Revisiting the Jewish American Princess:

Jewish Girls, The J.A.P. Discursive Stereotype, and Negotiated Identity

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"I never knew you could delve so deep into such a shallow persona"

- Emma

Abstract

This qualitative exploratory research investigates how Canadian Jewish girls understand the discursive stereotype of the Jewish American Princess (JAP), and how they take up these understandings of the JAP in relation to their identities. Three focus groups and six interviews were conducted with girls attending Jewish high schools in Toronto, Canada to explore these questions. From a *third wave Jewish feminist* perspective, and taking a *mediated action* approach to identity, two analyses were conducted. A thematic analysis of peer relations, gender, community, and religious understandings demonstrates how aspects of individual identities mediate interpretations of the JAP. A series of *portraits* of JAP-related identity were constructed to analyze how the JAP discursive stereotype also functions as a cultural tool that is taken up by the participants to mediate expressions of their identities. These findings establish the contradictory ways these Jewish girls describe, interpret, and utilize the JAP discursive stereotype, and the complex roles it plays in their social worlds.

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CHAPTER 1: ORIGINS

The Jewish American Princess (JAP) is a complex and emotionally loaded term. Emerging out of the quickly rising Jewish middle-class in post-World War II America, the JAP discursive stereotype has come to represent the epitome of an over-indulged and materialistic Jewish girl. Employed by both Jews and non-Jews, over the past forty years the JAP[1] stereotype has been liberally applied to Jewish women and girls in an effort to contain them within a specific conception of what it means to be Jewish and female.

Am I a JAP? I don't think so, but I am not exactly sure. Growing up Jewish in Hamilton and the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), cities with large Jewish populations, the JAP stereotype has been an established fixture in my social world. However, what *exactly* a JAP is, and the degree to which it has affected my own identity as a young Jewish woman, have always been somewhat unclear to me. While this stereotype has been one of popular interest for close to fifty years, the academic scholarship available on the topic focuses largely on deconstructions of the stereotype within joke culture (Dundes, 1985; Spencer, 1989), and popular culture (Brook, 2007; Byers, 2009), and on its social role within the Jewish community (Baum et al., 1975; Chayat, 1987; Prell, 2003). What is lacking in the research, and what I therefore set out to explore directly in this thesis, is how Jewish girls today understand the JAP discursive stereotype and how they take up this entity in relation to their own identities.

Growing up surrounded by the JAP stereotype has been confusing. At many points in my social history, the JAP stereotype has simultaneously encapsulated the abhorrent traits of self-centredness and entitlement, while still representing desirable social power through its association with the "cool girls" who display status clothing and accessories. Throughout my youth, I was acutely aware of the negative repercussions of exhibiting JAPpy traits, but at the same time recognized the social status that comes with

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[1] The stereotype of the Jewish American Prince is also acknowledged in the literature (Beck, 1990; Booker, 1991; Dundes, 1985). However, Beck (1990) explains that it never caught on with the same fervor "largely because of the double standard that admires in men the very characteristics that are considered heinous in women" (p. 27). I recognize that this label may also be an interesting aspect of the topic and worth exploring. However, for the purposes of this research, I focus solely on the female version of the stereotype, the Jewish American Princess.

wearing JAPpy clothes. Due to both the strong social presence of the JAP stereotype and the complexity of its meanings, I have often felt the need to negotiate around the stereotype in forming my own identity as a young Jewish woman. I have consciously examined whether affiliating with certain social groups, wearing certain clothes, or speaking in certain ways implicate me as a JAP. I have deeply considered how the implications of being labeled as a JAP shape my self-understandings as a young Jewish woman.

Two years ago, I sat with a close friend in United Bakers, a popular Jewish restaurant in Toronto. We were discussing my need for a new winter coat. I was interested in a down parka, made by a company called Canada Goose. This parka was extremely popular that season, and for good reason; it is well made, is available in bright colours, and includes posh details like a fur collar with a wire inside to form the hood directly to the shape of the wearer's head. Interestingly, this parka was also emerging as the latest JAP status symbol. As we sat in United Bakers, we noticed several women and girls in the restaurant wearing this exact coat. I quickly assumed that these women must be JAPs. Catching myself participating in this labeling process forced me to consider the realistic possibility that many people would judge *me* as a JAP if I wore this parka. Would wearing a Canada Goose parka *make* me a JAP? Did I care if others perceived me as a JAP? How would it make me feel to be considered a JAP? Was the possibility of being labeled a JAP detrimental enough to deter me from buying this coat altogether? And why did I still care about whether I was seen as a JAP at the age of 23?! The possibility of being labeled a Jewish American Princess was a real consideration in my decision about whether to buy this particular winter coat. This incident left me to deeply consider the strength of this social stereotype, and its ability to significantly shape how I understand and present myself as a young Jewish woman.

Kristin Esterberg (2002) philosophically states that "qualitative researchers begin where they are" (p. 26). The legacy of the JAP stereotype as a factor in my own identity negotiations led me to question the role it plays for other Jewish girls. At the same time, I began to notice the JAP image surfacing in a variety of movies, television shows, plays, and magazine articles. Despite a brief respite in the 1990s, the JAP is enjoying a strong comeback amongst Jewish youth and in popular culture (Appel, 2008; Newhouse, 2005a

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& b). As part of this revival, a number of Jewish women have written publicly about their own negotiations with the JAP stereotype. Alana Newhouse (2005a) discusses "outing" herself as a JAP in an article in *Lilith* magazine (p. 28). Newhouse's announcement illustrates this recent emphasis on the influence that the JAP label has today on individual women's and girls' identities. When taken together, my own continued experience with the stereotype, the resurgence of the term in popular culture, and the overt examination of Jewish women's own interactions with it, beg the question: What does the JAP stereotype mean to Jewish women and girls *today*, and how do these meanings factor into their self-understandings of being Jewish and female? In this way, my research is an intersection between my own personal history, and the re-emergence of the JAP discursive stereotype in popular culture.

In this thesis, I recount my story of carrying out exploratory qualitative research about the dominant cultural stereotype of the Jewish American Princess, and its role in individual identity construction. The purpose of this research is twofold: first, to address a significant gap in the literature by conducting the first qualitative study to gather primary participant-based research on the JAP stereotype, and second, to explore the JAP stereotype in relation to individual identity. Rich literature on the Jewish American Princess exists; however I was unable to unearth any studies that specifically focus on identity and the JAP stereotype as experienced by adolescent Jewish girls. My research seeks to fill this gap. From a *third wave Jewish feminist* perspective, and taking a *mediated action* approach to identity, I explore how Jewish girls in Toronto, Canada interpret the JAP stereotype in their social worlds, and how these understandings factor into their identity negotiations. It is my goal to expose the JAP stereotype to interrogation. In working directly with participants, I provided an opportunity for Jewish girls to explore, in an unconstrained way, their own understandings of this phenomenon. It has been my goal to create a space in which to challenge assumptions, foster meaningful discussion, and mutually make meaning of this complex entity.

I must address the apparent contradiction between conducting research about an *American* stereotype in Canada. While the label does refer to the *American* princess, the term is in full circulation in Canada as well. Furthermore, Canadian and American Jewish communities are very similar in their histories of immigration and experience as minority

groups within a dominant Christian culture. I therefore understand the *American* component of the JAP label to denote *North American,* speaking to both Canadian and American girls. My research therefore also provides scholarly work to better reflect the complex social reality for *Canadian* Jewish girls around the stereotype.

This is an important topic to study in order to recognize the concrete ramifications the JAP stereotype has in the lives of Jewish girls. The resurgence of the JAP stereotype in popular culture indicates the continued presence, and the continued relevance, of this concept in North America. It is therefore imperative to probe how this stereotype manifests, and the implications of these manifestations. Through this research, I hope to move the JAP stereotype from the periphery of discussions about Jewish girls, to the centre. I hope to treat this prominent stereotype as more than simply a joke or an inconsequential label. Through this research, I seek to establish the need to seriously consider how the JAP discursive stereotype is shaping modern Jewish girlhood.

Research Questions

In order to narrow the focus of my research, I formulated two research questions. First, how do Canadian Jewish girls experience and understand the discursive stereotype of the Jewish American Princess (JAP) today? I believe it is critical to begin my work by thoroughly exploring the stereotype. I chose to focus on the *experience* of the JAP discursive stereotype, as I want to capture the extent to which the JAP stereotype manifests in girls' daily lives. I conducted three focus groups with Jewish girls in Toronto to generate rich discussions about the experience of the JAP stereotype. Second, how do Canadian Jewish girls take up this discursive stereotype in relation to their identities? Highlighting my interest in the relationship between the JAP stereotype and individual identity, I designed this question to directly probe identity related experience. I carried out six individual interviews to gather insight into the ways that individual Jewish girls negotiate their self-presentations and their self-understandings in relation to the JAP. This question draws on a mediated action approach to identity construction, which I will explain in greater detail in the following chapter. I approached both of my research

questions through the lens of third wave Jewish feminism, which I will discuss in the following chapters as well.

The Girls: A brief Introduction

This study involves 14 thoughtful, intelligent, and highly articulate girls. You will come to know these girls much more closely through their words and stories in the pages to come, but I want to introduce them here, as they are the heart of this project. It is their stories that drive my research, and give it meaning.

Emma, Hannah, and Ashley, who were all in grade 12 at the Mesorah Academy for Girls (MAG), make up Focus Group 1. Emma, 17, Hannah, 17, and Ashley, 16, took the focus group very seriously. We met in an empty classroom at the end of their school day, and pulled the desks together in a circle. They presented their views comfortably, and with great consideration and seriousness. Emma was extremely reflective throughout the discussion, constantly remarking how she had never examined the JAP stereotype in this way before. Ashley and Emma had gone to elementary school together and often referred to past events they were both familiar with. Though Hannah had gone to a different elementary school, it was clear that all three girls were very close and knew much about each other's lives.

Focus Group 2 was also comprised of three seventeen-year-old friends in grade 12 from MAG: Rosaline, Mulan, and Bella. All three of the girls again, seemed very comfortable with one another, clearly spending a lot of time together both inside and outside of school. Mulan and Bella were both energetic and expressive girls. They bounced around in their seats with excitement as we talked, using their hands in grand gesticulations. In contrast, Rosaline spoke very quietly, and commented less frequently than the other two. I did not get the impression that Rosaline was uncomfortable in the focus group, but simply that she was more reserved, and was slow to throw herself into the lively mix with her friends.

Focus Group 3 was made up of three friends from the Jewish Academy (JA): Barbie, 17, her younger sister Abby, 16, and their friend Lily, 17. Barbie and Lily were

close friends in grade 12, and Abby, in grade 10, also knew Lily well through her sister. Overall, this group was very opinionated. Lily and Barbie frequently disagreed with each other. The disagreements resolved when one of the two backed down, ceding that the other was probably right. Abby commented less frequently, but when she did, she often added an entirely different perspective from what was already being discussed. Abby struck me as extremely insightful and observant of the world around her, and confident in voicing these impressions.

My interview participants represent a similar age-range and school split. Leora, 16, and Leah, 16, were both in grade 11 at MAG. Leora struck me as a humble girl, very appreciative of her privileges and opportunities. Leah was an extremely bright and feminist young woman, who read a lot (she often referred to books in our conversation). Sarah, 15, Lauren, 17, and Lola, 17, all attended JA. Sarah, in grade 10, was my youngest participant. Sarah spoke openly about her life, providing fascinating details about the social dynamics in her school. Lauren, in grade 12, was extremely self-aware. As we discussed her experience with the JAP stereotype, she often added reflexive commentary about her own personality traits and how she felt about them. Lola, also in grade 12, was somewhat hesitant when we began our interview. She needed reassurance that whatever she told me was interesting and significant to me, and that there was no "right" answer. Once she relaxed, Lola spoke passionately about her experience.

The Setting

As there are only a few Jewish high schools in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), my participants ended up attending two schools, with roughly half of the participants from each school. I introduce the schools at the beginning of this thesis so as to provide more context about my participants and their experience. I will refer frequently to these two institutions, and it is therefore crucial that the reader is familiar with them from the outset. The schools themselves were not the focus of my research, and I therefore do not attempt to draw conclusions about them in this work. However, since the JAP stereotype is in part constructed within the school environment, aspects of the participants' school lives have bearing on my research. The schools are referred to by pseudonyms.

The first school, the Mesorah[2] Academy for Girls (MAG), is an all girls religious school affiliated with the Orthodox denomination of Judaism. The students at MAG spend half of their school day studying Jewish law, history, language, and text from the perspective of Orthodox Judaism. The school draws its students from families in the GTA who identify as Orthodox Jews. The students at MAG follow a dress code based on standards of modesty that include wearing skirts that come to their knees and shirts covering their upper arms and chests.

The second school, the Jewish Academy (JA), is a co-ed, community wide school, drawing from families of all religious denominations. My JA participants practiced Judaism in a number of different ways. This differs significantly from the MAG participants, whose Orthodox practice of Judaism was very similar. Like MAG students, JA students spend half of their school day studying Jewish law, history, language, and text, though it is not necessarily taught from a solely Orthodox perspective. The differences between the two schools in religious practice and gender of the student body have significant bearing on the way religious and gendered values impact how the JAP stereotype functions in the school social environment.

The JAP as a Discursive Stereotype

In this thesis, I argue that the Jewish American Princess is a *discursive stereotype.* In the literature and in popular culture, the Jewish American Princess is commonly referred to as a stereotype (Byers, 2009; Prell, 1999). At the same time, the way the JAP label is used indicates that it is viewed as encompassing a pattern of complex beliefs and understandings. This network of images and ideas surrounding the Jewish American Princess suggests a discursive configuration. I have therefore combined the two concepts in conceptualizing the JAP as a discursive stereotype. This conceptualization of the JAP is supported by both the popular usages of the term, and is evident in my findings as well.

A stereotype functions as a "shorthand way of classifying social reality into convenient categories," based on the assumption of common properties amongst

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[2] *Mesorah* is the Hebrew word for "Jewish tradition."

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members of a group (Fleras & Elliott, 2003, p.388). Stereotypes of groups or certain personas oversimplify the characteristics that define this group, subsuming all members of the group within the stereotype, regardless of their individual differences. Homi Bhabha (2004) argues that a stereotype "must be anxiously repeated," highlighting the ways that the stereotype is used as central to its strength (p.94). Gold (1998), Prell (1999), and Byers (2009) clearly establish the JAP as a prevalent stereotype about Jewish girls in North America. The stereotypic nature of the JAP assumes that all Jewish girls are the same and ignores individual differences amongst them (Booker, 1991). It does indeed act as a shorthand, using the acronym *J.A.P.* to conjure up for the user or the listener all of the characteristics, behaviours, and activities that comprise that stereotype.

My participants also conceived of the JAP as a stereotype. Sarah, one of my interview participants, explained that she used the term JAP "instead of using bitch, nice looking, or rich. This one word sums it all up." In Focus Group 1, Hannah specifically identified the JAP as a stereotype: "It's kind of like a mold that people fit into. So in that way it's a stereotype, like there are certain characteristics that would describe a JAP." It is clear that for my participants, the Jewish American Princess is commonly understood as a stereotype about Jewish girls in North America.

At the same time that the JAP is a stereotype, I argue that it can *also* be understood as a discourse. Following a Foucauldian (1972; 1978) approach, discourse is understood as a body of knowledge that constructs ways of being. Foucault (1972) explains, "whenever, between objects, types of statements, concepts or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functions, transformations), we will say...that we are dealing with a discursive formation" (p.38). To further clarify this concept, Yon (2000a) defines discourse as "a collection of statements and ideas that produces networks of meanings" (p.3). Orchestrated by institutions and sociocultural forces, these networks of meanings "structure the possibilities for thinking and talking" about the world around us (Yon, 2000a, p.3). Discourse sets out rules for shaping our lives. Certain discourses become privileged, and then the meanings and norms set out in discourse "become disseminated, digested, and internalized as 'truth'" (Pomerantz, 2008, p.13). Subsequently, discourse authoritatively solidifies what it means to fall into a category or ascribe to a label, such as the JAP. The JAP functions as a discourse in that it

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is seen as a *truth* about Jewish girls, not as a constructed image that is mediated through sexism and anti-Semitism (which will be addressed in the following chapter). In this way, the discourse of the JAP narrowly shapes the meaning of Jewish girlhood.

For Foucault (1978), discourse and power are interchangeable, as "it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together" (p.100). Discourse is "productive" in its power to construct knowledge, to determine what is socially acceptable, considered to be the norm, or considered to be *true* (Yon, 2000a, p.4). Pomerantz (2008) explains that discourse has the power to "solidify socially constructed categories, granting them authorizing power that forms commonsense ways of thinking about others, the social world, and ourselves" (p.13). Truth and knowledge are constantly being produced and reproduced through the power of discourse. Foucault (1978) asserts that power is not attributed to one single person or creator. Further, power does not move in a linear fashion. Rather, power is produced through interactions between many people, many places, and many instances all at the same time. Power is practiced and dispersed in an endless number of locations. On a continuous basis, power simultaneously moves in multiple directions. The concept of power is important for my study because I am exploring how girls are *subjected* to the constructive power of discourse, and also how they themselves *exert* power over discourse. The girls in my study are subjected to certain designations of Jewish girlhood outlined in the JAP discourse, but they also have power in how they negotiate these designations, how they interpret them, and how they subsequently react to them in their own expressions of self. Just as Foucault (1978) argues that power is dispersed, the girls in my study therefore also have power. My participants exert power against the JAP discourse in their creative utilization of it. In this way, the real-life interactions surrounding the JAP discourse demonstrate the dual nature of power as it relates to discourse: "discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (Foucault, 1978, p.101). In many ways, my participants exercise their individual power to resist the narrow definitions of Jewish girlhood imposed by the JAP stereotype.

The JAP stereotype also displays discursive power in establishing a definition of Jewish girlhood that is experienced as "real" and "true." Discursive power lies in the

ability to make a constructed concept appear to be natural, un-challengeable, and eternally true. In the context of identity, discourse exerts its productive power in constructing identity categories, and structuring the possibilities of being within those categories by prescribing what "it means to *be*" a member of one of these identity categories (Yon, 2000a, p.4 emphasis original). Adding a discursive lens to my conceptualization of the JAP stereotype therefore accounts for the tension between recognizing that the JAP is a constructed stereotype, while still accepting that Jewish girls experience it as real in girls whom they know, and even in themselves. In Focus Group 1, Emma establishes this dual nature of the JAP: "I think it's like an imagined concept. But it's also clearly real because you can specifically point out people and say that they are JAPs." My participants have internalized the image of the JAP without realizing its history of anti-Semitism and sexism, some have ignored it, and some have resignified it. However, none have completely abandoned the image; they continue to take up the JAP in their daily negotiations of girlhood, proving the JAP's continued power as a discourse.

My participants discussed the JAP stereotype in ways that clearly indicate its discursive configuration. Emma described the JAP phenomenon as a *lifestyle* in Focus Group 1: "Like if you are a JAP, you live by the rules of JAPpy-ness, you live a certain way." In her interview, Leah also referred to rules when describing how a non-Jewish girl used the JAP term improperly: "she used the term to refer to someone who was slutty. I was like 'no! You don't know the rules!'" Through the use of the word *rules* when discussing the JAP, Emma and Leah alluded to clear prescriptions for what constitutes JAPpy behaviour and lifestyle, which girls are bound to adhere to. Further, Ashley reflected that the components of the JAP phenomenon come together in an interconnected web of ideas, values and regulations, again indicating discursivity. In viewing the JAP as functioning in a discursive way, I pay close attention to the aspects of the JAP stereotype "which open or foreclose the different ways" my participants "can imagine themselves" (Yon, 2000a, p.125).

In this thesis I have married the concepts of stereotype and discourse in conceptualizing the JAP so as to capitalize on the strengths of both of these models. The stereotype emphasizes the constructed link between exaggerated traits with a cultural understanding of Jewish girls. Discourse allows for a broader, deeper, more historically

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bound contextualization of the JAP within the experience of Jewish women in North America. The discourse is broader than the single stereotype. The discourse of the JAP reflects the production of knowledge about Jewish girls. The stereotype of the JAP illustrates the multiple ways and avenues through which it is taken up in our everyday lives. Coupling the two concepts together enables me to explore the JAP at the individual and the communal levels of experience. In this thesis I therefore explore how the JAP, as a discursive stereotype, impacts and shapes Jewish girlhood. In order to ensure that my writing is consistent and easy to read, I refer to the JAP primarily as a stereotype throughout the rest of this thesis. Please keep in mind my intentional conceptualization of the JAP as a stereotype with a discursive configuration, despite the absence of the word "discursive" alongside "stereotype" every time it is written.

My Own Position Within the Research

I am a young Jewish woman. I used to be a Jewish girl. In carrying out this research, it has been very important to acknowledge my own confused and emotionally charged experience with the JAP stereotype, and the impact that it has had on shaping my identity. I recognize that my complex relationship with the JAP stereotype has undoubtedly affected my approach to this research, my interactions with my participants, and my subsequent analysis of the resulting data. As a feminist researcher, I strongly believe that recognizing my own role in the process of generating knowledge through research is crucial. Following DeVault and Gross (2007) I have committed to "operat[ing] reflexively and relationally," examining my research practice and my assumptions about my participants at every stage of this project (p.178). Throughout this process I have struggled to achieve a balance between, on the one hand, allowing my own identity as a young Jewish woman and my lived experience with the JAP stereotype to inform my research orientation, and on the other hand, creating the space to examine my participants' JAP-related narratives as unique and individual. I have had to continually remind myself that the goal of this study is not to answer my own questions of identity, but to provide the space for other Jewish girls to discuss theirs. I have rejected the notion of removing myself from the research process, and have instead sought to respectfully

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engage with my participants and their stories. My goal in this work has been to be a present, conscious, and self-reflexive researcher.

CHAPTER 2: THE EVOLUTION OF THE JEWISH AMERICAN PRINCESS

The Jewish American Princess takes its place with other negative and gendered Jewish stereotypes such as the Ghetto Girl and the Jewish Mother (Prell, 1998). Even though Jews in general are often victims of negative stereotyping, it is Jewish women who are cast in the most vilified of these characters (Medjuck, 1988). The JAP is perhaps the most lasting of these stereotypes.

The existing literature on the Jewish American Princess can be roughly divided into three trends. The first trend develops the formulation of the JAP discursive stereotype, rooted in post-World War II American Jewish literature and preliminary anecdotal observations of JAP culture. These sources depict the JAP, or Jewish Princess as she was called in the early years, as a benign sketch of a Jewish woman. The second trend begins in the 1970s. It consists largely of the Jewish feminist deconstruction of the stereotype and its manifestations in American society. Through this critique, scholars expose the problematic usage of the term 'Jewish American Princess,' and strongly advocate for its eradication from the American vernacular. During the 1990s there was a decline in writing about the JAP stereotype in general, which some argue demonstrates the success of the second trend's agenda to reduce its usage. Scholars and writers today continue to approach the JAP stereotype in keeping with the deconstructive goals and critical views of the second trend. At the same time, a third trend in JAP literature has also recently emerged in the 2000s and continues to be produced. These works represent a different paradigm used to approach the stereotype of the Jewish American Princess. While the works acknowledge the critiques made by earlier scholars, and some still support the validity of their arguments, greater emphasis is placed on the influence that the JAP stereotype has on individual Jewish women's identities. From this perspective, an attempt at re-appropriating the JAP stereotype in a meaningful and relevant way is evident in these later works.

The following survey will describe the components of the JAP stereotype as found in the key literature on the topic. I will then overview the three trends in the literature, and conclude by highlighting the literature on the relationship between the JAP stereotype and individual identity.

The Stereotype: Jewish American Princess (JAP)

The Jewish American Princess functions in part, as a stereotype.[3] The JAP stereotype "single[s] out certain qualities in women, characteriz[ing] them in the first place as unattractive and, in the second, as specifically Jewish" (Baum, et al., 1975, p.236). Both Jews and non-Jews utilize the JAP stereotype as a tool to label Jewish women exhibiting certain traits. This stereotype is broken down into attitudinal and exterior characteristics.

In attitude, the JAP is depicted as sexually frigid, assertive, self-centred, and excessively materialistic. Sexuality is a key aspect of the JAP characterization. During the 1970s and 1980s, the JAP is consistently represented as sexually frigid, though at the same time, sexually manipulative (Baum, et al., 1975; Brook, 2007; Chayat, 1987; Dundes, 1985; Newhouse, 2005a & b; Prell, 2003; Spencer, 1989). The JAP is generally criticized for her disinterest in sexual activities, especially her well-established aversion to oral sex (Dundes, 1985). At the same time, the JAP exploits male sexual desire for her own gains, and is therefore condemned as sexually manipulative (Alperin, 1989; Brook, 2007; Prell, 2003). Baum, et al. (1976) argue that the most offensive aspect of the JAP's sexual standoffishness is her refusal to defer easily to male authority, "an unforgivable sin in the American pantheon of female virtues" (p.238). In this way, the JAP is rebuked both for her lack of sexual performance, as well as for her performance if her motives are not approved of. Second, the JAP is assertive (Baum, et al., 1975; Chayat, 1987; Spencer, 1989), where "bossy" and "bitchy" are also frequently used to describe this trait (Alperin,

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[3] It is important to note the coexisting stereotypes of the *Valley Girl* (Belzer, 2001) and the *Kugel* (Dundes, 1985). Belzer (2001) argues that the Valley Girl is the West Coast equivalent of the JAP. Also circulating in the 1970s, the Valley Girl was the moniker used to describe newly middle-class, overindulged, vain and materialistic Jewish daughters living in the San Fernando Valley outside of Los Angeles (Belzer, 2001). Although never reaching the same despised state as the JAP, the Valley Girl stereotype reflects similar class and racial anxieties as the ones expressed on the East Coast. The *Kugel* is the stereotype used to represent Jewish women in South Africa, which Dundes (1985) argues is the identical counterpart to the configuration of the North American JAP stereotype.

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1989, p.413). As an *assertive bitch*, the JAP proceeds through life in a manner that is designed to serve her own interests and desires. This assertiveness is seen as "an instrument of emasculation" used against the males she interacts with (Baum, et al., 1975, p.238). Medjuck (1988) points out that this assertiveness is viewed as extremely negative when exhibited by the JAP, but is ultimately praised when displayed by other upwardly mobile groups. Next, the JAP is unquestionably self-centred (Alperin, 1989; Chayat, 1987; Dundes, 1985; Spencer, 1989). In essence, "the stereotypical Jewish American Princess cares for no one but herself," and manipulates the world around her as needed to achieve her own selfish goals (Baum, et al., 1975, p.237). In this selfish orientation, the JAP does not nurture others. As a result, the JAP does not care for her existing family, and has no interest in producing one of her own.

Finally, above all else, the JAP is materialistic, the ultimate consumer (Alperin, 1989; Baum, et al., 1975; Byers, 2009; Chayat, 1987; Dundes 1985; Prell, 2003; Spencer, 1989). Prell (1998) asserts that the JAP's father is positioned at the centre of the frenzied consumption, as it is his credit cards which enable the JAP's indulgent expectations. Baum, Hyman, and Michel (1975) point out that the prevalence of this model for the Jewish girl as an excessive consumer leads one to the think (incorrectly) that poor Jewish people had either stopped having children or had ceased to exist. The focus on the JAP's consumption reflects the aspiration culture in which the stereotype was shaped. Post-WW II Jewish American culture was focused on individuals raising their status and securing the good things in life; it was a time of great social and economic aspirations for the community as a whole. In the construction of the JAP stereotype, this perspective is revealed in the JAP's consumptive drive: her aspirations to own the "right" things define her.

The JAP is also defined by specific exterior characteristics. The JAP stereotype is identified by distinct clothing, accessories, and hairstyles (Chayat, 1987; Rubenstein, 1987; Spencer, 1989). During the 1980s, the JAP was identified by a *uniform* that consisted of:

> An oversized sweater or sweatshirt, usually a Benetton; tight, dark stirrup pants;
> high-top Reebok sneakers; 'gaudy' or 'tacky' costume jewelry; designer bags and

wallets; long, highly polished finger nails (over which the JAP obsesses); heavy amounts of facial makeup; pink or mauve lipstick; 'big' (long, teased) hair with lots of hairspray. (Spencer, 1989, p.333)

In his research, Spencer (1989) found that the uniform served as a trigger to employ the JAP stereotype and subsequently interpret the person's behaviour as JAPpy. The JAP is "knowable" by her uniform, and it is the starting point for the labeling process (Prell, 1998 ,p.182). From my own experience in the late 1990s and 2000s, while the components of the style have changed, a JAP uniform is still in effect. And as Spencer (1989) and Prell (1998) describe, this uniform serves as a mechanism through which to identify JAPs, and to then proceed to interpret their behaviour as JAPpy.

Alongside the uniformed attire, JAPs are described as adhering to ritualistic grooming habits (Lukatsky & Toback, 1982). The two most prominent are an unfailing commitment to manicured nails, and a detailed regimen to ensure straight hair that is *not frizzy* (Lukatsky & Toback, 1982). *The Jewish American Princess Handbook* provides an overview of the favoured hair straightening techniques during the 1980s, including "blow-drying," "chemical straightening," and spending "hour after hour with [one's] hair wrapped around orange juice cans" (Lukatsky & Toback, 1982, p.86). Belzer (2001) claims that "grooming was so central to the daily life of a Valley Girl that it evolved into a social event" (p.182) This social process of improving their appearances together served a secondary function of female social time for these friends.

The characteristics and stylistic trends described here summarize the dominant ways the JAP discursive stereotype is described in the literature. It is important to note that within the existing literature, there is no mention of a specifically *religious JAP*. No sources address whether JAPs exist within religious Jewish communities, or whether religion plays any role in the JAP stereotype. As religious groups make up a significant portion of the North American Jewish community, this gap in the literature indicates a failure to explore the relevance of the JAP stereotype to a substantial group of Jewish girls.

Trend #1: Formulation of the Jewish American Princess Discursive Stereotype

The first trend in the literature captures the seeds of the JAP stereotype in American literature, and the largely benign observations of this stereotype's development in popular culture. It is widely held that the JAP stereotype first took shape in post-World War II Jewish literature (Antler, 1998b; Baum, et al., 1975; Fishman, 1998; Prell, 2003). Emerging at a time when the American Jewish community enjoyed unprecedented economic prosperity and upward social mobility, the now infamous characters of Marjorie Morningstar in Herman Wouk's classic novel by the same name, and Phillip Roth's Brenda Patimkin (*Goodbye, Columbus*), are the first to portray the image of an upwardly mobile, affluent Jewish daughter (Antler, 1998b). These characters, who later come to be identified as the first JAPs, are characterized as "excessively concerned with appearance and possessions" (Antler, 1998a, p.8), and focused on acquiring "big diamond engagement rings, house[s] in a good neighbourhood, furniture, children, well-made clothes, [and] furs" (Fishman, 1998, p.157). This quote aptly summarizes the materialistic, self-entitled, and spoiled traits that become the hallmark of the JAP. Antler (1998a) explains that these post-war novels became a site in which to negotiate new images of Jewish women and girls in the Jewish middle-class. It is argued that Jewish male writers created these literary images as vehicles through which to express their own animosity and frustration with the Jewish women around them (Baum, et al., 1976). These young female characters' emphasis on materialism can be interpreted as an allusion to the problematic role materialism played in the Jewish community's growth (Antler, 1998a). Baum, Hyman, and Michel (1976) argue that the stereotype of a "money-spoiled woman" always existed in literature, "but she was never labeled 'Jewish' until Jewish writers made her part of the American comic pantheon" (p.254). Both Marjorie Morningstar and Brenda Patimkin were further vilified in film adaptations of their novels, fixing these negative images of Jewish women forever in the American consciousness. Fishman (1998) bluntly questions who would want to be a Jewish woman after seeing and internalizing these negative images.

The first sources that directly discuss a JAP-like characterization of young Jewish women refer to them simply as "Jewish Princesses (JPs)" (Baumgold, 1971; Tonner, 1975). Baumgold (1971), in her article for *New York Magazine*, explains that Jewish

Princesses are the outward expression of "a little sac of specialness" that every Jewish girl possesses inside (p.25). This "sac of specialness" is created and then cultivated by over-indulgent parents who bring up their daughter to believe she is someone exceedingly special. Tonner (1975) elaborates on this charisma exhibited by Jewish Princesses, calling it "Jewish Princess Pizzazz" (p.44). Tonner (1975) defines the Jewish Princess by "her drive, her special chutzpah," her assertiveness, and her unflappable belief in her own abilities, interpreting them as positive and enabling traits (p.30). In an almost admiring tone, Tonner (1975) argues that the JP applies her belief in herself and her assertiveness to help her achieve in society.

Interestingly, two facets of this early description of the JP differ significantly from its later manifestation as the JAP. First, the Jewish Princess is portrayed as the ultimate good girl, who does as her parents wish, whereas the JAP is consistently seen as the ultimate bitch who walks all over others to meet her own needs (Prell, 1998). Second, Jewish Princesses may also have powerful and successful careers (Tonner, 1975). Later depictions of the JAP do not mention careers or work of any sort, and instead paint the JAP as both lazy and inept (Lukatsky & Toback, 1982). Neither Baumgold (1971) nor Tonner (1975) are especially critical of the Jewish Princess; instead, their discussions reify the traits of the JP.

This first trend in the literature marks the beginnings of the JAP stereotype and its circulation in North America. The combination of Wouk and Roth's preliminary JAP characters, and the labeling of Jewish Princesses in American culture, begins to formulate the JAP stereotype as we know it today. The second trend in the literature then responds to the growing strength of this controversial stereotype.

Trend #2: The Deconstruction of the Jewish American Princess Stereotype

The second trend in the literature tracks the reaction of Jewish feminist activists and other scholars to the growth of the JAP stereotype in North American culture, and their subsequent deconstruction of this entity. By the late 1970s, the stereotype of the Jewish American Princess was the presumed identity of almost every Jewish woman (Newhouse, 2005b), and the predominant Jewish gender stereotype (Prell, 1998). The

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degree to which the label was repeatedly used by both Jews and non-Jews alike made it appear as the norm, to be used in everyday conversation "as casually as the weather" (Booker, 1991, p.36). JAP representations were found in jokes, handbooks, t-shirts, dolls, magazine articles, greeting cards, novels, and on television.[4]

At the same time, the phenomenon of *JAP-baiting* exploded on many college campuses throughout the USA. *JAP-baiting* became the catch-all term used to refer to acts of verbal harassment, public humiliation, and the overall targeting of young women who were labeled as JAPs on university campuses (Spencer, 1989). Anti-JAP graffiti and "Slap-A-JAP" t-shirts were seen throughout campuses with large Jewish student populations (Byers, 2009; Medjuck, 1988; Newhouse, 2005a; Spencer, 1989). The "Dome chant," which occurred at Syracuse University, is a prime example of such behaviour. During sport games in the university stadium, any woman who fit the stereotype of the JAP *in appearance* would be pointed out and the entire sports stadium would start to chant "JAP, JAP, JAP" as she tried to make her way out of the aisle (Rubenstein, 1987, p.8). Many of the JAP-baiting expressions were blatantly violent and threatening (Beck, 1990), resulting in a culture in which "it was permissible to not only openly castigate Jewish women, but also to exact violence on them" (Appel, 2008, p.48). As a response to both the offensive nature of the JAP label, along with the violent and antagonistic culture of JAP-baiting that developed alongside it, Jewish feminists launched an attack on the term Jewish American Princess (Beck, 1992; Newhouse, 2005a; Schneider, 1987). The Jewish feminist periodical, *Lilith,* published a landmark issue on the JAP phenomenon, and is credited with initiating a public critique of the term (Beck, 1992).

During the 1980s, feminist writers, academic scholars, and Jewish community activists, began to deconstruct the JAP discursive stereotype. Chayat (1987) cites Siegel's argument that "the Jewish American Princess is living out the role expectations of

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[4] For example, comedian Gilda Radner created "Rhonda Weiss," a totally outrageous JAP persona, for the popular program Saturday Night Live in 1975. One of "Rhonda Weiss' " most notable sketches is of her singing about "Jewess Jeans," a commentary on the perceived obsession Jewish women have with designer jeans (Prell, 1999).

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American society" in that she wants to marry the right guy, dress fashionably, and have a luxurious lifestyle (p.6). However, these role expectations are exaggerated and combined with negative Jewish traits of being assertive and overt in her manner. Alperin (1989) draws the conversation beyond the sphere of universities where the incidents of JAP-baiting had focused national attention. She points out that Jewish adults are just as responsible for perpetuating this stereotype as college students are. For example, many synagogues' gift shops sold the "Bunny Bagelman" greeting cards. The character gracing the front of these cards, Bunny, has "a large hooked nose, kinky curly hair…[s]he shops for clothes and jewels (both at bargain prices, of course) and a husband" (Alperin, 1989, p.414). Bunny's physical attributes, as well as her activities, are flawless depictions of the JAP's traits.

Beck (1990) argues that the representations of the JAP had become so violent that they dehumanized the JAP in such a way as to convince the world that they would be better off without her. She then cites the appalling murder of Alana Steinberg by her own husband in 1981 as proof that the "rhetoric of violence" leads to physical violence (Beck, 1990, p.25). Steinberg's defense was built around the portrayal of Alana as a stereotypical Jewish American Princess, "a compulsive shopper…who drove her husband to murder" (Frondorf, 1988, p.5). In light of the potentially violent repercussions from the use of the JAP label, Beck (1990) challenges those who think that the Jewish component of the label is insignificant, and that it could easily be replaced by the name of another religious or ethnic group. She asserts that when given serious consideration, the JAP label makes us "tense" because it takes us into several "war zones." Beck (1992) boldly lays out four perspectives from which to interpret the JAP label, where each is antagonistic and anxiety inducing. The Jewish American Princess represents anti-Semitism, misogyny, class-hatred (of old money vs. the nouveau riche), and racism. Beck (1992) claims that it is not an accident that the acronym 'JAP' is the same as the slur, 'Jap,' used to refer to the worst enemies of the United States during WWII, the Japanese. This interpretation of the racist origins of the JAP stereotype further politically contextualizes the emergence of the JAP in post World War II American. Beck's (1992) readings of the label represent the dominant interpretations held by the assemblage of scholars and journalists who thoroughly deconstructed the JAP label through an analytical lens during

the 1980s and early 1990s. The sexist and anti-Semitic interpretations will be explored in greater detail further on in this section.

