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To what extent did difference in place influence children's coping strategies in the ghettos? With reference to Lodz, Theresienstadt, Vilna and Warsaw.

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Introduction Section

David Wadowinski a leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising declared 'children of the ghetto – a cursed generation that...knew no laughter and no joy.'¹ Children² were one of the most targeted groups of the ghettos, and their survival rates were extremely low.³ Of the children who passed through the ghetto of Theresienstadt, around 90% of them perished.⁴ As a result of such high mortality rates, historians have tended to discuss children's experiences mainly in relation to deportation, disease and death. They have placed too much emphasis on Nazi policy towards children, rather than on how children responded to such actions.⁵ As Nicholas Stargardt has emphasised children have become 'objects rather than subjects of history.'⁶ This dissertation intends to move away from this focus on Nazi action, and instead will examine children's responses to various ghetto settings. It will focus on three main areas of exploration. Firstly, it will seek to challenge historians like Deborah Dwork who treat children's experiences as relatively homogeneous.⁷ It will argue that children were not just passive victims of the process, that they exhibited strength and determination in responding to the various challenges of the ghetto conditions. Secondly, it will show that place played a prominent role in encouraging a wide range of coping strategies to develop. As George Eisen emphasises

¹D. Wadowinski., *And we are not saved* (New York, 1963), 45.

²For the purpose of this dissertation, a child will be defined as someone who is sixteen or younger.

³The Nazis targeted children in order to prevent the continuance of what they saw as an 'unwanted race.' It was part of a larger state sponsored scheme that aimed to remove those the Germans considered racially inferior. In the ghettos the children were targeted first as they were seen by the Nazis as unproductive and therefore 'useless mouths.' See USHMM., *Children During the Holocaust*.
<<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005142>>17 March 2010.

⁴It is difficult to establish the exact numbers of those who died under ghetto conditions. However from ghetto to ghetto this could vary dramatically. For instance between January to December 1942 the mortality per 1000 inhabitants in Lodz was 159.6 as opposed to in Warsaw where between January and August 1942 it was much lower at 11.1. See L. Zdenek, and K. Weisskopf, *Ghetto Theresienstadt* (London, 1953), 133 and Corni, G., *Hitler's ghettos: voices from a beleaguered society, 1939-1944* (London, 2002), 204.

⁵See R. Hilberg., *Destruction of the European Jews*, vol. 1 (London, 2003).

⁶N. Stargardt., *Witnesses of war: children's lives under the Nazis* (London, 2005), 10.

⁷D. Dwork., *Children with a Star: Jewish Youth in Nazi Europe*, (London, 1991), 156-203.

‘environmental conditions were predominant...in governing behaviour.’⁸ It will also explore the idea that children’s coping strategies could be seen as forms of resistance. In order to examine these ideas, this dissertation will be split into seven sections. Each section will focus on a different aspect of place, such as living space, which will help to determine the impact that the contrasting ghettos had on children’s strategy.

In emphasising place as an essential factor in determining difference, this connects to a new area of historiography, one that highlights the importance of landscape in determining experience.⁹ It is important when exploring the influence of different ghettos to examine both the ghetto administrations and the contrasting landscapes that surrounded the children. For instance children had different options of exploration in Lodz where there were the green fields of Marysin, to Warsaw where courtyards were the only substitute. In examining difference in place it is also important to recognise that the children who entered these ghettos were far from homogeneous. They differed greatly in age, wealth and gender, which may have had some effect on how they responded.¹⁰ However, despite these differences in social make-up, the children had one significant area of shared experience. They were all segregated and placed into unfamiliar ghetto settings. These settings forced the children regardless of background to adapt and innovate in order to survive. This centralisation of place to experience, helps to justify why it needs to be explored in greater detail by historians.

The ghettos examined were radically different due to various factors including their location, permeability and leadership.¹¹ It seems unlikely that ghettos located in different countries ranging from Czechoslovakia to Poland, would have had completely the same

⁸G. Eisen., *Children and play in the Holocaust* (Amherst, 1988), 114.

⁹See A. Charlesworth, ‘The topography of Genocide’, in D. Stone (ed.), *The Historiography of the Holocaust* (Basingstoke, 2004).

¹⁰There are other factors such as their religious and political situations, which further highlight the need to emphasise how diverse children’s experiences were.

¹¹Each ghetto received different levels of attention from the Germans, which again highlights their diversity. For instance Theresienstadt was more or less free from Nazis, giving the Jews a particularly strong sense of self-government. As opposed to in Warsaw, where due to the deportations from September 1942, it received a lot more attention from German SS and police units. See USHMM., ‘Theresienstadt’ and USHMM., ‘Warsaw’. <<https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005069>> 17 April 2010.

focus in terms of strategy against Nazi oppression. As Christopher Browning has exemplified, ghettos formed at different times and for different reasons.¹² The Lodz ghetto in contrast to Warsaw, was formed in ‘fits and starts’¹³ and had a ghetto manager who supported a viable economy. This focus on work as a method of sustaining German support, meant Lodz had a very different outlook to that of Warsaw. These radically different focuses seem to support the argument that under different conditions, children’s ways of coping could not have been the same. The children who experienced multiple ghettos, even suggested that certain ghetto surroundings were more detrimental than others. The Lodz chronicle describes a fourteen year old boy who ‘succeeded in getting out of Warsaw where in his opinion, things are considerably worse.’¹⁴ Theresienstadt in particular stands out as even though it was officially labelled a ghetto, it was also a fully functioning transit camp.¹⁵ Frank Ehrmann describes the ghetto as having ‘differed so much...it seems to stand in direct conflict to everything we know of the Nazis and their attitudes.’ To one survivor it was ‘the stable that supplied the slaughterhouse.’¹⁶ The exposure of children in the Theresienstadt ghetto to continual transit, completely contrasts to the experiences of children in Warsaw who were exposed to intense bursts of deportation.¹⁷ The Lodz ghetto stands out as it was the only major ghetto to be located in

¹²Each ghetto was formed at different times, for instance the Lodz ghetto was formed in February 1940 as opposed to the Vilna ghetto which wasn’t formed until late September 1941. By then Vilna had already experienced Soviet invasion, German occupation and the Einsatzgruppen killing squads. Both ghettos were open for different lengths of time, as the final stages of the Vilna ghetto occurred in September 1943 as opposed to in Lodz where they didn’t occur until July 1944. These differences in duration as well as the events that occurred before their formation, show how these ghettos varied significantly. See USHMM., ‘Lodz’. <<https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005071>>17 March 2010 and E. Sterling, ‘‘Theatre in a graveyard’ the ghetto theatre in Vilna’ in E. Sterling (ed.), *Life in the ghettos during the Holocaust* (New York, 2005), 224-5.

¹³C. Browning., ‘Nazi Ghettoization Policy in Poland, 1939-1941’, *Central European History*, 19:4 (1986), 347.

¹⁴L. Dobroszycki (ed.), *The Chronicle of the Łódź ghetto, 1941-1944* (London, 1984), 63.

¹⁵Theresienstadt was particularly unique in that it was a very important part of the Nazi’s propaganda and deception. The Nazis portrayed the ghetto as a ‘spa town’ where the elderly Jews could retire and those with connections could escape the worst conditions. It was designed to only incarcerate certain categories of privileged Jews from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia. Theresienstadt was a ‘camp-ghetto’ with features of both a concentration camp and a ghetto, which makes it stand out from the rest of the ghettos examined. See Ehrmann, F., *Terezin* (Prague, 1965), 75 and USHMM., ‘Theresienstadt’. <<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005424>>01 April 2010.

¹⁶R. Kluger., *Landscapes of memory: a Holocaust girlhood remembered* (London, 2003), 76.

¹⁷The different ghettos changed dramatically over time. For instance Warsaw had a very different experience to that of Lodz. Warsaw had deportations starting in 1942, as opposed to Lodz which had no significant deportations between September 1942 and May 1944. The levels of children in Warsaw before

the German Reich. In being surrounded by a mainly native German population, the ghetto was almost completely cut off from the outside world. Children from Lodz had little knowledge of the events that were occurring outside the ghetto walls. This stood in great contrast to those of Vilna, who had already been exposed to the mass killings at Ponary. These are just some of the factors that make examining place important in establishing difference. It seems that each ghetto had unique traits, which enabled certain strategies to develop.

There are three main historians who explore children's experiences of the ghettos. George Eisen focuses in on play as a temporary strategy used by children to cope with the ghetto conditions. He argues that play was not 'divorced from reality'¹⁸, but was actually reflective of it. For instance he describes how children played games such as seizing the clothes of the dead.¹⁹ This argument can be expanded upon in relation to other coping strategies, as children often re-enacted atrocity, in order to rationalise as well as impose their own interpretations on it. This idea of reflecting reality, once again highlights the importance of the harsh conditions imposed by the ghetto surroundings. In contrast to the other two historians, Eisen emphasises the importance of place as a factor. He connects environmental features of the ghettos to difference in children's behaviour. He argues that the ghetto setting forced children to continually modify and adapt. He centralises play as a strategy and demonstrates how it was used to make the reality of the harsh conditions more bearable.²⁰ Although he highlights environmental conditions, he does not single out certain environmental factors and how children responded to them. This dissertation intends to examine specific features including permeability and green space, in order to assess their influence on a variety of strategy. In attempting to emphasise the tragic nature of lost childhood, Eisen also highlights that 'thousands of children once,

and after the deportations were very different, which would have had a significant impact on the range of coping strategies that they exhibited. However, this dissertation is seeking to examine the differences mainly from ghetto to ghetto and to emphasise that there was no such thing as a typical childhood experience. It therefore seeks to examine these ghettos on a wider scale, as opposed to examining how changes over time in each ghetto affected the children's strategy. See USHMM., 'Lodz'.

¹⁸Eisen, *Children and play*, 6.

¹⁹Eisen, *Children and play*, 76.

²⁰Eisen, *Children and play*, 114-5.

vibrant, creative and industrious became...sealed off.’²¹ It is important to emphasise that in responding to their different ghetto settings, children were continually innovative and industrious. This is clearly exemplified by the range and contrasting nature of strategies, from art to smuggling, that were exhibited.

Deborah Dwork focuses more on exploring the measures taken to enhance and protect the children’s lives in the ghetto. In doing so she tends to treat children as a relatively homogeneous group. She explores in great depth the importance of children working in order to survive.²² Yet she does not show how this differed depending on the contrasting ghetto surroundings. She tends to emphasise adult agency in both creating ghetto settings such as playgrounds and in making the youth a central focus for the preservation of a Jewish future.²³ It is important to expand on this further by examining how creation of new spaces influenced children’s strategy. Dwork argues that children were the responsibility of adults, which highlights the necessity for both adult and child sources to be examined.²⁴ For instance the diary of Janusz Korczak is an essential source for coping strategies of orphaned children, who did not have access to the same level of education as children such as Mary Berg.²⁵ Dwork highlights the unique nature of the Theresienstadt ghetto in comparison to the ghettos of Warsaw and Lodz.²⁶ However, she does not elaborate on how Theresienstadt’s position as part transit camp impacted on the children’s lives. Unlike Eisen, she does not place any emphasis on the continuance of childhood activities such as play. She instead argues that ‘ghetto conditions squeezed out most normal childhood occupations.’²⁷ Yet it seems more effective to argue that childhood activities instead of being squeezed out, were actually adapted to the different

²¹Eisen, *Children and play*, 22.

