumatic experiences from the Holocaust that marked them as a very different group of immigrants than their coreligionists who arrived several decades earlier. The inability of humanitarian agencies to accommodate some of their specific needs was one of the great shortfalls of this period.

Recent research on DPs after World War II, both in European DP camps and in the US, has expanded the focus of Holocaust history, and has prioritized new questions about daily experiences of DPs and processes of acculturation after the War. However, this scholarship has

focused specifically on survivors during the resettlement process, and has not yet considered the role of humanitarian agencies in a significant way, or how resettlement fits into the context of American Jewish history and immigration. Placing post-War immigration experiences into these larger contexts reveals moments of continuity not yet acknowledged in the scholarship. At the same time, this contextualization contributes new understandings of the uniqueness of the post-World War II period--in the effects of Cold War legislation on immigration, the professionalization of agencies, and the status of the larger American Jewish community.

Shifting the center of analysis from individual DPs to humanitarian agencies is an opportunity to examine the power of these organizations as they negotiated a complicated trio of actors: the US government, the DPs themselves, and the American Jewish community. The result adds nuances to the history of post-War migration.

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