This deconstructive trend includes the research first conducted about the JAP that comes out of humour studies (Byers, 2007). With the exception of the study by Schwalb and Sedlacek (1989), a quantitative study that examines the attitudes of students towards those labeled as JAPs, the key research conducted during the 1980s focused on the JAP's representation and perpetuation through jokes and other expressions of humour. JAP jokes developed in the 1960s and flowered in the 1980s, and comprise a significant portion of the gendered jokes directed at females in American Jewish humour (Prell, 2003). Jokes about the Jewish American Princess were the primary way that the stereotype was circulated and entrenched (Alperin, 1989; Byers, 2007; Prell, 2003). These jokes touch on all facets of the JAP stereotype. For example, referring to the JAP's domestic ineptitude, "What does a JAP make for dinner? Reservations" (Alperin, 1989, p.412). Another sample reflects the view that JAPs are sexually frigid, "How do you get a JAP to stop having sex? Marry her" (Prell, 2003, p.238). Alperin (1989) explains that these jokes, which were originally considered harmless digs by Jewish comics at Jewish women told to Jewish audiences, had escalated into "an epidemic of hurtful, often hateful attacks of JAP-baiting" (p.412). Spencer (1989) asserts that JAP humour is extremely damaging to Jewish women as it "results in the proliferation of negative stereotyping, avoidance behaviors, and open harassment" directed at her, as well as a dangerous form of humour whose "content escalates from an identification of imputed moral failings, to sexual denigration, to calls for abuse and violence" (p.330). For these reasons, a systematic analysis of JAP humour and its expressions was taken up by Alan Dundes (1985) and Gary Spencer (1989) to unravel the meanings and implications of the JAP stereotype.

In his landmark study, Dundes (1985) analyzes JAP jokes and their place in Jewish humor. He contends that the Jewish American Princess must be understood in the context of the Jewish American Mother (JAM). A well-developed character in Jewish humour, the JAM is overly concerned with her children's welfare, especially her son's. She often force-feeds them to her satisfaction, and is anxious for her daughter to marry well (preferably to a doctor or a lawyer) (Dundes, 1985). Dundes sees the JAP as the

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resultant spoiled child of the "the excessively nurturant J.A.M." (p.457). Dundes' analysis differs from the majority of assessments of the JAP, which position her as an outcome of her father's overindulgence, not her mother's. Furthermore, Dundes (1985) argues that the existence of the identical *Kugel* stereotype in South Africa illustrates that this type of humour is not specific to the USA. While he does not elaborate beyond this brief assertion, the comment appears to serve his larger argument that the JAP stereotype can be read as a broader commentary on social issues such as women's roles and class mobility.

Expanding the conceptualization of JAP humour beyond jokes to include cartoons, events, and graffiti, Gary Spencer (1989) sheds important light on the role that the JAP (and especially JAP-baiting humour) played in the university social environment during the late 1980s. Spencer (1989) contextualizes his investigation of the JAP joke cycle within the debate on ethnic humour as to "whether or not its effects are harmful, beneficial, or simply benign" (p.329). Basing his study out of Syracuse University, he gathered data through qualitative interviews with students, and a content analysis of student newspapers, JAP jokes, and physical markers around campus (posters, tee-shirts, and graffiti) (Spencer, 1989). From this analysis, Spencer (1989) concludes that the JAP stereotype denigrates both women and Jews, that humor is the "primary mechanism for communicating the prejudice," and finally, that the effects of this humor are harmful (p.329). Spencer's work played a critical role in synthesizing the variety of ways JAP-baiting can manifest itself, and in revealing the phenomenon for what it really was, a cohesive framework for anti-Semitic and misogynist harassment.

Together, the groundbreaking research conducted during the late 1980s by Dundes (1985), Spencer (1989), and Schwalb and Sedlacek (1989) to explore the manifestation of the JAP in humour and campus activity complemented the theoretical work being done by Jewish and feminist writers during the period. This work established the conceptual framework with which to deconstruct the layered meanings and origins of the Jewish American Princess stereotype. The most significant aspect of this deconstructive trend in the JAP literature is the presentation of two dominant perspectives from which to interpret the purpose and the strong perpetuation of the JAP stereotype. The first is to see the JAP through the lens of the historical persecution of the Jewish

people, where the JAP stereotype is interpreted as a modern form of anti-Semitism. The second is through a feminist framework, in which the JAP is understood to reflect sexist and misogynist views. In practice, scholars generally ascribe to both of these interpretations, arguing that the "JAP picks up on the combined negative attitudes toward Jews and women...that Jewish women have become the targets of the prejudice that was once directed at all Jews" (Schwalb & Sedlacek, 1989, p.11). I will now elaborate on these perspectives seperately; however, it is important to keep in mind that both are necessary for a thorough analysis of the JAP's origins and applications.

Anti-Semitic Interpretations

It is commonly held that the Jewish American Princess stereotype is at its core, anti-Semitic (Alperin, 1989; Appel, 2008; Beck, 1990; Booker, 1991; Chayat, 1987; Klagsbrun, 1987; Medjuck, 1988; Schneider, 1987; Schwalb & Sedlacek, 1989; Spencer, 1989). After the Holocaust, overt acts and sentiments of anti-Semitism became politically incorrect in North America (Beck, 1990). However, the negative feelings towards Jews have never been purged from the dominant community; they have simply gone underground and are expressed in new ways (Beck, 1990). The JAP represents one of the key mechanisms of this newer, subtler, expression of anti-Semitism (Spencer, 1989). Klagsbrun (1987) called it a "code word" used by non-Jews to be anti-Semitic. Looking at the words in the label themselves, *American* and *Princess* can be equally negative or positive, depending on the context. It is only the modifier *Jewish* "that changes the princess from magically or potentially spoiled to money grubbing, power hungry, and manipulative...[and] 'American' to mean obsessed by upward mobility and ostentatious displays of (newfound) wealth" (Appel, 2008, p.47). Beck (1990) points out that when the acronym J.A.P. is used alone, the Jewish element is not clearly specified, and the user is better able to mask the Jewish attack within it.

The anti-Semitic connotations of the JAP differ depending on who is using the term. It is widely held that the JAP term actually originated within the Jewish community (Prell, 2003). When used by Jews, first by Jewish male comedians and then by many Jews today, the JAP label "is a form of self-hating or internalized anti-Semitism" (Beck,

1992, p.87). The willingness to use the derogatory term Jewish American Princess to describe their own community members illustrates how, as a result of centuries of oppression, the Jewish community as a whole has internalized anti-Semitic devaluation. Framed by the Jewish experience as an immigrant community to North America and the need to assimilate into the dominant culture, "when Jews buy into popular stereotypes they ally themselves with their enemies, while hoping they will insure themselves against future discrimination" (Booker, 1991, p.2). Alperin (1989) explains that Jewish males project this self-hatred, using stereotyped images and values traditionally designed to attack Jewish males, onto their own women. In doing so, the readiness to denigrate Jewish women and the "calm acceptance by Jews of the JAP stereotype" has given permission to the outside world to do the same (Booker, 1991, p.42).

When used by non-Jews, the JAP label serves as an acceptable vehicle to perpetuate classic anti-Semitic sentiments and images (Alperin, 1989; Beck, 1992; Schwalb & Sedlacek, 1989; Spencer, 1989). Research by Schwalb and Sedlacek (1989) confirms that "there is a clear tie between traditional Jewish stereotypes and the current stereotypes of the JAP" (p.11). For example, the exaggerated large nose and the materialistic orientation exhibited in the JAP stereotype are cited as direct ties to traditional anti- Semitism. Furthermore, the JAP's position in the emerging upper-middle class embodies the "sentiment that Jews are not entitled to the same material comforts and status symbols that the American culture tell all individuals to aspire to" (Schneider, 1987, p.2). It is not a coincidence that the JAP label gained prominence at a time when Jewish Americans were making strides in business and the professions. The JAP stereotype fits nicely into the cycle of anti-Semitism that emerges as a result of increasing suspicion and resentment toward Jews as they achieve greater success and wealth in North America (Chayat, 1987; Schwalb & Sedlacek, 1989). In these ways, when non-Jews utilize the JAP label, it both perpetuates age-old stereotypes of Jewish people, as well as warns them not to get too comfortable with their rising economic success.

Stemming from these anti-Semitic currents, the JAP stereotype is also intertwined with class-based fears arising out of the Jewish community's immigrant background. The JAP stereotype represents the hidden anxieties of Jews who fear they will never be able to fully integrate into American society and fully achieve status and success (Prell, 1999).

Prell (2003) argues that the JAP stereotype represents the impossibility of Jews ever truly meeting the expectations of the middle-class. The JAP stereotype showcases the gross material excesses allowed to the middle class, at the same time juxtaposing the ridiculousness of a minority group such as the Jews enjoying these material goods. The JAP stereotype becomes an outlet for both middle-class criticisms and xenophobic attitudes. Byers (2009) extends this understanding of the JAP stereotype using a neoliberal perspective. She frames the JAP stereotype as an identity that "straddles the parvenu and the pariah" where the "parvenu has arrived, while the pariah is still waiting," but "the parvenu lies in constant fear of returning to pariah status" (p.39). Byers (2009) explains how the JAP is both parvenu *and* pariah: "She embodies all the markers of the cultured classes and yet is always in danger of being exposed as a fraud" (p.39). The JAP stereotype embodies the paradox of Jewish assimilation into North American society, where "Jews are both quintessentially American, and never quite American enough," and acts as an outlet for the fear, insecurity, and frustration that accompanies this position experienced by many North American Jews (Byers, 2009, p.39).

Feminist Interpretations

Within this deconstructive trend, scholars present a number of interpretations of the JAP discursive stereotype that fall within a feminist framework, viewing the slur as both sexist and misogynist (Alperin, 1989; Beck, 1990; Medjuck, 1988; Prell, 2003; Schnur, 1987). Taking into account that the JAP stereotype originates from *within* the Jewish community, it begs the question of what role it serves for the Jewish men who use it. It is argued that some Jewish men attack Jewish women via the JAP label as a way to displace the discomfort they themselves are experiencing in American society (Alperin, 1989; Prell, 2003). The stereotype developed at a time when their own women were the safest targets towards which to direct their discontent, as the Jewish community was still a significantly persecuted group, and it was not politically acceptable to attack another group (Alperin, 1989). Riv-Ellen Prell (1998; 1999; 2003) provides a pivotal socio-anthropological analysis of the JAP stereotype that focuses on the gendered relations that the JAP label represents. Prell sees the gender stereotype of the JAP as a reflection of

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how some Jewish men understand their own place in American society, and specifically the challenges they have faced as they negotiate the process of Americanization. She suggests that the stereotypical whiny, materialistic, and withholding Jewish woman represents "the anxiety, anger, and pain of Jewish men as they negotiate an American Jewish identity" (Prell, 2003, p.242). The components of the caricature symbolize elements of *Jewish-ness* and *American-ness* that some Jewish men view as negative, and therefore want to reject. In this way, "these stereotypes associate certain features of American and Jewish life with women that Jewish men fear and wish to abandon" (Prell, 2003, p.242).

A second avenue in which the sexism in the term is apparent is by viewing the JAP label as a means for Jewish men to express their own discomfort at the expectations to marry a Jewish woman. JAP jokes set Jewish men up as the victims of Jewish women's endless consumption and sexual disinterest (Prell, 2003). Prell (2003) argues that the monstrous persona of the JAP in these jokes represents some Jewish men's fears of what will happen when they become adults, and are expected to marry a Jewish woman. Schnur (1987) reports that some Jewish women feel that Jewish men call them JAPs simply because they are afraid that they cannot live up to the standards Jewish women hold for them, and the jokes offer a way to attack someone they are afraid of. Furthermore, the image of vulgar and aggressive women presented in these jokes offers the perfect justification for why some Jewish men are so drawn to non-Jewish women (Prell, 2003). In many ways, the JAP is constructed to contrast a "concealed stereotyped Christian woman," who is held above Jewish women as the ultimate sexual prize (Prell, 2003, p.245). The non-Jewish *goddess* is not pushy, has straight, blond hair, is not obsessed with material consumption, and above all, happily gives oral sex and other sexual gratifications. By vilifying the Jewish woman through the JAP label, Jewish men are then able to reject her without experiencing any guilt that they are failing their community's endogamous expectations (Schnur, 1987).

The JAP label also reflects sexist views in that it represents the Jewish male attempt to undercut Jewish women's growing success beginning in the 1970s. In 1989, Alperin asks why the JAP stereotype became "so pervasive and virulent" at a time in history when many Jewish women definitely did not fit the stereotype. Instead, Jewish

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women were achieving in scholastic and professional pursuits. The eagerness by Jewish men to use the JAP term to label their women can be interpreted as a reflection of their own sense of emasculation, that Jewish women's newfound independence has undercut the traditional role of Jewish men as breadwinners (Alperin, 1989; Medjuck, 1988). Again, men feel threatened by women's rising success and independence, and resort to diminishing their accomplishments to displace their own feelings of discomfort.

Placing the rise of the JAP label within the context of the strengthening feminist and women's liberation movements in the 1970s brings further support to the claim that the JAP label is a sexist and misogynistic attack on Jewish women (Dundes, 1985; Newhouse, 2005a; Schneider, 1987; Stone, 2005). Regardless of whether Jewish or non-Jewish men are using the slur, the sexist and misogynistic connotations are evident (Beck, 1992). Developing this argument, Dundes (1985) asserts that "JAP jokes may be a reflection of anti-feminism" or "anti-woman" sentiments (p.469). Women's newfound, or rather newly accepted, drive for success was regarded as threatening to many men. The characterization of the JAP as the epitome of bitchy, whining, essentially female behaviour is meant to destabilize the emerging image of (Jewish) women as successful and competent outside of the home. This sexist design of the JAP construct is especially evident when one focuses on the usage of the *princess* component. The title *princess* denotes spoiled and infantile behaviour by a woman who is dependent and incapable of personal accomplishment. In a male-dominated society, a woman cannot be framed as a real competitor; she needs to be taken down a notch by diminishing her accomplishments. As Klagsbrun (1987, p.11) provocatively points out, "what better put-down of the strong woman than to label her a 'Princess'?"

In keeping with the feminist analytical lens, Dundes (1985) provides an interesting reading of the JAP label, from a woman's perspective. Starting from the recognition that JAP jokes depict a woman who is firmly entrenched in the home and supported by males, Dundes (1985) posits that the JAP stereotype encapsulates how American women in the early 1980s perceived themselves. Focusing on the JAP's inability and refusal to participate in domestic activities (from cooking and cleaning, to performing sexual activities with her husband), the JAP can be read as "an expression of wishful thinking among such discontented housewives" (Dundes, 1985, p.470). In this

reading, the JAP's disinterest in sex (especially her refusal to perform oral sex) is a rebellion against the sexual status quo where women were expected to be sexually subservient to their husbands and participate in acts geared towards male pleasure alone. In effect, the JAP stereotype criticizes the traditional sexist roles women were expected to cheerfully play in American upwardly mobile, middle class culture, leaving women free to pay attention to themselves. Dundes (1985) projects that if this analysis is valid, then the JAP cycle is not limited to Jewish American Princesses, but may serve as a metaphor "for *all* upwardly mobile American females who may be dissatisfied with the older traditional norms of a lifestyle demarcated by the duties of mother and wifehood" (p.471). While I find this analysis provocative, and unlike any other I have come across, I question whether the JAP stereotype can actually serve a liberating role for women. In this reading, women fuel the critique of the traditional female roles, but for what alternative? The alternative construction of a woman presented by the JAP stereotype is the epitome of a selfish, whiny, manipulative, and vapid persona. I have difficulty believing that feminist women would actively turn to this damaging portrayal of women as the preferred alternative to the *happy housewife.*

This second trend in the literature takes a critical and deconstructive angle on the construction, uses, and perpetuation of the JAP stereotype. This trend also encompasses the first scholarly works on the topic as well. Many scholars continue to write from this deconstructive perspective (Appel, 2008; Byers, 2009; Gold, 2004), and therefore this trend has a continued presence in the work on the JAP stereotype today. The third trend in the literature deviates from the second most notably in its less conclusive stance on the problematic nature of the JAP stereotype.

Trend #3: The Neo-JAP: The Jewish American Princess Stereotype Revisited

"The JAP is back" (Newhouse, 2005b). There is wide consensus amongst Jewish culture writers that beginning at the end of the 1990s, there has been a creeping resurgence of the JAP in popular (Jewish) culture (Appel, 2008; Belzer, 2001; Byers, 2007; Nathan, 2009; Newhouse, 2005a & b; Stone, 2005). The term faded from mainstream use in the early 1990s, due to both the vigorous campaign against it in the

early 1990s, and an emerging cultural environment that was becoming increasingly critical of overt racism and anti-Semitism (Appel, 2008; Belzer, 2001; Newhouse, 2005a). Now, the term is experiencing a revival in the 2000s (Appel, 2008). The growing number of movies, TV show concepts, novels, and print articles are proof of a trend addressing, or including the JAP (Byers, 2007; 2009).[5] More importantly, there are a host of Jewish girls and young women who actively identify with the label. Nathan (2009) demonstrates their widespread presence in his interview with an "anonymous JAP at a Midwestern liberal arts college" for *Newvoices Magazine*. Nathan's (2009) interview focuses on the respondent's experience within JAP culture. Appel (2008) argues that while the JAP label is back in use, its meaning is no longer as clear as it was the in 1970s and '80s. The third trend that I have identified in the literature addresses this resurgence of the use of the JAP stereotype. The third trend also captures the news ways that the JAP stereotype is being explored in relation to individual identity. Along this theme, Byers (2009) reports recently finding a number of "first person critical accounts" about the JAP stereotype (p.35). The centrality that personal identity appears to play in these later works indicates that the JAP stereotype is being viewed in new ways, as related to individual identity to some degree.

A significant component of this third trend is the question of whether to "reclaim her or reject her?" (Newhouse, 2005a p.28; see also Byers, 2007). Newhouse (2005a), Belzer (2001) and Appel (2008) all raise the question of whether the JAP label can be reclaimed by young Jewish women today, and be reconfigured to have more positive meanings than it has in the past. The recent literature on the JAP stereotype approaches reclaiming the term through the perspective of "power-shifting, in which the traditionally disenfranchised exert power by reclaiming slurs and reconstructing them, thereby robbing them of their derogatory punch" (Appel, 2008, p.49). Using this lens, the JAP label is placed alongside the originally demeaning labels *queer* and *nigger,* both of which have

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[5] Clothing advertising the Jewish American Princess is in wide circulation. The movie *Marci X* stars Lisa Kudrow, a JAP, as the main character. The Style Network put out a casting call for a new show called *JAP Squad*. In May 2010 a casting call was put out for a reality show about Jewish American Princesses modeled after the shows *Jersey Shore* and the *Real Housewives* series.

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been successfully reclaimed by the gay and African-American communities respectively, and now denote a sense of pride and self-empowerment (Newhouse, 2005b). However, the key here to reclaiming a slur "is to directly embrace the word's traditional connotations as the very qualities that are now valued" (Appel, 2008, p.50). A slur attacks a group by framing certain group characteristics as negative, embarrassing, or worthless. Appel (2008) argues that a slur can be reclaimed when the targeted group actively values the traits that the slur identifies as the very traits that they should be ashamed of. For example, the slur *queer* was designed to denote men who violate gender norms of heterosexual behaviour. Homosexuals who have re-appropriated the term *queer* value the fact that they are straying from the norm in their dress and speech, and use this term to express that position (Appel, 2008).

Applying this method to the JAP label, Belzer (2001) argues that she has taken negative traits associated with her Valley Girl upbringing, and reappropriated them as positive qualities in her later life as a feminist activist. The originally damaging JAP traits of complaining, being vocally critical, and having an entitled world-view have helped her to feel "as comfortable now naming a social injustice as [she] was sending a salad back when the dressing was not 'on the side'" (Belzer, 2001, p.185). Newhouse (2005b) expresses a similar sentiment in viewing the modern Jewish girl's victorious ability to "peel away many aspects of the old stereotype-the snobbishness, the dependency on daddy's Amex, the sexual frigidity-and keep...well, the shoes and the Chanel" (Paragraph 5). While Belzer (2001) and Newhouse (2005a & b) appear to comfortably reframe formerly frowned upon traits of the JAP or Valley Girl into positive ones, I concur with Appel's (2008) skepticism that this procedure for reclaiming a slur is somewhat simplistic. I question whether it is really possible to take the negative components of the JAP label, separate out the anti-Semitic and sexist origins of them, and make them into something truly positive.

The process of reclaiming a slur is still susceptible to a number of pitfalls. Appel (2008) warns that if the reclamation is not skillfully and thoroughly executed, "the attempt serves not to interrogate or reclaim, but rather only to perpetuate the myth" (p.50). Attempts to reframe the JAP stereotype through satire or jokes often fall flat, and only serve to reinforce the very negative traits they are attempting to expose.

Furthermore, unless the reclamation is complete, the term still holds some or all of its negative connotations (Appel, 2008; Newhouse, 2005b). Another problem with trying to reclaim a slur is that one cannot control that some groups will still use the term in its original negative ways. Unfortunately, the JAP stereotype is being co-opted by non-Jewish groups who want to capitalize off of its original negative characteristics (Appel, 2008).[6] The prevalence of this discussion about whether the JAP term has been reclaimed, and whether that is even possible, reflects the desire on the part of Jewish women today to engage with the label, and in some cases, find a way to fit it into their conceptions of being a Jewish woman today. My research seeks to explore this trend in concrete detail, probing how young Jewish woman are carrying out this process.

The third trend in the literature on the JAP stereotype closely resembles the second trend in its emphasis on consumerism. However, while the JAP is still depicted as an excessive shopper who covets status items, this materialism is framed in a new light. For some "neo-JAPs," consumerism is linked with their experience and practice of Jewish culture (Newhouse, 2005b). Newhouse (2005a) contextualizes her consumerism and material rituals as a vehicle through which to heighten her Jewish practice. She explains that the she only completes the ritual hair straightening for Sabbath dinner on Friday night, not as an everyday occurrence. Similarly, shopping trips often centre around searching for a new outfit for synagogue or bar mitzvahs. In these works, consumerism is again connected with Jewish identity, but is approached from the perspective that this consumerism actually enables enhanced Jewish participation.

At the same time, these recent works diverge from the first and second literature trends in three distinct ways. The first is in their representation of stereotypical JAP sexual behaviour. In the second literature trend (Alperin, 1989; Beck, 1990; Chayat, 1987; Rubenstein, 1987; Schnur, 1987), the JAP is consistently depicted as frigid within her romantic relationships, but also sexually manipulative as a means for securing what she desires. JAP jokes and humour from the 1970s and '80s revolved around these sexual

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[6] One example of this appropriation is the t-shirt produced in the mid-2000s by Urban Outfitters, a popular clothing chain amongst urban teens and young adults. The t-shirt read, "Everyone loves a Jewish girl" and exhibited dollar signs floating around the text. The shirt was removed from stores after criticism from the Jewish community.

themes, and the general discussion focused heavily on these sexual parameters. In contrast, these later works do not address sexuality at all. The JAP is not portrayed as sexually frigid or manipulative; sexual behaviour is simply left out of the discussion altogether. This leads me to wonder whether sexuality is still a significant component of the stereotype, or whether it has become a moot point, not one of distinction for this stereotype. Second, the JAP is not solely portrayed as a vindictive snob. With the exception of Tonner (1975) and Baumgold (1971) in the first trend, the second trend of literature on the Jewish American Princess consistently paints the JAP as an aggressive, vindictive, and bitchy woman. The third trend in writing on the JAP features more variability in how the JAP is described. For some (Appel, 2008; Stone, 2005), the JAP continues to represent a number of these undesirable characteristics. For others (Nathan, 2009; Newhouse, 2005a & b), the stereotype is seen as connoting confidence and a sense of self-worth, and does not assume that the bearer of the label is mean and *bitchy*. Finally, one of the more significant differences between the three trends in the literature is that almost exclusively young Jewish women write the third trend. Those who were critical of the JAP stereotype wrote the majority of the earlier articles, they used a feminist perspective, and the authors seldom positioned themselves in relation to the label. In contrast, young Jewish women who are themselves engaging with the stereotype write these later articles; two even proclaim themselves to be JAPs (Belzer, 2001; Newhouse, 2005a & b). It appears that this trend in the literature is a venue for these authors to negotiate their own relationships with this complex stereotype. This writing then goes beyond simply commenting on the phenomenon of the JAP stereotype, but is itself an artifact in its evolution.

The JAP Discursive Stereotype and Emerging Identity

The first and second trends in the literature, the formulation of the JAP stereotype and its deconstruction from the 1970s and 1980s, do not explore in detail how the JAP label influences Jewish women's identities. Amongst these works, Beck (1990) does acknowledge that the threat of being labeled a JAP "is deeply undermining to a Jewish woman's dignity, integrity, and above all, her self-esteem," and usually results in some

Jewish women trying to distance themselves from their Jewish community (p.25). However, as a whole, the works do not recognize the complex nature of how different elements of the JAP stereotype contribute to the construction of one's identity. The JAP stereotype represents two potentially significant aspects of identity in that it comments on being Jewish and being female. The confusion around understanding the implications of the JAP label in relation to one's own identities is poignantly evident in the third trend in the literature, largely written by young Jewish women who are experiencing this challenge themselves (Appel, 2008; Belzer, 2001; Nathan, 2009; Newhouse, 2005a & b; Stone, 2005).

The presence of the JAP stereotype causes great stress and confusion for many Jewish women (Beck, 1990; Belzer, 2001; Newhouse, 2005a). Those Jewish women who deem the label to be entirely derogatory may expend energy avoiding being labeled as such (Beck, 1990). Newhouse (2005a) and Belzer (2001) describe struggling with the negative implications of the JAP stereotype, while at the same time recognizing elements of the stereotype in themselves. Both women describe themselves as growing up comfortably in well-off Jewish communities which are considered bastions of JAP culture,[7] but later in life subscribing to feminist, social justice, and proudly Jewish values. In each of their respective articles cited here, the author articulates her own struggle to fit the different, and at times conflicting, pieces of their identity together into one cohesive unit. Belzer (2001) describes this taxing process as "trying to honor [her] multiple selves while acknowledging the contradictions inherent in doing so" (p.185). Belzer's (2001) analysis reflects both a potentially third wave feminist understanding of the contradictions in identity, while still feeling a need to fit these contradictions in the modern ideal of the coherent self.

In 1989, at the height of the anti-JAP-baiting campaign, Alperin recognized the intersection of female and Jewish identities in the JAP stereotype, and its direct impact on how young Jewish women position themselves in relation to these conceptions of self. She cites her own teenage daughter's confusion at feeling caught between the negative

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[7] Newhouse hails from Long Islands Five-Towns and Belzer from *The (San-Fernando) Valley*.

representations of Jewish women in the JAP stereotype, and her own expressions of being Jewish and female. She describes how as a result, her daughter "wears only torn jeans and refuses to learn to cook, making a very clear statement that she fits neither stereotype" (Alperin, 1989, p.415). This girl's actions illustrate how some young Jewish women actively make decisions about their social positioning and presentations directly in relation to the presence of the JAP stereotype.

It is also important to note that the third trend in the literature indicates that there are young Jewish women who self-identify as a Jewish American Princess (or its "Valley Girl" counterpart) (Belzer, 2001; Nathan, 2009; Newhouse, 2005a). This trend has important implications for the present day understanding of the JAP stereotype, as it indicates that the stereotype has in some way evolved to one that Jewish women willingly take on. Newhouse (2005a) recounts Rhonda Lieberman's understanding of identity integration to explain this trend. Lieberman explains in her discussion with Newhouse (2005b) that one rejects early parts of their background, and then later, "you can revisit those things and-through choice-decide whether or not you want to reclaim them." Following this perspective, Newhouse (2005a) concludes that her willingness to identify with the JAP label is an expression of embracing the early part of her life, growing up in a privileged community where materialism was the norm, which "like it or not, fall[s] under the rubric known as JAPpiness." The central role that identity plays in these discussions of the JAP phenomenon and its surrounding culture provides the foundation for my second research question, which explores the JAP discursive stereotype and individual identity. From the comments made by these authors, it is possible to suggest that the JAP stereotype offers a prism through which to examine how Jewish female youth today are engaging with preexisting cultural images and renegotiating their own identity both through them, and in relation to them. These young women are approaching the multitude of stereotypes and discourses about being both Jewish and female that are presented to them, and are reinventing these practices and subsequent identities for themselves.

In this thesis, I explore in greater detail how the JAP label influences the emerging identities of young Jewish women, a theme which the existing literature has only begun to probe. While the first and second trends in the literature firmly contextualize the JAP stereotype within a misogynist and anti-Semitic framework, it leaves the discussion at the beginning on the 1990s. The work making up the third trend shows that the dialogue about JAPs is far from resolved. Instead, it is returning to a place of prominence in Jewish culture, and has salient meanings for young Jewish women today. Furthermore, the JAP stereotype, as it is used today, no longer neatly corresponds to the meanings and interpretations set out by scholars in the 1980s (Newhouse, 2005a & b). The subtle changes to the uses and understandings of the JAP stereotype indicated in the third trend of literature point to the need for research to directly investigate this phenomenon.

Looking at research conducted in Canada, Dr. Nora Gold (1998; 2004; personal communications, Feb 22, 2010) has carried out the only studies to comprehensively explore Canadian Jewish women and girls' experience with sexism and anti-Semitism. In the qualitative phase of her two-phase study of Canadian Jewish women, Gold (1998) found that the JAP stereotype is one of three places where the experiences of anti-Semitism and sexism intersect. Gold (1998) summarizes comments from Jewish women who are actively aware of the JAP label, and how its presence has influenced their own negotiations of being Jewish women. Additionally, Gold's (2004) research indicates that schools are the second most frequent location in which to experience anti-Semitic incidents, leading Gold (2004) to conduct a longitudinal study of Canadian Jewish girls, investigating "their experience of sexism and antisemitism, and how these shape their emerging identities as Jewish and female" (p.70). Gold's (1998; 2004) work indicates the need for my research to specifically address experience with the JAP stereotype amongst Canadian high school girls.

There is a distinct gap in the field as there has been no academic research to date investigating how the JAP stereotype affects young Jewish women of high school age. The research conducted comes predominantly out of humour studies, and does not

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involve Jewish female participants as the primary source of information (Schwalb & Sedlacek, 1989; Spencer, 1989). Furthermore, this research does not engage the issue of identity negotiation, in which the JAP stereotype appears to play a significant role for Jewish women and girls. Moreover, the existing literature on the Jewish American Princess comes from largely journalistic sources. My thesis therefore seeks to fill these gaps by conducting primary qualitative academic research with Jewish girls directly to round out the claims made in journalistic and cultural work on the return of the JAP. While the theoretical work to deconstruct the JAP stereotype began in the 1980s, it now needs to be taken up again in the 2000s, focusing on the aspect of emerging identity, and the role that JAP culture plays in that process.

CHAPTER 3: THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of a theoretical framework is to bring together complementary ideas and approaches that guide the development of a research project. Reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of my work, the theoretical perspectives I have gathered are derived from sociology, psychology, feminism, religious studies, and anthropology. Each component of this framework adds further dimension to my approach, highlighting a different facet of the Jewish American Princess. The theoretical perspectives presented here function as interpretive tools to aid me in my analysis of this complex stereotype.

In this section I discuss third wave Jewish feminism, and a mediated action approach to identity, the theoretical perspectives that inform my research on the JAP stereotype. I begin with an overview of *second wave feminist theory* so as to understand the context from which *third wave* and *Jewish* feminisms emerged. Second wave feminist thought and action framed women as a uniform group, ignoring the significant differences in needs, wants, and experience amongst North American women. Third wave and Jewish feminisms emerged in response to this grossly generalized construction of women. In the sections that follow I emphasize the ways in which third wave and Jewish feminist thought highlight the diverse experience of women, bringing those who are marginalized in second wave discourse to the fore. I then bring in components of *intersectionality theory* to provide further theoretical support for my framework that conceptualizes the JAP stereotype as a site of imbricated identity-based experience. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the *mediated action approach to identity* that I am applying in my analysis of the JAP stereotype's impact on individual Jewish girls' identities.

The perspectives forwarded by third wave[8] feminist thought are the overarching thread guiding this project. A feminist perspective is a logical starting point for my work as the JAP is a stereotype *about* being a certain type of girl. Feminism, as a theoretical perspective, a belief, or a worldview, is "multiple" and "polyphonic" (Gillis, et al., 2007, p.xxx), and cannot be reduced to a single theory (Gillis, et al., 2007; Lotz, 2003; Steenbergen, 2001). As a starting definition, LeGates (2001) explains that "feminism begins with the recognition that all women, because of their gender, suffer injustice and with the refusal to accept that situation" (p.370). Third wave feminism, with its theoretical emphasis on intersectionality, approaches identity and experience as fluid, evolving, multiple, layered, complex, and contradictory. I am not trying to find one clear and cohesive definition for what a JAP is, or who falls under this label. I am interested instead in highlighting multiple voices, multiple understandings, and multiple experiences surrounding this contentious discourse. Third wave feminist theory enables and encourages this exploration.

To complement this third wave feminist approach, I also employ principles set out by Jewish feminism and intersectionality theory. Jewish feminism emphasizes recognizing being Jewish as a legitimate category of difference. This perspective creates the theoretical space within feminist discourse to explore the experience of oppression derived from being Jewish, alongside other narratives of marginalization. At the same time, it is clear that the lived experience surrounding the JAP stereotype is one of intersections. Seminal research in the field has already acknowledged the JAP stereotype to be located at the intersections of sexist and anti-Semitic discourses (Gold, 1998), along

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[8] Mann and Huffman (2005) argue that the majority of scholars still opt to keep the term *waves* to describe feminist activity because it is a metaphor for large schools of feminist thought. While there were feminists before the waves and in between the waves, they did not come together at those points in such wide-reaching expressions of feminism as they did during these waves. The waves denote crests of publicly acknowledged action by large groups of feminists (LeGates, 2001; Pinterics, 2001). Side (2006) relies less on a theoretical justification for the use of the wave metaphor, deciding instead to keep the wave metaphor because it is already recognized shorthand in the field. I have decided continue to use waves to outline my discussion of feminism in keeping with the widespread use of the term amongst scholars in the field.

with class- and immigration-based narratives (Prell, 1999). Therefore, it is only logical and necessary to continue conceptualizing and researching the JAP through an intersectional lens. Intersectionality posits the necessity of analyzing multiple identity-based experiences alongside that of gender, offering a logical extension of one of the primary goals of Jewish feminism: to examine the experience of being Jewish as it intersects with the experience of being female. The two theoretical perspectives strongly reinforce one another to frame my research.

The mediated action approach to identity construction is yet another theoretical building block. The Jewish American Princess stereotype constitutes a cultural discourse that is available in the North American Jewish community. Mediated action theory is quite appropriate for exploring how a discourse is utilized as a tool in the construction of identity. In this way, the JAP stereotype is understood as a tool that Jewish girls take up in their own identity negotiations. Mediated action theory specifically addresses the interplay between the individual and the discourses that are available to them in the moment when identity is enacted. The emphasis on the context of the cultural tool is important as I am examining a stereotype that already has a long history of use and meaning. The mediated action approach permits me to highlight the influences of time and place surrounding my participants that shape their understandings and uses of the JAP term.

I. Feminism

Second Wave Feminism

Second wave feminism is marked by a double focus "on women as an oppressed *social* group," and on the female body as the "primary site of that oppression" (Thornham, 2000, p.31). The ideas comprising second wave feminist work coalesced into a substantial movement in the late 1960s, with its peak of public activism in the early 1970s (LeGates, 2001). [9] Second wave feminism is rooted in the North American civil

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[9] The second wave of feminism is situated as following the first wave of feminist activity. First wave feminist thought and activity rose in the mid-to-late 1800s, and culminated just after World War I with the winning of the vote for women (LeGates, 2001). Similar to both second and third wave feminist movements, the first wave was also a large

rights and anti-war movements (LeGates 2001; Thornham, 2000). The successes experienced by these groups demonstrated that social movements could be organized, and as a result of their coordinated nature, effectively combat social injustices. Second wave feminists extended this model to oppose the injustice of female oppression under the dominant patriarchal structures.

Second wave feminist thought rallies around an essential understanding of women as "peaceful, nurturing, and cooperative," a characterization that is based on European notions of idealized femininity (Adams, 2008, p.17). Women who cannot identify with this construction of woman or femininity are excluded. Second wave feminism reflects the popularity with which structuralist theory reigned in theoretical discussions during the 1960s. Like structural theory, second wave feminist thought emphasizes clear dichotomous categories, such as male/female, sex/gender, feminist/not-feminist, and oppressive/liberating (Pinterics, 2001). Society is organized along these clear binaries, dictating how individuals fit into one category or another, without ambiguities.

Second wave feminist thinking also emphasized the concept of a common *sisterhood* of all women, working together to resist patriarchal oppressions. This approach encouraged an almost blind allegiance between women. The concept of *sisterhood* discourages discussion of the real ways that women do differ in race, ethnicity, religion, language, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, and ability. Furthering this view, second wave feminism sought to function as a cohesive movement, as the single voice to represent all women. In these ways, second wave thought narrowed the understanding of women to that of a homogenous group, whose members therefore experience oppression in the same way. This forced homogenization serves as one of the primary sites for disagreement and for distinguishing second wave feminism from third wave and Jewish feminisms.

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umbrella title for many different forms of feminisms during that period. In summary, first wave feminists worked towards women "[defining] their own capabilities and goals," and having "greater influence in both family and in public life" (LeGates 2001, p.197). First wave feminists are most significantly remembered for their success in winning the right for (some) women to vote in public elections.

In North America, two strands of second wave feminism developed beginning in late 1960s: *equal rights feminism* and *radical feminism* (LeGates, 2001; Thornham, 2000). Equal rights feminism sought equality and full partnerships for women with men (Thornham, 2000). This strand emphasized combating legal and economic discrimination against women and changing sexist attitudes. Radical feminism focused on liberating women as oppressed. Kate Millett (in her book, *Sexual Politics [1970])* was particularly influential in broadening the term patriarchy to mean "the institutionalized oppression of all women by all men" (Thornham, 2000, p.36). The patriarchy is the control of women and their sexuality through ideas established and entrenched in culture and discourse. Family and personal relationship structures are the sites of patriarchal oppression, as opposed to the realms of politics and paid employment that the equal rights feminists emphasized (LeGates, 2001, p.346).