²²Dwork, *Children with a Star*, 194.

²³Dwork, *Children with a Star*, 158 and 187-8.

²⁴Dwork, *Children with a Star*, xlv.

²⁵Mary Berg was a more privileged youth in the ghetto, whose mother’s status as an American citizen, gave her more protection and greater access to opportunities than other children. M. Berg., *The diary of Mary Berg: growing up in the Warsaw ghetto* (Oxford, 2006), xxi and J. Korczak., *Ghetto Diary* (New York, 1978).

²⁶Dwork, *Children with a Star*, 157.

²⁷Dwork, *Children with a Star*, 191.

ghetto settings. This is clearly demonstrated in Theresienstadt, where due to the lack of materials, the girls in one room still played with dolls, just ones made out of rags.²⁸

Unlike with Eisen and Dwork, Stargardt focuses his study on both German and Jewish children. His focus is more on the adaptability of children as victims of war. One of his most influential arguments is his emphasis on the importance of social relationships in helping children to cope in times of war.²⁹ These relationships would have differed depending on whether children experienced collective homes, apartments or lived on the streets. Stargardt places social relationships as central to children's experience, whereas this dissertation will focus more on how the different ghetto settings helped define the social relationships that were formed. He also argues that children should no longer be considered passive victims of the war. He highlights that children did not stop living, did not stop playing and were not merely traumatised victims of the process.³⁰ It is important to explore this argument in greater detail by applying it to the ghetto children and their strategies for survival. It seems that although children's experiences in the ghettos have been briefly examined by historians, the connections between place and children's strategy remain completely unexplored.

Another line of historical thought, which has been completely understudied, is the connection between children's strategy and resistance. Children's involvement in resistance has been dismissed by several historians, due to their lack of connection to armed activity. However, many of the child survivors believe that the strategies they undertook should be recognised as resistance. As the survivor Esther Dublin reflects the secret meetings of her youth group was her 'resistance against the Germans.'³¹ Rachel Kostanian-Danzig argues that in protecting others and themselves from the physical and moral terror of the ghettos, coping strategies were a form of resistance.³² Yitshok Rudashevski believed that through his youth club activities 'there will not emerge a youth

²⁸A. Zapruder (ed.), *Salvaged pages: young writers' diaries of the Holocaust* (New Haven, 2002), 179.

²⁹Stargardt, *Witnesses of war*, 10.

³⁰Stargardt, *Witnesses of war*, 17.

³¹Yad Vashem. 'Youth Movements at the time of the Lodz Ghetto (1940-1944)'.

<<http://www1.yadvashem.org/exhibitions/lodz/eduiot.html>> 02 February 2010.

³²R. Kostanian-Danzig., *Spiritual Resistance in the Vilna ghetto* (Vilna, 2002), 21.

broken in spirit.³³ It could be argued that because the ghetto conditions created were so harsh and unforgiving, that any creative or moral activity achieved by the children could constitute resistance. As Eisen has argued resistance ‘must include a wealth of human responses especially when the means of and ability to respond are severely limited.’³⁴ It seems that ghetto settings were a main factor in restricting means to respond, whether that be through limitation in space or food. There are numerous examples of children’s defiance of such restrictions ‘I’m not a bug...I’ll not give up just like that, without resisting.’³⁵ In creating new spaces in such harsh settings, the Jewish leaders refused to allow children to be recognised as submissive victims. The children in re-interpreting events such as Ponary, were using their mental resources to oppose the regime.³⁶ It therefore seems important to explore whether certain ghetto settings helped foster coping strategies that could be seen as manifestations of resistance.

In exploring the impact of place on strategy it is important to use a wide range of child sources and survivor accounts. One of the central problems with using such sources is that those that have survived are often highly fragmentary. For instance parts of Dawid Sierakowiak’s diary were burnt beyond recognition.³⁷ There is also the issue that due to the low survival rates, the sources that are left cannot be considered representative of children in the ghettos. For instance only 11% of children survived to give oral testimonies. The 11% that were collected cannot be considered typical sources, as they were ‘exceptions to the general rule of death.’³⁸ As Janina Bauman reflects her life in the ghettos ‘was the small, limited world of a teenage girl living in fear...in ignorance of very many important facts and occurrences.’³⁹ However, despite their lack of typicality, these sources can still give a unique insight into a child’s world which was beyond the comprehension of many adults. Some of the children’s coping strategies such as

³³Y. Rudashevski., *The diary of the Vilna ghetto: June 1941-April 1943* (Galilee, 1973), 104-5.

³⁴Eisen, *Children and play*, 83.

³⁵Holliday, L., *Children in the Holocaust and World War II: their secret diaries* (London, 1995), 206.

³⁶The children in their games imagined that it was the Germans not the Jews who were shot in the forests of Ponary.

³⁷Adelson, A (ed.), *The diary of Dawid Sierakowiak: five notebooks from the Lodz Ghetto* (London, 1997).

³⁸Dwork, *Children with a Star*, xxxii.

³⁹J. Bauman., *Winter in the morning: a young girl's life in the Warsaw ghetto and beyond 1939-1945* (London, 1997), 2.

continuing to play whilst being surrounded by death, were completely taboo for adults.⁴⁰ For instance, Emmanuel Ringelblum in Warsaw was shocked that ‘children played a game tickling a corpse.’⁴¹ Many children’s innocence and lack of life experience, resulted in their accounts having a tendency to be less dominated by facts.⁴² Children did not have the same concerns as adults nor the same levels of self censorship.⁴³ Some children did not remember a living environment outside the ghettos, making place even more central to their strategies, as the ghettos were ‘the only life they knew.’⁴⁴ It is clear that a variety of child’s perspectives are needed as well as those of adults in order to gain a strong insight into how they coped with their new ghetto life.

One of the central sources that will be used in this exploration of place, is young writer’s diaries. These child diaries have been largely ignored in scholarly literature and are often reduced to ‘evokers of emotion rather than repositories of information.’⁴⁵ One of the main factors that make diaries central to exploring the effect of place, is that with diaries ‘the interior landscape reflects the variations of an exterior landscape.’⁴⁶ As diaries were written during the ghetto experience, this adds to their relevancy in exploring place’s effect, as the child diarists were completely submerged in their surroundings. Despite diaries advantages in reflecting exterior landscape, they have to be treated with caution due to editorial manipulation. One of the main examples of manipulation, is that of Mary Berg’s diary, which is seen as a ‘hybrid of a diary and memoir.’⁴⁷ Her authentic voice is hard to establish in the diary, as the diary was completely rewritten and edited for publication. This does not prevent the diary from being examined, but it is important when using such sources to have an awareness of this distortion in focus. The other main

⁴⁰A., Reiter, ‘Kinds of testimony: children of the holocaust’, in Reiter, A (ed.), *Children of the Holocaust* (London, 2006), 6.

⁴¹E. Ringelblum., *Notes from the Warsaw ghetto: the journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum* (New York, 2006), 174

⁴²Reiter, *Children of the Holocaust*, 6.

⁴³ Child testimonies have also been seen to stand out by the likes of Maria Hochberg Marianska for their straightforward form of expression. B. Cohen., ‘The Children’s Voice: Postwar Collection of Testimonies from Child Survivors of the Holocaust’, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 21:1 (2001), 87.

⁴⁴Reiter., *Children of the Holocaust*, 6.

⁴⁵Zapruder (ed.), *Salvaged pages*, 11.

⁴⁶D. Patterson., ‘Through the eyes of those who were there’, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 18:2 (2004), 276.

⁴⁷Reiter, *Children of the Holocaust*, 14.

point to take into account with diaries is their intentionality. Young emphasises that every young person has a ‘different story to tell’⁴⁸ in accordance with individual motivations, levels of education and social position. For instance Yitshok Rudashevski was not only highly educated but was strongly influenced by his soviet beliefs.⁴⁹ These factors need to be taken into account in recognising that these diaries were representative of individual experience, and could not speak for the children who did not have access to such materials.

Of the children who did not leave written evidence, this does not mean their ghetto lives are completely inaccessible. The emergence of visual sources has helped bring a new perspective on children’s coping strategies. Many historians are still reluctant to use visual sources, as they are more intractable than textual evidence.⁵⁰ Photography tends to be overlooked, due to issues of neutrality as well as the fact it can only capture a specific historical moment.⁵¹ The main historians of children’s experience, have tended to use photographs merely to illustrate rather than as evidence in its own right.⁵² However, despite its lack of use, photography has a central part to play in examining the impact of

⁴⁸Corni, *Hitler's ghettos*, 5.

⁴⁹Zapruder (ed.), *Salvaged pages*, 195.

⁵⁰Historians are wary of photographs as they do not have one single signifying system upon which they are based in comparison to English textual sources which are based upon the English language. Unless they have a caption to anchor them, or the information available to contextualise them, they are much more difficult to interpret than traditional textual sources. Yet they should not be overlooked as a source, these problems just highlight the need to scrutinise the photographs in greater detail. It is important to look beyond what they superficially portray, to what their intended implications were. C. Brothers., *War and Photography: A Cultural History* (London, 1997), 14 and 21-22.

⁵¹ The camera is the tool of its operator, so one of photography’s main limitations is that they are taken from the viewpoint of one specific individual. As Susan Sontag has argued ‘nobody takes a picture of the same thing.’ The difficulty for historians is not only interpreting the picture, but acknowledging that it is often impossible to establish what may have been cut out. Many of the photographs taken in the ghettos were from a Nazi perspective, for instance in Warsaw and Theresienstadt a lot of the photographs were taken by Nazi Propoganda Units. Therefore even though they appear sympathetic, they were actually framed, selected and sometimes staged for the benefit of the Nazi’s campaigns or reports. However, even with textual sources such as official reports, there was no such thing as a neutral perspective. With photography it is important to establish issues such as the purpose of the photograph or whether the photographer was Nazi or Jewish, instead of just taking it at surface value. See S .Milton. ‘The Camera As Weapon: Documentary Photography and the Holocaust’, *Simon Wiesenthal Annual*, Issue 1:3. <<http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/site/pp.asp?c=gvKVLcMVluG&b=394975>>26 January 2010, U. Keller., *Warsaw Ghetto in Photographs: 206 views made in 1941* (New York, 1984), xvii, J. Collier., *Visual anthropology: photography as a research method* (Albuquerque, 1986), 9-10, and S.Sontag., *On Photography* (London, 1979), 88.

⁵²See Eisen, *Children and play* or Dwork, *Children with a Star*.

place. As Dwork has argued individual photographs combine together to form ‘a composite picture of what life was like for children in a number of different settings.’⁵³ Dwork may go too far in suggesting they provide a complete picture, but they certainly can give a new perspective on the importance of setting. For instance they provide a way of comparing green spaces, which are often only briefly described in textual evidence. Both photography and artwork give new insights into children and landscapes which are underrepresented in ghetto literature. For instance, there are several photographs, which show the youth activities in Marysin. These activities do not tend to be described in any great detail by official sources. Photographs provide visual evidence which helps to exemplify the contrasting landscapes of the ghettos.