On the surface, the feminist second wave appears fairly homogeneous. The founders of both radical and equal rights feminisms were most visibly white, educated, heterosexual and from middle-class backgrounds (Adams, 2008; LeGates, 2001; Thornham, 2000). This impression resulted in both strands becoming associated with privileged women. In actuality, second wave feminism was not a perfectly unified movement, but rather was one with numerous internal divisions (LeGates, 2001; Thornham, 2000). In North America, women of colour criticized the second wave for not taking an anti-racist and anti-imperialist stance in its work and writings. Lesbian women charged second wave feminism as heterosexist in framing understandings of female sexuality in a dominantly heterosexual framework.

Second wave feminism was, and continues to be, a pivotal social movement responsible for bringing the rights of women to the political and social fore. It is their revolutionary spirit and conviction that facilitated groundbreaking developments that have changed the status of Western women. At the same time, in the late 1970s and 1980s, the charges of racism, elitism, and heterosexism were increasingly leveled within mainstream second wave feminism. These divisions serve as the basis to challenge the essentialized approach to women and sisterhood. It is from the internal criticism to this front of female homogeneity that third wave feminism develops. In the following section I will delve into the grounds for this challenge. However, it is imperative to keep in mind

that I turn to these theoretical challenges with the utmost respect for the strong feminist foundation laid by the second wave, without which further development in new directions of feminist thinking would not be possible.

Third Wave Feminism

While I find it difficult at times to articulate what third wave feminists stand for, determining what third wave feminists *do not stand for* is much easier. Third wave feminists do not all agree, do not come from the same backgrounds, do not follow a single agenda, and do not share the same political motivations or dreams (Steenbergen, 2001). Despite the broad range of affiliations third wave feminists may take, they all embrace the "lived messiness" of being a woman, and of being a feminist (Heywood & Drake, 1997, p.8). In the introduction to their seminal anthology, *Third Wave Agenda,* Heywood and Drake (1997) highlight the complex and multi-faceted nature of women's lives today, and the intricate layered negotiations that feminist affiliation subsequently requires. Mann and Huffman (2005) broadly describe third wave feminism as a new discourse that seeks to reconfigure feminist goals to "make it more diverse and inclusive" (p.57). The feminist third wave seeks to expand on the second wave's perception of women as a cohesive homogenous group with common characteristics and interests, and opens up the space for individuality and complexity. In this section, I explore what third wave feminism is and who third wave feminists are. I also differentiate third wave feminism from second wave and postfeminist thinking.

One of the most frequently made assessments of third wave feminism is that it cannot be reduced to a single theory (Pinterics, 2001; Side, 2006; Steenbergen 2001). One of the primary goals of third wave feminism is to avoid establishing a clearly bounded definition of *third wave feminist theory,* which all identified third wave feminists, would then be bound to ascribe to. Instead, third wave feminism seeks to bring together multiple definitions, understandings of, and agendas for feminist theory and activism, intentionally cultivating a space in which to explore inconsistency, contradiction, and debate. At the same time though, it would be incorrect to assume that there is no common ground on which third wave feminists stand. Third wave feminism

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takes up the second wave pursuit of recognizing women as an oppressed group in society, and actively working though politics and social institutions to change this status. However, the third wave takes a more individualized approach to pursuing these goals, leaving room for the individual interpretation and expression of feminism and feminist values.

A defining characteristic of third wave feminism is the acceptance of the contradictory, complex, and *messy* nature of identity, experience, and feminism. The third wave embraces contradictions in feminist ideals, definitions of identity-based categories like *race* and *gender*, and contradictions in the ways we live our lives. It is this acceptance and cultivation of contradictions and ambiguity that marks the third wave (Adams 2008; Gillis, et al., 2007; Heywood & Drake, 1997; Mann & Huffman, 2005). Stemming from the criticism of the second wave's attempt to conceptualize all women as experiencing oppression in the same way, third wavers have sought to build an "inclusive feminism that respects not only differences between women based on race, ethnicity, religion, and economic standing but also makes allowance for different identities within a single person" (Heywood, 2006, p.xx).

An integral component of the third wave's active turn to accommodate ambiguity and complexity is an effort to avoid reducing experience to dichotomies. Again, in much of second wave theory, an emphasis is placed on clear dichotomous categories, such as, male/female, sex/gender, good/evil, feminist/not-feminist, and oppressive/liberating (Pinterics, 2001). These categories serve as a basis for determining identities or statuses that are in line with feminist thinking, and those that are not. In contrast, third wavers see these rigid dichotomies as the cause of very restricted thinking about who or what is a feminist, and what is a legitimate feminist claim of oppression or discrimination (Mann & Huffman, 2005). In her introduction to the anthology *To Be Real,* Rebecca Walker addresses this frustration:

> For many of us it seems that to be a feminist in the way that we have seen or understood feminism is to conform to an identity and way of living that doesn't allow for individuality, complexity, or less than perfect personal histories. (As cited in Heywood & Drake, 1997, p.7)

The third wave moves away from these dichotomous understandings of gender, sexuality, and feminism, opening up and "embracing fluidity" (Mann & Huffman, 2005, p.71). In taking this approach, third wave feminists are free to carve out feminist boundaries of identification and practice on their own terms.

Second Wave vs. Third Wave

Referring to these feminist expressions metaphorically as the second and the third waves inevitably raises the question of what the relationship is between the two. The more popular view sees the third wave as emerging out of the second, and maintaining the connection between the two (Adams, 2008; Gillis, et al., 2007; Heywood & Drake, 1997). The third wave challenges certain tenets of second wave theory, questioning where necessary, but does not make it its goal to undermine the preceding movement (Steenbergen, 2001). Instead, the third wave uses the questions as points of departure to refigure the theoretical concepts in an effort to move feminism forward. Pomerantz (2008) argues that third wave feminism "seeks to take further second wave's agenda by continuing to focus on gender equality, violence against women, and oppression" (p.173). Pinterics (2001) posits that using the term *third wave* specifically implies a continuation from the agenda of second wave, and refutes the notion that the waves of feminism are over and done with, but instead suggests a new life and movement in the growth of the feminist project.

The third wave challenges the emphasis on unity, the un-dynamic understanding of oppression, and the rigid definitions of feminism promulgated by the second wave. The second wave's emphasis on unity manifests in two ways: in the construction of women as a homogeneous category and in the production of an image of a single feminist voice to speak for the movement. Second wave theory holds at its foundation an essentialized view of women as a common group, whose members share characteristics, needs and experience (Adams, 2008). However, this focus on commonality causes problems when in fact, the group is very diverse. Third wave theory responds directly to this homogenization by emphasizing the diversity amongst feminists. The third wave also challenges the second wave's presentation of women as a single group with a single

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voice. The third wave therefore does not ascribe to a singular feminist subject or a single feminist agenda. As Lotz (2003) summarizes the point, the second wave focused on a single voice, while the third wave focuses on multiple voices.

The third wave also questions the conceptualization of oppression found in mainstream second wave theory. Part of the essentialized view of women is that because they share the same characteristics, they also share a common oppression. Third wave feminism subsequently approaches oppression as individually experienced, as based on mutually constitutive identity categories, as overlapping with privilege, and as intersectional. An important consideration in this third wave understanding of oppression is that young women today experience sexism, racism, heterosexism, classism, etc, that is more "underground, more insidious, and much more difficult to pinpoint than its previous incarnations" (Pinterics, 2001, p.15).

Further, the second wave did not explore the overlap of oppression with privilege (Pinterics, 2001). The second wave focused solely on the experience of oppression, ignoring that those who occupy subjugated positions may also occupy privileged ones as well. The second wave emphasis on either falling into an oppressed category or a privileged one reflects the structuralist underpinnings of the theory developed at that time. Following structuralist thinking, experience and subject positions are delineated along clear binaries, in this case, privileged or oppressed. The rigidity of this framework did not allow for the recognition that in our lives we occupy the positions of both the privileged and the oppressed. In our complex globalized society, people's gender may result in an oppressed subject position, while their race enables them to experience privileges in other contexts. The third wave picks up on the work initiated by feminists of colour at the margins of the second wave to fully acknowledge the intersectionality of oppression and the role that privilege also plays in this matrix of power.

Third Wave Feminism vs. Postfeminism

When discussing third wave feminism, it is important to also address the concept of *postfeminism*. In using the term postfeminism, I am referring to "a group of young, conservative feminists who explicitly define themselves against and criticize feminists of

the second wave" (Heywood & Drake, 1997, p.1), and who suggest that "the gains forged by previous generations of women have so completely pervaded all tiers of our social existence that those still 'harping' about women's victim status are embarrassingly out of touch" (Gillis, et al., 2007, p.xxvi). Following Heywood and Drake (1997), Gillis, et al. (2007) and Steenbergen (2001), I argue that third wave feminists are not postfeminists. Instead, many third wave feminists actively try to distance themselves from postfeminist views and actions.

The terms third wave and postfeminist are often conflated in North American media, and it is therefore imperative to clearly distinguish the two forms of feminist commentary (Gillis, et al., 2007; Heywood, 2006). Conservative postfeminism criticizes feminism for constructing women as victims (Heywood & Drake, 1997). As an alternative to its classification of feminists as victims, postfeminism forwards the concept of power feminism, featuring a modern and empowered woman (Heywood & Drake, 1997). Popularized by writers such as Naomi Wolf, Camille Paglia, Katie Roiphe, and Kate Fillion,[10] postfeminist writings indicate women's successful liberation and believe that the need to overturn systems of oppression is no longer relevant. They present an alternate image of a new feminist who is focused on "individual gain, the consumption of material goods, and the exertion of their own enlightened power" (Steenbergen, 2001, p.8). The postfeminist image of power feminism dominated the media in the 1990s (Steenbergen, 2001). At the same time, the term *third wave feminist* was also becoming more widely used in the academic and public spheres, but with more ambiguity in its definitions. As a result, the media's strong presentation of the image of a modern and empowered postfeminist woman effectively became synonymous with the term third wave feminism. Despite the stark and conflicting differences between the two, it is important to acknowledge the degree to which postfeminism is linked to third wave feminism in the public realm.

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[10] In 1995, Canadian journalist Kate Fillion published *Lip Service: The Truth about Women's Darker Side in Love, Sex, and Friendship* (Steenbergen, 2001). She argued that women adhere to conflicting paradigms and said that feminism tried to achieve sexual liberation through dangerous dichotomies and insisting on the image of women as victim (Steenbergen, 2001).

Conceptually, my research is situated within the field of third wave feminism, and at the same time, within Jewish feminist scholarship.[11] Gender, race, class, age and ability are the identity-based categories most frequently cited. To this list, I add *religion*. In the context of North America, a dominantly Christian culture, being of a minority religion also elicits experiences of oppression, persecution, and difference. For my participants, being Jewish is yet another dimension that must be included in the negotiations of self and community. I therefore approach my research through a third wave Jewish feminist lens.

In the historical trajectory of North American feminist thought, Jewish feminism emerged out of second wave feminism. Jewish women actively participated in the development of second wave feminism (Grumble, 2000; Umansky, 1988). They first became involved in feminist issues such as equal pay for equal work and the legalization of abortion. They then turned the feminist lens inwards on the Jewish community and began an analysis of patriarchy within Judaism itself. Jewish feminism developed in two directions at this point, addressing two facets of Jewish feminist women's lives (Grumble, 2000). The first aspect focuses on how the experience of being Jewish is treated within feminist theoretical and political discourse. Jewish feminists charged that second wave feminist discourse blatantly ignored being Jewish, and the anti-Semitism associated with this experience, as a category of legitimate difference and oppression. The second facet of Jewish feminism focuses on examining the patriarchal and andocentric structure of Judaism, and how to empower women to open up new opportunities for their religious and communal participation. Umansky (1988) summarizes the dual agenda well by explaining "Jewish feminism emerged as a means of asserting both *Jewish* visibility within the feminist movement and *feminist* self-consciousness within the U.S. Jewish community" (p.352).

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[11] For the purposes of my research on the JAP, a stereotype that originated and flourished in North America, I focus on Jewish feminism in North America alone. I recognize that there is rich Jewish feminist scholarship and activism in Israel; however including these discussions would digress from the specific Jewish community that I am exploring in this thesis.

Women who identified as both Jewish and feminist began to challenge the silence within the second wave feminist movement around Jewish women's experience. Jewish feminists fall in with the critique of mainstream second wave thought that viewed women as a homogenous group. Greenberg (1997) argues that many of the concerns felt by Jewish women about acknowledging diversity in race, ethnicity, and culture within feminist theory are similar to those of Black, Hispanic, or Asian women. However, because Jewish women are often perceived (and may also perceive themselves) as white and of the middle-class, Jewish women's attempts to claim experiences of oppression, marginalization, or discrimination do not hold the same weight.

Mainstream second wave feminism refused to acknowledge being Jewish as an oppressed experience (Gold, 2004). As a result, Jewish feminists did not feel as though they had a safe space to comfortably identify as Jewish within feminist discourse. In the 1980s, Evelyn Torton Beck wrote prolifically about "Jewish identity and the relationship between anti-Semitism and other oppressions" (Beck, 1983, p.11). One of the ways anti-Semitism operates is to make the Jew think that it is not a legitimate oppression, that she should not call attention to it for fear of not being taken seriously. "It is not OK to talk about anti-Semitism *in and of itself,* and it is also not OK to talk about it in the same breath as racism. Anti-Semitism thus falls between the cracks" (Beck, 1983, p.11). In feminist history, Jewish women have rarely been acknowledged to experience persecution the way women from other ethnic backgrounds have experienced it (Gold, 2004).

Jewish feminist scholars offer a partial explanation for why anti-Semitism and Jewish women have gone unrecognized within feminist theory. Beck (1988) looks to the initial conceptual framework forwarded by feminists of colour which "established (and quickly *fixed*) the interlocking factors of 'sex, race, and class" as *the* basis for the oppression of women" (p.101). *Jew* or *being Jewish* cannot be accommodated by any of those three categories. She further makes the connection between perpetuating these categories, and the resulting invisibility of Jews within feminism, as a benign type of anti-Semitism. An anti-Semitism of indifference and insensitivity to the issues affecting Jewish women, has subsequently allowed Jewish gender-based stereotypes like the JAP to flourish. In response to these omissions, Jewish feminism emerged in order to

"delineat[e] the specific experiences of being Jewish and female, and the ways these two forms of oppression intersect, and work together to oppress Jewish women and girls" (Gold, 2004, p.55).

The second goal of Jewish feminism is to improve the religious, legal, and social status of women within Judaism and to open up new opportunities for religious experience and leadership for Jewish women. These goals closely coincide with the second wave feminist project of challenging patriarchal structures that subordinate women. In the context of the Jewish religion and community, this arm of Jewish feminism responds to issues such as women's roles in ritual life, challenging masculine values within Judaism, and undermining strict gender roles within the community (Plaskow, 1991). This aspect of Jewish feminism has evolved to occupy a significant portion of effort and attention in the community today.

The failure to acknowledge being Jewish as a legitimate category of difference, and the undertones of anti-Semitism within the feminist movement, coupled with the reluctance within Judaism to address charges of sexism and patriarchal subordination of women, forced Jewish feminists to separate their Jewish identity from their feminist identity. Judith Plaskow (1991) passionately addresses her own struggle to negotiate between the two identities of Jewish and feminist when they are conceptualized as mutually exclusive and separate: "I am not a Jew in the synagogue and a feminist in the world. I am a Jewish feminist and feminist Jew in every moment in my life" (p.xi). In my own work, I take up this struggle as a feminist Jewish woman to weave my feminist and Jewish orientations together.

In this research, I have established a third wave Jewish feminist framework through which to explore the complex identity negotiations of Jewish girls today. In the introduction to her third wave Jewish feminist anthology, *Yentle's Revenge,* Danya Ruttenberg (2001) describes the third wave Jewish feminist approach as one that enables Jewish women to:

> talk honestly about the place of Judaism in real life-[to] grapple with body image, queer identity and the media's pervasive role in our culture...to give religion a

breath of fresh air-whether through meditation, eco-kosher living or punk rock.

To crave innovation-but innovation that's genuinely Jewish (p.xx)

This loose definition highlights the strength of this perspective to address both feminist and Jewish concerns embedded in the JAP stereotype at the same time, in a way that provokes evolution of thought and practice.

II. Intersectionality Theory

"People's real life experiences have never fit into the boundaries created by academic disciplines: Lives are much more complex and far reaching" (Weber, 2004, p.121). Weber (2004) presents this observation as a starting point from which to understand the unique approach to identity and experience forwarded by intersectionality theory. In its broadest conceptualization, intersectionality theory acknowledges the "interaction of multiple identities and experiences of exclusion and subordination" (Davis, 2008, p.67). The fundamental argument put forth in intersectionality theory is that every person experiences differences in social status, material circumstances, and personal identity based on their unique position in the social matrix. Experience is not neatly contained within the traditional boundaries of identity categories like race and gender. Instead, the experience associated with one's gender, race, class, ethnicity, nation, religion, age, and sexuality fuse and overlap in the individual's daily life (Berger & Guidroz, 2010). Crenshaw (1989) utilizes a highly illustrative metaphor to flesh out the interlocking and multidirectional nature of oppressions associated with these identity categories:

Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. (p.148)

This metaphor creates a vivid image of how one's identities in relation to their position in social structures can intersect with any number of forces at any given time.

Furthermore, the real life intersections that these categories take "cannot be captured wholly by looking at the women, race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately" (Crenshaw, 1991, p.94). Social identities are mutually constitutive in that one identity category, like gender, "takes its meaning as a category in relation to another category" (Shields, 2008, p.302). In the context of my feminist project, intersectionality theory harnesses these concepts and applies them to the lives of women, arguing that it is not sufficient to analyze the experience of gender as a contained entity. Intersectionality theory asserts the necessity of exploring the ways that multiple dimensions of experience mutually construct one another and create meaning in the lives of women. In this section I provide an in-depth discussion of these tenets of intersectionality theory and discuss their application to the study of the JAP stereotype.

Feminists of colour made significant contributions to the development of intersectionality theory by initiating a reconceptualization of oppression (Lotz, 2003). Feminists of colour took issue with the way second wave feminism understood oppression (Mann & Huffman, 2005). The second wave conceptualized oppression, such as racial or gender oppressions, as separate entities. And when oppressions were considered together, they were seen as simply added one on top of the other. But this additive approach did not acknowledge the ways that oppressions are actually intertwined in the ways people experience them. For example, one does not experience being black one day, and then being a woman the next day. One experiences being of a minority race and of a minority gender at the same time, and the two experiences of oppression are intertwined. The second wave also created a hierarchy of oppression, where some oppressions (gender) were ranked as more significant than others (race or class for example). Neither of these understandings adequately captured the experience of being a woman of colour engaging with racial, gender, and class-based oppression. Feminists of colour asserted the necessity of creating a framework that could conceptualize "multiple oppressions as simultaneous, inseparable, and interlocking" (Mann & Huffman, 2005, p.59).

Though not the first to engage with the idea of intersecting experience, Kimberlé Crenshaw is credited with coining the specific term "intersectionality" during the late 1980s (Davis, 2008). Crenshaw (1989; 1991) explores the experience of women of colour

at the intersection of their race and their gender. Crenshaw (1991) asserts that *structural intersectionality* is one of the primary sources of women's layered experience of oppression. Structural intersectionality refers to how the location of the individual at the specific intersection of time, place, and various identity categories differentiates their experience from that of other people who may share some of the identity categories. She uses the example of Black women's experiences of violence, which are compounded by poverty, lack of job opportunities and child care, as being structurally different than those of white women's experience of violence (Crenshaw, 1991).

Intersectionality theory also emphasizes the mutually constitutive and intertwined nature of dimensions of difference and the oppression resulting from them. Intersectionality theory rejects the view that each dimension of difference is categorically bound as a separate entity. Instead, identity categories are mutually constitutive and their meanings are constructed in relation to each other. Yuval-Davis argues in her conversation with Berger and Guidroz (2010) that "we need to theorize social divisions as constituted by each other in concrete ways, enmeshed in each other, although they each have their own separate discourses [they] are also irreducible to each other" (p.65). In theorizing identity categories as mutually constitutive, and therefore "interlocking," oppression, as a reflection of identity categories, must also be understood as interwoven and interlocking (Berger & Guidroz, 2010, p.5). Intersectionality therefore discards the additive approach as a meaningful way to account for multiple dimensions of oppression. Crenshaw (1989) cautions that it is not sufficient to simply add Black women (or any other oppressed group) to the already existing analytical framework of other categories of difference. Instead, the intersection itself of these labeled experiences must be examined intentionally in order to address the lived experience of subordination.

Similar to third wave feminism, intersectionality theory recognizes that experiences of privilege and experiences of subordination are expressed simultaneously in our lives (Pinterics, 2001; Weber, 2004). Weber (2004) argues that almost all of us occupy both dominant and subordinate positions and experience both advantage and disadvantage in our hierarchical society, and therefore, "there are no pure oppressors or oppressed in our society" (p.131). In acknowledging the double-handed presence of

privilege alongside oppression in our lives, intersectionality theory offers a more nuanced and case-sensitive approach to exploring power relations.

Finally, it is essential to locate the experience under scrutiny in an intersectional analysis within the structures of power at play in that context (Berger & Guidroz, 2010; Crenshaw 1991; Weber, 2004). Each category is stratified within a larger hierarchy of power, forcing these categories into conflict with one another. "They are power hierarchies in which one group exerts control over another, securing its position of dominance in the system, and in which substantial material and nonmaterial resources-such as wealth, income, or access to health care and education-are at stake" (Weber, 2004, p.127). It is insufficient to simply explore the overlap amongst dimensions of difference. Each dimension of difference or identity-based category features a component of a constructed power relationship (Weber, 2004). The intersectional approach intentionally focuses on the underlying power inequalities inherent in these experiences.

Intersectionality theory brings an important perspective to my research. It provides the theoretical support for exploring the JAP stereotype as it manifests in Jewish girls' lives. It is not sufficient to analyze the experience of the JAP stereotype related solely to gender, or solely to class, or solely to religion, as the discourse reflects all of these identities. The JAP stereotype, as a site of intersecting identities and experience, therefore necessitates an analytical lens that intentionally highlights intersections.

III. Mediated Action Approach to Identity

I have employed a mediated action theoretical framework to approach identity. Within the field of identity studies, the mediated action approach follows the work of Lev Vygotsky and his sociocultural approach to identity. The sociocultural approach to identity directly addresses the debate of whether an essential self serves as the basis for identity construction. The sociocultural approach, and the mediated action framework by extension, rejects this notion of an essential self. In a similar vein, the mediated action approach echoes Rorty (1989), who argues that the self is contingent on specific

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interactions, circumstances, and opportunities that are available to the individual, not on an essential self that is consistent for all people. Instead, identities are drawn from the social context and serve as a link between the social and the individual (Brown & Tappan, 2008).

In rejecting the essential self as the starting point for identity, the mediated action approach looks to cultural tools available to the individual as the means through which identity is constructed. The mediated action approach provides an alternative to viewing human action as entirely influenced by the individual, or as entirely influenced by social forces. It is based on recognizing an irreducible and productive tension between the agent and the social context the agent operates in. It creates the conceptual space for individuals to appropriate, transform, and resist the cultural tools at their disposal. Sharing in the sociocultural understandings of identity, the mediated action approach provides an entry point for exploring how cultural components (such as the JAP stereotype) are utilized to shape identity. In this research, the mediated action approach to identity is especially useful to conceptualize identities, and identity-based actions, in a cultural context.

Brown and Tappan (2008) explain that "mediated action entails two central elements: (1) an agent, the person who is the doing the acting, and (2) the cultural tools, mediational means, or instruments appropriated from the culture and used by the agent to accomplish a given action" (p.52). Following this framework, a mediated action understanding of identity focuses on how "cultural tools are used to construct identities in the course of specific activities and particular actions" (Brown & Tappan, 2008, p.52).

Mediated action assumes that any human action (any action that is not biologically or instinctually motivated), always involves a dynamic relationship between agents and their cultural tools/mediational means (Penuel & Wertsch 1995; Tappan 2005). In the context of identity, Brown and Tappan (2008) argue that this tension is required to fully understand the process of identity construction. The interplay between the individual and the social helps to illuminate the role that social, historical and cultural processes play in the formation and transformation of individual identities (Brown & Tappan, 2008).

The concept of *cultural tools* is central to the mediated action framework. Cultural tools take on a variety of forms including words, stereotypes, jokes, phrases, books, pictures, images, television shows and films. Words, language, ideologies, and discourses are most typically used in identity formation (Brown & Tappan, 2008; Tappan, 2005). Discourse becomes a mediational means when it is appropriated by an individual, and used as a filter through which to enact identity in that moment. In their research on girls who fight like boys, Brown and Tappan (2008) look at hegemonic masculinity as an example of one such discourse. The discourse of hegemonic masculinity is a cultural resource (it is a set of beliefs that is available in North American culture) that boys use to mediate how they perform a masculine gendered identity, or "being a boy" (p.53).

Critical to the mediation of identity is the recognition that the meanings of cultural tools are not fixed. Instead, the meanings are actually very flexible and fluid (Brown & Tappan, 2008; Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). The meaning of the cultural tool is largely determined by how the tool is used in a particular situation. Therefore, "identity should be seen as formed when on a particular occasion, an individual chooses one or more resources (ideologies) available from a 'cultural tool kit' to accomplish some action" (Tappan, 2005, p.52). The meaning that discourse holds for identity formation is specific to that exact moment when it is enacted in that unique intersection of social, cultural and historical elements.

Penuel and Wertsch (1995), two of the key theorists in this field, set out four claims outlining a mediated action approach to identity formation. Following Tappan (2005), I will focus on the second and third claims as they provide a productive structure through which to research a mediated action approach to identity formation: "(b) cultural and historical resources for identity formation are integral as empowering and constraining tools for identity formation; (c) mediated action, rather than an inner sense of identity, provides a basic unit of analysis" (p.89). In line with Vygotsky, Penuel and Wertsch (1995) focus their attention on the mediation of cultural tools in forming identity, as opposed to some stable, essential self as the basis for identity formation. Penuel and Wertsch reject the widely held notion of an "'inner sense' of coherence and stability as characteristic of identity" (as cited in Tappan, 2005, p.51). From this perspective, the

research emphasis is placed on the agents, the cultural tools utilized to mediate their action, and the tension between the two entities. This framework logically sets up the foundation from which to question why certain discourses are utilized, and to what ends.

Penuel and Wertsch's (1995) other claim is that cultural tools serve as both *empowering* and *constraining* means for identity formation. Examining the cultural tools that are available in a particular cultural-historical context, Penuel and Wertsch (1995) and Tappan (2005) accept that these tools can be both empowering and constraining on the development of identity. Empowering tools provide individuals with an appealing set of ideas and behaviours to embody. In contrast, constraining tools limit individuals in what they can become by providing narrow options for what they can believe, express, what careers they can choose, and how they can express themselves (Tappan, 2005). For youth, the implications of constraining ideologies are significant in defining who and what they can *be*.

An important concern of the mediated action approach is how "cultural tools and resources, like ideologies, that mediate identity [are] acquired" (Tappan, 2005, p.53). To explore this process, Tappan (2005) utilizes the term *appropriation*. Employing this term reveals his belief that the user does not passively internalize discourse, but rather has an active role in creating meaning for and gaining facility of the tool. There are two dimensions to the process of appropriation: a *sense of mastery* and a *sense of ownership* (Tappan, 2005). A sense of mastery implies knowing how to use a given cultural tool with a relatively high degree of facility or skill. A sense of ownership, on the other hand, goes a step further to convey how an individual takes a cultural tool, which basically belongs to others or to the group culture, and makes it their own. Acquiring a sense of ownership over cultural tools is an extremely difficult process, and agents do not easily come to a sense of ownership over the cultural tools they use.

The concepts of mastery and ownership reflect the inherent tension between the individual and the social in constructing identity. The agent is not reduced to a social category. But the constructive power of the cultural tool, such as discourse, is still respected. Where the capacity of the individual within this relationship is best seen is in Wertsch's (1997) concept of the *possibility for improvisation*. Wertsch (1997) positions

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the individual in an active role in the production of discourse through the "possibility for improvisation" (p.6). Stemming from the individual choices made in how to engage with the cultural tool, Wertsch posits that as individual agents use and appropriate cultural tools in their own lives, opportunities for these tools to undergo innovation and change occur. This concept of the *possibility for improvisation* serves as an entry point for individual agency in collective phenomena such as discourse. The possibility for improvisation is also extremely useful in theorizing the evolution and multiple uses of the JAP discourse. As will be apparent in the conversations with my participants, each girl creatively extends the JAP discourse to apply to her specific needs. The possibility for improvisation conceptualizes such innovative appropriations of discourse as the agentic utilization of a communal tool.

In seeking to understand how to take ownership over words or discourses that are not originally one's own, Tappan (2005) incorporates aspects of Mikhail Bakhtin's process of *ideological becoming* into his account of the mediated action approach to identity. Ideological becoming refers to "gradually coming to authorize and claim authority for one's own voice, while remaining in constant dialogue with other voices" (Tappan, 2005, p.55). These voices refer to discourses at play both within society and within the individual. Ideological becoming views these discourses in a constant struggle for dominance, as expressed through the individual's identity and understandings of the world. Bakhtin argues that it is through this struggle to express those discourses that are persuasive to the individual, and to reappropriate and improvise aspects of others as it is appropriate, that one's identity and self-understandings are forged.

Tappan (2005) outlines that words and discourses, both in society and within the individual, are never entirely one's own. Words do not exist in a neutral state; they exist in other people's mouths and with other's intentions. According to Bakhtin, a word or discourse only become one's own when "the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention" (as cited in Tappan, 2005, p.53). The strength of *ideological* becoming to assist in exploring the JAP discourse lies in its recognition of the historicity of the words that make up discourse. The notion of ideological becoming provides a theoretical tool for explicitly addressing and thematizing the debt within any present

utterance to pre-existing utterances and discourses. There is always a struggle to make words our own because they have been created and originally used within contexts that are not our own. Words have resonances beyond the intentions of the user, stemming from the historical debt of language and discourse. It is quite possible that words continue to resound with original meanings, even if that was not the intention of the user. Furthermore, since words are used in a cultural context, people's reactions and responses create meanings as well, demonstrating the dialogical process of meaning making. Therefore, the meanings of words often extend beyond their purview, and may have implications beyond what the user intended. Accordingly, the inclusion of the perspective of ideological becoming creates the theoretical space within which to explore Jewish girls' creative appropriations of the JAP discourse as well as their awareness of and interest in earlier meanings of the term, including the possible tensions between their own discursive aims and these historically embedded meanings.

A note on Identity Categories

In relying so heavily on identity-based categories such as gender and religion in my analysis, it is important to address whether these concepts are indeed real entities, or constructs alone. This issue is somewhat tricky. Within my theoretical framework and subsequent analysis, I argue that these categories are constructed given that they are produced within discourse; however, they are real in that they are *experienced* as real. In her analysis of identity categories utilized in intersectional analyses, Weber (2004) is very clear that identity categories are social constructs. Weber (2004) explains that identity categories are always contextual. While they persist through history, they are not static: they "constantly undergo change as part of new economic, political, and ideological processes, trends, and events" (Weber, 2004, p.124). Therefore, the meaning of identity labels and classifications must always be understood as defined by their context, and recognized to be fluid in their evolution and application.

How is it then that a constructed identity category, such as race or sexuality, comes to be experienced by individuals as a real and concrete category of social

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classification? Identity categories are experienced as real due to their construction within discourse (Pomerantz, 2008).

Discursive power lies in the ability to make a constructed concept appear to be natural, un-challengeable, and eternally true. Discourse shapes that category and determines the meaning of the construct. It is a result of the rooted nature of identity categories, where their meaning is taken as true, that they are experienced as real despite their constructed nature. My research on the JAP stereotype requires that I recognize the significance of the constructed nature of identity categories, as well as their lived experience as real.

How do these theoretical perspectives apply to my research?

In this project, I weave together third wave and Jewish feminist perspectives, intersectionality theory, and the mediated action approach to identity. Failure to use a feminist approach would undermine and negate the clearly gendered implications this stereotype has for Jewish women and girls. The *princess* component of the term alone exposes the JAP's sexist and misogynist origins. Adding the mediated action understanding of identity to this platform enables me to explore the JAP as a discourse, or cultural tool, that is shaping Jewish girls' identity negotiations.

The third wave feminist understanding of identity as contradictory and multiple is extremely useful for exploring the many different ways that girls today construct their identities. When applied to the study of the JAP stereotype, this approach cultivates critical analyses of the role that the JAP stereotype plays in the lives of Jewish girls. At the same time, in the context of North America, a predominantly Christian culture, being of a minority religion also elicits experience of oppression and difference. For my participants, being Jewish is yet another dimension that must be included in the negotiations of self and community. Marrying third wave feminist thought with Jewish feminist politics carves out the critical space in which to explore being a Jewish girl as a legitimate experience of difference.

Intersectionality theory then picks up on both third wave efforts to establish a feminist practice that recognizes difference and intersecting identities, as well as Jewish feminism's focused efforts to highlight the unique experience of Jewish girls. Intersectionality theory provides the necessary theoretical space in which to explore the multiple meanings the JAP has in the lives of these girls, without forcibly constraining their narratives into single identity categories. The mediated action understanding of identity, in turn, adds critical insight into how the JAP stereotype is taken up as a tool in identity expressions. The mediated action approach has richly productive implications in teasing out why, and to what ends, the JAP discourse is employed by Jewish girls today to mediate and enact their identities. All of these theoretical pieces are needed to thoroughly analyze the complex discourse of the JAP, and the ways it manifests in Jewish girls' lives.

CHAPTER 4: PASSIONATE RESEARCH: FEMINIST METHODOLOGIES AND FEMINIST METHODS

In this thesis, I have explored the JAP stereotype through feminist, qualitative research focused on the experiences of youth. Qualitative research tries to "understand the meanings of social events...*in context*" (Esterberg, 2002, p.2-3). Feminist research is a "style of knowing and knowledge making that is both critical and reflective" in its examination of gender (Hawthorne, 2002, p.38). Calling my research *feminist* and *qualitative* outlines my objective to explore the meaning of the JAP stereotype as it shapes the lives of Jewish girls today. In taking a feminist approach to research, I follow Hawthorne (2002) in conceptualizing my work as "passionate scholarship" (p.42). To do passionate research means to fully experience, to draw out strong feelings, and to be affected by something. My research seeks to accomplish these goals for my participants, for my readers, and for myself.

It is important to differentiate between *methodology*, the theory of how research should proceed, and *methods*, the actual tools used in carrying out the research (Esterberg, 2002). I will first address the issues of power and reflexivity, key components of my feminist methodology. I then provide an overview of the actual methods, three focus groups and seven interviews, I used in carrying out this research. Through this discussion, I highlight a number of situations where I was forced to adapt these components in response to unexpected constraints that arose in the field.

Power and Reflexivity

In the feminist study of women (Roof, 2007), and in the critical study of youth (Best, 2007), power is acknowledged as an inherent component of the research process. Both methodological approaches assert the necessity of interrogating how this power manifests. Power is an inherent part of research: the hierarchical structure of the researcher and the researched, the politics of interpretation and representation, value-laden theoretical frameworks, and prioritizing some types of knowledge over others. Central to this discussion is the investigation of how the researcher's position of power in relation to their participants mediates the collection and interpretation of data (Best,

2007). The researcher's position as one of power is especially relevant in the study of marginalized gender groups (women), and age groups (youth). Best (2007) asserts that critical youth studies must emphasize a methodological commitment to "a sustained concern for and consideration of the complexities of power and exploitation in the research encounter, an acknowledgement of the connection between power and knowledge" (p.9). In this way, I would also argue that Best's approach to the study of youth aligns with the feminist methodological commitment to examining the power-based relationship between the researcher and those being researched (Esterberg 2002; Roof, 2007). As the researcher, I recognize that I have power to determine what questions are asked, what information is presented, what is excluded, and how to represent my participants in this work.

In her influential article, "Working the Hyphen," Michelle Fine (1994) explores the inevitable power imbalance between researcher and participant. She calls this metaphorical space between the two parties, the *hyphen*. Fine (1994) argues against taking a positivist stance, which facilitates this hyphen. In the positivist view, the relationship between researcher and participant is a neutral, uni-directional information source flowing from the participant to the researcher, and the researcher may exploit and misrepresent the participant. Maintaining this hyphen between the participant and the researcher leads to the construction of the participant as *other*. Fine (1994) also argues that when qualitative researchers maintain the hyphen, they are implicated in the process of *othering* by reinforcing those who have already been established as *other,* such as women and youth, as further subjugated and exploited. Fine (1994) offers the feminist researcher an alternative approach to conceptualizing the researcher-participant dyad by "working the hyphen" (72). In working the hyphen, Fine (1994) suggests that researchers:

> Probe how we are in relation with the contexts we study and with our informants, understanding that we are all multiple in those relations…creating occasions for researchers and informants to discuss what is, and is not, 'happening between,' within the negotiated relations of whose story is being told, why, to whom, with what interpretation. (p.72)

In conducting intentionally feminist research, I tried to closely follow Fine's (1994) approach to understanding the power that I inadvertently hold as the researcher, and to actively work that hyphen to more respectfully reflect my participants in this work.

I sought to work the hyphen by rupturing my own authority. I believe that the assumed age-based authority of the researcher as older than the youth participant was somewhat moderated by my own appearance as a young adult/*really old youth*. My dress and manner was much closer to that of my participants than that of their teachers or parents. I also practiced researcher reflexivity as part of challenging my own authority. Researcher reflexivity required me to have "an ongoing conversation about experience while simultaneously living in the moment" (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p.659). This reflexivity meant consistently questioning my own decisions in carrying out the research, seeking feedback from my participants who were involved in the process with me, and remaining open to multiple interpretations of the process and the resulting data.

Feminist researchers have criticized the traditional expectation that research participants passively give over information to the interviewer without the researcher having to disclose information about themselves as well (Esterberg 2002). Following Oakley's warning that there can be "no intimacy without reciprocity," I therefore also exposed my own identity and vested interests in this research to my participants (as cited in Fontana & Frey, 2000, p.658). Finally, I showed my participants the transcripts of our conversations for review as a deliberate attempt to limit textual appropriation and misrepresentation (Opie, 2000). I tried to the best of my ability to provide my participants with the opportunity to challenge and correct my representations of them in the interviews texts and my writing-up of this information. In these ways, I approached my role as researcher conscious of the power dynamics at play, and with the goal to interrogate its role in shaping my research.

Participants

A purposive sample of 14 female Jewish youth participated in my study. Following the eligibility criteria I established, all 14 attended a Jewish high school in the

Greater Toronto Area, self-identified as Jewish, and self-identified as female. The majority of the participants (10) were in grade 12, two were in grade 11 and the final two were in grade 10. Great efforts were made to recruit participants in grade 9, although I was unable to find participants who were able to commit to the meeting times.[12]

There are many denominations of North American Judaism. The denominations vary in their practice, in their interpretations of the religious texts, and in their political views. Lily, Lauren, and Lola all identified themselves as Conservative Jews. Abby and Barbie did not specify their denomination; however, their attendance at the Jewish Academy and their appearance (wearing pants and low-cut shirts) indicates to me that they were not orthodox Jews. Sarah defined herself as a "traditional" Jew, which she described as keeping the traditions like Sabbath and holidays, but not following strict rules like in Orthodox Judaism. Hannah, Emma, Bella, Leah and Rosaline identified themselves as religiously Orthodox. Orthodox practice adheres closely to the prescriptions for observing the Sabbath, dietary laws, and other lifestyle guidelines set out in Jewish law. For girls, this includes specific instructions for modest dress and behaviour.

Jewish ethnicity refers to the two major ethnic groups within the Jewish people: Ashkenazi and Sephardi. Ashkenazi are Jews of "European and North American origin", and Sephardim are Jews of "Muslim–Arab Middle Eastern and North African countries of origin" (Goodman & Mizrachi, 2008, p.97). The different origins of these two ethnic groups have led to significantly different historical experiences of being Jewish. All of my participants identified as being of solely Ashkenazi heritage, except for Leah. Leah's father is Ashkenazi and her mother is Sephardi.

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[12] Overall, I found it interesting to observe the differences in planning and scheduling between participants in grade 12 compared to those in grade 9. Girls in grade 12 exhibited more autonomy and authority in setting their schedules, while girls in grade 9 understandably required much more parental consultation and assistance in trying to set times for interviews. I believe this played a significant role in the higher number of participants in the older two grades. Despite making every effort to make the interviews accessible to the grade 9 students, providing them with information for their parents, and offering to speak with their parents directly, none of the grade nine girls who expressed interest in participating followed through to schedule a meeting.

A discussion of the JAP stereotype would not be complete without addressing the category of *class*, or *socioeconomic status*. As I established in the literature review, the JAP stereotype is contextualized within the economic rise of the Jewish community from an immigrant class, to the middle-class, and some would argue, the upper-middle-class today. All of my participants openly identified themselves as well off financially, but they left the conversation at that. On the participant information sheet, I asked them, "What do you think your family's financial situation is?" Seven of the girls identified their families as "comfortable", one wrote "between comfortable and more than comfortable", five wrote "more than comfortable", and one wrote "(+) more than comfortable." None of my participants saw their families as not having a lot of money. They all perceived themselves to have a comfortable amount of money, with almost half feeling that they had more than what is necessary to be comfortable.

Furthermore, in the interviews and focus groups themselves, participants often made comments to the effect of knowing that they were well off and privileged. As an example, Leah described her financial environment: "well, there is one thing about having money that is really nice. I think most people in this school do. Like, we clearly go to private school, we go to a camp, we do our thing, we go on cruises, etc." From the perspective of my participants, this group of girls came from middle class to upper middle class homes. Subsequently, the girls did not actively engage with the JAP stereotype through the subject position of class or socioeconomic status.

An important factor when describing my participants as a group is their pervasive sense of living in a "Jewish bubble." This bubble is made up of their Jewish schools, Jewish families, and Jewish summer camps. All of the girls had attended Jewish day school their whole lives, with the exception of Lauren, who went to public school until switching to a Jewish high school in grade 9. With the exception of Hannah, all of my participants had attended Jewish overnight summer camps. All of the girls acknowledged that this "Jewish bubble" was a limiting factor in their experience and awareness of the world. Lily simply told me that she could not answer one of my questions because "unfortunately, I am really bubbled." Aside from Lauren, none of my participants felt that they had experiences outside the confines of the Jewish community. It is important to

keep this "bubbled" sense in mind when reading my participants' words. They openly admitted that their experiences with the JAP stereotype were highly coloured by their almost purely Jewish environment.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited using purposive sampling methods from the Jewish community in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Recruitment involved three pieces. The first entailed posting flyers describing the study and requesting participation. The flyers were posted in kosher restaurants frequented by Jewish youth. At each of these sites, I provided the manager with a Letter of Introduction providing background on the research study, which was then signed indicating their agreement to feature the poster. No participants joined the study through this method.

The second method focused on recruiting participants through The Jewish Academy (JA) and Mesorah Academy for Girls (MAG), two Jewish high schools in the GTA. It is important to note that Jewish high schools in the GTA are independent and autonomous institutions. They do not fall under the jurisdiction of a larger board of education. No such school board exists for Jewish schools in the GTA. As such, administrators within these schools had the authority to decide whether to allow me to recruit participants on their premises. I contacted MAG and requested permission to recruit participants on the school campus. The Headmaster and principals at MAG were extremely welcoming to me. They approved my research without hesitation and facilitated my recruitment of participants and execution of focus groups and interviews. The principal was especially supportive of the project, and continuously created opportunities for me to carry out the research in the fastest and most efficient way possible. Flyers were posted around the school advertising the study and providing contact information. Small flyers were left in busy locations for students to take. I made a presentation at a school-wide assembly explaining the project, and soliciting participation. Finally, on two different occasions, I set up a table during lunch hour in the lunchroom and spoke with potential participants and answered questions about the study. These tabling periods were extremely effective, and a number of interview and focus

group participants signed up during those times. This tabling strategy was especially effective for finding groups of friends to participate together in the focus groups, as they were able to be present for the discussion all together and discuss scheduling at one time.

I approached JA in the same way that I contacted MAG; however I was denied access to the school. I was not given any explanation as to why this decision was made. As a result, I have no first-hand knowledge of the school environment as it might affect my participants who attended this school and their experiences with the JAP stereotype. This is an example of how I was forced to change my methods in the field. Instead of recruiting participants directly from the school grounds, I recruited participants, some of whom happen to attend this school, through friends, family, and word of mouth.

The third method for recruitment was through my personal social networks. As a member of the larger Southern Ontario Jewish community, with many family and friends living in the GTA, these family and friends directed me to potential participants. This proved to be an equally effective way to recruit girls attending Jewish high schools in the GTA. Four participants were recruited in this manner.

I opened a secure email account for the purposes of coordinating meeting times with my participants. I also sent the necessary parental consent and participant assent forms over email as well. The day before the scheduled meeting time the participants received an email reminder. A number of my participants preferred to use the email system on the Facebook personal networking website. On their request, I communicated with a number of girls that way. The use of Facebook along with personal email is another example of how I adapted my methods while in the field. I also see my ability to accommodate participants by communicating in their preferred method to be another way of prioritizing the girls' wishes in this research. We communicated on their terms.

The Methods

This study involved three different data collection methods: focus groups, interviews and an information sheet. I conducted three focus groups, with three friends in each. I then conducted six individual interviews. Focus groups are often used in

conjunction with individual interviews when investigating a social phenomenon such as the stereotype of the Jewish American Princess (Esterberg, 2002). Lily is the only girl who participated in both an interview and a focus group. All of the other interview participants were brought into the study separately from the focus group participants. Each participant completed an information sheet covering basic demographic information and questions pertaining to the study before conversing with me.

Question schedules

Both the focus group and interview question schedules were designed in a semistructured format, comprised of mostly open-ended questions. The questions set out in the schedules are based on my research questions and the existing literature. I used the question schedules to guide the interviews and the focus groups, as starting points from which to develop our conversation. I also formulated questions during the interviews and focus groups in response to the specific conversation I was having with those participants. The focus group schedule explores the participants' understandings of the Jewish American Princess stereotype, and how it manifests in their social worlds.[13] The interview schedule focuses more on the participant's own experience and stories of the JAP stereotype, and how it influences their identities.[14] For example, participants were asked how they personally feel about the stereotype, whether they actively identify with it, and how they express this identification in the social context. I followed the methodological component of the mediated action approach to identity, and used the questions to draw out anecdotes and conversations about what people do in certain situations and circumstances (Brown & Tappan, 2008).

I also added an additional set of questions to the interview and focus group schedules. In conducting the literature review for this study, I was extremely affected by the Jewish feminist deconstruction of the JAP discourse in the 1980s as anti-Semitic and sexist. Growing up in the Jewish community, I was completely unaware of such an

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[13] See Appendix A: Focus Group Question Schedule.

[14] See Appendix B: Interview Question Schedule.

interpretation of this prevalent stereotype. Learning about it for this research has significantly altered the way I use the term and understand its meanings. I was curious whether any other Jewish girls were aware of these interpretations, and if they heard them, how that might affect their understanding of the stereotype. Furthermore, from his experience teaching the sociology of contemporary Jewish life at York University in recent years, Dr. Randal Schnoor has been repeatedly alarmed by his students' lack of awareness on the characterization of the term as particularly sexist or anti-Semitic (personal communication, June 30, 2009). I therefore raised this issue within my focus groups and interviews directly. Towards the end of each discussion, I asked the participant(s) what they thought the origin of the JAP stereotype was. After they were finished answering, I asked them whether they would like to hear about one interpretation established by Jewish feminists in the 1980s. Everyone asked to hear, and I gave them a brief summary of the arguments. We then discussed their reactions to this information.

In this aspect of my question schedules I have built on Melissa Freeman's (2007) methodological technique used in her study of parents' perceptions of parental involvement in education. Freeman (2007) incorporated stories of other parents, whom she had already interviewed, into the third of a series of interviews with other participants. Freeman's (2007) justification for using this technique is that by "expos[ing] each parent to a range of experiences that seemed different from their own" she would be ale to "elicit reflective commentary and further engagement with the topic" (p.931). Freeman (2007) explains that by including these texts, she confronted her participants with new information that encouraged critical reflection and innovation in their own thinking. Similarly to Freeman (2007), I have chosen to introduce my participants to already existing information that they simply may be not aware of, with the goal of instigating critical and innovative reflection of their own experiences. It is my belief that by presenting my participants with the historical interpretations of the JAP stereotype in my interviews and focus groups, the resulting discussions truly reflect the dialogical process of the co-construction of meaning that feminist researchers strive for.

The focus group and interview questions schedules were piloted with Jewish female youth prior to their implementation with study participants. This process helped to determine whether the research materials were clear and appropriate for use with the

target population. As Esterberg (2002) rightly points out, "what may seem like a good question in the abstract may turn out not to be in practice" (p.100). Adjustments were made accordingly in response to the comments made by these reviewers. As a result, the clarity and flow of the proposed focus group and interview question schedules were greatly improved. No data were collected during this process.

Focus groups

Focus groups made up of small groups of friends were employed to address the research question of how female Jewish youth today understand the stereotype of the Jewish American Princess. Focus groups are an extremely appropriate method to use in feminist, exploratory research (Wilkinson, 1999). Focus groups are group interviews conducted with as many as ten or twelve participants, or as few as two, and gather extremely rich data. Compared to individual interviews, which are timely to schedule and conduct, with only one person at a time, researchers use focus groups to hear many views and many opinions on their topic of interest in a very short period of time. The use of focus groups facilitates a dynamic conversation best suited to developing the rich data desired to fully explore a complex phenomenon such as the JAP stereotype.

Focus groups are useful for revealing both individual beliefs and values, and narratives of the social environment (Warr, 2005). In essence, the focus group is a social context. Its strength is in its capacity to capture "the dynamics of group interaction and to exploit this in attempting to understand a topic" (Hyde, Howlett, Brady, & Drennan, 2005, p.2588). In our social worlds, ideas are formed through talking and conversing with people, and focus groups tap into these ordinary social processes for meaning making. The horizontal interactions between the participants in the group offer the researcher the opportunity to observe the construction of meaning and ideas (Madriz, 2000; Wilkinson, 1999). Through conversation instigated by the researcher, focus group participants discuss, debate, negotiate and challenge the ideas and meanings surrounding the topic under investigation. It is through this process of negotiation and re-negotiation that meanings are clarified, and new meanings are made. Furthermore, focus groups allow the researcher to "witness the *language* with which those understandings [are] articulated"

(Jowett & O'Toole, 2006, p.464). Jowett and O'Toole (2006) argue that focus groups are therefore the best method to unpack contested understandings.

The Jewish American Princess is a socially based stereotype. Jewish girls utilize it as a tool in their social interactions to label and demarcate certain types of appearance and behaviour. At the same time, my research has shown that the JAP stereotype does not have one clear definition. It is a contested topic, holding different meanings for different girls. Focus groups are therefore the most appropriate method to use in investigating how Jewish girls today understand the JAP stereotype. The social interactions drawn out in the focus group setting closely mirror those amongst girls in their natural social settings. Due to the contested nature of the stereotype, it is especially useful, as Jowett and O'Toole (2006) suggest, to witness the specific language used by my participants to speak about the JAP. The use of focus groups therefore suits my qualitative framework for gaining an understanding of the JAP stereotype in the social context.

Originally, I designed my focus groups to be comprised of unconnected girls from throughout the GTA Jewish community. However, after further consideration and consultation with my committee members, I decided to conduct my focus groups with pre-existing groups of friends.

Some researchers have found that when strangers are brought together for research-based discussions, the groups do not work very well. Conversation develops awkwardly and tentatively, and participants appear to be unsure what types of opinions and information about themselves to share. Jowett and O'Toole (2006) and Hyde, et al. (2005) attribute this pattern to the fact that focus groups consisting of strangers are not naturally occurring social moments. Many researchers working with girls therefore advocate for the use of pre-existing groups, such as friendship groups, as the ideal group to conduct focus groups with (Hill 2006; Hyde, et al. 2005; Jowett & O'Toole 2006; Wilkinson, 1999). Although the focus group still takes place in an artificial setting, the pre-existing dynamic between the participants allows the researcher to observe "the jokes, insults, innuendoes, responses, sensitivities and dynamics of the group, as group members interact with one another, which may offer new insights into the substantive topic under investigation" (Hyde, et al., 2005, p.2589).

Wilkinson (1999) adds that when focus groups are conducted with close friends, there are added social dynamics which draw out especially rich data. Close friends ensure for one another a familiar audience, which encourages more open discussion, as well as a critical one. The familiarity between participants allows them to challenge each other in ways that a researcher alone could never do, often creating productive moments of tense negotiations of meanings (Warr, 2005). This pattern was strongly present in all of my focus groups. The girls were quick to challenge contradictions or generalizations that they saw as inaccurate, often recalling past events or comments that would undermine their friend's point. Focus Groups 2 and 3 especially drew upon this technique. The girls in these groups were quite blunt in their challenges to what the other was saying, using words such as "No!" and "I do not agree!" The use of friendship groups truly enabled rich, interesting, and engaging focus groups in a way that stranger-based groups would not necessarily have.

Hyde et al. (2005) also warn that it is important to recognize that friendship groups may share a dominant perspective on the topic being discussed. Group participants may also be inclined to reinforce group norms or homogenize their responses to preserve group harmony. This was as important aspect of peer dynamics to pay attention to in my focus groups due to their friendship group design. As such, the participants demonstrated how power dynamics and group norms amongst them were factors in how they negotiated meanings around the JAP discourse. The friendship groups effectively mirrored the participants' casual social environments where they would discuss a topic of social relevance like the JAP.

All three of my focus groups were made up of a small group of three friends. These groups were extremely homogenous in make-up. Participants were in the same grade (with the exception of Focus Group 3, where Abby was in grade 10, while Lily and Barbie were in grade 12). All members were of the same race, attended the same school, had many of the same friends, and participated in many activities together. Madriz (2000) argues the group homogeneity is extremely useful in creating a group environment of commonality where participants will feel comfortable talking together and expressing opinions freely.

Historically, focus groups were not a specifically feminist research method. They were used initially in marketing research, and then taken up by sociologist and other social scientists. Recently however, focus groups have been gaining popularity amongst feminist researchers (Madriz, 2000). Feminist researchers see focus groups as a method that has the ability to concretely reduce power between the researcher and the researched, and forward the feminist goal of addressing power issues throughout the research process (Esterberg, 2002; Hill, 2006; Jowett & O'Toole, 2006; Madriz, 2000; Wilkinson, 1999).

In the most basic way, focus groups disrupt power distribution within the research context simply by having more participants than researchers in a given setting. Wilkinson (1999) slyly points out that "the reduced power and control of the researcher is typically identified as a disadvantage of the method in mainstream focus group literature," whereas in feminist research, this is its most notable strength (p.230). The shift in balance of power allows for greater control on the part of the researched to determine the focus of projects (Jowett & O'Toole, 2006). Participants have the opportunity to push the conversation in the direction of their own interests and concerns. This has the effect of possibly refocusing the goals and ideas of the research, making it a more accurate reflection of the participants' needs and views. This often happened in my focus groups. A number of times my participants focused the conversation on areas that were most applicable to them. Madriz (2000) argues in line with Fine (1994) that the use of focus groups reduces forms of the self-other hyphen created in research. In having more control to direct the conversation, the participants provide multiple voices in describing a phenomenon or experience, hopefully avoiding the researcher reducing the participants' multiple experiences to that of a single *other*. Following these approaches, I used focus groups as a strong feminist research method to actively challenge established hierarchies in research, to ensure that priority is given to my participants' stories and words, and to create a space for them to shape and direct this research on the JAP discursive stereotype.

The focus groups were all between 1-1.5 hours in duration. A research assistant and myself attended all three groups. I facilitated all of the groups to ensure consistency. To ensure an accurate transcription of the meetings, the research assistant attended the group in order to record the order in which the participants spoke. The focus groups all

took place at a mutually agreeable location determined by the participants. The girls were given their $5 gift certificate honorarium before we began the group. The sessions were audio taped using a digital recorder.

Interviews

I utilized semistructured individual interviews to explore my second research question: How do Canadian Jewish girls take up the JAP stereotype in relation to their identities? I conducted six individual interviews with Lily, Lola, Lauren, Sarah, Leah, and Leora. An interview is a "meeting of two persons to exchange information and ideas through questions and responses, resulting in communication and joint construction of meaning about a particular topic" (Janesick as cited in Esterberg, 2002, p.83). Fontana and Frey (2000) add that the meanings and ideas produced from this exchange are contextually based. DeVault and Gross (2007) assert that interviews are useful for making experience known and hearable. Furthermore, the interview is so ingrained in our culture that it has also become a means of "contemporary storytelling," whereby people divulge accounts of their lives in response to questions (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p.647). My interest in exploring the more personal experiences and aspects of identity surrounding the JAP stereotype lends directly to the use of interviews as my tool of inquiry. The semistructured, in-depth interview is the most appropriate method as it is conversational and responsive in nature, and leads to rich, descriptive data. Additionally, individual interviews are more sensitive to the participant's privacy and comfort when discussing aspects of identity that a focus group does not account for in the same way.

Similarly to focus groups, interviews as a research method do not automatically fall in line with feminist methodologies. The traditional, positivist interview model encapsulates the power imbalances and the potential for *othering* that feminist methodologies seek to correct. In my research, I intentionally carried out my interviews within a feminist framework. To do so, I used a semistructured interview format, and I paid close attention to power relationships.

I elected to use a semistructured interview format as a feminist method for its open-ended and less structured approach (DeVault & Gross, 2007), and for its

effectiveness in exploring a topic in great detail (Esterberg, 2002). Esterberg (2002) explains that the researcher typically begins with a tentative list of questions and topics to cover, but the interviewee's "responses shape the order and the structure of the interview" (p.87). From a feminist perspective, the semistructured interview is preferred as it enables the participant to have input into what is discussed, and exert power in the interview relationship by pursuing what is relevant and of interest to them. As such, each interview ends up being tailored to that specific participant.

Following the semistructured format, I began each interview with the same question: What are the first five words that come to mind when I say the term Jewish American Princess? This question proved to be a good way to get the participant talking about the JAP and ease us into our conversation. After that, the conversation developed in a unique direction with each participant. I referred to the question schedule as necessary.

Feminist researchers actively challenge the traditional interview model which positions the researcher above the participant, and as holding all of the power in the exchange. In moving away from this model, feminists conceptualize the interview as "an encounter between women with common interests, who would share knowledge" (DeVault & Gross, 2007, p.178). I extend this understanding of the interview as an encounter based on common interests, and view the interview as a *relationship*.[15] A relationship develops between the interviewer and the interviewee as they attempt to create meaning about a topic *together*. The understanding of the interview as a relationship based on sharing knowledge and common interest serves the feminist goal of reducing the distance between the two parties involved. Seeing both parties as having valuable knowledge to contribute, and in working together to draw out meaning from that knowledge equalizes the power differences between the parties to some extent: it *works the hyphen*.

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[15] I am building off of Esterberg (2002), who advocates for conceptualizing the interview as a relationship. However, Esterberg does not specifically indicate that this is a feminist way of thinking about the interview. I apply the conceptualization of the interview as relationship in my research as part of my feminist research methodology.

I also took a feminist approach in the ways I negotiated my own role as interviewer. I strove to make myself accessible to my participants, and discarded the view that an interviewer should remain neutral and detached from the interview. The feminist approach to research advocates for reducing the barriers between the participant and researcher, and avoiding the presentation of the researcher as above the participant. Furthermore, my conceptualization of the interview as a relationship immediately undermines the view that the researcher must be neutral in the interview exchange; instead a relationship assumes a degree of personal investment and intimate communication in the exchange. In addition, as my participants were teenage girls, they were naturally curious about my own experiences and views, and a more detached approach might have put them off of working with me altogether. I therefore took a very relaxed and personal approach in conducting my interviews. I willingly shared information about myself if asked, and at times, contributed stories of my own to the discussion if it appeared appropriate in developing the conversation.

Finally, I employed the technique of *active listening* as part of conducting my interviews in a feminist way. DeVault and Gross (2007) explain that:

> Active listening means more than just physically hearing or reading; rather, it is a fully engaged practice that involves not only taking in information via speech, written words, or signs, but also actively processing it-allowing that information to affect you, baffle you, haunt you, make you uncomfortable, and take you on an unexpected detour. (p.182)

Active listening is designed to induce careful listening, and commitment to interpreting the meaning as the speaker intends it. As a researcher, if I do not engage in active listening, my analysis has the potential to reproduce dominant perspectives that the participant was not necessarily expressing. I may fill in the blanks or anticipate their answers based on dominant perspectives that I am already familiar with. Active listening requires consistent concentration on what my participant is actually saying, a state that hopefully safeguards against inserting my own expectations about what I will hear. The active listening approach also directly calls upon my reflexivity as a researcher. It

requires me to interrogate my own arrogant assumptions about how the world works, and therefore, how life is for those (i.e. my participants) who experience it.

I interviewed Leah and Leora during their spare periods at school. Lily, Lauren, Lola, and Sarah were interviewed in their homes. Before beginning the interview, the participant was given their $5 gift certificate honorarium. The interviews lasted from forty-five minutes, to an hour and a half for the longest. During this time, I recorded our conversation using an audio digital recorder. Following Esterberg's (2002) recommendation, I tried to take field notes of my own observations and reflections of the interview. However, I quickly determined that it was not best to take these notes during the interview itself. I felt it detracted from my ability to listen closely as well as appear focused on the participant. Instead, I made notes as soon after the interview as possible of peripheral observations and personal reflections on the encounter.

Information Sheet

The information sheet offered an efficient way to gather basic contact and demographic information about the participants.[16] As the JAP stereotype encompasses commentary on social and economic status, religious affiliation, and Jewish communal affiliations, awareness of these details of the participants' lives has provided important context in the process of data analysis and interpretation. The information sheet included questions about the participant's contact information (home and email addresses), age, grade, whether they attend sleep-away summer camp, religious affiliation, Jewish ethnicity, level of Jewish education, their perceived level of family income, whether they would like to review the transcript of the session, and whether they would like to receive additional information about the study later on. In the questionnaire, participants were also asked to choose a pseudonym. I found that having them pick their pseudonym before starting the interview or focus group helped to break the ice and get them excited about being part of the research.

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[16] See Appendix C: Information Sheet.

Consents, Ethics, and Other Things to Consider

As in all research, there are ethical issues to consider when investigating other people's lives. This is especially true when the focus on the research is on youth who have a history of being treated as silent and passive research objects (Best, 2007). The issues of *informed consent* and *confidentiality* are the two ethical concerns most relevant to my project. In short, I received approval from the Brock University Research Ethics Board accounting for these two primary concerns. I then began recruiting participants and collecting data.

I used a series of approved standard forms to address the issue of informed consent. As my participants are all under the age of 18, I sought parental consent before conducting any research. I created a Guardian Information Letter and Consent Form.[17] I sent the Guardian Information Letter and Consent form ahead of time to my participants through email. They had their parents sign the form, and brought it to our scheduled meeting.

Before beginning the group or interview, I reviewed the Participant Information Letter and Assent Form[18] with the participant. While potential legal issues require parental consent to conduct research with those under 18, I have a moral and ethical obligation to acquire consent directly from the youth whom I am researching. I view the participant assent to be equally weighted with the parental consent. The Participant Assent form is written using age-appropriate language to ensure that participants fully understand their involvement in the study. To ensure that my participants were giving informed assent, we discussed their forms together and any questions or concerns they had with them. Furthermore, I reminded each girl that they should only respond to questions that they felt comfortable answering. I also reminded them that they were free to leave at any time, and without explanation. The participants were given the thank-you

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[17] See Appendix D: Guardian Information Letter and Consent Form for Focus Groups, and Appendix E: Guardian Information Letter and Consent Form for Interviews.

[18] See Appendix F: Participant Information Letter and Assent Form for Focus Groups, and Appendix G: Participant Information Letter and Assent Form for Interviews.

gift certificate prior to commencing so that they should not feel compelled to complete the activity simply to receive compensation. After completing the data collection phase, I sent each participant a feedback email, thanking them for their participation, updating them on the progress of the study, and providing information about how to contact me should they have any questions or concerns.

Confidentiality was another primary concern in conducting this research. I refer to participants only by their chosen pseudonyms in any written and oral documents. Their Information Sheet including their real names and contact information remained in a secure location in my personal office, to which only I have access. In addition, participants in each focus group signed a Group Confidentiality Agreement before we began the group.[19] We took this opportunity to discuss the importance of keeping what was said in the context of the focus group to ourselves.

Though not necessarily an ethical issue, I did face intriguing dilemmas around how to dress while in the field. Esterberg (2002) argues that appearing similarly to your participants (dress included) is crucial for gaining access to and building rapport with them. This was extremely relevant for me. Dress was a significant factor affecting the degree of ease with which I was able to gain access to potential participants at MAG. As a religious school, the students and staff adhere to guidelines of modest dress.[20] While in the field, I dressed within these guidelines as well. While personally, I believe in respecting the morays of a community when coming into it as a guest or outsider, dressing in this way also effectively removed some of the barriers to being approved and accepted by the school administration and the girls themselves. In this way, my dress served as an access key of sorts into the school community.

I also approached how I dressed for my interviews and focus groups as a tool for building rapport with my participants. The JAP discourse is closely linked to clothing and accessory style. Furthermore, youth pay close attention to style and the messages that it sends. I therefore gave serious consideration to how I wanted to present myself to my

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[19] See Appendix H: Group Confidentiality Agreement.

[20] The students are required to wear skirts to the knee, shirts that come close to collarbone, and sleeves that cover the upper arms.

participants. I dressed carefully, choosing pieces that would establish me as *trendy,* or somewhat *cool,* to hopefully ease the boundaries between the participants and myself. At the same time, I was careful not to choose pieces that are identified as "JAPpy" clothing items. I intentionally tried to dress in a JAP-ambiguous way: trendy and stylish, but not overtly wearing any JAP symbols. I was acutely aware that my participants' assessment of whether I was or was not a JAP would have serious ramifications for how they responded to my questions and the degree of comfort they would have to talk about themselves.

Data Analysis

Digital audio files of the interviews and focus groups were burned to CD. I transcribed the conversations as soon as possible after the completion of the interviews and focus groups. I used an external foot pedal and Express Scribe software to assist with the process. I transcribed as accurately and with as much detail as possible. I included the time elapsed during pauses and marked the tone of the comments, such as exclamations. I took great efforts to transcribe using the girls' exact language. I did not convert their words or speech patterns into "adult" or "formal" language. This meant including verbatim all of the 'likes' 'ummmms', 'ughhhs', self interruptions, and self-corrections. I purposefully did not want to alter these ways of expression or speaking, as I wanted to capture the words as the girls spoke them, and hopefully hear their voices at the same time. The transcripts were then listened to a second time to ensure accuracy. I then sent the completed transcripts to the participants via email. I invited them to review the transcript, and to include their comments, questions, or corrections. Following Opie's (2007) recommendation, showing the transcripts to the participants is designed to "realign the balance of power in the research relationship by minimizing appropriation through a deliberate attempt to avoid misrepresentation" (p.368).

I began to analyze the transcripts and code them into prevalent themes and patterns that were relevant to my research questions and interests. I coded the focus group and the interview transcripts. Coding is a frequently used method of analysis of qualitative data and it involves "organizing the raw data into conceptual categories"

based on themes, topics, and other similarities (Neuman, 2006, p.330). Thematic analysis is used for exploratory purposes into a topic (Ryan & Bernard, 2000), to explore organizing the data in different configurations, and to see if those organizations lead to new way to conceptualize and interpret the cultural phenomenon under examination (Neuman, 2006). During the coding process, I was guided by questions and ideas for themes that were suggested in the literature (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). I then added new themes and subthemes and made adjustments to the categories as I went through the data. I constantly asked myself critical questions about the data and how I was interpreting them. Through this reflexive process I tried to ensure that I was letting the data guide me, instead of forcing the data into preconceived categories or organizations.

During the first and second passes through the data, I practiced open coding. Open coding generates preliminary lists of possible themes, and allowed me to take many notes about the data, getting an initial feel for them (Neuman, 2006). I then read through the transcripts again (and again and again) doing selective coding. At this stage, I grouped quotes together under the themes I had previously identified, determined whether the themes made sense and were reflective of the data, and started to think about relationships amongst the themes and how they contribute to an overall picture of the phenomenon (Neuman, 2006). Due to time and space constraints, taking into account that this is a Master's level thesis, I was forced to make many decisions about what information to include in my analysis here. As a feminist researcher, I believe it is important to openly acknowledge this *pruning* process. This effort to make my research methods transparent speak to Fine's (1994) call for researchers to end the "god trick", where the researcher plays an omnipotent and invisible role, drawing conclusions about participants from "nowhere" (p.74). I openly acknowledge that *I* have made these decisions with the best intentions possible to honour my participants' voices.

Ryan and Bernard (2000) argue that significant interpretive analysis takes place during the coding process itself. I continued to explore the stereotype of the Jewish American Princess at an extremely deep level through reading the thematic codes, re-reading them, trying different arrangements and configurations of the information, and establishing relationships between the different themes. Neuman (2006) suggests that the

process of coding engages the researcher at the conceptual level and encourages "higher-level thinking" about the material (p.330).

The thematic analysis was highly appropriate for responding to the first research question on how Jewish girls understand the JAP stereotype. However, when it came to responding to my second research question of how Jewish girls take up the JAP stereotype in relation to their identities, a thematic analysis was not the most enlightening. Regarding the theme of identity, I have analyzed solely the interview transcripts as they were designed to probe the relationship between the JAP stereotype and individual identity. I was unable to establish significant themes pertaining to the JAP stereotype and identity. Instead, I began to notice that in separating the transcripts into thematic categories, I was actually breaking up the strong narratives about identity that are found in this data. When read as a whole, each of my six interview participants tells a unique story about how they negotiate their identities in relation to the JAP stereotype. I have therefore decided to follow Daniel Yon's (2000a & b) "portrait" approach as my mode of analysis for identity.

Yon's (2000a & b) ethnographic study focused on identity negotiation among youth in a racially and ethnically diverse high school in Toronto. Instead of breaking his interview data into thematic categories, he reconstitutes his conversations and observations of these participants into "individual portraits" of their identity-based experiences (Yon, 2000b, p.149). Yon explains his conceptualization of the term *portrait*: "'portrait' indicates that these ethnographic snapshots are only meant to capture a moment, a particular pose, and their likeness, as in any portrait, might well be contested by the subjects they claim to represent" (p.144). Yon's (2000a & b) portraits are miniature narratives of individual identity-based experience as they are told in the moment of that interview. The portrait approach dovetails with third wave feminist research perspectives as well. Third wave feminists utilize personal narratives as a key tool in discussing experience, and as an access point to frame theoretical explorations (Mann & Huffman, 2005; Pinterics, 2001). No one view or story is more significant than another, avoiding the emergence of a master-narrative, one that assumed a dominant position over others. Instead, the third wave calls for "polyvocality and more localized mini-narratives to give voice to the multiple realities that arise from diverse social

locations" (Mann & Huffman, 2005, p.65). The mini-narratives constituted through the portraits of my participants reflect the situated, individual experience that third wave narratives seek to elevate.

Following Yon (2000a & b), I have analyzed my interview transcripts as whole stories. Looking at them as miniature narratives of my participants' experience, understandings, and impressions of how the JAP stereotype has impacted their identities. I have applied third wave, intersectional, and mediated action theories to these portraits, making meaning of these stories along identity lines. Like Yon (2000a & b), I also acknowledge that these portraits are only snapshots of the moment in which my participant and I interacted in her telling of these stories. The use of the portrait as an analytical framework to scrutinize and discuss my interview data has enabled me to maintain the integrity of my participants' narratives as an entity unto themselves.

Conclusion

In conducting this research, I have positioned myself methodologically as a feminist qualitative researcher in the field of youth studies, and I have utilized methods that reflect these philosophical underpinnings. In this section, I explored my understandings of *power* and *reflexivity,* two key components to feminist methodology. I also discussed how I have applied these feminist understandings in conducting three focus groups and seven interviews with Jewish girls. Together, these two elements have steadfastly guided my decisions through the research process. In this respect, the following three sections where I explore the findings and analyses of the data resulting from this research must be understood as shaped by this feminist methodology as well. I have made every effort to honour my commitment to feminist research goals and techniques in this work.

CHAPTER 5: DESCRIPTIONS: REVISITING THE JEWISH AMERICAN PRINCESS

An important aspect of my research is my intention to address how Jewish girls today describe and understand the JAP stereotype. Informed by Brown and Tappan's (2008) astute point that before understanding how a cultural tool is utilized, one must first understand the cultural tool itself, this chapter discusses the traits and features of the JAP offered by my participants, establishing an understanding of the JAP discursive stereotype as it is used today.

It can be argued that the stereotypic nature of the JAP label assumes that all Jewish girls are the same, and ignores individual differences amongst them (Booker, 1991). It acts as shorthand, using the acronym J.A.P. to conjure up for the user or the listener the narrow set of characteristics, behaviours, and activities that make up that stereotype. However, as my research shows, individual girls are interpreting this discursive stereotype in their own ways. The ways my participants described the JAP stereotype indicate that it does not have a singular meaning or configuration of traits. My participants presented a very complex picture of what the JAP stereotype is, and how it is used. This suggests that there are multiple ways to understand the JAP stereotype. In this section, and the one that follows where I explore the interpretations of these descriptions of the JAP discursive stereotype, the reader may be extremely curious as to whether my participants themselves identify with this contentious label. I save my discussion of individual degrees of identification with the JAP discursive stereotype for Chapter Seven where I explore this topic in great detail. In this chapter, I explore the consistent *and* the contradictory aspects of the JAP stereotype, demonstrating the nuanced nature of this social label. To do so, I review the descriptions of *JAP Appearance* and *JAP Attitude and Behaviour* to highlight the complex configurations of this stereotype.

JAP Appearance

My participants provided many examples of JAP clothing and hairstyles, which comprise the updated description of the Jewish American Princess's appearance. I will discuss each of these areas in detail. I have also included a discussion of what a *religious*

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JAP looks like. As half of my participants attended the Mesorah Academy for Girls (MAG), a religious school, their descriptions of what a JAP looks like differed from those who attended the community-wide high school, Jewish Academy (JA). The description of a religious JAP highlights clothing and hair trends that are tailored to that community. The descriptions encompass a long list of what a JAP can and cannot wear, and how appearance style rituals demarcate who appears to be a JAP. At the same time, the theme of appearance also houses many options for how a JAP can look, which indicates that there is a degree of choice and variation within the JAP stereotype. The presence of a *religious JAP* variation further indicates that within the JAP stereotype there are multiple possible configurations of style that are considered to be JAPpy.

Clothing

Wearing clothing with certain designer labels is a key identifying and establishing feature of the JAP stereotype. When asked to list the first five words that come to mind when I said the word JAP, all of my participants included clothes, often stipulating "designer clothes." Lily explained that the JAPs are "all about what labels they're wearing...labels are important to them." Following Spencer (1989), Chayat (1987), and Rubenstein's (1987) classifications of the JAP trends amounting to a uniform, my participants offered a number of specific brand name items that identify someone as a JAP. Lily referred to the highly coveted Canada Goose winter jacket. In Focus Group 2, Mulan listed the brands of Lululemon[21], American Apparel, and TNA (specifically the jackets). My participants also presented footwear as a defining JAP element, specifically the UGG brand boots. Wearing these Australian sheepskin winter boots quickly indicated an adherence to the JAP trends. In Focus Group 3, Barbie, Lily and Abby identified moccasins, rain boots, and gladiator sandals to also be considered JAPpy footwear. These stringent elements of JAPpy style support the stylistic configuration of JAPpy clothing as an actual *uniform*. To this effect, Barbie asserted that at her school, "wearing like a Free

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[21] The brand Lululemon produces a line of active wear including pants, sweatshirts, exercise shirts, headbands, and bags. The tight fitting yoga pants are extremely popular.

City sweatshirt, with leggings and like your Uggs folded over" is the epitome of a JAP. It is not enough to simply wear Ugg boots; they must be folded in a certain way.