Artwork has also largely been overlooked in exploring ghetto experience. Unlike with photography, artwork was a central strategy used to help children cope in certain ghettos. Of the studies done in relation to children’s art, Nicholas Stargardt’s has been the most influential. He recognises the predominance of place in artwork, ranging from the discussion of barred windows to the drawings of the green fields beyond Theresienstadt’s walls.⁵⁴ One of the main difficulties in using artwork as evidence of strategy, is that due to its subjectivity in interpretation, questions emerge as to whether the drawings should be seen as reflecting fantasy or portraying reality.⁵⁵ Despite its limitations, artwork gives a strong insight particularly into Theresienstadt, where children had structured art classes which helped them cope with their new surroundings. It appears that Theresienstadt produced a huge volume of artwork in comparison to any other ghetto, with over five thousand drawings surviving the war.⁵⁶ It therefore seems essential to include artwork, in helping to explore how individual ghetto setting helped strategies to vary considerably.

The other main source of evidence that helps to explore the importance of strategy is oral and memoir accounts. One of the main difficulties in using such sources, is that these

⁵³Dwork, *Children with a Star*, xxxii.

⁵⁴N. Stargardt., ‘Children’s Art of the Holocaust’, *Past and Present*, 161:1 (1998), 195-6.

⁵⁵The interpretation of children’s artwork is hindered by the lack of any clear methodological precedents. There is also the issue of whether free drawing is more reflective of a child’s situation, than art that has been inspired by a particular theme guided by the teacher. Stargardt, ‘Children’s Art’, 197.

⁵⁶Feinstein, S., ‘Art and Imagery in the ghetto: during and after the Holocaust’, in E. Sterling (ed.), *Life in the ghettos during the Holocaust* (New York, 2005), 195.

accounts were often taken in very different surroundings to those of the ghettos. They have points of comparison which were not accessible to the children who wrote diaries or who were captured in photographs at the time.⁵⁷ As Marian Turski expresses ‘sometimes also I am recalling David Sierakowiak.’⁵⁸ Some survivors use other ghetto accounts to support the validity of their own statements, which makes their perspectives different from the diary-writers in the ghettos. The narrative structures they impose on their recollections are also distinct.⁵⁹ A lot of memoirs and oral sources are recounting their experiences as adults, which brings into question whether they can ever truly resurrect their experiences from a child’s perspective.⁶⁰ This problem is clearly shown by Janina Bauman’s memoir, which is written in the style of a child but there are always hints in the text that the survivor is writing retrospectively, ‘(I) kept the locket, I have it still.’⁶¹ It seems the interview process used in oral accounts in particular, can also cause reflections on ghetto life to be manipulated. For instance with the Children Accuse, a collection of transcribed documents, there was a specific questionnaire used in the interview process.⁶² However, neither the distance from the event nor the lack of a child’s voice, can challenge these accounts reliability. As Lawrence Langer points out recent neurological research has suggested that traumatic memories are deeply imprinted in long term memory, making them both vivid and accurate.⁶³ Therefore many survivors are still able to give an insight into the perspective of their younger selves, even if it is through adult narration. These accounts do provide examples of children’s strategies that would otherwise be unobtainable. The more official sources, would be of little use, as children’s strategies were not seen as matters of great importance by German officials.

⁵⁷There is also the issue that after the event, memories are often restructured to ensure a clearer message is achieved in the retelling of their experiences. S. Vice., ‘Children’s Voices and Viewpoints in Holocaust Literature’, in A. Reiter (ed.), *Children of the Holocaust* (London, 2006), 12.

⁵⁸USHMM., ‘Voices from the Lodz Ghetto: conversations with survivors: Marian Turski’.
<http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/lodz/conversations/view_video.php?content=04-turski&video=video1>01 April 2010.

⁵⁹ Stargardt, ‘Children’s Art’, 231-2.

⁶⁰There is also the issue that after the event, memories are often restructured to ensure a clearer message is achieved in the retelling of their experiences. Reiter (ed.), *Children of the Holocaust*, 12.

⁶¹Bauman, *Winter in the morning*, 91-2.

⁶²However, this is a typical method of collecting oral testimony, which can also be seen in the Shoah Foundation Archive sources. There is also the issue that as they were transcribed, this can lead to mistakes or unintended editing of the survivor accounts. Cohen, ‘The Children’s Voice’, 77.

⁶³J. Greene., S. Kumar, and L. Langer, *Witness: voices from the Holocaust* (London 2001), xvii.

1) The effects of the varying permeability of ghetto boundaries

Philip Friedman has noted how there were all kinds of ghettos ‘open, closed and half closed.’⁶⁴ It is clear that the ghetto boundaries ability to be breached varied from place to place.⁶⁵ This variation in permeability, resulted in different kinds of coping strategies developing, as communication beyond the ghetto walls varied. Warsaw stands in great contrast to ghettos such as Lodz and Theresienstadt, as it was a relatively open ghetto. The head of the Warsaw Judenrat Czerniakow claimed that the ghetto received around ‘70-80,000,000 worth’⁶⁶ of its food supply through smuggling. This smuggling network was largely dependent upon the ghetto children. As Mieczyslaw Eichel conveys children could access the Polish side more effectively than adults, ‘little seven or eight year old boys...thin as rakes, would slip like rats, through the cracks in the wall.’⁶⁷ Smuggling was a central strategy for many children as it helped protect their families from starvation. As Jadwiga Kotowska reflects ‘I supported the whole family, everyone waited for me to bring something.’⁶⁸ Smuggling enabled children to take over the role of provider, ‘Parents would sit at home all day nervously awaiting the return of their breadwinner.’⁶⁹ The risks of being caught were great, with numerous accounts reflecting on the ‘murderous blows’⁷⁰ children often received. As this strategy was so dangerous, it could be seen as the children’s way of resisting the Nazi’s system of restriction. As Max Glauhen argues ‘I felt like I was...defying the Nazis, like I was keeping some Jewish people alive.’⁷¹ It seems that smuggling was not just a strategy for survival, but was also an act of defiance. It could be argued that due to the Warsaw ghetto being particularly resistance orientated, that it encouraged children to utilise any abilities they had to resist Nazi control. Smuggling as a strategy could only be used where the ghetto boundaries

⁶⁴P. Friedman., ‘The Jewish Ghettos of the Nazi Era’, *Jewish Social Studies*, 16:1 (1954), 79-80.

⁶⁵T. Cole., ‘Building and breaching the ghetto boundary: a brief history of the ghetto fence in Körmen Hungary in 1944’, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 23:1 (2009), 60.

⁶⁶R. Hilberg., S. Staron and J. Kermisz., *The Warsaw Ghetto Diary of Adam Czerniakow: prelude to doom* (New York, 1982), 305.

⁶⁷N. Grüss., M. Hochberg-Marianska and B. Johnston, *The Children Accuse* (London, 1996), 4.

⁶⁸F. Bussgang., J. Bussgang, S. Cygielski, J. Gutenbaum and A. Latala., *The last eyewitnesses: children of the Holocaust speak*, vol. 2 (Evanston, 2005), 123.

⁶⁹B. Goldstein, and L. Shatzkin, *Five years in the Warsaw ghetto* (Edinburgh, 2005), 66.

⁷⁰A. Lewin., *A cup of tears: a diary of the Warsaw ghetto* (London, 1990), 28.

⁷¹D. Plotkin, ‘Smuggling in the ghettos: survivor accounts from the Warsaw, Lodz and Krakow ghettos’, in E. Sterling (ed.), *Life in the ghettos during the Holocaust* (New York, 2005), 96.

were weak enough to be breached. This was simply not the case for children in other ghettos such as Lodz.

The Lodz ghetto was one of the only examples where its boundaries were almost completely closed off. It was difficult for strategies such as smuggling to exist, as this would involve infiltrating the increasingly Germanised city that surrounded the ghetto walls.⁷² The ghetto children could only observe the lives of children outside of the ghettos, ‘everyday the children...make a pilgrimage to this corner... (there is) a merry-go-round, almost within reach, only the barbed wire keeps them away.’⁷³ In contrast to Warsaw, the fixed boundary prevented both food and communication from reaching the ghetto. In depending entirely on German allocations for food, a lot of the children’s strategies revolved around lack of provisions. As an anonymous girl describes in March 1942 many children ‘are wheeling and dealing in homemade candies and cigarettes.’⁷⁴ The Lodz ghetto children had to improvise more, with homemade substitutes, which helped them gain extra money for their struggling families. Their methods of play reflected the daily reality of the struggle to obtain food. As a Lodz teacher describes one girl imitated her mother in the rations queue ‘screaming...they gave me rotten potatoes...What will I feed my children?’⁷⁵ These imitations helped the children to channel their frustrations and to process their parent’s actions. Their lack of knowledge of events outside of the ghetto, meant that they still remained hopeful that the soldiers would eventually arrive to liberate them. As the Lodz chronicle describes they reflected such hopes in their games ‘together children imitate the beating of a drum, improvising marches out of banging sounds as they parade with their playmates as soldiers.’⁷⁶ The lack of food also led them to form community groups with shared provisions for those in need. One observer describes how ‘young boys and girls....denied themselves morsels of food to place them in the community chest...they managed to save comrades who...refused to report for deportation.’⁷⁷ These strategies of mutual assistance, were

⁷²A. Katz., *Poland's Ghettos At War* (New York, 1975), 105.

⁷³Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle*, 352.

⁷⁴Zapruder (ed.), *Salvaged pages*, 233.

⁷⁵Cited in Eisen, *Children and play*, 77.

⁷⁶Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle*, 373.

⁷⁷Trunk, I., *Lodz Ghetto: a history* (Bloomington, 2006), iv.

extremely important in a ghetto where smuggling could not supplement food rations. This togetherness as a way of coping could also be seen as resistance, as by saving food rations, they were preventing the Nazi's from deporting some of their intended targets.

Theresienstadt was also very isolated, as it had no major cities located in close proximity. However, its boundaries were continually broken by the incoming and outgoing transports. As Vera Schiff reflected 'it was always unstable...people were deported...everything was in a continuous state of flux.'⁷⁸ This meant Theresienstadt got continual snippets of news from those who had travelled from various different destinations. The children of Theresienstadt were more aware of the prospect of death than those of Lodz, as they received news from the transports and had the presence of the crematorium within their ghetto. By 1943 the crematorium was fully functioning and could not be shielded from the children.⁷⁹ The children coped with such instruments of death, by trying to understand their processes. In the VEDEM magazine Beno Kaufmann and Zdenek Taussig drew a diagram of the crematorium and described 'what the installation was like.'⁸⁰ In sharing this process with others, they were able to support each other and to calm each others fears. However, it seems the children's main preoccupation in terms of strategy revolved around the transports. Theresienstadt like Lodz tended to focus on the community strategy of mutual assistance, 'Tomorrow they load the transport...everyone gave Zdenka something...I gave a half loaf of bread.'⁸¹ By providing for others who faced such transports, they were ensuring that if they faced transportation themselves, that they had the full support of their community. They were also collectively defying the Nazi's treatment. It seems that in the more closed off ghettos of Lodz and Theresienstadt, children chose to adopt a more internalised community focus rather than rely on more individual strategies such as smuggling.⁸²

⁷⁸V. Schiff., *Theresienstadt: the town the Nazis gave to the Jews* (Ontario, 2002), 83.

⁷⁹A. Dutlinger, and S. Milton (eds.), *Art, music and education as strategies for survival, Theresienstadt 1941-1945* (London, 2000), 176.

⁸⁰ Havel, V., M. Koutouc, M. Kirzkova and Z. Ornest (eds.) *We are children just the same: Vedem, the secret magazine by the boys of Terezin* (Philadelphia, 1994), 85-6.

⁸¹Cited in Ehrmann, *Terezin*, 103.