Consumer goods are used to establish a system of shared meanings and information amongst groups of people (Douglas, 1992). JAP clothing markers are so well known to students within their schools that they represent shared understandings of what is considered socially valuable to each community. At the time that I conducted my interviews, the brand *Free City* was one of the most prominent JAP trends amongst JA students. It is a clothing line of extremely expensive[22] sweatshirts and sweatpants in a range of bright colours. During our interview, Lola highlighted the social significance this brand of clothing has at her school: "I can walk around with normal sweatpants that nobody notices. The second I wear Free City sweatpants, everybody looks." It is evident from her comment the degree to which her social world is tuned into Free City clothing, reinforcing its significance as a status symbol at the Jewish Academy. The frenzied JAP consumption of Free City clothing underscores this brand's role as a symbol of JAP affluence, popularity, and *coolness*. That other students accept these messages illustrates how the consumption of specific goods mutually constructs the social meaning of those items (Douglas, 1992). In contrast, my participants who attended MAG did not mention the Free City brand as a symbol of the JAP, nor is it part of what they had collectively deemed to be status items. That the brand is viewed as central to the JAP stereotype at JA, but is not even on the radar for students at MAG, illustrates the ability for consumer goods to reflect the variation in social understandings of what is valuable to different groups.

My religious participants attending MAG presented a different description of JAP appearance that is firmly contextualized in their experience within a religious community. I have called this version the *religious JAP,* as she is found amongst girls in the religious community and her clothing reflects guidelines of modest dress. The girls attending MAG did not wear a school uniform, but they were required to follow modesty guidelines including wearing skirts to the knee, and shirts covering their chests and shoulders. Leah described the ultimate JAP outfit as "skirts and…cardigans, and flats."

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[22] Lola reports that the sweatpants cost approximately $200, and sweatshirts cost $300.

The prominence of the skirt locates this JAP style directly in the religious community, where girls wear skirts as part of the modesty guidelines they follow. In Focus Group 1, Hannah provided another variation on JAP style exhibited by girls who attended an even more religious school than MAG called Bnos Yisroel. The JAPs from that school wore "penny loafers, like patent leather, and certain types of knee socks." My religious participants described the style of flats, cardigans and skirts to be just as definitively JAPpy as my non-religious participants who outlined the JAP as wearing tight leggings and a Free City sweatshirt. These differences indicate that there is much variation in the representation of clothing styles and labels associated with the JAP stereotype, and points to the necessity of examining the stereotype more broadly in order to capture the full range of what can be considered JAPpy style.

My participants from both schools also identified purses as a crucial JAP defining accessory: "Purses are key" (Leah). Coach and Longechamp brands are the most coveted. It is important to recognize though that purses are significant to the stereotype of both the religious JAP and the non-religious JAP for slightly different reasons. Non-religious JAPs appreciate purses because they are a quick way to establish wealth and status. While religious JAPs also enjoy the purse for its material status, the purse is especially important for them because as an accessory, it is exempt from religious modesty modifications. Religious girls are free to buy the most popular and the most expensive purse. Many other JAP trends, such as Lululemon brand yoga pants or tight leggings, are not open to religious girls because they violate the guidelines of modest dress, which dictate that women are to wear skirts. For the religious JAPs, the purse is the most accessible status symbol, and therefore receives a lot of emphasis. So while on the surface, both religious and non-religious JAPs are identified by their status purses, the different underlying motivations for why the purse is emphasized indicates how style "only makes sense when viewed in relation to the social codes and locales that grant it meaning" (Pomerantz, 2008, p.5). The meaning of the purse as a status symbol is slightly different when one is aware of the larger cultural values shaping this emphasis. Subtle differences in JAP trends only make sense when they are examined in the context of the particular social codes at play.

Hairstyle

A significant component of JAP appearance is hairstyle, as there are distinctive ways that a JAP may wear her hair. The ritual of straightening one's naturally curly or wavy hair is a process closely associated with the JAP. In the first focus group, Emma mentioned "intentionally straightened" hair when asked to describe how a JAP looks. *Straightening* is an involved process of turning curly, often frizzy, hair into the more desired straight hair. Sarah presented the practice of hair straightening as a key stylistic tool used by JAPs. She explained how the decision to straighten one's hair is determined in relation to clothing choices for the day:

> [They] iron their hair straight when they wear sweatpants. They don't want to look too shlumpy,[23] so they make their hair really nice: straightened or properly curled, with hair bands or hair clips. But when you are wearing jeans and a nice top – you can put your hair in a ponytail so it likes balances out.

Hair straightening is identified as the process through which a girl makes her hair look "really nice." It is a significant component to completing the desired JAP look.

In Focus Group 3, there was some debate about whether hair straightening is critical to the JAP stereotype:

Meredith:[24] Do people still straighten their hair a lot?

Lily: Yeah, but people don't do it as much anymore because its like not good for your hair.

Abby: No, that's not true. I know people who straighten their hair everyday. Since grade 9, no one has seen them with like curly hair.

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[23] "Shlumpy" is a term derived from Yiddish. When used in this context it means casual, grubby, or messy.

[24] Meredith Herman served as the research assistant for this focus group.

Lily alluded to the former significance of hair straightening, but that the practice has tapered off. Abby disagreed with her, citing a girl who apparently has curly hair, but has only ever worn it straight in public. The girls' disagreement illustrates how each has her own reference point in girls who they would consider JAPpy, but who demonstrate different hair straightening practices. There is obviously variation in the importance and consistency of hair straightening amongst those who are identified as JAPs.

The significance of the hair straightening process can be interpreted in the context of the constructed "Jewish body," and the denigration of features that appear "naturally" Jewish (Gilman, 1996; Kleeblatt, 1996). Gilman (1996) relays the popular understanding of a prominent nose and dark, curly hair as symbols of a Jewish face. The JAP stereotype embodies these Jewish features. The *Jewish American Princess Handbook* (1982) devotes an entire section to addressing the challenges a JAP faces in taming her frizzy hair and her prominent nose. The prominent nose and curly hair serve to "other" the Jew from her gentile neighbours (Gilman, 1996), whose slimmer noses and naturally straight, smooth, and often blond, hair are the *normal* standard of these features (Kleeblatt, 1996, p.10). Jews, especially Jewish women, have a long history of making alterations to their bodies in order to better "pass" in gentile culture, and to "make their physical features conform with widely promoted standards of Anglo-Saxon beauty" (Kleeblatt, 1996, p.13; see also Weinfeld, 2009). Rhinoplasty surgery, more commonly known as a *nose job,* is seen by many girls as a cure for the prominent Jewish nose. A Jewish girl's desire to straighten her naturally curly, frizzy, hair can also then be interpreted as an attempt at gentile-ification in the same way. While my participants do not frame their hair straightening practices in relation to gentile images of beauty, they still view straightened hair as the beauty ideal. The ways my participants refer to straightened hair as a symbol of JAPpy-ness, and an attractive and desired hairstyle overall, can be understood as a continued comparison by Jewish girls of their own less desirable traits of curly hair or prominent noses to more gentile-esque straight hair, which continues to occupy a higher status. Although my participants do not present their hair practices in this way, I understand their desire for gentile-like straight hair as unintentionally ideological in that it reflects the long history of Jewish women's desires to gentile-ify their appearance.

The second aspect of hairstyle that accompanies the JAP stereotype is the use of headbands. My participants listed basic headbands (Ashley; Hannah), American Apparel brand braided headbands (Barbie), and Lululemon brand headbands (Barbie; Bella) as key JAP markers. The headband is significant to the JAP appearance for its ability to stand out as a status symbol. Given that a headband is physically a very small accessory, to wear an expensively labeled headband packs a punch as a fashion status symbol. Barbie described a trend at her school where JAPs wore a braided fabric headband from the desirable store American Apparel positioned intentionally across the middle of their forehead. Barbie explained that this unique way of wearing this specific headband contributed to the identification of "J.A. JAPs," JAPs specific to the Jewish Academy. This headband is a powerful marker in establishing who fits into the stereotype of the "J.A. JAP."

That these headbands are also labeled by the highly coveted clothing brands is also a key to the headband's ability to act as a status symbol for *religious JAPs*. Hannah and Ashley stated in Focus Group 1 that religious JAPs are clearly identified by how frequently they wear headbands, and what types of headbands they wear. Ashley related the overuse of this one hair accessory amongst religious girls to the presence of a mandatory school uniform: "because they wear a uniform you really have to play up accessories." For religious girls, whose style is more constrained by religious modesty guidelines or a school uniform, headbands become a prime vehicle through which to display the wealth and the status demonstrated by the JAP stereotype.

Some of my participants also described how the choice to wear a headband and certain accompanying hairstyles also indicates that the wearer has the JAPpy attitude of thinking they are superior to others. In reference to the Lululemon headband, Bella explained in Focus Group 2, "sometimes you kind of could tell that they were wearing those headbands so that they can kind of like feel more superior." During Focus Group 1, Hannah also identified the "pouf" hairstyle that frequently accompanies the use of headbands as a distinctly JAPpy hairstyle that also indicates a superior attitude: "literally half their hair they use for a *pouf*. And I don't know why, but it gives me that image that she's stuck up or whatever." Both headbands and the "pouf" hairstyle evoked for Hannah and Bella associations with a superior type of JAPpy attitude. The way they link hairstyle

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with an attitude portrayed by the JAP indicates how these stylistic elements are more than simple trends; they have deep meanings and connotations for my participants.

The descriptions of the JAP's appearance that I have brought together in this chapter include a variety of clothing items and hairstyles, assembled in various configurations. I argue that these configurations of JAPpy style serve an important function as social markers. These styles are ways to identify a certain type of Jewish girl, and to establish the social classification to which she belongs. Douglas (1992) explains that goods as markers are "just the visible bit of the iceberg which is the whole social process" (p.25). The goods are the physical markers of social meanings, and through them, we arrange our social world into coherent categories and hierarchies. Douglas (1992) provides the example of dishes. We use different types of dishes to connote different social meanings: times of day, celebrations, or religious practices such as the Jewish practice of keeping two separate sets of dishes for meat and milk products. For the JAP, goods such as the clothing and accessories described here hold meanings for my participants about the wealth and social status of the girls who wear them. My participants then use these meanings to assign the wearer to the social category of the JAP. A JAP's consumption of specific goods helps my participants interpret their social world, and determine where this girl is located. Those who wear these style symbols indicate membership in a JAPpy social group. These items also serve as social markers in establishing who has social power or status. Differences in wealth, popularity, and desirability are communicated through the ability, or choice, to wear JAPpy items such as a Free City sweatshirt, Ugg boots, or a Lululemon headband. For both the religious and non-religious JAP styles, clothing choices (especially the specific status symbols) serve the common function of status enhancement within the peer group. Despite differences between descriptions from religious girls and descriptions from non-religious girls of what a JAP looks like, the underlying principle remains the same; those who wear these items are assumed by all around them to represent a certain configuration of traits and behaviours that make up the JAP stereotype which I will now move on to discuss.

JAP Attitude and Behaviour

When asked individually to describe the attitudes and behaviours of a JAP, my participants mentioned many of the same traits, but established different hierarchies of importance for these characteristics. My participants appeared to be in agreement that the JAP is excessively materialistic, flaunts her material wealth, has no appreciation for the value of money, holds a self-centred attitude, and is "girly." At the same time, many presented differing descriptions of the JAP in terms of intelligence, confidence, and whether they are mean or nice. The debates around these traits clearly demonstrate how Jewish girls are describing the JAP in varying ways. This finding illustrates how the JAP stereotype is complex, and full of contradictions and ambiguities. I will first review the elements of the stereotype that are held fairly consistently amongst my participants. I will then move on to illuminate the more controversial aspects of the stereotype.

I. The JAP is Extremely Materialistic

All of my participants described the JAP as materialistic, an excessive consumer, and as flaunting her wealth and privilege unnecessarily. Lily and Rosaline bluntly listed "materialistic" as one of the primary words to describe the JAP's attitude. In Focus Group 1 Hannah referred euphemistically to materialism in saying that "JAPs tend to be really into *stuff*." Hannah linked materialism with a JAP's excessive consumption: "They are into buying stuff, and they don't care if it has any meaning – they just like buying all the designer clothes and consuming all sorts of stuff they don't actually need." Hannah established this type of mindless consumption to be an especially negative JAP trait.

Hearing Hannah's view, I began to think a lot about how to distinguish *need* from *excess*. If the JAP is defined by demonstrating excessive consumption, I asked my participants how they differentiate between what is reasonable consumption, and what falls into this JAPpy pattern of excess. During her interview, Leora and I explored this question in relation to clothes, one of the primary sites of JAP consumption:

> Well like obviously everyone needs to have clothes, but do you need to go and
> spend $50 on a shirt for school? You know? You could spend $20 on a

shirt…Some people just go out and they buy and buy and buy, and I'm like 'you don't really need that, so why are you buying it?' Someone just got a new computer, so like they went out and they bought the MOST EXPENSIVE MACBOOK[25] as opposed to like something that just does the job! You have to get the fanciest, the nicest, the most expensive.

Leora acknowledged that it is reasonable to buy clothes and other goods, but it is not reasonable beyond a certain price point. Leora identified the price scheme of $20 compared to $50 as an example of how she differentiates reasonable purchases from excessive ones. Leora's assessment of reasonable versus excessive prices for clothes is only one example of how each of us would establish our own standards for what constitutes acceptable consumption. Probing further into how individuals, such as Leora, define excessive consumption would shed light on the financial and social factors shaping our standards of consumption.

Lauren and Leah added the attitude of *actively flaunting* their material goods to the pattern of excess that marks the JAP. During her interview, Lauren explained that flaunting how much one owns or the costliness of those items is an attitude that defines the JAP:

I would never say that because someone has lots of money therefore they are a JAP. And because they have lots of technology, therefore they are a JAP. I think its more an attitude surrounding that materialism. Like how much of a role materialism plays in their life. If they flaunt what they have, and they feel the need to show it off, or if they talk about it all the time, I guess that would conform to the stereotype of being a JAP. But, not just having [the material goods].

Lauren distinguished between merely having wealth, and the attitude of flaunting that wealth through consumption. Leah referred to the advertisement of status clothing and accessory brands as another element of this flaunting attitude: "Like you don't go around wearing shirts that say 'J'adore Dior', with 'Coach' all over your body, wearing a 'Juicy'

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[25] Written in capital letters to indicate Leora's emphasis on these words.

sweatshirt every day – you don't want to give off the impression of 'look at what I've got.'" The status labels of Dior, Coach, and Juicy are meant to indicate how much money the wearer has, that they are able to afford such expensively branded items. Leah is especially put off by this advertisement and finds it distasteful. Both Lauren and Leah talked about this showy attitude as a choice that the girl makes about how to present herself.

This attitude can be understood within Mary Douglas's (1992) conceptualization of consumer goods as "rank markers" (p.28). Douglas (1992) argues that "people use consumption to say something about themselves, and about their families and their localities" and we therefore need to look at the consumption patterns of goods as symbolic or indicative of whole structures of meanings (p.22). In this way, goods act as "rank markers" in their capacity to reveal financial, moral, ethical, religious, and social positionings of the consumer. A JAP's consumption of an expensively labeled good that advertises its branding directly on it, effectively ranks the JAP as having a certain amount of money, feeing entitled to advertize this wealth through these brand name goods, and as comfortable accepting the social ramifications of wearing these goods. Consumer goods' capacity to function as rank markers effectively drive consumption patterns as a vehicle for communicating who is a social insider or a social outsider. The JAP's attitude of excessive materialism, and flaunting this materialism through certain status goods reflect Douglas's understanding of consumption as closely tied to social power.

II. The JAP Does Not Appreciate the Value of Money

Amongst my participants there was also a general consensus that the JAP has no appreciation for the value of money. During her interview, Leora frequently used the phrase "has no care for money" to describe the JAP's lack of appreciation for the value of money and the hard work required to produce it: "like certain people you will be like 'yeah, their so JAPpy', as in you see them going to the mall every day spending their parents' money, and they don't care and they have like no concept of, of like, like money and spending and stuff." Leora emphasized this lack of appreciation for the value of

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money in our interview. She was clearly very distressed by this type of attitude, and for her, it stood out as the primary reason for strongly disliking the JAP persona and avoiding it herself.

It is interesting to note that Leora immediately identified the parental source of a JAP's money. She then linked this origin of the JAP's money to help explain the JAP's attitude toward money. In Focus Group 3, Barbie also reflected on this parental role, situating the JAP's lack of appreciation for the value of money in relation to the parents' facilitation of her excess spending and consumption: "If you're buying with the money you earn and you appreciate the value of it, that's not JAPpy cuz you're working hard for what you want, you're like growing up. But if your parents just buy it for you and you don't really realize the value of money, then that's kind of JAPpy." Barbie stressed the importance of working for something you want, as opposed to having everything handed to you, as a way to ensure that you appreciate its value. Leora, and the girls in Focus Group 3 adamantly differentiated how they appreciate of the value of money, from the JAP who does not have the same appreciation. Leora evaluated the degree of one's appreciation for the value of money through their consumption habits. Leora therefore demonstrated having an appreciation for the value of money through her conservative spending habits. To Leora, the JAP's excessive consumption illustrates that they do not hold the same value of money that she does. Barbie and the other girls in Focus Group 3 related knowing the value of money to the act of "working hard for what you want." They did not explicitly state what they meant by working hard. I believe that working for one's money or one's goods implies that there is some resistance to acquiring them. This resistance can be accomplished by literally working for the money through employment, receiving money or goods as a gift or as a reward for significant accomplishments, or simply having the parent put more restrictions on a reasonable price for clothing and accessories. My participants passed evaluative judgment on JAPpy consumption and their lack of appreciation for the value of money, indicating that free consumption without restraint leads to an attitude of taking money, and what can be bought with it, for granted.

III. The JAP is Self-Centred

My participants described the JAP as self-centred, and as someone who thinks she is better than everyone else. Bella framed the JAPpy attitude as "totally self-centred, no other values than thinking they are centre of the universe." Leah described the JAP attitude as "*holier than thou*, sanctimonious, and just like elitist." Emma provided the most intricate description of this self-centred attitude: "[She] like think[s] 'I am the most important thing in my world, and everything revolves around me." Emma argued that JAPs do not concern themselves with the rest of the world. This description of the JAP fits in with a general understanding of a princess as someone who sees themselves as the centre of attention and unquestionably worthy of this focus.

IV. The JAP is Girly

One of the primary traits my participants attributed to the JAP is that of being a "girly girl." Lauren summarized the defining nature of the girly trait:

> I think it, when the term JAP is used, it tends to be used to girls that express like a more feminine side. I don't think I have ever used/heard the term JAP being used about a girl that's like extremely athletic or that is maybe like doesn't really dress 'girly' per sé, that just sort of doesn't really care. Like I don't think a tomboy, like I don't think I've ever really heard that expression used to describe a girl like that. So it's definitely a girl who like expresses a lot of femininity and has those sort of typical feminine qualities.

The girly trait denotes someone extremely feminine, who does not like to get dirty. Leah identified herself as JAPpy along these lines in the way that she dresses very girly: "I am girly, I like designer things, I like nice clothes, I wear high heels." Leora employed "girly" as a JAP descriptor in the context of responding to the question of whether she herself has ever been labeled as a JAP:

> I am not usually called a JAP, but I think like sometimes I will be girly, and I will be afraid of mud and like that kind of stuff... I am a bit of a girly-girl in that way.

I am not so much like with the clothes and the make-up and all that. But I am in the sense that I'm like grossed out by like bugs and like grossness.

Leora expanded the meaning of "girly" to include an interest in feminine activities like clothes and make-up, which she did not identify with. But that being "girly" also includes an aversion to "bugs and like grossness," which she strongly identified with. Interestingly, this trait is not included in the general descriptions of the JAP found in the literature from the 1970s and 1980s. So while my participants all appeared to be in agreement about the JAP's character as especially "girly", it is important to recognize that this description is a new addition to the JAP stereotype. The JAP stereotype has therefore clearly evolved to some degree in the last fifty years, indicating change and variation to the stereotype components.

What is the significance of this impression of the JAP is seen as demonstrating exceptionally girly dress and appearance? I will discuss two possible explanations. The first, from my participants Rosaline and Bella, and the second found in mediated action theory, shed light on this fascinating aspect of the JAP stereotype.

The girls in Focus Group 2 offered an intriguing and feminist interpretation of the purpose of the JAP stereotype, revolving around the girly aspect of the stereotype:

Rosaline: I was just going to say like, maybe one of the reasons that the stereotype was created was because women, who were trying to get rid of the type of hierarchy based on things like money and like putting people down, are like disappointed by girls who do encourage those things. Because it's like progress in feminist rights and stuff, but the people who are JAPs are completely slowing down the progress.

Bella: But when like feminists see these girls going around like that[26] they're just like 'oh please no, you're making us look stupid!' I feel like JAPs are like the girly girls.

Mulan: Yeah

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[26] Bella is referring to the act of establishing hierarchies based on money and putting other women down.

Bella: Like you say like 'oh she's a girly girl.'

Rebecca: And that's a way of criticizing that type of materialistic behaviour?

Bella: Yeah

Here, Rosaline, Bella and Mulan suggested that feminist women are frustrated with materialistic and girly women, and see them as setting feminist progress back. They understood the JAP stereotype as created by feminist women to criticize overly girly and materialistic women. It is crucial to note that I had not yet raised feminist concepts in our discussion, nor had I introduced the feminist deconstruction of the JAP stereotype. My participants volunteered this interpretation entirely from their own experience. From their perspective, the JAP is an extreme caricature of feminist regression, where women now only care only about shopping, materialism, and beautification; the epitome of the "girly-girl." Rosaline raised the excellent point that women have made strides in being taken seriously as equal contributors to society. But the progressive women are embarrassed and frustrated by women who focus on materialism, consumerism and beautification, measuring their life's value in the sum of their material goods. Rosaline and Bella presented a strong feminist interpretation of the JAP stereotype, seeing it as a tool for women to criticize those who orient themselves in this way.

To explore the meaning of the description of the JAP as girly from a different perspective, I turn to Penuel and Wertsch's (1995) claim that cultural tools, such as the JAP stereotype, serve as both *empowering* and *constraining* means for identity formation. Empowering tools provide individuals with an appealing set of ideas and behaviours to follow, which is especially important for youth who need a compass of sorts in this complex world. In contrast, constraining tools limit individuals in what they can become by the set series of options of what they can believe, and how they can express themselves (Tappan, 2005). Again, for youth, the implications of constraining tools are significant in defining who and what they identify with. Applied to the girly component of the JAP stereotype, I question whether the JAP stereotype enables girls to embrace feminine ways of dressing or acting, or whether it constrains their choices by vilifying feminine behaviour. For Leora, being calling a JAP might constrain her actions within the confines of girly in a negative way. At summer camp, a girl once called Leora a JAP

because Leora did not want to take part in an activity where she would get very dirty. While others might have taken offence to being defined in this way, Leora saw it as an accurate reflection of the situation: "But in that sense, that I'm like grossed out by like bugs and like grossness. So…THAT was JAPpy because I was, like, a girly-girl." This may have felt negative for someone else. But for Leora, in this situation she did not feel constrained, it was simply as assessment of how she was acting.

V. Is the JAP Mean or Nice?

One of the biggest points of debate amongst my participants in describing the JAP stereotype was over whether the JAP is conclusively mean, or can also be nice. In Focus Group 1, Emma recalled trying to determine whether a classmate in her grade six class was a JAP:

> There was a girl who dressed really JAPpily, she was friends with all the JAPs, she like had the Uggs, and Roots sweatpants, and the straightened hair. But she was really, really smart, and really nice. And like I couldn't decide if she was a JAP or not…that sort of behaviour deviated SO MUCH from everyone else I saw as a JAP.

Emma identified being nice as a deviation from the JAP stereotype, where she expects the JAP to be mean. In the same focus group, Ashley explained that the JAP label is so closely linked to a mean attitude, that "for lack of a better word you might use the word JAP" to label a mean girl despite her not fitting the JAP stereotype in other ways. In her interview, Lola described the attitude associated with the JAP as one who is "very rude." I then asked her whether she would apply the word "bitchy" to this type of behaviour: "Yeah, definitely. When you think of [a JAP], the first word that comes to your head is like 'bitch', or rude, or obnoxious. Just like not very nice at all." Lola's characterization of the JAP establishes her as exceptionally mean, even bitchy.

In contrast, Leah asserted that "nice girls can be JAPs." She did not think that exhibiting a "bitchy" attitude automatically makes someone a JAP. Ashley contextualized whether a JAP is mean within different peer relationships: "I feel like you

would think that they are kind of mean, but like nice to their friend." In Focus Group 3, Barbie expressed a similar understanding of whether JAPs are nice or mean, drawing Lily and Abby into a debate about this characteristic of the stereotype:

> Barbie: If they think you're the same as them, they're really friendly. If they think you're similar to them, then you're friends. But if you're not, if you're different and you don't have the same interests, they just ignore you or they don't acknowledge you, yeah.

> Abby: I think that they get judged just because of how they present themselves, but they're not mean. It's not like the 'mean girl' and the 'JAP' are the same thing, I think you have to differentiate those.

> Rebecca: Interesting. So JAP does not necessarily equal mean?

> Abby: No.

> Lily: Correct.

> Rebecca: Are JAPs nice?

> Lily: They can be.

> Barbie: Yeah.

> Abby: There definitely can be like friendly ones, I just think that they're not overly friendly. They might get judged, or like originally seen as being rude even though they're not necessarily like that.

This excerpt from the focus group highlights the debate about whether the JAP is conclusively mean or nice in her attitude toward others. Factors such as peer context and first social impressions influence how the JAP is perceived with respect to the trait of meanness. If the JAP has a reputation for acting meanly or rudely, then her peers may interpret her behaviour in a way that is consistent that with reputation.

VI. Is the JAP Confident?

A similar debate surrounds the characteristic of confidence. Mulan, Rosaline, Hannah, Ashley and Emma (in Focus Groups 1 and 2) accepted confidence as a defining component of the JAP stereotype. But at the same time, they explored the source of this confidence, probing whether it is a genuine confidence or merely the appearance of confidence. My participants did not agree on whether the JAP stereotype dictates that a girl is confident. While some acknowledged that the JAP appears confident, they explored whether this confidence is genuine, or merely an image projected to cover up deeper insecurities. Lola and Mulan explored the JAP's confidence as connected to their status items such as clothes and accessories. Lola discussed how the JAP's confidence makes everything she wears very desirable:

> The amount of confidence [a JAP] has makes something looks better on them, makes it look so much more admirable, makes it something that you want because you think that if you get it you'll be like that. And even though that is so unrealistic when you think about it, it's the fact that you think that there's that little hope of that helping you, that getting you that little like extra mile of being happier, being more popular, being cooler, whatever it may be.

The confidence exuded by the JAP might be interpreted as derived from having these beautiful items. Therefore, if someone wants to have the same confidence as the JAP, they simply need to acquire the same items. Lola is clearly skeptical of this meaning some girls infer from the JAP, but she nevertheless recognized the power this belief about JAP confidence has to influence others to model themselves after the JAP. Mulan expressed a similar logic, in explaining how someone might see the JAP's confidence as directly derived from their material goods: "you also want that [confidence] because you're like 'oh because they have all this clothing it makes them feel so confident inside and I want to be like that too.'" Lola and Mulan were critical of girls who make the jump to attribute the JAP's confidence to her material goods, feeling sorry for those who believe that beautiful clothes and accessories will be a fast way for them to find confidence and feel good about themselves.

Mulan suggested that JAPs actually have a poor sense-of-self, possibly due to a lack of parental support and encouragement. She pointed out "like you can't really tell what's fake and what's real confidence," and that the appearance of confidence is a front to cover up her lack of self-esteem. In Focus Group 1, Hannah, Ashley, and Emma discussed this very issue. Hannah asserted that JAPs are "posers" and that their confidence is merely an image:

> Hannah: the thing with JAPs is that like, they are posers, like you know what I mean, they are posing this image like they're like 'look at me, I am flashy and shiny' and whatever. I feel like it is all an act, I mean, obviously it is embedded in their personality, but I am sure deep down inside they are not actually like that…So, I mean you can't be so confident if you have to live like that I feel like they are not so confident on the inside.

> Ashley: Like they seem confident, but I don't know. Like they are being something else because they are hiding who they are.

> Emma: I also think that there are JAPs that are like confident, but not in the sense that they are confident about their values and their personality. But it's in the fact that they are arrogant about it. Like "I am at the top of my social sphere, and everyone looks up to me, and I am the best".

Hannah, Ashley and Emma all questioned whether the JAP's self-presentation as confident is genuine. Hannah and Ashley suggested that the JAP appears confident only on the surface, and is actually compensating for a deeper part of herself that is more insecure. Emma provided a different interpretation by suggesting that the JAP's confidence may not be a cover-up for her insecurities, but rather is simply a reflection of a very shallow and arrogant persona. On the whole, while many of my participants identified *confidence* as a criterion of the JAP stereotype, they did not all interpret this confidence in the same way. This provides further illustration of the diversity of the JAP stereotype, and the debate that surrounds defining it.

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VII. Is the JAP Intelligent?

All of my participants from MAG addressed the question of whether the JAP is a smart girl. However, on this trait, they were not sure exactly where the JAP stands. A strong example of this variation arose in Focus Group 2. Bella explained: "When I think of a JAP I think of somebody who's not exactly like genius. Not a dumb blond, but I think of someone who's not such a smart girl." Bella positioned the JAP somewhere between "genius" and "dumb blond" on the intelligence scale, indicating uncertainty in this characteristic of the stereotype. Mulan was less ambiguous in her description: "you usually think they're unintelligent because you wouldn't think of them as people who read or people who do their homework. You like think of them as the people who leave school early to go on a shopping spree." She uses the modifier "usually," suggesting that there might be exceptions to the rule that the JAP is unintelligent. In spite of this, Mulan did not provide alternative descriptions of JAP intelligence beyond the label of "unintelligent" at any other point in our discussion. Ashley and Emma referred to the JAP as "ditsy" in Focus Group 1. I interpreted from their comments that *ditsy* indicates flaky and unintelligent personas, and therefore have positioned "ditsy" as the binary opposite of smart or intelligent. Leah also used the term "ditsy" in her interview to describe the JAP: "I think it used to mean that you were ditsy, not anymore, a lot of smart girls are called JAPs." In this context, it is clear that ditsy does indicate a lack of intelligence, because Leah used it to contrast her understanding of the JAP today as being a smart girl. Interestingly, amongst these girls, there is much variation on the degree of the JAP's intelligence. Furthermore, my participants from JA did not bring in the concept of ditsy, or any other term connected to intelligence, when describing the JAP stereotype. Intelligence was a relevant component of the JAP stereotype for some girls, and irrelevant for others. The question of the JAP's intelligence highlights the diversity within the description of the JAP stereotype amongst Jewish girls today.

Conclusion

My research examines 14 girls' descriptions of the JAP stereotype. When analyzed as a whole, this data reveals many consistent elements that define a Jewish

American Princess. At the same time, my discussion also exposes variations and debates embedded in this description along the dimensions of appearance and attitude. Instead of viewing the JAP stereotype as representative of a short list of traits, the variety described by my participants opens up the JAP to multiple possible configurations. From this perspective, the JAP stereotype is clearly a very complex entity. I therefore argue that it is crucial to embrace a nuanced understanding of this stereotype if one is going to understand the multiple roles that it plays for Jewish girls today. The intricate differences in how my participants describe a JAP necessitates a close examination of how the stereotype functions and the meanings girls attribute to it. This analysis therefore further supports my conceptualization of the JAP as a discursive stereotype. Recognizing my participants' primary understanding of the JAP as a stereotype leads one to overlook the complexity in this persona. Therefore, my call for a more nuanced and involved interpretation of the JAP stereotype's appearance and behavioural traits points to the need for a discursive understanding of this entity as well. Viewing the JAP in part as a discourse accounts for the variation in the descriptions above. In the next two chapters I will conduct a detailed investigation of the ways that my participants understand the JAP stereotype and how they take it up in their everyday lives. This exploration is founded on my understanding of the JAP stereotype as a complex and nuanced stereotype established here.

CHAPTER 6: INTERPRETATIONS: UNDERSTANDING A SOCIAL STEREOTYPE

In the previous chapter I reviewed in detail how some Jewish girls today describe the JAP discursive stereotype. The other side of how the discursive stereotype factors into Jewish girls' lives is how they *interpret* and *understand* this entity. In this chapter, I argue that these Jewish girls understand the JAP discursive stereotype through four aspects of their identities: being a member of certain social groups (peer relations), being a girl (gender), being Jewish (a member of the Jewish community), and their religious views (the ways they practice Judaism). Each of my participants constructed her identity in part through her relations with her peers, her understanding of being a girl, her response to membership within the larger Jewish community, and her interpretation of Judaism. These aspects of identity weave together values, cultural and social roles, history, and images that are used by girls to express their individual senses of self. The beliefs and experience embedded within these aspects of identity are then compared to the JAP stereotype. Girls' understandings of their social, gendered, communal, and religious roles provide them with the means to explore the meanings of the JAP discursive stereotype, locate themselves in relation to it, and in the some cases, to challenge it.

These aspects of identity are more than patterns found in the data, they represent modes of analysis through which my participants theorize and respond to the JAP stereotype. Many of my participants directly located the JAP stereotype as a powerful social designator within the systems of peer relations that surround them. Some girls' interpretations of the JAP are intertwined with their understandings of gendered role expectations. A strong identification as a member of the Jewish people, as opposed to another religious or ethnic group, further shapes the meanings my participants attach to uses of the JAP stereotype. Finally, there is a stark difference between how my participants who practice a religious form of Judaism interpret the JAP discursive stereotype, compared to girls who ascribe to a different set of Jewish laws and values. In these ways, the beliefs and experience embodied in these four aspects of identity serve as a foundation for understanding the JAP discursive stereotype in my participants' lives.

My analysis of *peer relations, gender, community,* and *religion* aspects of identity also demonstrate that the JAP stereotype is a site of intersections. These aspects of identity are not cleanly bounded entities. As will be evident through my discussion, these aspects blur into one another as the girls incorporate many elements of their identities into their interpretations of the JAP. The four themes overlap one another to create a unique portal through which each girl engages with the stereotype in her own way. Furthermore, these aspects of identity are not mutually exclusive. My analysis follows the intersectional approach of understanding identity categories as mutually constitutive. In other words, one girl's experience of gender is closely intertwined with her understanding of religion, and her position amongst her peers. Together, these experiences mutually construct her understanding of the JAP stereotype. In the following analysis, I will therefore be highlighting the intersections *between* the peer, gender, community and religious-based aspects of identity as they relate to the JAP stereotype, rather than treating them as separate discussions.

I. Peer Relations

Peer relations are a significant aspect of identity for teenage girls. *Peer relations* refer to who my participants choose as friends, how they relate to these friends, and the larger social dynamics that regulate these interactions. As the JAP is a socially based stereotype, my participants understandably located their interpretation of it within their social worlds. They subsequently interpreted the JAP stereotype as a component of their peer relationships, and in the larger social systems in which they are participants. Through the focus group and interview discussions, I have identified three aspects of peer relations that are directly applied to understanding the JAP stereotype: social power, social monitoring, and social conformity. My participants used the JAP stereotype as a symbol of who holds social power, both between JAPs and other girls and with boys. Some of my participants also used the JAP stereotype as a social monitoring tool to indicate to friends when they stray beyond the boundaries of behavioural norms. Finally, my participants also discussed how the JAP stereotype is a symbol of extreme social

conformity. Together, these elements make up the discussion of *peer relations,* where my participants address the role of the JAP stereotype in their own social negotiations.

A. *The JAP Stereotype as a Symbol of Social Power*

Social Power Between JAPs and Other Girls

In the context of their high schools, my participants described a number of ways how the JAP stereotype denotes having social power. They described the JAP as a *cool* girl, who is at the centre of things (known as the "scene" according to Lola), and who sits at the top of the social hierarchy. Lily explained that many girls at her school "think fitting-in means being JAPpy," perceiving the JAP as representing complete social acceptance (Interview). To be a JAP means to be popular and socially powerful. Emma clearly outlined where the JAPs stand socially: "When you are like the top of your social like atmosphere, why would you want to be anything else?" The way she asks rhetorically why anyone would want to be anything other than the JAP implies the large amount of power and prestige that their high position affords.

Stemming from their top social position, my participants also saw the JAP as wielding their power against other girls. Bella attributed the JAP's leverage to the larger system of how girls gain social power: "Girls build power through money and putting people down." The JAPs use both of these techniques to rise above girls around them. Emma and Hannah then saw JAPs exert this power specifically within girl-girl interactions. In Focus Group 1, Hannah asserted that "JAPs are more interested in like intimidating girls than boys," and Emma agreed. Sarah saw JAPs as "mean girls,[27]" bullies who "use people," taking advantage of other girls' beliefs that they will become popular by association if they are friends with the JAPs. Of all my participants, Lola expressed the most anger and frustration at how JAPs take advantage of their popular status to socially oppress or manipulate other girls. She told me one story about her participation in a school talent show, and a confrontation she had with the JAPpy girl

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[27] A number of my participants use the phrase "mean girls" as a reference to the popular movie *Mean Girls.* This movie portrays the activity of social cliques, and the "meanness" associated with them, amongst high schools girls.

coordinating her number. One of Lola's friends in the number quit, and the JAP referred to her as a "bitch" for doing so. Lola asked the JAP to refrain from referring to her friend as a bitch; however, the JAP responded dismissively: "I am going to do whatever the fuck I want!" Lola accompanied this story with many hand gestures, further illustrating her anger at how the JAP denigrated her friend by calling her a bitch. What especially struck me was Lola's tone of resignation at the end of her story: "But whatever, they just make angry more than anything else." Lola's request seemed to have little or no effect on the JAP. Lola accepted that the way JAPs treat other girls upsets her, and has lost her zeal to oppose them. Lola has resigned herself to the social rules structuring her peer group, determining that the JAPs sit at the top of the hierarchy, with the power to talk about other girls however they please.

Social Power Between JAPs and Boys

My participants also explored the JAP's social power in relation to boys, specifically the most popular boys. This aspect of JAP related peer relations also incorporates the analysis of gender, illustrating one of the ways that social identities overlap closely with gendered identities. In their interviews, Sarah and Lola explored the idea that to be desired by boys is a way for a girl to have more power over other girls. Lola exposed this aspect of the social power system: "if girls want to be you but boys don't want you, you're not going to be popular...you need the boys to want you." She identified the link between being sexually desired by males and gaining social popularity. The JAP, as stereotypically beautiful and well dressed, is very successful in winning male attention and affection. Being desired by the boys helps to establish the JAP's social power over other girls.