⁸²It is important to distinguish between the large scale smuggling organised for economic profit, and the smuggling carried out by youths and children. The children's everyday smuggling, existed as a means of

Vilna had a greater awareness than any of the other ghettos of what had and was occurring beyond the ghetto walls. The majority of Jews around 70-80% had been killed in the actions of 1941, including all of those located in the little ghetto.⁸³ Children due to such exposure to death were completely aware of the Nazi's deception and lived in a state of constant fear. As one little girl questioned on prospect of deportation 'and what if this is a lie and they take us to panerai?'⁸⁴ Many of the children coped with such fear, by using play to impose different interpretations upon the harsh realities of ghetto life. They attempted to normalise the extraordinary by making up 'songs and games where actions, blockade, sorrow...became the ordinary vocabulary of their make believe.'⁸⁵ They sought to impose their own version of events through play, 'At times they selected one of them to play Hitler, whom they imprisoned in a pit.'⁸⁶ In the words of a nine year old on liberation, it was the Germans who were overpowered in their games and 'shot to death'⁸⁷ in the woods of Ponary. Eisen has argued that these responses through play, were the children's way of defying their physical subjugation.⁸⁸ By using play to reflect and process reality, this helped to channel fear and enabled the children to overcome feelings of helplessness. Play allowed children to retake control of their reality, and to defy the restrictions placed upon them. These strategies reflected a hope for change to come, where the Russian 'tank men'⁸⁹ would achieve the same as in their games, and overpower the Nazi army. The Vilna ghetto was unique in fostering such strategies, as in none of the other ghettos examined, was there such a full awareness of death and such a frequency of graphic play. Both Vilna and Warsaw children stand in great contrast to those of Lodz, who due to being sealed off, had strategies that alleviated the limited reality of their ghetto space. It seems that due to the variations in ghetto boundaries, children were far from homogeneous in their strategic responses.

providing for their families or themselves, making it a more individual strategy. Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos*, 139.

⁸³Kostanian-Danzig, *Spiritual Resistance*, 33.

⁸⁴Holliday, *Children in the Holocaust*, 191.

⁸⁵Wadowinski, *And we are*, 49.

⁸⁶A. Eisenberg., *The lost generation: children in the Holocaust* (New York, 1982), 47.

⁸⁷J. Robinson., *And the crooked shall be made straight: the Eichmann Trial, the Jewish catastrophe, and Hannah Arendt's narrative* (New York, 1965), 122-3.

⁸⁸Eisen, *Children and play*, 83.

⁸⁹Eisen, *Children and play*, 89.

2) *The effect of landscape and the creation of new space.*

The landscape of the ghettos has often been overlooked by historians as a factor of importance. Yet for several children access to green space was considered to be central to their wellbeing. Many children exhibited a longing for nature, which they associated with freedom 'penned up inside the ghetto...the dandelions call to me.'⁹⁰ Lodz was one of the only ghettos to have a significant amount of green landscape within its boundaries. This access stood in great contrast to Vilna and Warsaw, where no parks or major green space were included.⁹¹ The Marysin quarter due to its extensive space was promoted as the 'garden of Eden'⁹² of the Lodz ghetto. The impact of such space on children's coping strategies can clearly be seen in the photograph below.



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⁹⁰H. Volavkova., J. Weil and J. Nemcova (eds.), *I never saw another butterfly: children's drawings and poems from Theresienstadt concentration camp, 1942-1944* (London, 1965), no page numbers.

⁹¹Eisen, *Children's play*, 37.

⁹²G. Horwitz., *Ghettostadt: Łódź and the making of a Nazi city* (Cambridge, 2008), 255.

⁹³This photograph is from the Lodz state archives and unlike the other two photographs examined has no information on the photographer or its purpose. Yet it is one of the best depictions of Lodz children at play in Marysin. Yad Vashem., 'Lodz, Poland: Children playing in the ghetto'.

<<http://www6.yadvashem.org/wps/portal/photo>>02 February 2010.

This amount of space allowed children to play in larger groups and to experience fresh air and a greater feeling of freedom. The Marysin quarter, was able to function efficiently due to a combination of ghetto administrative support and public initiative. The Lodz administration recognised the importance of access to sun, air and open space, in helping to reduce the psychological and physical effects of ghetto life on the children.⁹⁴ It was not just adult agency that supported access to green space as a strategy. As Ben Edelbaum describes he and group of friends used their initiative by sending a fur coat to Rumkowski's wife. This strategy got them seven days in Marysin with 'good food, fresh air.'⁹⁵ He describes this experience as the 'happiest'⁹⁶ days he spent in the ghetto. The Marysin space was also used to encourage the flourishing of educational activities, with children being given the incentive of only being allowed there to study. As Dawid Sierakowiak announces in his diary 'there was a test in German...the wonderful air in Marysin...left me remarkably refreshed.'⁹⁷ By having access to green space, this offered the children 'a dreamlike experience...away from the daily realm.'⁹⁸ It gave them an opportunity to escape the brutal conditions, and to join other children of similar ages in games, which helped distance themselves from reality. This luxury of escapism through nature, could not be used as a method of coping, in any of the other ghettos on a similar scale.

Despite the other ghettos not having access to green space, this did not stop them from creating new spaces which could be used for play and recreation. Warsaw in particular had a focus on turning courtyards and bombed ruins into viable areas for play. As Janina David describes 'girls spent their days playing in the courtyard...watching the toddlers in the sand-pit we had built that summer.'⁹⁹ Warsaw was dominated by tenement blocks, which had strong committees to ensure courtyards could be transformed into children's corners.¹⁰⁰ These corners provided children with a chance to not only play, but to be in

⁹⁴Eisen, *Children's play*, 63.

⁹⁵B. Edelbaum., *Growing up in the Holocaust* (Kansas City, 1980), 128-9.

⁹⁶Edelbaum, *Growing up*, 128-9.

⁹⁷Adelson (ed.), *The diary of Dawid*, 106.

⁹⁸Horwitz, *Ghettostadt*, 255.

⁹⁹J. David., *A square of sky: the recollections of a childhood* (London, 1964), 186.

¹⁰⁰Eisen, *Children's play*, 36.

touch with nature, with exposure to direct sunlight as well as open skies. The photograph below exemplifies a courtyard transformation.



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The Warsaw organisation TOPOROL¹⁰² helped transform bombed sites into green spaces. As Mary Berg describes ‘this park on the site of bombed houses...is green...Jewish workers have constructed swings, benches.’¹⁰³ The green spaces did not just allow play as a strategy to develop, but it also provided children with the chance of other strategies to cope, such as gardening. As Janina Bauman reflected from her time in June 1941 ‘we now sowed and planted vegetables...this...summer spent on a green island in the midst of hell...was a happy time of my youth.’¹⁰⁴ These makeshift spaces provided avenues of escape for a number of children. For Wiktoria Sliwowska it was ‘paradise’¹⁰⁵ and provided her with a way to ‘normalise’¹⁰⁶ her situation. It also helped

¹⁰¹This photograph was taken for the ZSS, a self-help organisation in the ghetto. It therefore was not used for propaganda purposes and is likely to have depicted events that occurred in everyday ghetto life. Yad Vashem., Warsaw, Poland: Children from a kindergarten at 29 Leszno Street. <<http://www6.yadvashem.org/wps/portal/photo>>02 February 2010.

¹⁰²TOPOROL was the Society for the Support of Agriculture.

¹⁰³M. Berg., *Warsaw Ghetto Diary* (New York, 1945), 147.

¹⁰⁴Bauman, *Winter in the morning*, 49.

¹⁰⁵Ficowski, *The last eyewitnesses*, 134.

¹⁰⁶Ficowski, *The last eyewitnesses*, 134.

her to feel she could provide ‘material support.’¹⁰⁷ This idea of material support meant the children felt they were helping to provide for the ghetto, and as with games in Vilna, helped alleviate their sense of helplessness. It appears that Warsaw was one of the most organised ghettos in terms of children’s welfare, as tenement committees were never as strong in Vilna and Lodz.¹⁰⁸ Czerniakow as a ghetto head particularly focused on the power of play as a protecting force. Unlike with Rumkowski, his ghetto was not provided with a viable play space. To enable the continuance of play, he ensured that several playgrounds were built in 1942. As the teacher Sara Munk describes the playgrounds were ‘an oasis in the hell of the ghetto.’¹⁰⁹ She describes the playgrounds many benefits ‘Here they forgot about the terrors of every day reality, about the hunger, the poverty.’¹¹⁰ These playgrounds allowed organisers and children to shape their own realities in such a restricted environment. They also provided momentary respite for the children from their harsh surroundings. In none of the other ghettos examined, was there a creation of new play space on a similar scale to Warsaw. These courtyard strategies allowed children to feel part of a larger community, and in turn the community’s spirits were lifted by seeing the children play in times of hardship.

Both Vilna and Theresienstadt focused less on creation of new space, and more on cultural or sporting activities. Theresienstadt is particularly unusual in that it is often a ghetto pictured for its outdoor play activities. Yet the majority of these images are deceptive in that they were used for German propaganda. The playgrounds depicted were only constructed for the Red Cross visits, meaning children did not have access to them in the same way as in Warsaw.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷Ficowski, *The last eyewitnesses*, 134.

¹⁰⁸Eisen, *Children’s play*, 37.

¹⁰⁹Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 237-8

¹¹⁰Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 237-8.

¹¹¹The Danish Red Cross made a visit in June 1944, the playgrounds were all part of a programme of beautification to present the ghetto in a more positive light to the visiting dignitaries. The Nazis staged many cultural and social events during the visit which often involved the children. As Inge Auerbacher reflects the ‘IRC requested permission to inspect camp, Terezin went through beautification. A few children received chocolates and sardines sandwiches just as the commission past them. I was not one of the lucky ones.’ See I. Auerbacher., *I am a star* (New York, 1993), 56 and USHMM., *Theresienstadt: Red Cross Visit*. <<https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007463>>17 April 2010.



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However, even in Warsaw it is important to note that not all children had access to these playground spaces. It was mainly the privileged who could afford to send their children, ‘the children of the rich can enjoy them, because the charge is 30-40 zloty a month.’¹¹³ Janina David’s mother had to pay a high ‘admission fee’¹¹⁴, in order to enable her to ‘form an acrobatic group’¹¹⁵ and perform ‘reckless’¹¹⁶ performances in the playground. Both Warsaw and Lodz were particularly socially stratified, as Ben Edelbaum reflects there were the ‘Havenots...the haves were the ones who held the reigns on the ghetto.’¹¹⁷

¹¹²This photograph was taken by a German propaganda photographer. It depicts children enjoying playgrounds, which during their time in the ghetto they did not have access to. This particular photograph is from the Nazi propaganda film ‘Theresienstadt. Ein Dokumentarfilm aus dem jüdischen Siedlungsgebiet’ and illustrates the caution that needs to be taken when using photography as evidence. Yad Vashem., ‘Theresienstadt, Czechoslovakia: A Girl at the Playground, 1944’.
<<http://www6.yadvashem.org/wps/portal/photo>> 02 February 2010.

¹¹³Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw ghetto*, 188.

¹¹⁴David, *A square of sky*, 151.

¹¹⁵David, *A square of sky*, 151.

¹¹⁶David, *A square of sky*, 151.

¹¹⁷Edelbaum, *Growing Up*, 166-7.