The JAP's dependence on male approval to facilitate her social power reflects intersectionality theory's recognition that individuals simultaneously occupy dominant and subordinate social positions (Weber, 2004). Sarah's perception of the JAP's social position vis-à-vis the boys is an excellent example of this dual position. According to Sarah, at her school the JAPs sit on the second highest rung of the social ladder, second only to the most popular boys. In relation to other girls, the JAPs occupy the dominant

position. They oppress less popular girls by exerting social power directly over them. At the same time, JAPs remain subordinate to the most popular boys. Reinforcing Lola's assertion that the key to female popularity lies in securing male attention, JAPs try to connect themselves to these boys. Sarah described how JAPs flirt, act coquettishly, and dress well, with the goal of enticing these boys to date them. While in relation to other girls, JAPs are in a dominant position; they remain subordinate to the most popular boys and are therefore blocked from achieving the highest social status. Ultimately, social power is divided along gendered lines.

The way Sarah described her own role in this system of social and gendered power further revealed the dual experience of dominance and subordination. Sarah did not hold an oppressed position in relation to the JAPs, as she was included in their social clique and considered their friend. Yet, she did not hold a position of dominance over them by any means. At the same time, Sarah described herself as good friends with the popular boys. Sarah explained that because she was friends with these boys, JAPpy girls often asked her to find out whether these boys are romantically interested in them. In these exchanges Sarah had the opportunity to exert power over the JAPs. The JAPs were forced to defer to Sarah's social capital as their intermediary in trying to achieve their ultimate goal of dating these boys. Sarah challenged the social status quo and she throws off the balance of female power by holding power over the JAPs through her friendship with the boys. Sarah acknowledged that she has more power than the JAPs in this specific way, but she conceded that "overall, they have more power."

From the perspective of gender, the power that Sarah did exercise is defined solely in relation to male standards. Sarah explained that the boys only accept her because she acts like "one of the guys." That these boys accept Sarah because she displays male traits sends the message that masculine attitudes alone are rewarded socially. If Sarah were to act girly like the JAPs she would not enjoy these boys' friendship. Therefore, in this social system, males remain at the top of the hierarchy: both as the ones holding the highest social position, and in promoting masculine behaviour as the standard against which others are judged. Sarah occupies a subordinate gender position by establishing friendships that are defined by the male standards alone. The JAPs seek approval defined by male sexual standards, while Sarah was granted access to

the male social group by forgoing female behaviour and acting more masculine. The gender and peer dynamics at play simultaneously in this social hierarchy strongly illustrate Weber's (2004) assertion that there are "no pure oppressors or oppressed" in our society (p.131).

B. The JAP Stereotype as a Social Monitoring Tool

Between friends, my participants utilize the JAP stereotype as a social monitoring tool. Lily, Hannah and Leora referred to incidents where they label a friend a JAP as a way to indicate that she is behaving unfavourably. Lily frequently used the JAP stereotype as an indirect way to communicate to Barbie that she was stepping out of line, and that Lily did not approve of her action. More specifically, Hannah stipulated that if a friend was acting snobbishly, she would tell them to "stop being so JAPpy." Similar to Hannah, Leora directs the JAP stereotype towards friends when she does not approve of their material consumption: "I'll be like 'you're so JAPpy.' Because she just buys whatever she wants with no care towards money or whether she actually needs it." Leora used the JAP stereotype to criticize her friends' shopping behaviour. From a mediated action approach, Leora's interpretation of her friends' shopping as excessive establishes Leora's own standards for more cautious consumption. Leora's choice to utilize the JAP stereotype, with its meaning of excess and materialism, communicated her disapproval of her friend's spending habits. In making this condemnation, Leora separated herself from her friend, making it clear that she does not shop with the same degree of thoughtlessness. The JAP is seen as a *thoughtless* consumer, whereas Leora differentiated herself from the JAP to make it clear that she is a thoughtful consumer. Amongst friends, the JAP stereotype is employed as a social control mechanism, indicating when one of my participants sees a friend behaving in a socially unacceptable manner.

C. The JAP as a symbol of Social Conformity

The JAP stereotype also functions as a symbol of social conformity. In her interview, Lauren defined conformity as "the need to also wear that brand in order to fit

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in with your group of friends, or dress the same as them." At Lauren's high school, this type of social conformity was a defining characteristic of the JAP. Lily, Barbie and Lauren who all attended the Jewish Academy, discussed how JAPs set the clothing trends, and those who wish to fit in socially, aspire to meet those standards. Others' desires to conform to the JAP trend are a guiding force amongst these girls' peers. This conformity draws girls in, and they may succumb to it unless they analytically explore their motivations for desiring trendy items. For example, Leah described her own realization that she may be a victim of this desire to conform to her JAPpy peers:

> There are times when I have wanted to buy a purse, and I have realized when [my friend] said "do you actually want this purse, or do you only want it because it is a nice label?" I have had to confront myself and realize, I don't really want this purse; I want it because everyone else does.

Here, Leah applied her understanding of peer relations of social conformity to help her understand why she was drawn to certain status items.

All of my participants discussed JAPpy conformity as extremely negative. Mulan exclaimed "they are just so generic the JAPs, like they all wear the same things! ... they have no individuality in their style." Lauren presented a similar picture of conformity, emphasizing its detrimental effects on individuality. It is important to note the emphasis Lauren and Mulan put on the importance of being an individual. They continuously pit the social conformity demonstrated by the JAP against individuality, clearly valuing individuality above conformity. In this way, Lauren and Mulan create distance from the JAP stereotype by establishing themselves as individuals. Their comments echo third wave feminist desires to create more space for individuality (Gillis et al., 2007). From this perspective, the trend of mindless social conformity exhibited by the JAPs is seen as undermining the ability to establish oneself as an individual. Mulan and Lauren's revulsion at the mechanical conformity surrounding them resonates with third wave ideals, and illustrates the relevance of this feminist theoretical model for girls today.

Peer relationships are a dominant lens through which my participants interpreted the JAP stereotype. However, it is interesting to note that the lens of peer relations, especially with regard to the understanding of the JAP as a symbol of social conformity,

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was most prominent amongst my participants from the Jewish Academy. Lily, Abby, Barbie, Lola, Sarah, and Lauren discussed conformity and its problematic social ramifications as one of the most significant ways they interpret the JAP stereotype. The participants from the Mesorah Academy for Girls also mentioned conformity, but it was not a prominent feature of their narratives. They spoke about conformity exclusively in relation to clothing; their comments did not extend to conformity of attitude or behaviour at a widespread social level. In keeping with my intersectional analysis of JAP related aspects of identity, I recognize the emphasis this theoretical perspective places on the *context* to shape the meanings and implications of a phenomenon. The differences between my participants from the two schools on this issue indicate the necessity of analyzing the context, as well as the phenomenon. It is clear that the context significantly determines the ways that Jewish girls experience the JAP stereotype socially. Context continues to play a key role in the intersectional analysis of gender based understandings related to the JAP which I will explore in the next section. Jewish girls' interpretations of the JAP stereotype draw out complex gendered discourses constructed by the religious and cultural contexts of the Toronto Jewish community.

II. Gender

The stereotype of the Jewish American Princess is an inherently gendered concept. The word *princess* directly addresses women and girls, as it denotes a female role laden with complex meanings. The JAP discursive stereotype therefore plays on girls' understandings of their gender identity. It probes how they conceive of themselves as Jewish girls, and what role expectations they associate with this identification. In this section, I explore how my participants interpreted the gendered meanings of the JAP discourse. First I examine how the JAP represents female gender roles. I then conduct a gender analysis of how the JAP stereotype is used. I conclude with an evaluation of the relevance of earlier Jewish feminist interpretations of the JAP discursive stereotype as sexist and misogynist to my participants today.

A. The JAP Stereotype and Gender Roles

When asked whether the JAP stereotype is a significant stereotype about females, Sarah replied affirmatively that it sends specific messages about being a certain type of girl. In this way, the JAP stereotype is responsible for circulating a negative image of Jewish women and girls. Ashley felt that "if you knew only that the girls in Judaism were JAPpy, it would give a very negative feel to our religion." She was worried that unless people outside the Jewish community get to know the diversity of Jewish girls, the JAP will remain the dominant image. She thought that if people were to "look at all the female scholars, or all the incredible women that make differences in the world and do charity work," then they would realize that not all Jewish girls are JAPs. Lauren focused on the repercussions of the JAP's negative portrayal of Jewish women for Jewish males' exogamous practices:

> Another detrimental impact of the stereotype of JAP is in terms of men that are like seeking their spouses or they're looking for someone to marry. I think if these boys get really fed up with Jewish girls or JAPs that might turn them off of looking for a Jewish woman to marry.

David Weinfeld (2009) made a similar argument in his paper on Jewish intermarriage and the JAP stereotype in cultural texts from the 1960s and 1970s. Weinfeld explores how exogamy is a logical decision for Jewish men, when faced with the prospect of marrying a JAP. He argues that "pop culture texts implicitly blam[e] Jewish women for intermarriage, and frequently described Jewish men fleeing in droves from 'Jewish American Princesses' (JAP), to embrace instead non-Jewish women" (Weinfeld, 2009, p.1). The non-Jewish woman is presented as a goddess alongside the whiny, demanding, manipulative JAP. Lauren has considered the same possibility of the JAP stereotype turning Jewish men off of marrying Jewish women. The continued relevance of this interpretation of the consequences of the JAP stereotype indicates its power to spread a strongly negative portrayal of Jewish women.

At the same time, a number of my religious participants interpreted the JAP stereotype as representing traditional gender roles for women. The JAP is portrayed as never needing to work; she simply spends her parents' money and shops excessively.

Some participants made the parallel between the JAP stereotype and traditional gender roles that stipulate women are to stay in the home and be taken care of. What is especially interesting is that the Orthodox participants located this traditional gender role within the Jewish community as a specifically *Jewish* expectation for women. Leah bluntly outlined:

> In the religious [Jewish] culture there will always, *always* be a slight bias about women, always... I have that image of "you don't work, you take care of the kids, you take care of the house." I think that image definitely lends itself to being a JAPpy mother. Like you go shopping, you stay at home, you have vacations, you are like quote-unquote spoiled by your husband.

Leah's comment reveals both the Jewish gender expectations within the Orthodox community for women not to work, and the similarity of this image to the JAP. These communal messages about gendered role expectations subsequently shape the way my participants interpret the meaning of the JAP stereotype.

For Leah, the JAP stereotype reaffirms the traditional gender role of the *stay-at-home* mom, who is taken care of by her husband. She described the expectations for women within the Orthodox community, "if you're a woman you're NOT going to university, you are going to have children, be married and be happy." Leah claimed that she has "zero issues" with a woman who wants to stay at home and raise a family, provided that it is a choice she makes independently. Leah saw the JAP stereotype as a symbol of the gender norm within her community that girls will naturally want to stay home and raise families as opposed to pursue careers. Leah rejected the cultural messages she receives within her community that this is the only choice for religious Jewish women. Further, since she viewed the JAP as a symbol of this limited approach to women's life choices, she positioned herself away from the stereotype in this respect. If it is not already evident, I believe Leah is a strong feminist. She is highly attuned to gender imbalances in her community, and struggles to assert herself as a girl who has the right to study or pursue anything she wishes. Leah's emphasis here on the right for a Jewish girl to stay at home with her future children, *or* to pursue other things, highlights why I specifically frame Leah's views here as having a third wave feminist slant. Leah advocated for girls to be any type of girl that they want to be, empowered with the ability

to fully make their own choices. Leah focused in on the aspect of *choice* and self-definition as crucial for Jewish girls to make the decisions that are best for them. Leah refused to accept the message that the most legitimate future for religious Jewish girls is to become a wife and mother. On this issue, Leah takes a third wave stance, encouraging girls to define themselves as *they* desire.

The *princess* component of the JAP stereotype also directly exposes gendered meanings, and serves as a point of intersection between gendered and religion-based aspects of identity. When asked what meaning she sees in the term princess, Hannah suggested, "maybe a JAP is someone who really embraces their Judaism, the idea that every Jewish woman is a princess. That is a classic thing that we learn." In this comment, Hannah wove together an element of the JAP stereotype, Jewish teachings, and a gendered role set out for women. She suggested that she has been taught that, within a religious framework, a good Jewish woman is positively considered a princess. Later, in Focus Group 2, Bella and Rosaline got into a debate about whether *princess* does indeed allude to this religious conception of a good Jewish woman. Bella invoked the image of a *good Jewish girl*: "your mom could be like 'you're a little Jewish princess' and that means you have really good *midot,* like you're a very good girl, you are doing what you're supposed to be doing." Bella's use here of the Hebrew term *midot* refers to the commitment to introspection and the improvements of one's positive, ethical, moral, and admirable qualities (Dagut, 1991). Rosaline immediately jumped in and strongly disagreed with her: "I think Jewish Princess doesn't convey what it should. If you're doing mitzvoth, that's about humility. I don't think a mother would say like 'you're a princess because you're doing mitzvoth.'" The Hebrew word *mitzvah (*plural *mitzvoth)* means good deeds (Dagut, 1991). It is important to note the intensity with which Rosaline jumped into the conversation, interrupting Bella, in order to assert her point. Here we see the tense negotiation between the JAP stereotype and the orthodox religious model for Jewish girlhood. My orthodox participants readily drew upon this image of a good religious girl as a princess from the Jewish orthodox environment surrounding them. They then used this image as a tool which with to analyze the gender prescriptions set out in the JAP stereotype.

B. A Gender Analysis of Uses of the JAP Stereotype

Girls' Use of the JAP Stereotype as a Female Slur

The way the JAP stereotype is used, and its subsequent meanings, are also interpreted along gender lines. Barbie and Lola use the term JAP alongside other slurs for girls such as "bitch" and "slut." Lola explained that "when you think of [a JAP], the first word that comes to your head is like bitch, or rude, or obnoxious. Just like not very nice at all." Later in the interview, Lola explained that when she was younger, she frequently used the term JAP as a way to be mean to another girl, "the same way that people perceive *slut* and *bitch*." Lola described how *JAP* and *bitch* and *slut* are used interchangeably in the social context. The term JAP becomes another derogatory tool in girls' arsenal of insults. Lola suggested that this way of using the term reduces that word JAP to simply another insult. Leah interpreted the usage of the terms JAP, slut, and bitch amongst girls as a self-imposed "harness," where girls are insulting themselves through these labels. Girls quickly take up any of these words as a tool to put down, undermine, or stigmatize another girl.

They are many possible ways to interpret the significance of the JAP stereotype functioning as a female slur. As I addressed earlier in the context of peer relations, when used amongst female peers, the JAP stereotype functions as a social monitoring mechanism. In this role it lets girls know when, according to the norms within that friendship group, they are transgressing the boundaries for acceptable consumption, material interests, or self-centred behaviour. I argue that when the JAP stereotype is held up alongside other vilified images of girls as sluts or bitches, the social monitoring function extends beyond the standards for that individual peer group, to invoke the standards of society at large. Putting the JAP stereotype in the same category of "bitch" or "slut," allows the user to play on the same criticisms those other stereotypes levy against girls for being too aggressive, too opinionated, too sexually suggestive, too beautiful, or too focused on their physical appearance. The JAP, as an insult, packs more punch when it calls on the same discourses as that of "bitch" or "slut," which already have great power in the adolescent social sphere to constrain and limit girls' self-expressions.

Boys' Use of the JAP Stereotype as an Insult

The JAP stereotype is interpreted as a strong insult when used by boys. In Focus Group 2, Mulan explored the intentions behind some boys' usage of the JAP stereotype:

> I think that boys who are kind of upset that these girls won't talk to them because they think they are too good for them will be like "those girls are such JAPs!"...Or sometimes no, I think they do though secretly-usually they are the pretty girls so they want to be with them but they know they can't ever have them, so by labeling again, it makes them feel superior cuz they're like "uch, they're JAPs, we shouldn't even bother with them."

Mulan suggests that boys who are unable to win the affections of pretty girls, call them JAPs as a way to demean them. This way of understanding the JAP exceeds the specificity attached to stereotypes, and reflects the broader understandings and contextualization associated with discourse. My participants see boys' usage of the stereotype as a way to denigrate girls and as a defense mechanism against rejection. Who would want to date a JAP anyways? Mulan's interpretation is similar to the Jewish feminist analysis of the JAP stereotype as sexist. Alperin (1989) and Medjuck (1988) argue that Jewish men eagerly used the JAP stereotype in the 1970s to deflect their own sense of emasculation. During this period, Jewish women's newfound independence as part of the women's liberation movement began to undercut the traditional role of Jewish men as breadwinners. Mulan's interpretation that Jewish boys insult girls by calling them JAPs because they are not interested in them sexually is very similar to this earlier understanding. Both reflect Jewish males' dissatisfaction that their women (and girls) are not acting in the manner that they would like them to. According to Alperin (1989) and Medjuck (1988), Jewish men used the JAP stereotype to cut down women who they were threatened by in terms of jobs and growing power. Jewish boys are still using it to cut down girls, but this time because they threaten them sexually. The JAP's sexual rejection threatens their masculinity and sense of their desirability. I therefore suggest that the deconstruction of the JAP stereotype as a criticism of women is still relevant; the basis of the criticism has simply shifted. Jewish boys now criticize Jewish girls for rejecting them

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or failing to act in the way they want them to. The JAP stereotype continues to be the vehicle of their condemnation.

C. Relevance of Jewish Feminist Interpretations

Building on the critical deconstruction of the JAP stereotype by Jewish feminists, I intentionally addressed their analysis of the JAP as sexist and misogynist in my research. The majority of my participants did not feel that this interpretation was relevant to their understandings and uses of the JAP stereotype today. Lauren saw the usage of the JAP stereotype primarily amongst girls, reducing the relevance of the sexist element. In Focus Group 1, Emma also argued that the established place feminism holds in society today makes the sexist deconstruction even less relevant:

> Feminism is like part of society now, but at that time, it was a much more
> revolutionary thing. I mean to me today, in a world where feminism already exists,
> it was blown out of proportion. But I am sure at that time, that was just justice.
> That wasn't an over-exaggeration of anything.

Emma saw feminism as a concept that was developed in the 1970s. Therefore, she thought that for women at that time, the interpretation of the JAP as sexist was probably quite relevant. However Emma herself was familiar with the ideas of feminism, and this analysis of the JAP stereotype therefore did not really seem relevant to her. Emma also suggested that the feminist project overall has in many ways been accomplished. Her statement that "at that time, that was justice" indicates to me that she believes the situation for women was different thirty years ago, compared to today. And that to interpret the JAP stereotype as a sexist insult in the 1970s would in fact have been an accurate assessment. Her words hint at the postfeminist argument that the goals of feminism set out in the 1970s have been accomplished to a large degree.

Alternatively, Leah discussed the way the JAP stereotype functions in a "subversively negative" way, which follows the Jewish feminist critique from the 1970s. Leah elaborated on her understanding of the JAP stereotype as "subversively negative": "No one, like politicians if they want to keep their job and their office, would ever say

anything like outright derogatory to the Jewish people, to women as a whole, to anything ever. But it's like implied." While she uses the term "subversive," Leah's description of this term is more in line with the word *subtle*. I interpret Leah's characterization of the JAP stereotype as "subversively negative" to mean that it is a *subtly negative* stereotype. Leah's argument here is very similar to Klagsbrun (1987), who saw the JAP stereotype as a subtle "code word" used by non-Jews to be anti-Semitic. Leah's feeling that the JAP stereotype functions today as a subtle form of anti-Semitism and sexism also supports Pinterics' (2001) third wave feminist assessment of discrimination as more "underground, more insidious, and much more difficult to pinpoint than its previous incarnations" (p.15). Therefore, while she does not come right out and say it, Leah's commentary on the JAP stereotype does indicate continuity with early Jewish feminist interpretations of the stereotype as sexist.

My participants' gender identities clearly mediate their interpretations of the JAP stereotype. Their understandings of female roles and expectations are applied to the JAP stereotype as a tool to unpack the gendered messages that the JAP sends. This pattern is evident in my participants' interpretations of the JAP as modeling traditional female roles within the Jewish community. The gender understandings of the JAP stereotype also closely intersect with religious Jewish understandings. My religious participants theorized the JAP stereotype both through their gender identities and through their religious identities, combining religious and gendered expectations for Jewish girls that they see conveyed through the JAP. Finally, the JAP stereotype can be understood through a gendered lens as a tool used by both females and males to stigmatize and insult Jewish girls, and to narrowly define what is acceptable female behavior.

III. Community

Just as gender identity serves as a base from which to interpret the JAP stereotype, so too does one's Jewish identity. My discussion of *community* explores how identifying as a member of the larger Jewish community shapes my participants' experience and understanding of the JAP stereotype. Community refers broadly to the identification of being Jewish, as opposed to the member of another religious or cultural

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community. My participants establish distinct barriers between their Jewish community and the non-Jewish community. They discussed this distinction in terms of differences in how Jews use the JAP stereotype compared to non-Jews. They referred to values, stereotypes, myths, and impressions about Jews and about being Jewish to colour this distinction. These understandings extend beyond sectarian differences in how denominations practice the Jewish religion. I therefore interpret these ideas as reflections of being a member of the North American Jewish community as a whole. In this section I argue that through my participants' identifications as members of the Jewish community, they interpret the JAP stereotype as having anti-Semitic implications when used by non-Jews. I then connect this interpretation to the scholarly deconstructions of the stereotype that argue this same usage of the term.

In all of my interviews and focus groups, the question of whether the uses and accompanying meanings of the JAP stereotype differ between the Jewish community and the non-Jewish community was raised. I asked my participants whether they would react to the term the same way if said by a Jewish person versus a non-Jewish person. Does the community affiliation of the user alter the meaning of the term? Overall, it does. The majority of my participants articulated that it is far less acceptable to them when a non-Jew employs the JAP stereotype. The following conversation from Focus Group 3 is one example of how some of the girls separated the use by a Jew from the use by a non-Jew:

Lily: When someone from the outside the circle, or whatever way you want to phrase it, might call us a JAP it is a ...negative thing.

Barbie: Especially when non-Jews characterize people as JAPs.

Abby and Lily: yeah!

Lily: Totally. That is definitely not allowed.

Rebecca: Have you ever heard that before?

Barbie: Once, maybe, I can't even remember where. But I kind of got offended. Not even because I thought it was a bad thing, but I'm thinking-who are you to like-

Abby: Judge

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Barbie: Judge us?

Lily: Because you know that they mean it as a negative thing.

Abby: Like with Jews, if I'm calling someone else a JAP, I'm sort of more on their level, than if someone who's not Jewish says it. It's just a lot ruder.

Lily, Barbie and Abby exhibited very strong reactions to the prospect of a non-Jew calling them a JAP, compared to a more ambivalent attitude when fellow Jews use the stereotype. What explains this difference?

Ashley, Abby, Lily and Barbie explained that when employed by non-Jewish people, they hear classic stereotypes of the Jewish people as garishly and unjustifiably wealthy coming through the JAP term. Historically, these are key elements of the damaging anti-Semitic stereotype of the Jew (Kleeblatt, 1996). These participants recognized the anti-Semitic connotations when non-Jewish people apply the JAP stereotype to evoke these images. In my first focus group, Ashley spoke about the essentially anti-Semitic messages the JAP stereotype sends about Jewish people: "People say that Jews have all the money –like 'you're such a JAP, such a princess, the Jews have all the money, they can get anything they want at any time they want it'. Like if you are saying it in that way, then it is very anti-Semitic." Barbie saw the same image of a Jew represented in the JAP stereotype. She explained in Focus Group 3 that while girls of many different groups may exhibit similar behaviour, "when you put the Jewish label on it, it's like 'you're all these über privileged, wealthy people, who think you're better than everyone.'" Barbie accurately highlighted the irony that though girls of all religions and ethnicities may shop excessively and feel entitled to do so, applying the term Jewish immediately invokes an established caricature of Jews as "money grubbing," ostentatious, and garish in their displays of wealth (Appel, 2008, p.47). Abby asserted that the term Jewish American Princess quickly brings to mind "classic" and harmful stereotypes of Jews, such as "Jews have all the money." Abby went on to argue that the JAP term "brings back those old stereotypes and just keeps them going." It is clear that the anti-Semitic images embedded in the JAP stereotype are visible to my participants. Many of my participants clearly identify the JAP stereotype as being connected to, and

partially responsible for perpetuating, negative and harmful stereotypes of Jews as wealthy and consumerist.

Understanding the JAP stereotype as perpetuating anti-Semitic messages connects directly to the earlier scholarly deconstruction of the JAP discourse. Towards the end of the interviews and focus groups, I gave my participants a brief summary of the analysis of the JAP stereotype as an anti-Semitic code word with which to attack Jewish women. None of the girls had heard this interpretation before, and were genuinely surprised by it. Lauren mulled over this perspective out loud, exploring how the term is potentially anti-Semitic by design:

> I think that like it's definitely true that when non-Jews use it, I guess it is sort of an expression of anti-Semitism. I don't know if it's meant to be like that, or if in all cases its anti-Semitism, it's sort of hard to draw the line in that regard. But, I mean it hurts me as I said when my non-Jewish friend uses it. And I think it can be really hurtful when non-Jews use that term. So I guess it is an expression of anti-Semitism.

Lauren agreed that when used by a non-Jewish person, the JAP has anti-Semitic meanings. The conversation between Barbie and Abby in Focus Group 3 captured a similar pattern where the girls do not see the anti-Semitic application of the term in their own uses of it *within* the Jewish community, but see how the term may indeed be anti-Semitic in other contexts:

> Abby: Like knowing that it started as an anti-Semitic thing, like I don't understand now why we call other Jews that, that's just so weird
>
> Barbie: I think they need a new word; cuz I don't think that JAP is for the anti-Semitic-it has nothing to do with the Jewish aspect!!
>
> Abby: Yeah but, like cuz we use it and we're Jewish
>
> Barbie: But you're Jewish but that's it!
>
> Abby: But in public school if you're called a JAP I still think that would have a Jewish meaning.

Abby is suggesting that in public school, an effectively non-Jewish environment, she thinks that the *Jewish* part of the JAP acronym would indeed have significance. The speed with which these girls identified the anti-Semitic characterization of Jews embedded in the JAP stereotype, and cite this implicated meaning as one of the reasons that they are uncomfortable with its usage by non-Jewish people, supports the relevance of the earlier scholarly deconstructions of the term to this day. This differentiation further separates my participants' understandings of the JAP stereotype as it is used within their own Jewish community, versus its use outside in the non-Jewish world. The prominence of these ideas drives home the significance of the community aspect to their understandings of the stereotype. In the next section, I will explore a different type of Jewish identification, one based on religious teachings and values, that provides further insight into how my participants interpret the JAP discursive stereotype.

IV. Religion

Religious identity is the last dominant lens for interpreting and responding to the JAP discursive stereotype that I will address. This aspect of identity differs from *community,* which I define as the identification as Jewish as opposed to another religion. My discussion of *religion* specifically explores how girls' religious beliefs and practices shape their understandings of the JAP stereotype. Specific Jewish values, practices, and teachings come together to form a religious framework. The influence of religion on the interpretation of the JAP stereotype is most evident amongst my participants from MAG. As explained earlier, Hannah, Emma, Ashley, Leah, Leora, Mulan, Bella, and Rosaline identified with Orthodox denominations of Judaism. Their family lives revolve around a religious Jewish lifestyle, and their school forwards the values and traditions of Orthodox Judaism. These participants explicitly cited tenets of the Jewish religion, and identify expectations and values determined by their Orthodox Jewish communities in our discussions about the JAP. Their identification with an Orthodox practice of Judaism functions as a lens for interpreting the JAP stereotype. In this section I argue that the internalization of Jewish values derived directly from Jewish religious teachings, and the

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values held by their Orthodox communities, shape my religious participants' understandings and experience of the JAP stereotype.

The girls in Focus Group 1, Hannah, Emma and Ashley, were adamant that the Jewish religion itself is not responsible for facilitating the JAP. Hannah argued that if we are considering the principles of the Jewish religion on their own, Jews should not be JAPpy: "Like there is nothing in Judaism that would make you a JAPpy person...Like you're taught to be nice, not to be snobby...Like if anything, they shouldn't be JAPpy considering the values they were brought up with." These girls saw the JAP stereotype as directly opposing religious Jewish values. Comparing a model of Jewish religious behaviour to one of JAPpy behaviour is one of the key tools my religious participants used to interpret the JAP stereotype.

It is clear that an ascription to a Jewish religious framework mediates how one interprets the JAP stereotype. According to these girls, Jewish Orthodoxy espouses the importance of being a good person, and acting humbly and modestly. These core values conflict directly with JAPpy traits such as excessive consumption, being self-centred, and believing that your needs trump those of all others. Bella explained that the Torah, the Jewish bible, tells you "ve'ahavata le're-acha ka'mocha, which means to love your fellow Jew or neighbour like yourself...So following that totally takes away from the JAP stereotype because you're no longer caring only about yourself, you're caring about other people." In her focus group, Hannah reflected that this conflict between Jewish religious values and the JAP stereotype is especially glaring in girls whom she considers to be both Orthodox and JAPpy:

> I feel like their religious values get compromised, cuz they dress really
> religiously... but their attitude is kind of contradicting because they are acting like
> really mean. And that's not what they are trying to show when they cover their
> knees or cover their elbows. Like they should be nice, right?

Hannah's comment addresses the paradox between Orthodox girls who dress modestly, a choice that is meant to convey an unobtrusive attitude, with the JAPpy character traits they also display. Hannah and Bella have clearly applied their Orthodox framework to

decide what values and character traits are admirable, versus those that are negative and problematic.

In my second focus group, Mulan and Bella discussed how following a religious Jewish framework provides one with higher goals to aspire to, instead of focusing on acquiring material goods. Mulan separated the religious world from the secular world, summarizing the difference that "in the secular world they focus a lot more on money, that's kind of what their lives revolve around. But if you are more involved with religion then that's not your focus in life." Mulan acknowledged that this statement is "a really big generalization;" however she rooted her opinion in her own observations of her secular extended family: "It's about cars and money and your vacation places, like [they are] more focused on that than anything else." Mulan was critical of the way her secular family members emphasize the importance of material objects. She positioned a religious lifestyle as one that aspires to more than money and status items. My religious participants were in agreement that the religious framework orients them towards more meaningful things in life, and hopefully arms them against succumbing to JAP-like behaviour.

My discussion of religion also extends to include aspects of the girls' experience with the JAP stereotype in Orthodox religious culture. Leah interpreted the JAP stereotype along sectarian lines that stem from her own religious views. Leah identified the girls from the more religious school, Bnos Yisroel (BY) as the JAPpiest girls, more JAPpy than girls from MAG or JA. When I probed her as to why she thought these girls were the most JAPpy, Leah tried to explain: "I don't know why, maybe it's just my opinion about Bnos Yisroel, I don't like the theory behind it, and that's why I think of them as JAPs." Leah's perception of a JAP as a more religious girl than herself is rooted in the "theory" behind that denomination of Judaism. All of the schools that Leah referred to are affiliated with specific denominations of Judaism, and each represents a different political and religious framework. It is beyond the purview of this thesis to begin to delve into these sectarian differences. For the purposes of my discussion here, it is sufficient to say that of the three schools Leah mentions, JA, MAG, and Bnos Yisroel, JA represents the least religious Jewish community, MAG represents the modern or moderate Orthodox religious community, and Bnos Yisroel represents the ultra Orthodox

community.[28] Leah used the JAP stereotype as a way to differentiate herself from the most religious girls, whom she admitted that she just does not like. Using a mediated action approach to identity, Leah's positioning of the JAPpy girls as the more religious girls reveals information about Leah's own religio-political views. In identifying herself as a Modern Orthodox Jew, Leah ascribes to that specific framework for how Judaism should be practiced. When referring to the "theory" behind Bnos Yisroel, Leah is alluding to her dislike for how that denomination interprets and practices Judaism. These beliefs then shape how she views the girls of another denomination. Applying the JAP stereotype to the BY girls is a tool for Leah to express her own dislike for the religious philosophies forwarded by that specific group. In utilizing the JAP stereotype in the moment of our conversation to describe BY girls, Leah actually revealed to me layers of her own religious identity.

In Focus Group 1, Hannah talked about how JAPpy religious girls are examples of *rebelliousness*. Again, starting from Hannah's own religious Jewish views that one should prioritize being a good person, she explored how a religious girl can also be a JAP:

> I feel like it's a form of rebellion or something…so it depends whether you are a JAP from a secular background or a religious background. If you are from a religious background then its like kind of bizarre that you are rebelling against what you should have theoretically been growing up on: The values that you should be nice, not be mean to anyone, not embarrass them, stuff that a JAP might do.

Hannah discusses standards she has internalized for the ideal way JAPpy Jewish girls, as well as *religious* Jewish girls, are expected to act. Hannah's interpretation of religious JAPs as *rebellious* implies the simultaneous and competing existence of both of these discourses. Her use of the word "rebellion" is especially illustrative of the established

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[28] This spectrum of religiosity is by no means an authoritative description of these schools and their religious philosophies. This spectrum that I have described is solely a reflection of my conversation with Leah, and the way she has presented these schools' religious orientations in relation to one another.

nature of these different expectations. The way Hannah positions JAPpyness as a form of rebellion suggests that the discourse of the religious girl is more dominant than the JAP discourse. This interpretation of Hannah's understanding of the JAP stereotype as negotiated between these two discourses of Jewish girlhood illuminates the mutually constitutive nature of identity categories. As Shields (2008) explains, each identity category "takes its meaning as a category in relation to another category" (p.302). Both religious and gender identities shape how Hannah understands Jewish girlhood. And the religious understandings are determined off of the gendered ones, and vice-versa. What it means for her to be a religious Jew is so closely intertwined with what it means for her to be a girl that she interprets the JAP stereotype through both of these lenses. As she tried to describe for me why a JAP does not fit the religious framework that she follows, she also explained why the JAP does not fit with the gender expectations she holds as well. Hannah's religious identity is enmeshed with her gender identity, which together mutually shape how a religious Jewish girl should or should not act.

When religious identity is conceived of as an interpretive tool it captures how my Orthodox participants hold the religious framework for behaviour and values over top of the JAP stereotype. Through the lens of their religious beliefs, Bella, Mulan, Rosaline, Emma, Ashley and Hannah saw the problems and shortcomings of the JAP stereotype as a model for female behaviour. These girls bring in the religious concepts of personal growth, modesty, and being a good person to challenge the JAP stereotype. Their strong ascription to these religious values quickly exposes the JAP as promoting the less desirable values of superficiality, materialism, and snobbishness. Identifying this conflict in values appears to be a way for my religious participants to criticize the stereotype and to justify separating themselves from it. Their Orthodox religious framework provides them with an alternate model for values and behaviour. They do not need to follow the model set out by the JAP.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argue that the Jewish girls that I spoke with understood the JAP stereotype through four aspects of their identities: being a member of certain social

groups (peer relations), being a girl (gender), being Jewish (a member of the Jewish community), and their religious views (the ways they practice Judaism). The values, beliefs, and experience embedded within these aspects of identity were then applied over top of the JAP stereotype, and provided them with the means to explore its meanings and locate themselves in relation to it. My analyses in this chapter also illustrate how the JAP functions as a discourse in its power to structure and order Jewish girls' lives. My participants' interpretations of the JAP through these four aspects of identity demonstrate how in this structuring, the JAP discourse provides numerous lived opportunities of Jewish girlhood. On the one hand, the JAP discourse provides constraining opportunities in its roles of structuring peer social hierarchies, reinforcing gender roles, evoking narratives of anti-Semitism, and causing conflict with religious values. At the same time though, the JAP discourse also provides girls with potentially empowering opportunities in how they utilize the varied interpretations of the JAP stereotype reflected here in their own lives. The following chapter will explore in detail portraits of individual girls' utilizations of the JAP stereotype in their identity construction. The complex and unique ways they play on the varied interpretations of the JAP stereotype discussed here illustrate that, while the JAP discourse has the power to structure aspects of Jewish girlhood, Jewish girls also exert power in shaping the JAP discourse through their own individual applications of it.

CHAPTER 7: PORTRAITS OF JAP IDENTITY

In this chapter I explore how some Jewish girls take up the JAP stereotype in relation to their own identities. Regarding the theme of identity, I have analyzed only my interview data, as it was intentionally designed to probe the relationship between the JAP stereotype and individual identity. Originally, I had planned on focusing only on how the JAP stereotype mediates expressions of Jewish and female identities. I rationalized that since the stereotype addresses these two identity categories right in its name, Jewish American Princess, it would be a straightforward process to tease out the influence of the stereotype on these identities. However, as I sought to thematically analyze the data along the themes of the *JAP and Jewish identity,* and the *JAP and female identity*, coherent themes did not emerge. I found that in breaking up the transcripts into themes, prioritizing commonality over difference, the subtle, yet extremely significant, differences in the ways that my participants negotiate the JAP stereotype in their own lives, were lost. Had I continued in this manner, I would have potentially forced the data into my own preconceived categories, instead of allowing the data "speak for itself."

A thematic analysis dilutes the strong narratives about identity that *are* found in this interview data. When each interview transcript is examined as a whole, each of my six interview participants tells a unique story about how they negotiate their identities in relation to the JAP stereotype. To honour these narratives, I have analyzed them here as complete entities, allowing the identity negotiations of each participant to be explored in their own right.

It is imperative that the reader understands the different tones between the previous chapter, which is derived from my thematic analysis, compared to this chapter, which is founded on the analysis of identity portraits. The thematic analysis summarized in the previous section gives the dominant impression that my participants wholeheartedly rejected the JAP stereotype. But this is not the complete picture. If I were to leave it here, the reader would miss a crucial piece of the story. While my participants in many ways did reject the JAP stereotype, they also took up the JAP in their own identity negotiations in a variety of ways. These utilizations of the stereotype illustrate varying degrees of affinity and identification with aspects of the JAP discourse.

Therefore, in this chapter I change my analytical strategy to highlight *portraits* of identity negotiations around the JAP stereotype.

Instead of featuring distinct themes about gender and religious identities, the interview data actually reflect the complex and intersectional nature of identity. As I moved away from a thematic approach to the data, I read each transcript more closely as a whole. I began to hear the voice of each girl more clearly, and realized that each was telling her own unique narrative about the JAP stereotype's impact on her identity. My earlier attempts at teasing out female identity from Jewish identity from other identities were unproductive because these identities are not distinct in the ways girls experience them. These narratives truly reflect the principles of an intersectional approach in that the experiences the girls describe are not neatly contained within the traditional boundaries of identity categories (Berger & Guidroz, 2010). Instead, the experiences associated with the girls' gender, class, ethnicity, religion, age, and sexuality imbricate with the experience of the JAP stereotype. Furthermore, my inability to separate the gendered expressions from the Jewish expressions within these narratives illustrates how social identities are mutually constitutive. One identity category, like gender, "takes its meaning as a category in relation to another category" (Shields, 2008, p.302). These Jewish girls experience deep intersections of their understandings of being female and of being Jewish around the JAP stereotype, such that it is only appropriate to explore my conversations with them in a way that allows the intersectional and mutually constitutive nature of identity to emerge.

I have therefore utilized Daniel Yon's (2000a & b) metaphor of the "portrait" as the mode of analysis to interpret these identity-based narratives. Following Yon's (2000a & b) approach, I have reconstituted my interviews with these girls into individual *portraits* of their identity-based experiences. The portrait as a research metaphor represents the construction of a "snapshot" of an individual that is only designed "to capture a moment, a particular pose" (Yon, 2000b, p.144). The portraits I present in this chapter are miniature narratives of some of my participants' identity-based experience. These portraits capture my interpretations of how the JAP stereotype has impacted some of my participants' identities. The *portrait* is a most appropriate metaphor because my summary is only a brief snapshot of their thoughts, feelings and experiences. Like Yon

(2000a), I use these portraits to show how youth "make (and resist making) identifications" (p.27). I explore these negotiations specifically in relation to the JAP stereotype.

Following the mediated action framework, I recognize an irreducible and productive tension between the agent, and the cultural tools they employ to express their identities (Brown & Tappan, 2008). This dynamic tension enables a process where individual agents appropriate cultural tools in creative ways that reflect both an allegiance to, and a transformation of this tool. These portraits highlight the agentic side of this relationship. The participant narratives demonstrate how these Jewish girls actively engage with the JAP discursive stereotype as a tool through which to mediate expressions of their identities. Both patterns of maintaining allegiance to the discourse as is, and transforming it into something different are evident through these negotiations. In this analysis, I weave in concepts from third wave feminist, intersectional, and mediated action theories, to demonstrate how these portraits illustrate the complexity of identity negotiations youth engage in on a daily basis.

Sarah: A Part-time Member of the "JAP Crew"

Sarah and I started talking in her bedroom on a Sunday afternoon. She seemed pretty relaxed; she was wearing a comfortable sweatshirt, and had her hair up in a messy-bun. We sat on her bed and she stuffed a pillow behind her to support her back. Sarah defined the JAP as having a bossy attitude, and needing a lot of material goods. Sarah described this stereotype very concretely, referring to real people.[29] She talked about the JAPpy girls in her grade to support her descriptions. Then the conversation took an unexpected turn. Sarah explained that she has two groups of friends, one of which is the JAPpy, and the most popular group in her grade. The other is "just like a normal group of school friends."

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[29] All of my participants discussed the JAP stereotype as a real person. I am noting here that Sarah spoke about the stereotype in especially real terms.

She referred to the JAP group as "the JAP crew." When she first began grade nine, she assumed these girls are "bitches" simply based on their label as JAPs. Then she got to know them, and "it turns out they aren't." Her best friend was in the JAP crew. She brought Sarah into the group where she has come to know the JAPpy girls well. Sarah explained how becoming part of the JAP crew modified her feelings about the JAPs, but not her willingness to use the label: "I still think they're JAPs, but I don't hate them." While the bitchy characteristic was key for Sarah's understanding of the JAP, it was not the primary defining element. Therefore, she still considered these girls to be JAPs, even though she no longer thought they were mean and bitchy. Her understanding of the JAP stereotype shifted to accommodate these girls underneath the label.

Sarah maintained that being part of these two friendship groups was very important to her social identity. She was therefore known at school as someone who was friends with many different social groups. Sarah divided her time between these two groups of friends. She spent more of her time at school with the non-JAP group, and went out to parties with the JAP crew on the weekends. But if she wanted to just "stay in" on a weekend night, she joined in the non-JAP group's plans as well. She found it hard to balance the two groups at school. JAPpy friends may wave to her in the halls, but they did not say hello to the non-JAP friends she was with. Talking about the groups as whole, she felt more comfortable with the non-JAP group. But at the same time, she credited the JAP crew with giving her "the high school experience." Without the JAP crew, Sarah would not have begun going to parties, taken her first shot of alcohol, or enjoyed other high school experiences.

Sarah felt like the JAPpy girls were not interested in her personal life, so she did not talk about herself very much. But if they asked her something, she answered "*really quickly.*" She presented a very well thought-out protocol for participating in the JAP crew's conversations: "if they ask me something about my personal life, I wouldn't elaborate on my answer. And then I'd just be so much more interested in their's cuz their life just seems more like fun, you know?" When she did contribute to the group conversation, she talked about the "interesting part of [her] life," mostly her "Saturday nights." Sarah was up front that she actively changed what she talked about with the JAP crew. She omitted large pieces of her life, so as not to bore them. Subsequently, the

disinterest she felt from the JAP crew "affects the way [she] expresses [her] feelings." This patterns contrasts to how she talks about her life when she is with the non-JAP group:

> They are always more interested in my life because it's more fun than theirs'. So I'd elaborate and I'd explain in detail about what I did, for example on the Saturday night. And they'd be so interested and they'd keep asking me questions and like, it feels nice to like know they're interested.

Sarah modified how she presented herself and her social life depending on whether she was interacting with the JAP crew. This process is an example of the dialogical constructions of the self.

Being part of the JAP crew was a significant part of Sarah's social identity. Her narrative reflected how she negotiated her social roles between the non-JAP group and the JAP crew, almost using the former, while being used by the latter. Her participation in the JAP crew appears highly constrained. Sarah mediates her self-presentation on the basis that the JAP crew is only interested in knowing certain parts of her. She mediates the identity that she shows them by only presenting them with the "most interesting parts" of her life. I asked her whether she felt there was a power imbalance between her and the JAPpy girls in the group. She acknowledged that there was, but claimed that it does not bother her. This response led me to wonder to what degree Sarah is integrated into the JAP crew, or whether she sits on the fringes. If she were a truly incorporated member of the group, she might feel more comfortable taking centre stage in the group conversations. But perhaps you can only be a full member of the JAP crew if you are a JAP yourself. Sarah did not consider the way she acts to be JAPpy. However she did concede that the way she dresses might be JAPpy. And definitely her hair: she gets it done once a month.

Leah: "I confuse people and I love it"

Leah and I planned to meet at the beginning of her spare period. After the morning bell rang, Leah came running around the corner, and excitedly held out her

parental consent from to me. We found a quiet place and sat down to talk. From her first response, Leah's confidence was obvious. She loves to read, and incorporated book references wherever possible. Leah spoke very quickly; as if she had so many ideas to share she was in a hurry to get them all out.

Leah was a self-proclaimed half-JAP. She listed the way she dressed in designer clothes, the way she talked, the way she walked, and how she enjoyed being a girl, as the reasons why she considered herself to be "a little bit of a JAP." The characteristic of being *girly* was central to her understanding of herself as falling under the JAP stereotype: "I am girly, I like designer things, I like nice clothes, I wear high heels. I am not a jewelry person actually, but what I do wear is nicer stuff." Leah identified her desire to appear feminine as a JAPpy trait, establishing part of her identity as JAPpy, and accepting that others see her in this way as well.

Leah was also a self-proclaimed "nerd," or "smart girl." She described herself first and foremost as smart. She made it clear that if asked to list her traits, she was first going to say smart: "Like that is who defines me." Until grade four, Leah considered herself to the "the biggest nerd... zero JAPpyness." In this statement Leah pitted being a nerd against being a JAP, as two opposing states. Then in grade five, she "got boobs before everyone else," and boys started looking at her differently. "It was like an identity crisis in grade five!" Leah described having to re-work how she understood herself. She became more interested in fashion and her appearance, which contributed to the emerging JAP side to her personality. She explained that she had to "figure out how to balance the fact that I am a ginormous nerd and a little bit of a JAP."

Through the process of balancing her JAP identity with her nerdy identity, Leah demonstrates how the JAP stereotype mediates identity, as both an empowering and a constraining cultural tool for identity expression. For Leah, the JAP stereotype represented her desire to act in a girly manner, focusing on beautiful clothes and dressing up. The JAP stereotype functions as an enabling cultural tool, that provides her with the framework to indulge these feminine expressions. At the same time, the JAP stereotype does not promote smartness or intelligence. The *nerdy* side of Leah's self-descriptions represented her primary identification as a "smart girl," and this label supported her

passion for reading and asserting her intelligence amongst her peers. But the nerdy stereotype does not include prescriptions for especially girly behaviour. Leah positioned the two stereotypes as opposites. The JAP stereotype enabled girly behaviours such as wearing high heels or designer clothes, while the "smart girl" stereotype enabled behaviours like reading books. While one might see the JAP stereotype as purely constraining, Leah used the girly aspect of the JAP stereotype to empower her to challenge the "smart girl" stereotype, and vice-versa. The JAP identification allowed her to embrace the girly part of herself that the "smart girl" role did not allow for. From this interpretation, the JAP stereotype actually empowered Leah to creatively adapt the JAP stereotype for her own identity-construction purposes.

The way she married the JAP stereotype with the "smart girl" stereotype illustrates the *possibility for improvisation* that Wertsch (1997) discusses. Leah tweaked the JAP stereotype in a way that enabled her to express her identity as a Jewish girl who "can like high heels and can read textbooks" at the same time. This example demonstrates how one stereotype can function as both a constraining and empowering cultural tool, highlighting the significance of context and individual utilization of that tool in the moment of identity construction. Leah used both of these discourses to reinforce one another, the expressions that one stereotype constrains are enabled by the other, working together symbiotically Leah was able to take up the appropriate stereotype to mediate her desired identity expression at that moment. Leah explained this fused identity: "I am a JAP and a nerd. Like I will spend my entire day reading and be totally satisfied. And I will go out and go shopping and also be very happy with what I have done."

The evidence of the JAP stereotype as a mediational cultural tool in Leah's expressions of identity is even more complex. Leah defined herself as a "living contradiction," emphasizing the need she felt to highlight the assumed contradiction of being both a nerd and a JAP. Her JAP identity is taken up as a tool to challenge the presumption that attractive or girly-girls cannot be smart as well: "I like making people challenge what they think. Like I hate the idea that if you're a girl, and you dress well, and you are slightly attractive, you can't be smart." The JAP stereotype is a critical component in mediating Leah's identity as intentionally complex and contradictory. She

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took up the JAP stereotype in identity construction very consciously in that she used her "JAPpyness or femininity to prove that [she] can like high heels *and* [she] can read textbooks." She "like[s] using the two of them together." The JAP stereotype mediates Leah's expression of her smartness. She weaves the two discourses together into her identity as smart *and* girly.

This partial-JAP identity has an additional Jewish spin to it. Leah attributed much of her desire to challenge people's assumptions that a JAP cannot be smart, or a smart girl cannot be girly as a byproduct of being part of a religious Jewish community. She felt that her religious community expects their girls to go to "seminary[30] and then get married right after." She was highly frustrated by this plan that many religious girls follow by default. Leah exclaimed, "just because of that, I want to prove that like I *can do* more!" She located her unique use of the JAP stereotype as a tool with which to "shock people." That she can appear like a girl headed for marriage, but also hold different intellectual aspirations.

Leah confuses people on purpose. From the way she talked about both the nerdy and the JAPpy parts of her identity, I believe that she uses the JAP stereotype, capitalizing on the elements of that discourse that present girls as unintelligent or only capable of being interested in material consumption, to confuse those around her and challenge their assumptions about who or what a "smart girl" is. The nerd and the JAP discourses both support and undermine each other in this model of intentional confusion. Bakhtin's process of *ideological becoming* is extremely useful here to understand Leah's negotiation of these two discourses in mediating her identity. Ideological becoming refers to the "gradually coming to authorize and claim authority for one's own voice, while remaining in constant dialogue with other voices" (Tappan, 2005, p.55). These voices refer to discourses at play both within society and within the individual. Ideological becoming views these discourses in a constant struggle or negotiation for dominance, as expressed through the individual's identity and understandings of the world. Bakhtin

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[30] *Seminary* is a religious learning institute for girls. Many religious girls will go to a seminary for one year after graduating high school. Where they will study only religious materials intensely for the year.

argues that it is through this struggle to express those discourses that are persuasive to the individual, and to reappropriate and improvise aspects of others as it is appropriate, that one's identity and self-understandings are forged. Leah's engagement with the discourses of the JAP, the nerd, the Jewish girl, and the religious Jewish girl, amongst others, illustrates Bakhtin's process of ideological becoming. As she struggles to navigate the expression of, or resistance to, these and other discourses, Leah's identity is shaped. Overall, it appears that the nerd identity is primary for Leah, and the JAP identity merely plays the supporting role to mediate her expression of a smart, but still girly, Jewish girl.

Does Leah feel that these two contradictory aspects of her identity are conflictual? Leah alluded to having "issues" identifying herself as a JAP and a nerd at an earlier time, "but not anymore." She made no apologies in stating, "that is a part of my identity and I am ok with that." Presenting a highly contextualized understanding of identity, she argued that she could either ignore the JAPpy parts of herself, or she "could use it to [her] advantage." Depending on the situation, Leah capitalizes on the JAPpy parts of self-presentation to accomplish other goals. Leah's intentional description of herself as a "living contradiction" strongly resonates with third wave feminist understandings of identity. Leah suggested that she has no qualms about living with "different paradoxes." She explained that exhibiting contradictory traits in being both JAPpy and nerdy never bothered her until others challenged her, calling her "confusing." To those who challenge her, Leah responded by asking them, "what's your point? We are all different things." Leah accepted herself fully. She knew who she was, and instead of problematizing contradictions in her identity, she valorized them. This narrative follows a third wave feminist approach to accepting identity-based contradictions, and providing space to cultivate and explore those contradictions. The confidence and self-assuredness Leah exudes is a model for those who feel compelled to eradicate any conflicting aspects of their identity, trying to achieve a cohesive, seamless state of self-expression. Leah made her alternative, embracing the "lived messiness" (Heywood & Drake, 1997, p.8) of being a girl today, seem much more appealing: "You could either ... be ashamed of being a JAP...Or you could be like, this is a part of who I am, if you don't like it, it's *so* your problem... Deal with it."

Leah's family background adds an additional element of complexity to her understanding of the JAP stereotype. Leah introduced the fact that her mother is a Sephardic Jew who is a first generation North American to colour how she has come to her views on the JAP. The Jewish people are broken down into two major ethnic groups: Ashkenazi and Sephardi. The Ashkenazi are Jews of "European and North American origin," and the Sephardim are Jews of "Muslim–Arab Middle Eastern and North African countries of origin" (Goodman & Mizrachi, 2008, p.97). The different origins of these two ethnic groups have led to significantly different historical experiences of being Jewish. They have different histories of persecution, expulsions, and diasporic travel. In North America, the Ashkenazi ethnic group is of the majority. Subsequently, most North American Jewish communities orient towards representing the experiences and meeting the needs of the Ashkenazim

Leah told the story of how her grandmother "came from North Africa, like a total immigrant. She got off the boat, and that week she had my mother." Leah recounted how her mother struggled while growing up; her father died when she was young, they had little money, and they lived "in the projects." Leah described her own nuclear family's standard of living today as "comfortable," and said that for her mother, "it was quite a way to go." For Leah's mother growing up, the JAPs were the girls around her "who had lighter skin, and blond hair, and who were ashkenaz[i], and had their purses and had their shoes." The Ashkenazi ethnic group that is more powerful and successful displays this dominant position through the shoes and purses their daughters carried. Leah's mother saw the JAP stereotype as a "terrible classification," and one that she vehemently did not want her daughters to assume.

Leah recognized that now living in a predominantly Ashkenazi community in Toronto, her mother may feel uncomfortable with the JAP stereotype and those who may be associated with it: "Like, I love my friends' parents, but I am sure some of those mothers were the JAPs my mother didn't like." Coming from a half-Sephardi home, Leah was aware of the different experiences that Sephardi Jews have had with the JAP stereotype. Leah juxtaposed her mother's Sephardic and immigrant experience to the Ashkenazi girls whom she grew up with. As I am of Ashkenazi ethnicity, with few Sephardi friends, I was completely unaware of this parallel story of Jewish girlhood.

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Jewish girls, who are of a different ethnicity than the majority, have had very different experiences with the JAP stereotype *within* our own Jewish community. There is a long history within the Jewish community of marginalizing the Sephardim, and constructing them as *other*. It is in recognition of this history that I intentionally highlight Leah's story and her mother's story. The JAP stereotype itself is a byproduct of the North American Jewish community's narrative of being immigrants and slowly working our way toward success. Leah's story has shown me that within the master narrative of Jewish immigration and class shifting, they are other sub-narratives, distinct to each nationality and ethnicity of these Jews. Leah's story has challenged my own assumption that within the Jewish community, Jewish girls' experiences will be the same.

Lauren: "I would be EXTREMELY offended if someone called me a JAP"

Lauren was in twelfth grade at Jewish Academy. When I arrived at her home on a Sunday afternoon she was ready for our interview, waiting for me with her signed consent forms and a bottle of water. From the beginning of our conversation, Lauren talked about conformity. Her first response to how she thought about a JAP was "someone that's not an individual," someone who "conforms to whatever their friends are doing, and wears what they wear, and adopts a sort of language that they use." She spoke slowly, in a way that revealed the conviction behind her words.

Lauren went to public school before the Jewish Academy. This background adds a unique dimension to her experience. As my only participant to have attended a non-Jewish school, she was most able to bring in understandings of the JAP stereotype from outside of the "Jewish bubble." Lauren's best friend was not Jewish, but used the JAP stereotype a lot. The way she used it really bothered Lauren, who "feels like she's generalizing *all* Jewish girls," forcing individuals into the JAP classification simply because they are Jewish, and threatening one's sense of individuality.

I asked Lauren whether she had ever been called a JAP. She told me that while she had not been labeled directly, she felt "like a lot of the time it's been sort of implied." She described her grade eight class where she was only one of three Jews in the class: "I just sort of got the impression that I was really being judged... I will never know for sure,

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because it was never like anything spoken, no one was ever disrespectful to my face or anything, but I sort of just got that feeling from it." The JAP stereotype has been part of her experience of being a Jewish girl for many years now. It has a strong presence in her social world, where she actively negotiates her identity in relation to it.

Lauren repeatedly emphasized that the JAP stereotype is an extremely negative stereotype, primarily for her interpretation of it as a symbol of social conformity. Before I could prompt her by asking the question directly, Lauren declared herself *not* to be a JAP: "I would be *extremely* offended if someone called me a JAP... I feel strongly about that." Her identification as a non-Jap was extremely important to how she saw herself because of how the JAP stereotype represents for her the undesirable trait of social conformity:

> I see myself as having individual values and I feel like if I were to classify myself
> as a JAP it would almost be degrading. I feel like I would be like lowering
> myself, like belittling my role in society to being part of a group, and not seeing
> myself as an individual person, but rather just seeing myself as a group of girls.
> And that's *not* how I see myself. Like I see myself as an individual: I have my
> own hobbies, I set my own values like separate from the values that my friends
> may have.

Lauren focused her identity around the importance of being an individual, which she saw the JAP stereotype as directly undermining by representing girls who dress and act the same.

The JAP stereotype as representative of social conformity mediates Lauren's identity as it manifests in her decisions about wearing clothing items that are key JAP status symbols. She told me a long story about a Free City sweatshirt her mother had bought her to illustrate how she made decisions in response to the JAP stereotype. As I discussed in Chapter 5 where I describe the JAP stereotype, for students at the Jewish Academy, Free City was one of the most significant JAP signifying brands of clothing. Lauren recounted how her mother bought her a Free City sweatshirt. She told me that what was "horrible" about this situation was that she really liked the sweatshirt, "its really comfy," but while she loved wearing it around the house, she "didn't want to wear it to school." She cited the connection between the Free City brand and the JAP

stereotype as her deterrent for wearing it. She called this tension between wanting to wear something, but fearing the JAP labeling that inevitably follows as "an internal dilemma." At school, the labeling of girls who wear Free City sweatshirts as JAPs was too significant to ignore, and as a result, she very rarely wore the item to school.

Lauren then told me how she brought this sweatshirt to overnight camp. She described the camp environment as "really comfortable" where people can be themselves. So she decided, "I like this sweatshirt so I'm going to wear it. Not because everyone else is wearing it but just because I like this sweatshirt!" She described how her peers reacted very strongly to her wearing it, and she speculated that "maybe they were thinking in their heads 'oh my god, like what a JAP, like I can't believe she's wearing that sweatshirt.'" Once again, she responded to the situation by not wearing the sweatshirt anymore.

Through this story about her Free City sweatshirt, Lauren demonstrated how the JAP stereotype mediated her identity. It is clear that being an individual and actively opposing social conformity, was an extremely important value to Lauren, and was central to how she conceived of herself. The JAP stereotype, as a cultural tool available to Lauren, epitomized for her this trend of social conformity that she so despised. She saw conformity and JAPpyness to be synonymous. Lauren took up the JAP stereotype in her identity expressions by positioning it as *opposite* to who she is. Lauren constructed her identity around resisting social conformity, and she therefore avoided being labeled as a JAP as an expression of this identity. To be seen as a JAP would have threatened Lauren's non-conformist core. Therefore, distancing herself from the JAP stereotype was a mediated expression of Lauren's identity. Lauren consolidated her identity as an individual by choosing repeatedly *not* to wear the Free City sweatshirt that represents the JAP.

Lauren's fierce emphasis on individuality strikes me as having a third wave feminist tone. Prioritizing her own thoughts and principles instead of adopting a herd mentality and simply following what is going on around her, revealed Lauren's highly analytical and critical approach to negotiating her place in her world. At the same time, Lauren's focus on being consistent in her expressions of this individuality does not reflect

third wave feminism's willingness to accept contradictions in one's identity. Lauren seemed to spend a great deal of energy to maintain this identity as not conforming, where establishing herself intentionally apart from the JAP stereotype was part of that process. Why is it that Lauren was so committed to avoiding the JAP stereotype as a symbol of conformity? Her dedication to opposing the JAP stereotype suggests the extent of its awfulness. Despite readily admitting the she liked the Free City sweatshirt, and found it quite "comfy," Lauren would not allow herself to wear it in environments where it carried JAP symbolism for fear of coming under that label. Perhaps Lauren would be more willing to accommodate a moderate degree of social conformity of things she desires, if they were associated with a less damaging and negative discourse.

It would not be honest in my role as a researcher to end this portrait here. While I have described Lauren's negotiations with the JAP stereotype, and its accompanying symbols, in the intentional tone that she told these stories to me, towards the end of the interview, Lauren stated that "not being a JAP" was *not* part of her identity. She explained that, "I wouldn't say that I am consciously making an effort not to be a JAP all the time." Lauren's statement was surprising after how intensely she described her reactions and subsequent actions to the JAP symbol of the Free City sweatshirt. However, her clarification is not problematic. Instead, it strongly reflects the importance the mediated action framework places on the specific moment and context in which cultural tools are taken up in identity negotiations. The story about the Free City sweatshirt represents only one occasion on which Lauren took up the JAP discursive stereotype as a means through which to mediate her identity. At that particular time, Lauren used the JAP discourse, and its representation in that context of social conformity, to establish herself as an individual who chooses her own clothing styles to follow. It is important to bear in mind that this is one story, and not a reflection of the totality of Lauren's engagements with the JAP stereotype. But within this one story, the active negotiations Lauren described are indeed evidence of her deep awareness of the JAP stereotype and how she engaged with it in constructing and performing her identity.

Lily: "It's just the nature of things"

Lily described herself as having "JAPpy parts" for the first time ever during our interview. She was definitely not a "full-blown JAP," but she might be a little JAPpy. She explained how she has come to be a little JAPpy: "I think it's just the nature of things. Of how I've grown up and where I go to school, and what I do in my spare time that make me some form of JAPpy." I asked her to clarify what she meant by "naturally." She replied, "my community...like growing up." Lily has grown up in the Jewish Toronto community. Her peers get what they want and she also receives material goods that she wants, acknowledging that she is privileged to receive things "that other people wouldn't necessarily get." Lily saw her somewhat JAPpy orientation as inevitable growing up in this community. Lily seemed comfortable integrating the JAPpy pieces of her identity with the non-JAPpy pieces, but she "would like to think that there's more non-JAPpy pieces." We explored how she reconciled the acknowledgment that she displays some affinity to a negative stereotype, without causing her additional stress and identity-based confusion. She rationalized the JAPpy parts of herself through their "natural" origins: "I don't really see it as anything bad or good, like the way I've been brought up it was *bound* to happen. It wasn't like anything I could have changed." I believe that her attribution of the JAP stereotype as a byproduct of Toronto Jewish culture enables Lily to absolve herself of responsibility for displaying some JAPpy traits. If it is inevitable as a member of this community to be a slight JAP, even if it is a negative stereotype, it is not really her fault. This logic would understandably reduce the tension of having both JAPpy and non-JAPpy traits. Lily's perspective on the inevitable nature of the JAP stereotype led me to reflexively consider my own assumptions that to express a JAP-related identity is an entirely conscious act.

Despite recognizing JAPpy traits within herself, Lily felt the JAP stereotype is negative enough to warrant actively avoiding being labeled as such; outside of the Jewish community. At first, Lily asserted that she does not make any decisions to actively distance herself from the JAP stereotype. She then changed her position, and began to list modifications she makes on a daily basis to hide JAPpy items and behaviours. For example, when buying a Coach brand purse, she "purposefully picked out a hidden one, the one without the logos all flashing." She wore fake Ugg boots. And, when she sat on

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the subway, she did not want people to think "oh, that girl is a little bratty, JAPpy girl on her Blackberry," so she hid the phone in her bag. The more we talked, she began to think of many examples of when she was in public where she had avoided giving off the impression of being spoiled or JAPpy. Lily was well aware of the JAP stereotype and the connotations it has, and therefore tried to hide aspects of her material goods and the way she talks when around people outside of the Jewish community.

I probed Lily about why she felt more strongly about being identified as a JAP outside of the Jewish community. In her school, trying to avoid appearing as a JAP is kind of a "lost cause." Everyone at her school is so tuned into the JAP style and status brands, that even if you buy a "more hidden" type of Coach purse, it will still be totally identifiable. Therefore, avoiding JAP identification is less important to her at school; so many people around her fit the stereotype anyway. Comparatively, in public, in downtown Toronto, Lily worries about the negative associations that would come from identifying these status symbols. She feared that in public, strangers would assume that all Jewish girls dress this way, and have status items like a Blackberry phone, and are therefore all JAPpy. She feared the generalization of all Jewish girls as rich and entitled; exactly the traits that the JAP stereotype embodies. Lily's distinction between the meanings of the JAP stereotype within her school and in the public sphere illustrates mediated action theory's conceptualization of cultural tools as having fluid and contextually derived meanings (Brown & Tappan, 2008; Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). The meaning of the cultural tool is largely determined by how the tool is used in a particular situation. For Lily, in the school context, where "everyone looks the same" and are well aware of the JAPpy status items, the JAP stereotype takes on less negativity. In school, the JAP stereotype did not appear to mediate her expressions of identity through her clothing and behaviour choices.

In contrast, in public, Lily understood the JAP stereotype to hold severely negative implications for all Jewish girls. Displaying status items may lead strangers to assume that Jewish girls all own expensive goods and display them in an entitled way. This alternate understanding had a stronger effect on Lily's identity performance. This understanding mediated her surface presentation while in these public spaces. She actively reduced her phone use, wore less conspicuous purses, and tried to avoid speech

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that could be construed as sounding spoiled. The meaning of the JAP stereotype is shaped by its context. Subsequently determining the extent to which this cultural tool then mediated Lily's identity. Toward the end of our conversation Lily began sounding distressed in trying to articulate why she was not as afraid to display JAP symbols within her school. She concluded that it was less significant for her to wear the JAPpy stuff at school. She felt this way, but she did not know why. She was confused by her identity understandings and expressions.

Conclusion

These portraits illustrate the complexity some Jewish girls face in negotiating their identities in relation to the JAP discursive stereotype. These portraits show how individual identifications with the JAP stereotype are complex and varied. None of my participants presented here unequivocally identified themselves as a Jewish American Princess. At the same time, they indicated a resemblance, to widely varying degrees, with certain elements of the discourse. Sarah considered herself to be a member of the "JAP crew" social group in her grade. Leah saw her feminine and girly side as easily fitting into the JAP stereotype. Lauren acknowledged that she likes the Free City sweatshirt, a JAP status symbol. And Lily wondered whether she was partly a JAP simply by virtue of her upbringing in the Toronto Jewish community. It is clear from these portraits that positioning oneself in relation to the JAP stereotype is not as simple as either identifying as a JAP, or not.

The JAP discourse encompasses a wide range of behaviours and attitudes, resulting in a spectrum of characteristics that my participants are responding to. In keeping with my earlier argument that the JAP discursive stereotype has multiple meanings and possible interpretations, Jewish girls do not take up the JAP stereotype in relation to their identities in a single way either. Instead, as evidenced by these snapshots of JAP related identity; these Jewish girls apply their own unique interpretations of the JAP discourse in their identity expressions. This creative process highlights the power exerted by individual agents to appropriate the cultural tool in ways that help them to accomplish their identity goals. In these portraits, my participants demonstrated how in

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using the JAP discursive stereotype as a cultural tool, they adapted it to mediate their self-expressions. These adaptations both support and challenge aspects of the JAP discourse, illustrating how a cultural tool is transformed during this negotiation.

What is especially interesting about these portraits is how they highlight the contradictions inherent in identity. As a controversial social stereotype, the JAP elicits a wide range of emotional and intellectual responses. The portraits above reveal the often-contradictory nature of these responses. The openness with which my participants frame their varied perspectives on JAP related identity suggest affinity with the third wave feminist approach to identity as accepting of contradictions and ambiguity (Adams 2008; Gillis et al., 2007; Heywood & Drake, 1997; Mann & Huffman, 2005). The third wave feminist lens provides the necessary framework to accommodate these complex self-understandings.

These portraits also emphasize the intersections arising in the JAP discourse. The narratives I have reconstituted here focus on JAP-related identity, but in doing so, also feature other themes which significantly shape my participants' identities as well. Sarah's portrait is situated in the complex world of high school social groups, and her identification with the JAP stereotype intersects with her social identity. The two are intertwined in her daily social negotiations between the JAP crew, and her "regular" group of friends. Lauren's portrait also locates her identity-based understandings of the JAP in the realm of peer relations, highlighting a different intersection with peer relations and community identifications. Lauren's experience attending a non-Jewish elementary school and having a non-Jewish best friend have constructed a unique intersection of peer and community-based identities, overlapping at the JAP stereotype. Lily's negotiations of a JAP-related identity reveal the intersection between the JAP stereotype and the community one belongs to. This intersection reflects Lily's understanding of her own identity as having JAPpy elements in it as an inevitable and natural outcome of belonging to the Jewish community. Finally, Leah's portrait of a feminist young woman belonging to a modern Orthodox Jewish community, compellingly illustrates the intersectional experience of the JAP stereotype. Leah's narrative repeatedly draws together the themes of religious identity and gendered identity. Her experience of the JAP stereotype, and its formative role on her identity, illustrate the mutually constitutive role that identity

categories play in shaping one another simultaneously. Leah's struggles with defining herself both as a JAP and a nerd, struggling to balance the empowering and constraining impacts of both of those discourses, demonstrates how the experience of the JAP as a gendered stereotype cannot be separated from the JAP as a religious stereotype. The stereotype instead forces these two identity-based categories to overlap. Through these portraits we see how the JAP stereotype functions as a site of intersections of multiple identity-based experiences in the lives of Jewish girls today.

Finally, these portraits illustrate how the JAP discursive stereotype is a tool that is used by these individual Jewish girls to mediate their identities. The JAP discursive stereotype functions as a cultural tool, available to Jewish girls as a set of ideas they can utilize in expressing aspects of their identity. Looking at each of these portraits, the girls take up the JAP stereotype in relation to their identities in slightly different ways. To explain the uniquely individual ways my participants utilize the JAP stereotype, I look to the intersectional and individual experience of the JAP discourse. Each of my participants stands at a unique intersection of peer, gendered, religious and communal experience. She has her own understandings of what it means to be a student at a Jewish high school, to be a girl, and to be Jewish. And these understandings are inextricably linked to her identity as a Jewish girl. It therefore follows that her usage of the JAP stereotype, as a tool to express these individual identifications, is necessarily unique as well. The portraits I present in this chapter deftly illustrate how Sarah, Lily, Leah, and Lauren take up the JAP stereotype in individual ways, to express their truly individual experience of configurations of the gender, religion, and social influences in their lives.

CHAPTER 8: SUMMATIVE REFLECTIONS

In this research I set out to qualitatively explore how Jewish girls interpret the discursive stereotype of the Jewish American Princess, and how these meanings factor into their identities. It was my goal to address a significant gap in the literature on this topic by conducting the first qualitative study to gather primary participant-based research on the JAP stereotype, and by exploring the JAP stereotype in relation to individual identity.

My analysis of the JAP discursive stereotype, which involved exploring how some Jewish girls today understand and utilize this entity, is comprised of three pieces. I first explored how my participants describe the JAP stereotype. I then contextualized these descriptions within a web of understandings, exploring how my participants interpret the JAP stereotype. I concluded my analysis with a series of portraits to probe directly how these descriptions and understandings manifest in my participants' utilization of the JAP stereotype as a tool to mediate their identities. Together, these analyses shed light on how the JAP stereotype is shaping Jewish girls' lives on both the social and the individual levels.

In Chapter 5, I presented how my participants described the physical and attitudinal characteristics of the JAP persona. My participants provided a wide array of descriptions of this stereotype. They characterized the JAP consistently as materialistic, as girly, as self-centred, as someone who flaunts her wealth, and as someone who does not appreciate the value of money. At the same time, there was a lot of variation in how my participants described the JAP in terms of intelligence, confidence, and meanness. In light of these findings, it is apparent that the JAP stereotype is not understood in one single way. Instead, my participants' varied descriptions indicate that the JAP has multiple possible meanings and possible configurations.

Finding that amongst a group of fourteen girls the JAP is described in a variety of ways begins to undermine the understanding of the JAP as a hard and fast stereotype, representative of only a narrow set of traits. From my research, it is clear that the JAP stereotype is a very complex entity. I therefore argue that it is crucial to embrace a nuanced understanding of this stereotype if one is going to comprehend the multiple roles

that it plays for Jewish girls today. Understanding that girls configure the JAP stereotype in different ways is a necessary starting point if one is going to explore how this stereotype manifests for individual girls' identity negotiations.

In Chapter 6, I built on this foundational understanding of the JAP stereotype as nuanced, and explored how my participants subsequently interpret the stereotype. My participants interpret the JAP discursive stereotype through four aspects of their identities: peer relations, gender, community, and religion. Girls' understandings of their social, gendered, communal, and religious roles provide them with the means to interpret the JAP stereotype in ways that are specific to their unique social positioning. These four aspects of identity come together in a configuration that is unique to each girl. Therefore, the portal through which each girl interprets the JAP stereotype is unique as well. In this way, the JAP stereotype functions as a site of intersections. These imbricated aspects of identity serve as lenses through which to interpret the JAP stereotype's role in my participants' lives. These complex understandings and experiences of the JAP stereotype further illustrate the varied ways this phenomenon manifests in girls' lives.

Finally, in the seventh chapter, I turned my focus to how these descriptions and interpretations of the JAP discursive stereotype are taken up by Jewish girls in their identity negotiations. Using a mediated action approach, the portraits of Lauren, Leah, Sarah, and Lily's JAP-related stories illustrate how some Jewish girls take up the JAP stereotype as a cultural tool through which to mediate expressions of their identities. This chapter reflects the complexity of identity-based negotiations. While Lily criticizes JAPpy materialism and excessive consumption, she accepts that she may very well display these traits herself, simply as a byproduct of growing up in the Toronto Jewish community. Sarah actively calls the JAPpy girls her friends, and calls herself a member of their social group, yet does not go so far as to adopt the label herself; whereas Leah enthusiastically self-identifies as a JAP for her girly and fashion loving traits, and at the same time criticizes the JAP discourse for not encouraging female intelligence. The ways in which these girls simultaneously criticize the model of Jewish girlhood forwarded by the JAP and take on aspects of this discourse in their self-expression, illustrates the complexity embedded in their identity negotiations.

In these portraits, the girls take up the JAP stereotype in relation to their identities in different ways. And in doing so, they both accept and reject various elements of this discourse. To explain the uniquely individual ways my participants utilize the JAP stereotype, I have applied the mediated action concept of *possibilities of improvisation.* Tappan (2005) explains that the individual does not passively internalize the cultural tool, in this case, the JAP stereotype; instead the user has an active role in creating meaning for, and gaining facility of the tool. There are two dimensions to this process, a *sense of mastery* and a *sense of ownership* (Tappan 2005). A sense of mastery implies knowing how to use a given cultural tool with a relatively high degree of facility or skill, whereas a sense of ownership goes a step further to convey how an individual takes a cultural tool, which basically belongs to others or to the group culture, and makes it their own.

The concept of ownership over the cultural tool best highlights the capacity of the individual within the tense relationship between the individual and the social in constructing identity. Developing a sense of ownership over the cultural tool provides the opportunity for the individual to creatively develop and extend the cultural tool in ways that meet their own identity needs. Wertsch (1997) posits that this process of taking up and appropriating the cultural tool as one's own, and subsequently changing and adapting this tool to meet your needs, is the *possibility for improvisation.* The varied ways that my participants take up the JAP stereotype in relation to their identities indicates the possibility that some Jewish girls have developed a sense of ownership over the JAP stereotype as a cultural tool, and have therefore been able to creatively extend its meaning and possible uses to serve their own identity construction. Each portrait demonstrates how my participants creatively extend the JAP discourse to apply to her specific needs. The possibility for improvisation conceptualizes such innovative appropriations of the JAP stereotype as the agentic utilization of a communal tool.