In Theresienstadt as schedules were made by room, rather than social position, more children had access to strategies like sport. They allocated certain spaces that they could be used by the children for such activities. The children's magazine VEDEM describes how 'here in the Terezin football league what do the players get on the winning team?...nothing...they play for the sake of playing.'¹¹⁸ The activities such as the football leagues allowed the children to release their energy and to play against those who were their equals. As the Nesarim boy Kikina describes 'the most important thing in my mind was to play soccer...you block things out and concentrate on playing.'¹¹⁹ Sport allowed children to have momentary feelings of achievement and allowed them to forget their surroundings. In Vilna they had sports clubs, where the 'Jewish Council...schedules various types of sports and athletics.'¹²⁰ The Vilna sport yard motto was 'a healthy body – a healthy spirit.'¹²¹ The various types of sports helped maintain morale, although the club could only provide such facilities for four hundred children. Each ghetto appears to have had some form of sporting activity, but it was only in Theresienstadt where sport was part of their daily routines. The disparity of access to certain spaces in ghettos like Warsaw, highlights that place did not just help coping strategies to differ from ghetto to ghetto. It shows how ghetto specificity meant children developed different strategies depending on their access to certain spaces within the ghettos.

3) The effects of the contrasting living spaces.

It was not just green space that had a profound impact on children, but the differences in living spaces they were placed in. Theresienstadt was the only ghetto to set up official children's homes within its limited space.¹²² Ehrmann has emphasised how the children in these homes experienced better food and conditions than those in other ghettos.¹²³ As Eva Landa reflects 'thanks to our children's residence we had something resembling a

¹¹⁸Havel, *We are children just the same*, 52.

¹¹⁹Nesarim meaning the eagles was a group that the boys of room 7 created. Gruenbaum(ed.), *Nesarim: child survivors of Terezin* (London, 2004), 70.

¹²⁰Cited in Eisenberg, *The lost generation*, 62.

¹²¹Cited in Eisenberg, *The lost generation*, 62.

¹²²Stargardt, 'Children's Art', 206.

¹²³Ehrmann, *Terezin*, 78.

normal life.’¹²⁴ These homes gave the children better opportunities to collectively unite. Jane Friesova describes her experiences before going into the home ‘After the distress I had endured in the house on Q street, 1410 was absolute paradise.’¹²⁵ She found the home took her away from abuse she had experienced as well as continual loneliness. The homes were self-administered, which enabled children to take an active part, helping to foster group affinities and making children feel they were part of a new family.¹²⁶ As Ruth Kluger reflects ‘the administration of 1414 was in the hands of youngsters...these half-grown children made a point of creating...group spirit.’¹²⁷ In giving the children some control, it allowed them to take action and helped them assert their independence. Communal strategies were used by children in Theresiensadt to support one another and to help distance themselves from reality. As Jane Friesova reflects ‘the wish to have a variety of clothing was resolved communally in our room, whatever we had, we shared.’¹²⁸ In one of the boys’ rooms they had BROCOFEA, which were ‘clubs, consisting of several individuals who pool all their food, so once a week they...have a proper meal.’¹²⁹ By supporting others, it prevented individuals from feeling isolated as well as helped them to feel they were contributing. This fostering of group initiative helped to prevent demoralisation and gave the children a purpose for continuing to strive to survive.

In Theresienstadt each collective living space, had different pedagogues, who encouraged children to develop contrasting strategies. These collectives had a fixed daily programme, with separate cultural and sporting initiatives. Kurt reflects on how in his room ‘we had more of an intellectual education, whereas in number 5 stress was on spirit de corps and sport.’¹³⁰ The children were encouraged to form different strategies to channel their frustration and to distract them from their current situations. One of the most innovative strategies undertaken, was by the boys of room L417, who independently created the magazine VEDEM. The newspaper helped them to explore the ghetto community and to

¹²⁴Dutlinger, *Art, music and education*, 66.

¹²⁵J. Friesova., *Fortress of my youth: memoir of a Terezin survivor* (Madison, 2002), 94.

¹²⁶Ehrmann, *Terezin*, 79-80.

¹²⁷Kluger, *Landscapes of memory*, 84.

¹²⁸Friesova, *Fortress of my youth*, 96.

¹²⁹BROCOFEA stands for Brotherhood of Communal Feasting. Havel, *We are children just the same*, 42.

¹³⁰Havel, *We are children just the same*, 51.

form opinions on a vast range of subjects. For instance they had a section called Rambles, where they took an interest in different parts of ghetto life. In one issue Petr Ginz took an interest in the ghetto kitchens, ‘how many people does this kitchen serve?’¹³¹ This magazine gave the boys a sense of ‘adventure and...an illusion of freedom.’¹³² The magazine was encouraged by their group leader Eisenger, who the boys praised as a ‘fantastic teacher...who enabled us to establish a community.’¹³³ Eisenger is just one example of how a group leader could directly impact the kinds of unique strategies the children undertook. As the group leaders were dedicated to one particular room, they could provide a constant source of strength and support for the children.¹³⁴ They helped to encourage mutual support, as Eva Zohar describes ‘inspired by our room leader...we formed maagal...all girls who acted on behalf of the common were admitted to this maagal.’¹³⁵ The boys of L417 formed SHKID which was an acronym for a Russian school for homeless orphans.¹³⁶ The group had its own ‘flag, the symbol of its future work and communal life.’¹³⁷ These secret groups were not just a strategy of communal support, but a form of resistance against Nazi restriction. They were completely under the control of the children with their own governments, which allowed them to feel they had a unique part to play in culturally resisting. The Theresienstadt ghetto exemplifies how children’s strategies differed not only from ghetto to ghetto, but by individual living space. The children’s homes, were able to foster a collective unity as well as a number of cultural strategies, that were not seen in the same form in any of the other ghettos examined.

¹³¹Havel, *We are children just the same*, 63.

¹³²Havel, *We are children just the same*, 36.

¹³³Havel, *We are children just the same*, 101.

¹³⁴The children of Theresienstadt had greater access to positive role models, whereas in ghettos like Vilna, the guards were the ones that pervaded their games. Stargardt, *Children’s Art*, 207-9.

¹³⁵Dutlinger, *Art, music and education*, 65.

¹³⁶ SHKID is from the Russian shkolaimeini dostoyevskovo, which was the name of a school for homeless orphans in post-revolution St Peterburg. It was a secret club with its own anthem and each child who belonged to it had a different nickname. Havel, *We are children just the same*, 36.

¹³⁷Havel, *We are children just the same*, 36.

Warsaw, Vilna and Lodz, had ghetto structures where children's living spaces were much more orientated around apartments or housing.¹³⁸ Unlike the children of Theresienstadt, they did not have the secure structure of a fixed daily programme. These children had to develop separate coping strategies in order to deal with varying levels of parental support. Warsaw and Lodz's living spaces helped increase social stratification, as those who could afford better housing, were segregated from the rest. As Dawid Sierakowiak bitterly recorded, the children of the privileged, were eating better in the ghetto than his own family did before the war, 'I wish I could burn up that whole gang.'¹³⁹ This was in complete contrast to Theresienstadt where all children of 'different social stratification...orphan children...children from large families'¹⁴⁰ were placed together. The wealthier children as a result of their larger living spaces, were able to adopt different coping strategies. As Mary Berg describes in October 1941 she had a 'birthday party...we drank cherry liqueur...and even sang the traditional birthday song.'¹⁴¹ These parties helped the children to completely disassociate themselves from the harsh conditions and gave them a chance to engage in normal childhood pursuits such as forming relationships with boys. The children were not as exposed to scrutiny as in the communal living of Theresienstadt, which gave them opportunities to engage in relations with the opposite sex. Janina Bauman describes an older girl Joanna's night time parties 'they were playing games...they danced...Zula...heard a couple making love next to her.'¹⁴² By pushing the boundaries of what was socially acceptable, they were rebelling against restriction as well as giving themselves a sense of freedom of choice.

The other main influence of apartment living space on children's strategies, was often the presence of parents within these spaces. The children of Warsaw and Lodz, often had to watch their parents disintegrate, which was simply not the case in Theresienstadt. As Inbar has argued children often underwent a role change, taking on leadership roles

¹³⁸Although they had different levels of overcrowding, for instance in Warsaw they had an average of 5.8 people per room as opposed to Lodz where the density rose to 7.2. Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos*, 120.

¹³⁹Adelson (ed.), *The diary of Dawid*, 9.

¹⁴⁰Gruenbaum, *Nesarim*, 28.

¹⁴¹Berg, *The diary of Mary Berg*, 100.

¹⁴²Bauman, *Winter in the morning*, 60.

within the family, as parents could no longer cope with the daily pressures.¹⁴³ Children adopted strategies which often led them to become the main providers. As Janina Bauman reflects she became ‘head of the family...mother felt insecure and helpless...it was I who had to take care of...finding food...make all kinds of decisions for them.’¹⁴⁴ Dawid Sierakowiak, not only took on a family leadership role, but also took over his father’s role of protector. In his diary on July 13 1942, he describes how he had a ‘fierce argument with father, who is becoming greedier.’¹⁴⁵ Dawid challenged his father to protect his mother and also took on extra tutoring hours in order to ensure his family would survive. This strategy of taking on extra responsibility, helped many children to feel they were protecting their families. The presence of parents, did not always result in disintegration of the family structure.¹⁴⁶ Some parents managed to provide children with a sense of security and comfort, ‘When my father came from work, he brought me some soup. I was in seventh heaven.’¹⁴⁷ The contrasting features of living space between Theresienstadt, Lodz and Warsaw, indicate that place had a profound impact on the measures taken by the children. The difference in living spaces appears to have caused a variety of different social relationships to develop.

Vilna, Warsaw, and Lodz also had another form of living space which influenced children’s strategy. Orphanages were spaces where those who ‘who didn’t have anyone’¹⁴⁸, were placed. Their effectiveness was highly dependent on location as well as the managers of the orphanages.¹⁴⁹ Orphanages highlight the disparity in living conditions, as some had much larger funds and spaces than others. Janusz Korczak’s orphanage in Warsaw, is a prime example of how effective orphanages could be with the right funding and leadership. Janusz believed in the power of play to form a distraction, and had the resources to provide the children with some respite, ‘Little Janusz and Irka

¹⁴³Inbar, Y., *No child's play: children in the holocaust: creativity and play* (Jerusalem, 1997), no page numbers.

¹⁴⁴Bauman, *Winter in the morning*, 73.

¹⁴⁵Adelson (ed.), *The diary of Dawid*, 196.

¹⁴⁶Stone, D (ed.), *The Historiography of the Holocaust* (Basingstoke, 2004), 376.

¹⁴⁷Zapruder, *Salvaged pages*, 235.

¹⁴⁸Kruk, H., *The last days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania: chronicles from the Vilna ghetto and the camps, 1939-1944* (New Haven, 2002), 345.

¹⁴⁹This variation in managers and locations were completely ghetto specific, emphasising once again the importance of place.

built a garden in the sand, and a little house, and flowers, and a picket fence.’¹⁵⁰ This example indicates the children still believed they were building for a future and that the orphanage provided them with the resources to express such feelings. Orphanages were similar spaces to children’s homes but did not exhibit the same organisational features as Theresienstadt. Janusz Korczak, encouraged his children to keep diaries, which shows that children from wealthier orphanages were given opportunities not always accessible to children from poorer housing districts. One young boy Abus recorded how he ‘wanted to be liked’¹⁵¹ by others so felt guilty for staying on the toilet too long. This promotion of diary-writing, provided children with a way of channelling their emotions and gave them something to confide in. In Vilna, a lot of the orphanages were less well equipped, yet the children were known for their resourcefulness. This is shown by their nickname of ‘the musketeers of the ghetto.’¹⁵² The child ‘musketeers’¹⁵³ coped by continually fighting for their survival. Both Warsaw and Vilna were very resistance orientated, which encouraged the less profitable orphanages to stage protests, ‘Today the orphanage...sent its children...to the...self aid office...this was intended as a demonstration against the Jewish council...they overturned a few wagons.’¹⁵⁴ The children overturned the wagons on their own initiative showing they resisted the situation they had been placed in. Children in orphanages stand in great contrast to those who lived in apartments or in the children’s homes. It is clear that the disparities in place both within the ghettos and between the ghettos, encouraged different strategies to develop.

Not all children had access to adequate living space. A large number of children had no choice but to live and survive in the ghettos without shelter. As Kaplan describes in January 1942 ‘there is no institution that will take them in and care for them.’¹⁵⁵ Warsaw and Lodz had particularly large numbers of children who roamed the streets. Mary Berg describes how some street children ‘earn a living more easily than their elders. Whole

¹⁵⁰Korczak, *Ghetto Diary*, 91.

¹⁵¹Korczak, *Ghetto Diary*, 158.

¹⁵²Kruk, *The last days of the Jerusalem*, 345.

¹⁵³Kruk, *The last days of the Jerusalem*, 345.

¹⁵⁴Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw ghetto*, 77.

¹⁵⁵Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony*, 290.

gangs of little children are organised.’¹⁵⁶ This idea of forming gangs shows that children aware of the dangers of the street, used each other to help cope with their situation. They united together for protection as well as comfort in the knowledge they had a new family to protect. Street children due to their increased vulnerability and lack of resources, were often very creative in their survival strategies. A Lodz Judenrat memorandum describes child begging, ‘they know how to pretend to be unconscious or dead...passers by often take pity on them.’¹⁵⁷ Child beggars developed numerous strategies to increase their chances of earning money for provisions. Ringelblum describes ‘Whole choirs of children sing in the street to large audiences...appreciative crowds.’¹⁵⁸ These street performers went to great lengths to ensure the ghetto inhabitants did not simply pass them by. Chaim Hasenfus describes in April 1941 how ‘a girl on Ciepla street intones hymn songs in a piercing voice...for variety she sings ‘sienna street.’¹⁵⁹ The children were constantly coming up with new ways to entertain the ghetto crowds. These children also had a greater freedom of action, and were more likely to openly defy the ghetto restrictions. Kaplan describes how a Nazi demanded to be greeted by the Jews with the removal of their hats, ‘the true lords of the street noticed what was going on and found great amusement in actually obeying the nazi...to make a laughingstock out of the ‘great lord.’¹⁶⁰ The children were able to openly defy this Nazi because they had nothing to lose, and as Kaplan announces it was the perfect ‘Jewish revenge.’¹⁶¹ These kinds of actions tended to only be used by street children, as they did not face the same level of consequences or discipline as figures such as Mary Berg.¹⁶² These actions by street children were only seen in three of the ghettos, as Theresienstadt with its tailored homes prevented the majority of children from being left to fend for themselves on the streets.

4) The importance of welfare organisations and material restriction.

¹⁵⁶Berg, *The diary of Mary Berg*, 64.

¹⁵⁷Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 256-7.

¹⁵⁸Ringelblum, *The last days of the Jerusalem*, 283.

¹⁵⁹M. Grynberg (ed.), *Words to outlive us: eyewitness accounts from the Warsaw ghetto* (London, 2004), 34.

¹⁶⁰Kaplan, C., *Scroll of agony: the Warsaw diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (Bloomington, 1999), 153-4.

¹⁶¹Kaplan, C., *Scroll of agony*, 153-4.

¹⁶²Mary Berg as a wealthier ghetto citizen had the risk of her privileged status being removed.

Each ghetto had its own structures to support children's welfare. The organisations set up to safeguard the children, often had very different methods in ensuring their continual well being. The Lodz ghetto had a centralised bureaucracy, which resulted in the social welfare organisations following the vision of the Judenrat.¹⁶³ They focused on Lodz main policy of 'work for salvation'¹⁶⁴ to ensure the children were kept busy as well as secure within their ghetto setting. As Zelcowitz describes 'the ghetto children...when they work, they are useful, protected ghetto citizens.'¹⁶⁵ Warsaw was much less monolithic than Lodz. Its main welfare organisation CENTOS was independent of the central bureaucracy.¹⁶⁶ This allowed it more creativity in its initiatives, which resulted in the organisation of events such as the Children's Month. The Children's Month incorporated a range of activities which were dedicated to raising more funds for the children. As Ringelblum describes in November 1941 'Children's month is a grand success...well attended concerts and affairs.'¹⁶⁷ CENTOS also encouraged wealthier children to take the initiative and fundraise for the welfare of others. As Sarah Munk describes 'children demonstrated great enterprise in organising various events... they...found an outlet for their creative energy...it allowed them to forget the horror of...reality.'¹⁶⁸ In Warsaw there was more encouragement on public as well as Judenrat initiative to improve the conditions for the children. In Vilna welfare centred more on cultural activities, due to the intensity of its pre-war cultural inheritance.¹⁶⁹ One example of such activity is shown by the boy Nathan Cohen, who often took refuge in one of Vilna's carefully maintained libraries in 1943, 'I sat in the library for a long time.'¹⁷⁰ Trunk has argued that due to Vilna's social background, it succeeded in reducing children's issues of impoverishment more effectively than in Warsaw.¹⁷¹ Theresienstadt stands in great contrast to all three of these organisations, as its Youth Welfare Department had greater access to the majority

¹⁶³Dwork, *Children with a Star*, 179.

¹⁶⁴Corni, *Hitler's Ghettos*, 227.

¹⁶⁵M. Unger, and Y. Zelkovicz., *In those terrible days: writings from the Lodz Ghetto* (Jerusalem, 2002), 285.

¹⁶⁶CENTOS stands for the Central Organisation for Orphan Care. Dwork, *Children with a Star*, 179.

¹⁶⁷Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw ghetto*, 234.

¹⁶⁸Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, 237-8.

¹⁶⁹Vilna was known as the Jerusalem of the North. Trunk, I., *Judenrat: the Jewish councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi occupation* (Lincoln, 1996), 219.

¹⁷⁰ Cohen, N., 'The Last Days of the Vilna Ghetto: Pages from a Diary', <http://www1.yadvashem.org/download/about_holocaust/studies/cohen.pdf>7 March 2010.

¹⁷¹Kostanian-Danzig, *Spiritual Resistance*, 106.

of the ghetto children. The Department's main policies of health and education, were easier to implement due to the structure of the children's homes.¹⁷² The ghetto welfare organisations encouraged children's strategies to take specific routes, depending on their central focus.

It was not just the welfare organisations that were of central importance, but the restrictions that were placed on play materials from entering the ghettos. In Warsaw children were able to smuggle in certain desirable toys and books. As Janina David reflects she experienced great joy from the 'collection of magazines I used to read at home'¹⁷³ being smuggled in for her. They helped her create her own imaginary world to escape reality, 'I could pretend that the year was really 1936 and I was at home.'¹⁷⁴ In Theresienstadt no play implements were allowed into the ghetto and in Lodz its continual isolation meant they had no access to extra toys. This caused the children in both these ghettos to be innovative and create new toys and games. As the Lodz chronicle describes 'Our children collect empty cigarette boxes. They remove the colourful tops and stack them in a pile, until they have a whole deck of playing cards....and they play.'¹⁷⁵ The ghettos isolation forced many children to be extra resourceful and to 'let their imaginations take over.'¹⁷⁶ These games allowed them momentary escape from reality and helped them reclaim their childhoods. This goes against Dwork's argument that normal childhood occupations were removed. It instead indicates that ordinary childhood pursuits were used to cope with the adverse surroundings.¹⁷⁷ In Theresienstadt, the children helped cope with their traumatic realities by incorporating them into their cleverly constructed games.¹⁷⁸ As can be seen by the monopoly board below:

¹⁷²Zdenek, *Ghetto*, 133.

¹⁷³David, *A square of sky*, 207.

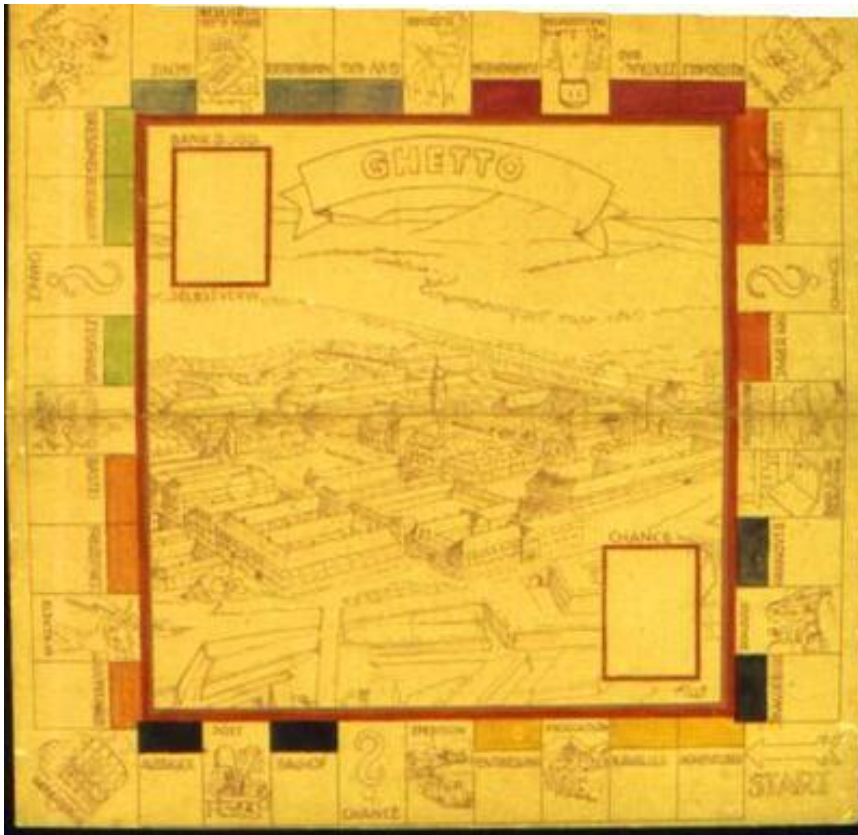
¹⁷⁴David, *A square of sky*, 207.

¹⁷⁵Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle*, 360-1.

¹⁷⁶Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle*, 360-1.

¹⁷⁷Dwork, *Children with a Star*, 191.

¹⁷⁸Dutlinger, *Art, music, and education*, 36-7.



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The desirable properties were in attics or cafes, the least accessible places within the ghetto.¹⁸⁰ In the game they had a chance to own such spaces, and to reclaim their right to freedom of choice as to where to live. The children placed their hopes in such games, and were able to control their own destinies in the monopoly ghetto world. It appears that the more isolated ghettos, gave children the chance to improvise in order to construct different realities through creating new games and toys. This variation in the restriction of materials, allowed different toys and games to be used depending on the traditions and access each ghetto had to the outside world.

5) The four ghettos contrasting focuses and strategies.