A Return to the Discursive Stereotype

The crux of my research and its findings rests on the conceptualization of the Jewish American Princess as a *discursive stereotype.* In this thesis I have married the concepts of stereotype and discourse so as to capitalize on the strengths of both of these

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models. *Stereotype* emphasizes the constructed link between exaggerated physical and behavioural traits with a cultural understanding of Jewish girls. Conversely, *discourse* allows for a broader, deeper, more historically bound contextualization of the JAP within the experience of Jewish women in North America. The discourse is broader than the single stereotype. The discourse of the JAP reflects the production of knowledge about Jewish girls. The stereotype of the JAP is the manifestation of this discourse, and the multiple ways and avenues through which it is taken up in our everyday lives. To ignore the general understanding of the JAP as a stereotype would be inaccurate. But to ignore the deeply entrenched social power this stereotype has to order Jewish girls' lives, and shape what they see as true, would be ignorant.

The discursive element of the JAP is important to help further explain the variations in how my participants take up the JAP stereotype. In keeping with the Foucauldian understanding of discourse, the power coupled with the discursive production of knowledge and truth is not attributed to one single person or creator. Rather, power is practiced and dispersed in an endless number of locations, including individuals (Foucault, 1978). The girls in my study are subjected to certain designations of Jewish girlhood outlined in the JAP discourse, but they also have power in how they negotiate these designations, how they interpret them, and subsequently react to them in their own expressions of self. Just as Foucault (1978) argues that power is dispersed, power therefore also comes from the girls in my study. This conceptualization of power and its role in producing discourse subsequently opens up the space to understand how my participants *exert* power over the JAP discourse. My participants exert power against the JAP discourse in their creative utilization of it. For example, how Leah capitalizes on the JAP discourse's characterization of girls as unintelligent to promote her own identity as smart actively challenges how the JAP discourse defines Jewish girls. In a similar way, Lily exerts her own power to subtly redefine how to the JAP stereotype is attributed to girls by arguing that it is an inevitable outcome of growing up in a certain community, and is therefore natural behaviour. These examples illustrate how my participants are impinging on how the JAP discourse defines Jewish girls.

In many ways, my participants exercise their individual power to resist the narrow definitions of Jewish girlhood imposed by the JAP stereotype. Through their re-

appropriations of aspects of the discourse, they are actively contributing to its evolution. The mediated action understanding of discourse as a cultural tool further reinforces this interpretation. The meaning of the cultural tool, here the JAP discourse, is modified, adapted, and affected each time it is used in direct reflection of the individual who uses it and the context in which it is used. It is in these moments of utilization that the cultural tool is shaped, where its meanings change, and its resulting power to define and order categories of being is shifted.

Final Feminist Thoughts

Through the guiding framework of third wave Jewish feminism, this research has intentionally probed the relationship between the JAP discursive stereotype and female identities. My analysis of the gendered understandings of the JAP discursive stereotype demonstrates how it provides strong prescriptions for a certain way of being a Jewish girl. The identification of the *girly* trait as one of the central elements of the JAP stereotype illustrates one such prescription. Presenting a highly feminine persona, consumed with their appearance, the JAP stereotype confines those who fall under this label to this expression of femininity. In negotiating their identities around the JAP stereotype, girls may then be forced to either accept or reject this version of femininity. Addressing the expectations for Jewish females specifically, Leah also related how the JAP stereotype serves as a model for traditional female roles. She saw the JAP stereotype as a symbol of the *stay-at-home* mother, who does not work, and who is fully taken care of by her parents and her husband. It is these and other gendered prescriptions that some of my participants resist in their own utilizations of the JAP discourse. As they take up this tool to express their own identities and to interpret their social worlds, they challenge these gendered messages within the JAP discourse.

Furthermore, through the third wave feminist lens, I celebrate the variations in how my participants interpret and utilize that JAP discursive stereotype. It is through these variations that identity can be seen as contradictory and complex. As discussed earlier, some of my participants accept elements of the JAP discourse, while criticizing others. In embracing identity as contradictory and complex, a third wave Jewish feminist

approach enables the re-conceptualization of how a Jewish girl might simultaneously express both affinity and rejection with one discourse. My participants have applied individual understandings of the JAP discourse in their utilization of it, re-signifying the JAP discourse in ways that are meaningful for them. In its acceptance of contradictions and ambiguities, third wave feminist thought creates a meaningful framework through which to understand my participants' unique JAP-related experience.

Final Thoughts on Jewish Identity

The guiding framework of third wave Jewish feminism, while intentionally probing how the JAP discursive stereotype constructs meaning around being a girl, has also allowed me to explore what the JAP conveys about being Jewish. Through this research I have sought to explore the relationship between the JAP discursive stereotype, and my participants' Jewish identities. The JAP stereotype plays a role in negotiations of Jewish identity in that it evokes certain discourses of Jewish history, Jewish community, and the Jewish religion. My participants offered interpretations of the JAP stereotype directly in relation to their experience of being Jewish. For the girls in Focus Groups 1, 2, and 3, the JAP stereotype evoked the images of Jews as money grubbing and ostentatious in their wealth. They located these images in the historical discourses of anti-Semitism and Jewish persecution. These girls absorb these messages about what it means to be Jewish from the JAP stereotype.

Similarly, my participants took from the JAP discursive stereotype, messages about what it means to be part of the Jewish community. They saw the JAP stereotype as a widely recognized symbol of being a Jewish girl. Therefore, in their affinity or rejection of this stereotype, they are negotiating their affiliation with the Jewish community over other ethnic or religious groups. Finally, the JAP stereotype also served as a way for some of my participants to connect with their religious understandings of Judaism. For my religiously Orthodox participants the JAP stereotype became a vehicle for negotiating their religious understandings of being Jewish and being female. For my participants, the JAP stereotype does indeed represent to them messages, images, and expectations for being Jewish and part of the Toronto Jewish communities. Their usages of the JAP

discursive stereotype therefore became a site for negotiating their understandings and expressions of their Jewish identities at the same time.

Final Thoughts on the Mediated Action Approach

One of my central purposes in this research has been to explore, through a mediated action perspective, how the JAP discursive stereotype can be understood as a cultural tool taken up by Jewish girls to mediate their identities. Through the identity portraits, I have illustrated this process. Furthermore, the ways the portraits capture specific stories and instances where my participants describe taking up the JAP stereotype as such a tool reflects the emphasis on context in the mediated action understanding of identity construction. Crucial to the mediation of identity is the recognition that the meanings of cultural tools are not fixed. Instead, the meanings are actually very flexible and fluid (Brown & Tappan, 2008; Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). The meaning of the cultural tool is largely determined by how the tool is used in a particular situation. The meaning that discourse holds for identity formation is specific to that moment when it is enacted in that unique intersection of social, cultural and historical elements. In this way, as my participants took up the JAP stereotype, the meanings of the tool became inscribed at the specific moment of its use. The applications of the JAP stereotype in the many stories that my participants have shared with me are therefore reflections of the context in which it was used at that moment of identity construction.

This research, drawing on the experiences and understandings of girls from different Toronto Jewish high schools, thoroughly illustrates the contextual nature of cultural tools. The JAP stereotype is interpreted and described differently, depending on the community in which the interpreter is embedded. For example, on the broad social level, my participants' understandings of the JAP stereotype are contextualized within their specific (school) community. For my participants who attend the Jewish academy, peer relations are the most salient context for interpreting the JAP stereotype's role in their social lives. In contrast, for my participants from the more religious Mesorah Academy for Girls, religious beliefs and practices provide the context and most significant interpretive tool for making meaning out of the JAP stereotype. In short, for

each of my participants, the JAP discourse took on specific meanings derived from their social and religious contexts. In this way, utilizations of the JAP stereotype and its subsequent meanings are inescapably contextual. Furthermore, on the surface level, the JAP's appearance is also defined differently depending on the school community. My participants from the Jewish Academy outline the style of a "JA JAP," that they describe as specific to their school. At the same time, my participants from the Mesorah Academy for Girls refer to the *religious JAP,* providing a description of her stylistic components. The girls from one school do not appear to be familiar with the JAP styles indicated by the girls at the other school. JAP style is therefore also local and contextual. The contextual nature of usages of the JAP stereotype further reinforces the necessity of taking a nuanced approach to understandings how the JAP discursive stereotype manifests in Jewish girls' lives.

I also recognize that many of the clothing trends that are delineated as JAP trends are also popular amongst girls of other religious, ethnic, and social groups. Simply walking through shopping malls in Toronto, I see many different girls wearing Lululemon leggings and Ugg boots. But in the context of the Jewish community, these symbols are interpreted as JAPpy. For my participants, their interpretations of these material objects is contextualized within the Toronto Jewish community, where these symbols are directly associated with the JAP discursive stereotype.

Finally, it is imperative to close these reflections with an explanation of how I conceive of my participants' interactions with the JAP stereotype. In Chapter 6, I presented my participants' understandings of the JAP stereotype as mediated through the identity aspects of peer relations, gender, community, and religion. Then in Chapter 7, I positioned the JAP stereotype as the tool of mediation, through which some of my participants' identities are enacted. I have discussed the JAP stereotype as both a cultural tool that is picked up by individuals, and as a discourse that structures lives. It is my belief that the JAP discursive stereotype takes on *both* of these roles in the lives of these Jewish girls. My analysis illustrates how the JAP stereotype is a cultural tool that is available to Jewish girls, and that is taken up by some to mediate expressions of their identities. At the same time, I have also demonstrated how aspects of individual identity mediate unique understandings of the JAP stereotype. The JAP discursive stereotype is

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both the mediator, and the mediated. In this way, I believe that the JAP stereotype factors into the structuring and meaning making of Jewish girls lives in multiple, complex, and highly contextual ways.

Suggestions for further research

As in all research, coming to the end of a project provides the opportunity to imagine possible directions in which to take the research. Through this exploration of the JAP discursive stereotype and how individual Jewish girls take it up in their identity negotiations, several possible directions for future research have emerged. The first encompasses ways to adapt my current project to explore the new facets of the experience surrounding the JAP discourse that came to light through this work. The second involves possible applications of my work to youth programming within the Jewish community. The third, finally, involves applying the methodological and interpretive tools I have brought to bear on the JAP discursive stereotype to other cultural images and stereotypes. I address each of these possible directions for future research in more detail below.

This research project probing Toronto Jewish girls' understandings of and experience with the JAP discursive stereotype has illuminated two aspects of this phenomenon that I argue warrant further investigation. First, through our discussions, my participants expressed their inability to comment on the manifestation of the JAP stereotype beyond their "Jewish bubble." The identification of their surroundings as almost exclusively Jewish reveals the narrowness of my research sample. My sample is confined to girls of a certain socioeconomic class and social location. My participants see themselves as financially well off; they attend private schools and enjoy many material luxuries such as summer camp, personal computers, and nice clothes. My participants all come from the Greater Toronto Area. I recognize that in these ways, the narrow design of my sample precluded the participation of Jewish girls who are of working or lower-middle-class backgrounds, attend public schools, or who have different affiliations with the Jewish community. While my research has not in any way tried to speak for all Jewish girls, or represent the totality of female Jewish experience, I recognize the value of seeking out a wide range of Jewish female experience as it relates to the Jewish

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American Princess. The benefits of hindsight allow the researcher to look back on their project, and reflect on how to approach this topic from a different angle. I strongly believe that seeking out girls outside of the "Jewish bubble," or who are perhaps only partial participants within this bubble, would draw out extremely insightful narratives of identity negotiation. In the future, I would therefore like to expand this study to involve Jewish girls in public schools and in different cities across North America.

Second, many of my participants also expressed that they felt their experience with the JAP stereotype was more salient when they were younger, primarily during elementary school. They explained that the role the JAP stereotype played in influencing their social experiences was especially strong from approximately grades five to eight. For example, Lola described using the JAP stereotype as a significant insult during elementary school, and then graduating to stronger insults such as bitch or slut in high school. In a similar way, Lauren described feeling that the JAP stereotype played a stronger role in defining who the most popular social clique was in grade seven, eight, and nine. She felt in some ways, she later outgrew that focus in high school. It would therefore be relevant to build on these reflections, and explore the JAP stereotype through the eyes of younger girls than my high school aged sample. Adapting the desired sample of participants to better reflect a broad range of Jewish girls' backgrounds, as well as targeting girls at a younger age who may be engaging with the JAP stereotype more overtly, would enable further meaningful exploration into this complex entity.

My findings also have implications for my own and others' work with Jewish youth. My research participants all expressed genuine surprise when I shared with them the scholarly deconstructions of the JAP stereotype as sexist and anti-Semitic. All of the girls responded that they had never heard this commentary before, and all found it extremely interesting. Reflecting on the ways my participants responded to learning of the historicity of the JAP stereotype, and how this information served as an excellent springboard for discussing the feminist and anti-Semitic meanings of the term, I believe that this same information would work well in a workshop format. I would like to adapt my review of the relevant literature tracking the evolution of the JAP discourse, and the scholarly deconstructions of the term into workshops designed for Jewish youth. I envision these workshops being facilitated in summer camps, youth groups, synagogues,

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and school settings. I believe there is strong value in circulating the perspectives on the JAP stereotype that I bring together in this thesis, and using them to provide opportunities for youth to engage directly with their understandings of this prevalent stereotype.

Third, I believe that the methodological and interpretive tools used here in application to the JAP discursive stereotype hold great promise as interpretive approaches when applied to other cultural stereotypes. As used here, the combination of a third wave feminist approach coupled with a mediated action approach to identity have facilitated a rich investigation of how cultural stereotypes targeting girls and young women are taken up in complex identity negotiations. In this way, my work contributes to the field of girlhood studies by challenging cultural stereotypes and discourses shaping North American girlhood. Further, the methodological technique of integrating historical background to develop the discussion of the cultural tool has provided further depth and mutual meanings making of complex cultural entities. I am excited to see how this approach may provide meaningful insight into how other cultural stereotypes are understood and utilized in identity construction.

Conclusion

My overarching goal through this entire project has been to draw attention to the JAP stereotype and its social manifestations. The recent resurgence of the JAP stereotype in popular culture indicates the continued presence, and the continued relevance, of this concept in North America. It is therefore imperative to probe how this stereotype manifests, and the implications of these manifestations. Through this work I have shown how the JAP discursive stereotype shapes some experiences of modern Jewish girlhood. In recognizing this influential role, it has also been my goal to expose the JAP stereotype to interrogation. In working directly with participants, I provided an opportunity for Jewish girls to explore, in an unconstrained way, their own understandings of this phenomenon. I have created a space in which to challenge assumptions, foster meaningful conversations, and mutually make meaning of this complex entity.

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Exploring the term

What do you think of – in 5 words – when you hear the term JAP?

Can you describe what a JAP is? (OR: What is a JAP in 2009?)

     a. Can you describe the behaviours that are commonly associated with being a JAP?

     b. How would you describe a JAPpy attitude?

     c. Are there different types of JAPs?

How would you categorize the word JAP? (for example: a label, a stereotype, a name, a culture, a lifestyle, a phrase)

     a. Please explain why you picked this category.

What role does materialism or consumerism play in the JAP stereotype?

Sexuality

How do JAPs associate with the opposite sex?

     a. Are there specific sexual attitudes or behaviours that JAPs stereotypically show?

     b. Is this issue of how they act sexually an important part of the stereotype?

Uses and Meanings

Who uses the term 'Jewish American Princess'?

     c. Who is the person they are saying it about?

     d. Why do you think people use the term JAP? [it's purpose]

Do you think that the JAP label actually refers to real people? Or is it just a stereotype?

How does a girl's family contribute to her 'being called a JAP' OR having a 'jappy image'?

Can you tell me about whether you think being labeled as a JAP is a positive or a negative thing?

     e. How do you think it makes someone feel to be labeled as a JAP?

What does using the JAP label say in general about what it means to be Jewish or female?

     What messages do you think the JAP label is sending?

The JAP's role in the social sphere

Can you tell me about a time you heard the term JAP used?

How acceptable is it for a girl to be a JAP?

     d. Is it cool to be a JAP?

What ages do you think the JAP stereotype applies to?

Think about the way your school's social environment looks (different groups of friends, etc.)

     e. Where would you place JAPs in the social hierarchy/levels/order?

     f. Who do JAPs socialize with?

Is the JAP specific to the Jewish community? How so?

Where does the JAP label come from?
Where do you think the term "JAP" comes from?
Are you aware that the JAP label is interpreted as both sexist and anti-Semitic?

    g. Provide more background (some scholars interpret the label in this way

    h. Now that I have told you that – How does it make you think differently about the term?

Appendix B
Interview Question Schedule

Exploring the Term
What do you think of – in 5 words – when you hear the term JAP?
Can you describe for me what or who a JAP is?
    a. Can you describe the behaviours and attitudes that are associated with being a JAP?
    b. Are there different types of JAPs?
How do you determine if someone is a JAP, or deserves for you to give them JAP label?
What role does materialism or consumerism play in the JAP stereotype?
How do JAPs associate with the opposite sex?
    c. Are they "easy", or do they "play hard to get"?
    d. Is this issue of how they act sexually an important part of the stereotype?
Do you think everyone means the same thing when they are using the term JAP?
Do you know any people who call themselves JAPs? Do you know any people who 'own' the JAP label?
    e. What do you think that is all about?
How do you react to the word "JAP" compared to the words "Jewish American Princess"?

Personal experiences with the Term
Can you tell me a story about a time you had an encounter with the term "JAP".
Can you tell me about a time you used the word JAP?
    i. Why did you choose to use this word over another?
How does the term "JAP" affect your life?
Can you tell me about whether you think being labeled as a JAP is a positive or a negative thing?
How does JAP culture make you feel about yourself?
    j. As a female?
    k. As Jewish?
Would you consider yourself a JAP?
    l. Why or why not?
How important is being or not being a JAP to your identity – or how you think about who you are as a person?
    m. Had you ever thought of this before, or just since I am asking you?
What types of things do you do to reflect this identity?
    n. How do you modify or change things about yourself or what you do in response to the term "JAP" or JAP culture?
Do you think other people think you are a JAP?
    o. How do you feel about being perceived in this way?

Non-JAP identified
What does being considered a "non-JAP" mean to you?
    p. Can you explain a bit more about how and why this is important to you?

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How does not thinking of yourself as a JAP influence decisions about how you act and what you do?

How do you think your future will be influenced by your identity as a non-JAP?

JAP identified

What does it mean to you to be a JAP?

    q. What parts of the Jap stereotype fit in with how you think about yourself?

    r. How does thinking of yourself as a JAP influence decisions about how you act and what you do?

Do you like being thought of as a JAP?

    s. If yes, what does it bring to your life?

    t. If no, how has it complicated your life?

Who gave you this label as a JAP? (or, Did you decided that you were a JAP, or someone else?)

Where does the JAP label come from?

What does using the JAP label say in general about what it means to be Jewish or female?

    o What messages do you think the JAP label is sending?

Where do you think the term "JAP" comes from? (who came up with it, when in history)

Are you aware that the JAP label is interpreted as both sexist and anti-Semitic?

    o Are you surprised by this information?

    o Now that I have told you that – How does it affect how you think about the term?

    o Does this history have meaning today?

    o Can you take the history out of the word and use it entirely differently today?

    o Do you think this information would affect how other people use and understand the term?

Please fill out the following questions as best you can. If there are any questions you do not feel comfortable answering, feel free to skip them. All of the information in this form will be kept confidential, and will not be shared in the focus group.
Thanks!

1. Name:
2. Email address:
3. Home mailing address (street name, house number, apartment number, city, postal code):
4. Age: _____
5. Grade: _____
6. Do you attend a Jewish High School?
7. Have you ever attended sleepover camp in the summer?
8. Was it a Jewish Camp?
9. Do you (or your family) belong to any religious denomination (Reform, Reconstructionist, Conservative, Orthodox, Humanist, Other-Please specify)?
10. What is your Jewish ethnicity (Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Other-Please specify)?
11. For how many stages of school have you attended a Jewish Day School? (Kindergarten, Elementary, High School)
12. What do you think your family's financial situation is? (Choose from *do not have a lot of money, are comfortable, are more than comfortable, are wealthy*)
13. Would you be interested in participating in an individual interview after your participation in the focus group?
    (This is not a commitment, only if you think you might be interested in having a more in depth conversation about the Jewish American Princess stereotype. The interview would be scheduled at a new time, not on the same day as the focus group.)
14. Would you like to review the transcript of this focus group?
15. Would you like to receive information at the end of this research study about the conclusions to this research?
16. Please choose a pseudonym (fake name) that will be used in all of records/writing of this research study, instead of your own name. It can be any name that you like. This is to protect your identity as a participant in this research.

Title of Study: The Jewish American Princess Returns
Principal Investigator: Rebecca Starkman, Graduate Student, Department of Child and
                Youth Studies, Brock University
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Tom O'Neill, Associate Professor, Department of Child and
                Youth Studies, Brock University

Dear Parent or Guardian,

       I am a Master's student in the Department of Child and Youth Studies at Brock
University and I am working with Dr. Tom O'Neill. In my research, I am exploring how
young Jewish women today understand the stereotype of the Jewish American Princess
(JAP), and how it affects their emerging identities as both Jewish, and female. The
purpose of this research is to hear directly from Jewish girls about their thoughts,
feelings, and experiences with the Jewish American Princess term. It is expected that
participants in this study will benefit from discussion about their experiences with the
Jewish American Princess stereotype. It is also hoped that the discussions will shed light
on what role the Jewish American Princess stereotype plays in the lives of Jewish female
youth.

       Your daughter is being asked to participate in a focus group discussion. This
study will involve an approximately 90 minute group discussion between your daughter,
three or four of her friends, and myself. A research assistant will also be present to
record the order in which the participants speak, but will not participate in the discussion.
In this focus group we will discuss a variety of issues related to the stereotype of the
Jewish American Princess. Before the focus group, your daughter will also be asked to
fill out a brief questionnaire. Upon completion of the focus group, your daughter will
receive a $5 gift card to either Silvercity or Indigo. She will be contacted by email a few
weeks after participating in the focus group to provide her with an update on the research
study, and if she is interested, at the end of the research study for a summary of the
results.

       Although disclosure of your daughter's identity is a possible risk, every
precaution will be taken to protect her privacy and the confidentiality of any records
generated by this research. Given the group format of this session, she will asked to keep
all information that identifies, or could potentially identify a participant and/or her
comments, private. All participants and researchers will be required to sign a group
confidentiality form. All information your daughter provides will be considered
confidential and her name will not be identified with the input she gives to this session.
With your permission, the focus group will be tape recorded for future transcription. Only
my faculty supervisors and I (Rebecca Starkman) will have access to the audiotapes and
the transcripts. Your daughter's name and any other identifying information will not
appear in any reports or documents that are published as a result of this research project.
The identifying information collected will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

It is possible that some participants may experience minimal emotional discomfort. There is a minimal risk that your daughter my experience slight emotional discomfort while participating in the focus group as the interview discussions may call on her to look at the topic of the Jewish American Princess in a thought provoking way. However, in the event that your daughter is uncomfortable in any way, she may decline answering any questions that she feels she does not wish to answer and may end the session altogether if she wishes. I will at all times be sensitive to your daughter's thoughts and feelings, and conduct this research in a way that is respectful of these needs. Participation is totally voluntary. Your daughter is free to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty.

If you have any questions about your daughter's participation in this session, please feel free to discuss these with me. If you do not understand any portion of what she is being asked to do, or the contents of this form, I am available to provide a complete explanation. Please get in touch with me through the email address at the bottom of this form.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at Brock University. However, the final decision about your daughter's participation is yours. If you wish to withdraw your consent for participation at anytime, please inform me of your decision. Should you have comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact the Office of Research Ethics at Brock University (905 688-5550 ext 3035, reb@brocku.ca).

Thank you for your assistance with this project. Please sign the attached consent form and send it with your daughter to the scheduled focus group.

Yours sincerely,
Rebecca Starkman
Rebecca Starkman   Dr. Tom O'Neill, Supervisor
M.A. Student   Associate Professor, Child and Youth Studies,
Brock University
jap.research.study@gmail.com   (905) 688-5550, ext. 3110
                                    toneill@brocku.ca

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University's Research Ethics Board (09-048 O'NEILL).

Consent Form

Date: _____
Project Title: The Jewish American Princess Returns

Principal Investigator:
Rebecca Starkman, Master's student
Department of Child and Youth Studies
Brock University
jap.research.study@gmail.com

Faculty Supervisor:
Dr. Tom O'Neill, Associate Professor
Department of Child and Youth Studies
Brock University
(905) 688-5550 Ext. 3110
toneill@brocku.ca

I have read the information provided concerning the Master's research project entitled *The Jewish American Princess Returns* conducted by Rebecca Starkman of the Department of Child and Youth Studies at Brock University. I have understood the purpose of the research and potential risks and benefits as they are stated there. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions and receive any additional details I wanted about the study.

I am aware that my child will be participating in a focus group discussion. I am aware that my child will be audiotaped for the purposes of gathering clear and accurate data in both situations. I acknowledge that all information gathered on this project will be used for research purposes only and will be considered confidential.

I am aware that permission may be withdrawn at any time without penalty by advising the researchers.

I realize that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at Brock University (09-048 O'NEILL). I also realize that if I have any comments or concerns about my child's participation in this study, I can contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Child's Name: _____

Child's Birth Date: _____

Permission Decision: _____ Yes, I consent for my child may participate in this study

_____ No - I do not consent for my child to participate

Signature of Parent or Guardian: _____

Printed Name of Parent or Guardian:_____

Contact Number for Parent or Guardian: _____

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Title of Study: The Jewish American Princess Returns
Principal Investigator: Rebecca Starkman, Graduate Student, Department of Child and
                     Youth Studies, Brock University
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Tom O'Neill, Associate Professor, Department of Child and
                     Youth Studies, Brock University

Dear Parent or Guardian,

        I am a Master's student in the Department of Child and Youth Studies at Brock University and I am working with Dr. Tom O'Neill. In my research, I am exploring how young Jewish women today understand the stereotype of the Jewish American Princess (JAP), and how it affects their emerging identities as both Jewish, and female. The purpose of this research is to hear directly from Jewish girls about their thoughts, feelings, and experiences with the Jewish American Princess term. It is expected that participants in this study will benefit from discussion about their experiences with the Jewish American Princess stereotype. It is also hoped that the discussions will shed light on what role the Jewish American Princess stereotype plays in the lives of Jewish female youth.

        Your daughter is now being invited to participate in an individual interview. The interview will be an opportunity to talk in more detail about her own personal thoughts about the Jewish American Princess label, and how it affects her own identity as both Jewish and as female. The interview will involve a 90-minute conversation with myself, at a time and place that is most comfortable for your daughter. Upon completion of the interview, your daughter will receive a $5 gift card to either Blockbuster or Indigo. She will be contacted by email a few weeks after participating in the interview to provide her with an update on the research study, and if she is interested, at the end of the research study for a summary of the results.

        Again, although disclosure of your daughter's identity is a possible risk, every precaution will be taken to protect her privacy and the confidentiality of any records generated by this research. With your permission, the interview will be tape recorded for future transcription. Only my faculty supervisors and I will have access to the audiotapes and the transcripts. Your daughter's name and any other identifying information will not appear in any reports or documents that are published as a result of this research project. The identifying information collected will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

        It is possible that some participants may experience minimal emotional discomfort. There is a minimal risk that your daughter my experience slight emotional discomfort while participating in the interview as the interview discussions may call on her to look at the topic of the Jewish American Princess and individual identity in a thought provoking way. However, in the event that your daughter is uncomfortable in any way, she may decline answering any questions that she feels she does not wish to answer and may end the session altogether if she wishes. I will at all times be sensitive to

your daughter's thoughts and feelings, and conduct this research in a way that is respectful of these needs.

Participation is totally voluntary. Your daughter is free to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty.

If you have any questions about your daughter's participation in this session, please feel free to discuss these with me. If you do not understand any portion of what she is being asked to do, or the contents of this form, I am available to provide a complete explanation. Please get in touch with me through the email address at the bottom of this form.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at Brock University. However, the final decision about your daughter's participation is yours. If you wish to withdraw your consent for participation at anytime, please inform me of your decision. Should you have comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact the Office of Research Ethics at Brock University (905 688-5550 ext 3035, reb@brocku.ca).

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jap.research.study@gmail.com   (905) 688-5550, ext. 3110
                                     toneill@brocku.ca

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University's Research Ethics Board (09-048 O'NEILL).

Guardian Consent Form

Date: _____
Project Title: The Jewish American Princess Returns

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Principal Investigator: Faculty Supervisor:
Rebecca Starkman, Master's student   Dr. Tom O'Neill, Associate Professor
Department of Child and Youth Studies   Department of Child and Youth Studies
Brock University   Brock University
jap.research.study@gmail.com   (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3110
                                                                  toneill@brocku.ca

I have read the information provided concerning the Master's research project entitled *The Jewish American Princess Returns* conducted by Rebecca Starkman of the Department of Child and Youth Studies at Brock University. I have understood the purpose of the research and potential risks and benefits as they are stated there.

I have had the opportunity to ask any questions and receive any additional details I wanted about the study.

I am aware that my child will be participating in an interview discussion. I am aware that my child will be audiotaped for the purposes of gathering clear and accurate data in both situations. I acknowledge that all information gathered on this project will be used for research purposes only and will be considered confidential.

I am aware that permission may be withdrawn at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

I realize that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at Brock University (09-048 O'NEILL). I also realize that if I have any comments or concerns about my child's participation in this study, I can contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Child's Name: _____

Child's Birth Date: _____

Permission Decision: _____ Yes- I consent for my child to participate in this study
                                 _____ No - I do not consent for my child to participate

Signature of Parent or Guardian: _____

Printed Name of Parent or Guardian:_____

Contact Number for Parent or Guardian: _____

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Title of Study: The Jewish American Princess Returns

Principal Investigator: Rebecca Starkman, Graduate Student, Department of Child and Youth Studies, Brock University

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Tom O'Neill, Associate Professor, Department of Child and Youth Studies, Brock University

Hello,

      I am a Master's student in the Department of Child and Youth Studies at Brock University. In my research, I am exploring how young Jewish women today understand the stereotype of the Jewish American Princess (JAP), and how it affects their emerging identities as both Jewish, and female. The purpose of this research is to hear directly from Jewish girls like you about their thoughts, feelings, and experiences with the Jewish American Princess term. You are invited to participate in this research project as one of these Jewish girls. It is expected that participants in this study will benefit from discussion about their experiences with the Jewish American Princess stereotype. It is also hoped that the discussions will shed light on what role the Jewish American Princess stereotype plays in the lives of these Jewish female youth.

      You are being asked to participate in a focus group discussion. This study will involve an approximately 90 minute group discussion with you, three or four of your friends, a research assistant, and myself. In this focus group we will discuss a variety of issues related to the stereotype of the Jewish American Princess. Before the focus group, you will also be asked to fill out a brief questionnaire. Upon completion of the focus group, you will receive a $5 gift card to either Silvercity or Indigo. You will be contacted by email a few weeks after participating in the focus group to provide you with an update on the research study, and if you are interested, at the end of the research study for a summary of the results.

      Although disclosure of your identity is a possible risk, every precaution will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of any records generated by this research. Given the group format of this session, I will ask you to keep all information that identifies, or could potentially identify a participant and/or her comments, private. All participants and researchers will be required to sign a group confidentiality form. All information you provide will be considered confidential and your name will not be identified with the input you give to this session. With your permission, the focus group will be tape recorded for future transcription. Only my professors and I (Rebecca Starkman) will have access to the audiotapes and the transcripts. Your name and any other identifying information will not appear in any reports or documents that are published as a result of this research project. The information collected that could identify who you are will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

      It is possible that some participants may experience minimal emotional discomfort. There is a minimal risk that you my experience slight emotional discomfort while participating in the focus group as the interview discussions may call on you to look at the topic of the Jewish American Princess in a thought provoking way. However, in the event that you are uncomfortable in any way, you may decline answering any

questions that you feel you do not wish to answer and may end the session altogether if you wish. I will at all times be sensitive to your thoughts and feelings, and conduct this research in a way that is respectful of these needs.

Participation is totally voluntary and involves your input to and discussion of the issues associated with the study. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty. If you choose to withdraw after you have started a focus group, you will still receive the $5 gift certificate.

You are also invited to participate in an individual interview after the completion of the focus group discussion. The interview will be an opportunity to talk in more detail about your own personal thoughts about the Jewish American Princess label, and how it affects your own identity as both Jewish and as female. The interview will involve a 90-minute conversation, at a time and place that is most comfortable for you. By agreeing to participate in the focus group part of this research, you do not also have to participate in an interview. If you are possibly interested in participating in an interview at a later date, please indicate so on your questionnaire (another document included in this email) and we will have a chance to discuss it further at the appropriate time.

If you have any questions about participation in this session, please feel free to discuss these with me. If you do not understand any portion of what you are being asked to do, or the contents of this form, I am available to provide a complete explanation. Please get in touch with me through the email address at the bottom of this form.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at Brock University. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you wish to withdraw your consent for participation at anytime, please inform me of your decision. Should you have comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact the Office of Research Ethics at Brock University (905 688-5550 ext 3035, reb@brocku.ca).

Thank you for your assistance with this project. Please sign the attached consent form and bring it with you, along with a signed copy of the parental consent form to the scheduled focus group.

Yours sincerely,
Rebecca Starkman

Rebecca Starkman   Dr. Tom O'Neill, Supervisor
M.A. Student   Associate Professor, Child and Youth Studies,
Brock University
jap.research.study@gmail.com   (905) 688-5550, ext. 3110
                                          toneill@brocku.ca

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University's Research Ethics Board (09-048 O'NEILL).

Participant Assent

I have read the information presented in the letter about a study being conducted by Rebecca Starkman of the Department of Child and Youth Studies at Brock University under the supervision of Dr. Tom O'Neill. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I am aware that my comments will be tape-recorded for future use in the study.

I am also aware that pieces from the discussion may be included in Rebecca's thesis and/or publications that may come from this research. I am aware that any of my responses that are included in Rebecca's thesis or publications will be presented as anonymous, meaning that no one reading it would be able to tell that it was me that said it.

I am aware that I may withdraw from the study without penalty at any time by advising the researchers of this decision.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at Brock University. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Office of Research Ethics at 905-688-5550 ext. 3035.

With full knowledge of this study, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in the focus group discussion and all that it involves.

_____

Print Name

_____

Signature of Participant

Interview: Participant Information Letter and Assent Form

Title of Study: The Jewish American Princess Returns

Principal Investigator: Rebecca Starkman, Graduate Student, Department of Child and Youth Studies, Brock University

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Tom O'Neill, Associate Professor, Department of Child and Youth Studies, Brock University

Hi,

      I am a Master's student in the Department of Child and Youth Studies at Brock University and I am working with Dr. Tom O'Neill. In my research, I am exploring how young Jewish women today understand the stereotype of the Jewish American Princess (JAP), and how it affects their emerging identities as both Jewish, and female. The purpose of this research is to hear directly from Jewish girls like you about their thoughts, feelings, and experiences with the Jewish American Princess term. It is expected that participants in this study will benefit from discussion about their experiences with the Jewish American Princess stereotype. It is also hoped that the discussions will shed light on what role the Jewish American Princess stereotype plays in the lives of these Jewish female youth.

      You are now invited to participate in an individual interview. The interview will be an opportunity to talk in more detail about your own personal thoughts about the Jewish American Princess label, and how it affects your own identity as both Jewish and as female. The interview will involve a 90-minute conversation with myself, at a time and place that is most comfortable for you. Upon completion of the interview, you will receive a $5 gift card to either Blockbuster or Indigo. You will be contacted by email a few weeks after participating in the interview to provide you with an update on the research study, and if you are interested, at the end of the research study for a summary of the results.

      Again, although disclosure of your identity is a possible risk, every precaution will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of any records generated by this research. With your permission, the interview will be tape recorded for future transcription. Only my faculty supervisors and I will have access to the audiotapes and the transcripts. Your name and any other identifying information will not appear in any reports or documents that are published as a result of this research project. The information collected that could identify who you are will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

      It is possible that some participants may experience minimal emotional discomfort. There is a minimal risk that you my experience slight emotional discomfort while participating in the interview as the interview discussions may call on you to look at the topic of the Jewish American Princess and your own identity in a thought provoking way. However, in the event that you are uncomfortable in any way, you may decline answering any questions that you feel you do not wish to answer and may end the session altogether if you wish. I will at all times be sensitive to your thoughts and feelings, and conduct this research in a way that is respectful of these needs.

Participation is totally voluntary and involves your input to and discussion of the issues associated with the study. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty.

If you have any questions about participation in this session, please feel free to discuss these with me. If you do not understand any portion of what you are being asked to do, or the contents of this form, I am available to provide a complete explanation. Please get in touch with me through the email address at the bottom of this form.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at Brock University. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you wish to withdraw your consent for participation at anytime, please inform me of your decision. Should you have comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact the Office of Research Ethics at Brock University (905 688-5550 ext 3035, reb@brocku.ca).

Thank you for your assistance with this project.
Yours sincerely,
Rebecca Starkman

Rebecca Starkman   Dr. Tom O'Neill, Supervisor
M.A. Student   Associate Professor, Child and Youth Studies,
Brock University
jap.research.study@gmail.com   (905) 688-5550, ext. 3110
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I am aware that my comments will be tape-recorded for future use in the study.
I am also aware that pieces from the interview may be included in Rebecca's thesis and/or publications that may come from this research. I am aware that any of my responses that are included in Rebecca's thesis or publications will be presented as anonymous, meaning that no one reading it would be able to tell that it was me that said it.
I am aware that I may withdraw from the study without penalty at any time by advising the researchers of this decision.
This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at Brock University. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Office of Research Ethics at 905-688-5550 ext. 3035.

With full knowledge of this study, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in the interview and all that it involves.

Date: _____

Print Name: Signature of Participant:

Appendix H
Group Confidentiality Agreement

I understand that participation in this focus group requires group confidentiality. I realize that it is important for all participants and researchers to feel comfortable sharing their experiences and views without worrying that other people might find out. Therefore, my signature below ensures that I will keep all that is said in the focus group private and that I will not share anything said by other participants to people outside the focus group.

Participants
Print Name: _____
Signature: _____

Print Name: _____
Signature: _____

Print Name: _____
Signature: _____

Print Name: _____
Signature: _____

Researcher
Print Name: _____
Signature: _____