This idea of contrasting ghetto focuses needs to be expanded upon in relation to several of the children's coping strategies. The central policies of the ghetto Judenrats had a

¹⁷⁹Yad Vashem. 'Monopoly Game from Terezin Ghetto'.
<http://www1.yadvashem.org/Odot/prog/image_into.asp?id=4391&lang=EN&type_id=7&addr=/IMAGE_TYPE/4391.JPG>26 February 2010.

¹⁸⁰Dutlinger, *Art, music, and education*, 36-7.

significant impact on children's ways of coping. One of the most compelling examples of Judenrat influence, is from the Lodz and Vilna ghettos, where the majority of children used work as a strategy to survive. These two ghettos had Judenrats that believed in work for salvation, and relied heavily on this to prevent liquidation. By July 1942, the Lodz ghetto had over thirteen thousand children employed in community workshops.¹⁸¹ Both ghettos believed that the only way children could be protected was if they joined the working ranks. As one child survivor Turski reflects 'we understood...that if you are not employed...if you are not useful...for the Germans you are in danger.'¹⁸² It appears that working did not just benefit the ghetto production figures, but could also provide a refuge for some children. As Dawid Sierakowiak describes, his boss 'would try...to give me another ID card. I would be able to have extra soup.'¹⁸³ The children were aware of the importance of maintaining a job to enhance their chances of survival. As Michale Etkind reflects 'I ended up working in the post office...any kind of uniform in the ghetto was useful.'¹⁸⁴ By working, many children were entitled to 'soup'¹⁸⁵ and 'money',¹⁸⁶ which put them at an advantage over other ghetto inhabitants. In Vilna, work also provided a chance for children to cope away from a life of crime. The ghetto set up a brigade for child criminals, which involved 'the healthy atmosphere of productive work'¹⁸⁷ in exchange for food and a 'school education.'¹⁸⁸ This gave children the option of providing for themselves and their families, without risk of punishment. Work also provided a welcome distraction from the many horrors of ghetto life, 'I grew up in the fur factory. Every day I faced challenges...Being group foreman...gave me an extra sense of responsibility.'¹⁸⁹ It helped give children a sense of pride and achievement and gave them a reason to continue to fight for their survival. This strategy was simply not an option in the same way in Theresienstadt. It lacked the space for any major war industries to

¹⁸¹Dwork, *Children with a Star*, 194.

¹⁸²USHMM., 'Voices from the Lodz Ghetto: conversations with survivors: MarianTurski'.
<http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/lodz/conversations/view_video.php?content=04-turski&video=video1>01 April 2010.

¹⁸³Adelson (ed.), *The diary of Dawid*, 258.

¹⁸⁴L. Smith., *Forgotten voices of the Holocaust: a new history in the words of the men and women who survived* (London, 2005), 120.

¹⁸⁵M. Gilbert, and W. Whitworth., *Survival: Holocaust Survivors tell their story* (Retford, 2004), 252.

¹⁸⁶Gilbert, *Survival: Holocaust Survivors*, 252.

¹⁸⁷Kruk, *The last days of the Jerusalem*, 407-8.

¹⁸⁸Kruk, *The last days of the Jerusalem*, 407-8.

¹⁸⁹Edelbaum., *Growing up*, 128.

develop, meaning work was never seen as a central strategy.¹⁹⁰ This focus by the children on work exemplifies how some strategies were completely ghetto specific.

Theresienstadt may not have had the industries of Vilna and Lodz, but its inhabitants did bring with them a deep tradition of artistic expression. The children's homes formed a safe environment, in which the children could collectively express their emotions. Over six hundred children benefitted from art, as a strategy in the ghetto.¹⁹¹ Theresienstadt was the only ghetto in which they had officially sanctioned art classes.¹⁹² The main art teacher Friedl Dicker-Brandeis believed in art as a form of creative release. This release helped children to cope with the horrific conditions.¹⁹³ Art provided children with an outlet for their imagination as well as a form of escape, enabling them to gain control of their personal time and space.¹⁹⁴ Below are two such examples of the freedom children gained from artistic expression.

¹⁹⁰G. Berkley., *Hitler's gift: the story of Theresienstadt* (Boston, 1993), 24.

¹⁹¹Sterling (ed.), *Life in the ghettos*, 197.

¹⁹²Stargardt, 'Children's Art', 206.

¹⁹³Stargardt, 'Children's Art', 193.

¹⁹⁴Dutlinger, *Art, music and education*, 30.



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¹⁹⁵Volavkova, H., J. Weil and J. Nemcova (eds.), *I never saw another butterfly- : children's drawings and poems from Theresienstadt concentration camp, 1942-1944* (London, 1965), no pages numbers.

¹⁹⁶Found in Stargardt, *Children's Art*,

The butterflies symbolise children's desire to escape and to achieve greater freedom. The chef in being much larger than the rest of the people, shows the power that was vested in those who could provide food. The lack of facial features of the people in line, reflect the children's concerns over losing their identities.¹⁹⁷ Drawing and painting helped them to channel their frustration and helped sustain morale. Marta Frohlich describes how she 'improvised a sculpture...of a tree and two monkeys...I received first prize for it.'¹⁹⁸ Art helped give the children a sense of achievement as well as a forum to express their ideas and emotions. In having a communal focus of artistic expression, this helped create a sense of normalcy. As Helga Pollak expresses 'each child could draw feely according to its imagination and wishes...it gave us a different life, a different atmosphere.'¹⁹⁹ Art provided a way of expressing emotions that may have been difficult to articulate. It was also a very effective form of resistance. As Stargardt argues the drawings 'reaffirm the...will to live which has turned these painting into such potent symbols of resistance.'²⁰⁰ One survivor reflects on how 'even the Germans knew what powers of resistance resided in art.'²⁰¹ As a strategy it was different from other ghetto focuses, as Theresienstadt was the only ghetto that had the resources to allow art to be produced on such a large scale. The art produced by the ghetto was unique to its setting, as it formed a direct reaction to the surroundings in which it was painted.

Both Theresienstadt and Vilna, had cultural inheritances, which drew their focus on strategy more towards cultural initiatives.²⁰² One of the main strategies directed at the children of these ghettos was the uplifting effects of performance. Theresienstadt was unusual in that a number of its child performers were used to appease the Red Cross.²⁰³ Yet despite some of these performances deceptive intentions, this did not mean the

¹⁹⁷F. Grossman., 'The art of the children of Terezin. A psychological study', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 4:2 (1989), 219.

¹⁹⁸Dutlinger, *Art, music, and education*, 78.

¹⁹⁹Dutlinger, *Art, music, and education*, 75.

²⁰⁰Stargardt, 'Children's Art', 192.

²⁰¹Friesova, *Fortress of my youth*, 87.

²⁰²Vilna was known as the Jerusalem of the North before the war due to its intense intellectual productivity and Theresienstadt had an unusually high concentration of domestic celebrities from the arts and other cultural worlds. See Sterling, E, 'Theatre in a graveyard' the ghetto theatre in Vilna', in E. Sterling (ed.), *Life in the ghettos during the Holocaust* (New York, 2005), 223 and USHMM., 'Theresienstadt'.

²⁰³USHMM., 'Theresienstadt: Red Cross Visit'.

children did not use acting as a way of coping and resisting. It could be argued that the Red Cross Visits gave children greater freedom of action in performance, in that the guards were more accepting of their late night practices. The opera Brundibar is a prime example of how the children could appear to be conforming to the Nazi's wishes, but were actually secretly resisting their control. As Vera Schiff reflects 'the heroes of the opera were two children who had to fight the wicked monster Brundibar.'²⁰⁴ The opera represented to the children a triumph of good over evil and gave them hope of a better future to come.²⁰⁵ As Gruenbaum describes they 'were quick to relate it their own situations, cheering loudly when the villain, Brundibar was defeated.'²⁰⁶ The opera provided several of the performers with a 'moment of freedom'²⁰⁷ and allowed them to channel their 'energy and creativity.'²⁰⁸ The children of Vilna also used performance as a form of resisting. They performed plays like 'di vant'²⁰⁹, which reflected the inhabitants hope that the ghetto walls would fall and that freedom would be obtained.²¹⁰ The performances were used to resist Nazi control, by helping the children to maintain their dignity and to enhance the traditional Jewish values. Performance also helped children cope, in that it allowed them to 'act out their fantasies.'²¹¹ As Herman Kruk described in March 1942 'no skating in the ghetto, so they do theatre skating...they create an illusion for themselves.'²¹² Acting gave them a new sense of freedom, allowing them to break away from all restriction. It gave them the chance to escape their own lives, by immersing themselves in the worlds of the characters they chose to play.

7) *Resistance*

One of the main forms of resistance that involved children, was in their continuing access to education. Rachel Kostanian-Danzig sees the transmission of education as essential

²⁰⁴Schiff, *Theresienstadt*, 97.

²⁰⁵Schiff, *Theresienstadt*, 97.

²⁰⁶Gruenbaum., *Nesarim*, 48.

²⁰⁷Dutlinger, *Art, music and education*, 68-9.

²⁰⁸U. Powell., *My child is back!* (London, 2000), 61.

²⁰⁹The play 'Di Vant' in English is The Wall.

²¹⁰Kostanian-Danzig, *Spiritual Resistance*, 98.

²¹¹Kruk, *The last days of the Jerusalem*, 174.

²¹²Kruk, *The last days of the Jerusalem*, 174.

for saving ‘children from moral destruction.’²¹³ This access to education was completely ghetto specific, as some ghettos were more restricted than others. For both Warsaw and Theresienstadt, this involved a lot of underground educational activity, as all secondary education was illegal. As Mary Berg described ‘there are now a great number of illegal schools...we feel like comrades in arms responsible for each other.’²¹⁴ This was in contrast to Vilna and Lodz, where they developed intensive educational programs which faced little opposition.²¹⁵ As Yaacov describes in Vilna ‘I was in first grade...everything we read, a sentence, in yiddish.’²¹⁶ Both forms of educational pursuits can be seen as resistance, as for Warsaw and Theresienstadt their councils were going against Nazi restriction. For Vilna and Lodz by preserving levels of education, they were preserving their culture and preparing for a future. The Warsaw and Theresienstadt classes tended to be a lot smaller, to avoid detection, which allowed the children to have a greater level of individual attention. As Liliana describes she ‘went to a small school, where they taught us a little of everything.’²¹⁷ In Vilna and Lodz, specific buildings were dedicated to study, but due to the nature of the ghettos, only a certain number of children benefitted from education. For instance in Lodz the education system included forty seven schools with a total enrolment of fifteen thousand, which meant that many children were still neglected.²¹⁸ Of those who did benefit, education proved to be an effective strategy, as it gave them a *raison d’etre* to continue life in the ghetto. As Rudashevski commented in October 1942 ‘what would be the case if we did not go to school ...we would die of dejection inside the ghetto walls.’²¹⁹ Janina David from Warsaw supports this statement ‘these lessons helped to keep the prospect of normal life before our eyes. We were preparing for real school which we should enter one day.’²²⁰ For Rudashevski and David school provided a structure of normality and a great distraction from conditions as the

²¹³Kostanian-Danzig., *Spiritual Resistance*, 31.

²¹⁴Berg, *The diary of Mary Berg*, 32-33.

²¹⁵Trunk, *Judenrat*, 207-8.

²¹⁶Schwartzberg, Y., From the Testimony of Yaacov Schwartzberg about the Cultural Life in the Vilna Ghetto <http://www1.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%203754.pdf>01 March 2010.

²¹⁷L. Zuker-Bujanowska., *Liliana’s Journal: Warsaw 1939-1945* (New York, 1980), 29.

²¹⁸Unger, *In those terrible days*, 285.

²¹⁹Rudashevski, *The diary*, 67.

²²⁰David, *A square of sky*, 158.

days would ‘fly by.’²²¹ Schooling allowed them to prepare for a future. It was a form of escape and a strong method of coping. As Michal Unger has argued schooling was ‘a ray of light amidst the darkness.’²²² All the ghettos had some form of educational program, yet the size and restrictions to such programs, varied from place to place.

The other main way for older children to cope and express their resistance was by joining a youth movement. These youth movements manifested themselves in very different ways depending on the ghettos situation. For instance in Lodz they were more insular, as they had no contact with outside resistance organisations. In Warsaw due to more regular contact, the youths were involved in smuggling information. As Max Glauhen describes ‘we never knew our mission. We carried either a box or letter...containing information... for a future load.’²²³ In Lodz the youth movements were allocated their own spaces in Marysin until 1941, as opposed to in Warsaw and Vilna where activity was largely developed underground. As Sarah Stern-Katan describes the children in the Bnei Akiva youth group ‘didn’t eat at home but ate there...they slept in Marysin, so their own bed in the family home became available.’²²⁴ It appears that the two most resistance focused ghettos, Warsaw and Vilna, had some of the strongest youth movements. They did not face the same disruption as in Lodz, where all the youth collectives were closed in late 1941.²²⁵ In Theresienstadt the children did not have the same options for forming movements, as they were largely confined to their group rooms.²²⁶ However, some did show allegiance to particular political groups, we ‘turned our forced community into part of the youth movement, be it socialist or Zionist.’²²⁷ Within Warsaw there was a diverse range of youth movements, focusing on different strategies from community aid to secret missions that attempted to disrupt German control. It appears that all the ghettos

²²¹Rudashevski, *The diary*, 65.

²²²Unger, *In those terrible days*, 134.

²²³Sterling (ed.), *Life in the ghettos*, 90.

²²⁴Yad Vashem. ‘Youth Movements’.

²²⁵Trunk, *Lodz ghetto*, 315.

²²⁶The Youth Department aimed to impart a future orientated vision around either Communism or Zionism. Yet this was disrupted by the children’s focus on their individual units needs. Stargardt, *Children’s Art*, 209.

²²⁷Kluger, *Landscape of Memory*, 84.

benefitted from some form of group cohesion, yet these were formed out of very different child collectives.

The youth movements were largely run by the older children, giving them a sense of responsibility and input into disrupting the Nazi's plans. As Esther Dublin reflects 'We would meet twice a week...learnt about the land, communications and first aid...We felt that this was our resistance against the Germans.'²²⁸ In Lodz, due to its focus on work, the youth movements organised collective efforts to reduce the effectiveness of their factories. As Joseph Meyer reflects 'the battle was conducted under the codeword "P.P." (Powoli Pracuj) – that is to work slowly, to sabotage the products, to damage Fascism.'²²⁹ These strategies of collective effort to sabotage Nazi's plans, exemplify the lengths children were prepared to go to in order to undermine the regime. In the Vilna ghetto due to the secretive nature of such activities, this allowed children to take the initiative in forming secret organisations. As Rudashevski notes on the 27 February 'fifteen of us have begun a pioneer project...the future will require dedicated people to guide the masses towards...renewal.'²³⁰ The movements helped give children a purpose to continue in the ghetto. They gave them hope for the future and took their focus away from the daily struggle. As Chaim Kozienicki describes "during our meetings we have forgotten...we haven't been hungry, we have again been children.'²³¹ In joining a youth group, children were protecting their interests, as a central focus of such groups was mutual aid. As Esther Dublin reflects on the movement Hashomer Hazair 'my youth group leader...arranged for me to visit to a good doctor and procured me medicine.'²³² Youth movements were a particularly effective strategy as they distracted from discomfort, provided support and helped the children feel they were resisting the regime. It appears that in each ghetto, different strategies were formed ranging from undermining work to smuggling information, which were dependent on the ghetto conditions. This once again centralises place as an important factor in shaping children's strategies.

²²⁸Yad Vashem. 'Youth Movements'.

²²⁹Yad Vashem. 'Youth Movements'.

²³⁰Rudashevski, *The diary*, 131.

²³¹USHMM., Voices from the Lodz ghetto: Chaim Kozienicki'.

<http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/lodz/conversations/view_video.php?content=03-kozienicki>01 April 2010.

²³²Yad Vashem. 'Youth Movements'.

Conclusion

*'What worries me that when someone reads my diary, they might think that Terezin was a sort of country club. We went to play soccer, studied English and I had piano lessons.'*²³³

This dissertation has examined the temporary moments when children were able to experience some relief from the horrors of daily ghetto life. By examining coping strategies such as education or performance, its main focus was to emphasise that children were not merely passive victims of the Nazi machine. As Eva Landa reflects children took action 'Study was strictly forbidden in the ghetto...but we studied just the same!'²³⁴ It could be argued that in highlighting the children's strategic actions, this can detract away from the horror of their situation. Yet as the child survivor Pavel has pointed out, although the Theresienstadt ghetto should not be seen as some sort of 'country club'²³⁵, the activities that took place there deserve some recognition. It seems that no aspect of ghetto experience should be overlooked. The vast range and variance of children's responses, helps to emphasise how the children were far from passive victims of the process. Dwork has argued that 'to make choices does not mean a survival strategy.'²³⁶ Yet strategies such as mutual aid in Theresienstadt or youth movements in Lodz, exemplify how children saw such activities as methods of survival. The constructions of playgrounds seen in the Warsaw ghetto, were a specific strategy to promote welfare and health, which went beyond levels of choice. Strategies such as play and work, did not guarantee survival, but they did play a significant role in the accommodation of many children's holocaust existence.²³⁷

Place helped to restrict certain strategy options whilst enhancing others. In Lodz due its closed boundaries there were very few toys in the ghetto, which encouraged the children

²³³Gruenbaum, *Nesarim*, 107.

²³⁴Dutlinger, *Art, music, and education*, 28.

²³⁵Gruenbaum, *Nesarim*, 107.

²³⁶Dwork, *Children with a Star*, 257.

²³⁷Eisen, *Children and play*, 118.

to be innovative and to create new ones. Each ghetto had its own distinct features, which conveys that there was no such thing as a typical holocaust experience. Some children had piano lessons or parties, whilst others begged or smuggled on the streets. Difference in strategy can stem from landscape, ghetto focus or from the children's individual orientations. The disparities in ghetto settings, ranging from the Lodz green spaces to the Warsaw's courtyard havens, were designed to evoke very different strategic responses. These ghettos were set up at different times, with different levels of isolation and had varying levels of cultural inheritance. It therefore seems impossible to represent children's experiences as homogeneous, as they had to adapt to very different surroundings. This is clearly exemplified by Theresienstadt where the children's collective unity, can be attributed to the ghetto's unique structure of concentrating children in shared living spaces. In other ghettos such as Warsaw, where accommodation was so disparate, this encouraged more individual strategies such as smuggling. These variants in setting exemplify why place should no longer be overlooked as a significant factor in historiography of the holocaust. It seems that it is not just human factors, but physical aspects such as landscape and ghetto structure, that helped to shape human experience.

The children of the ghettos were unique in that they had very different capabilities and perceptions to adults, which made their strategies particularly distinctive. Instead of emphasising their lost childhood as Dwork does, it is important to explore the methods they used to continue their lives. As the magazine VEDEM emphasises 'we were children just the same.'²³⁸ Children's lives did not stop when they entered the ghettos, they were not merely traumatised victims. As Josef Stiasny described in his motto of the week 'For young people, Terezin is the experience of a decade...it is here that we must learn to face reality, life and death, logically, critically, manfully.'²³⁹ They did not allow all their normal childhood activities to be 'squeezed out.'²⁴⁰ They instead adapted these activities to the individual ghetto settings. In Vilna play was used by many children as a method of processing and coping with the horrors that took place at Ponary. In Theresienstadt

²³⁸Havel, *We are children just the same*, 1.

²³⁹Havel, *We are children just the same*, 140.

²⁴⁰Dwork, *Children with a Star*, 191.

children's artwork, was used as a creative release and a way of normalising their extraordinary situation. Both activities were used in childhood pursuits before the war, the ghetto settings just provided different restrictions and forms in which these activities took place. It appears that the ghetto settings combined with the children's creativity and resilience helped to form such a unique range of coping strategies. As Ursula Powell reflects 'I still marvel at the energy and creativity so many mustered under these adverse conditions.'²⁴¹ Children were less attached to conventional norms than adults and were often quicker to adapt, which suggests their strategies deserve separate historical attention.

A main theme that seems to transcend children's strategies is this idea of resistance. Each ghetto setting seemed to focus on different forms of resistance. Yet despite these different focuses, each strategy in attempting to alleviate the conditions, could be seen as an act of defiance. As Eisen has argued, resistance can be exhibited in a number of forms, providing certain restrictions are put into place.²⁴² It seems that Dwork is correct in arguing that we need to move away from framing resistance concepts around armed action.²⁴³ In making some broader conclusions it would appear that the ghettos which were more prepared to physically resist, such as Vilna and Warsaw, tended to foster children's resistance strategies that expanded beyond the ghetto walls. Whether that be in the form of youth movements or smuggling, where they took advantage of the permeability of their ghetto boundaries. The more isolated ghettos of Theresienstadt and Lodz, had a greater focus on cultural or work related strategies. These strategies having preserved Jewish culture or undermined the Nazi regime, could also be seen as acts of defiance. These forms of resistance were equally as important in preserving ghetto life as armed activity. These strategies whether physical, mental, or spiritual demonstrate the refusal of the children to be broken by Nazis attempts to degrade them. It appears that despite the range of coping strategies that were exhibited, a lot of these strategies shared the common factor of attempting to resist.

²⁴¹Powell, *My child*, 61.

²⁴²Eisen, *Children and play*, 83.

²⁴³Dwork, *Children with a Star*, 255.

The importance of place as a factor and children as a victim group, can no longer be overlooked. They both deserve to become ‘subjects’²⁴⁴ of history, due to the significant impact they had on shaping the holocaust. However, there are still questions that remain unanswered. In taking a broader focus in examining coping strategy, this has emphasised the differences in ghetto structures and landscapes on a wider scale. Yet this broader focus, has also highlighted the necessity of examining difference not just from ghetto to ghetto, but also during contrasting stages of the ghetto process. As the Warsaw ghetto exemplifies, the levels of children and their ability to strategise varied significantly before and after the 1942 deportations. It is also important to expand beyond the significance of place to examine the influence of factors such as class and gender. This dissertation has shown that children’s strategies varied dramatically as a result of their different locations. As Eisenberg has argued the children’s situations were bound up with the fate of their individual ghettos.²⁴⁵ It is clear that the ghetto children had different stories to tell, and their paths of experience were completely distinct and individual. They may not have experienced the same ‘laughter and joy’²⁴⁶ as children outside the ghetto walls, but they still held onto hope. As Walter Roth declared in VEDEM ‘robbed of the sources of our culture, we will create new ones....we shall build a new life altogether.’²⁴⁷

²⁴⁴Stargardt, *Witnesses of war*, 10.

²⁴⁵Eisenberg, *The lost generation*, 45.

²⁴⁶Wadowinski, *And we are*, 45.

²⁴⁷Havel, *We are children just the same*, 36.

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