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Volume 60, automne 2007

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/llt60art03>

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Éditeur(s)

Canadian Committee on Labour History

ISSN

0700-3862 (imprimé)

1911-4842 (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Zembrzycki, S. (2007). ‘There Were Always Men in Our House’: Gender and the Childhood Memories of Working-Class Ukrainians in Depression-Era Canada. *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 60, 77–106.

Résumé de l'article

Comme un des souvenirs d'enfance des Ukrainiens de la classe ouvrière qui ont grandi dans les pensions de famille (ou dans des maisons avec quelques pensionnaires) à l'époque de la Dépression à Sudbury, Ontario, cet article traite les histoires orales comme le sujet, non seulement la méthode, de l'analyse et souligne, en particulier, les différences de genre qui émergent dans les narrations des femmes et des hommes interviewés pour ce projet. De plus, cet article prétend que même dans un groupe d'immigrants politiquement polarisé tel que les Ukrainiens, où les séparations entre la gauche et la droite, le progressiste et le nationaliste, et le séculaire et le religieux étaient si prononcées, et par conséquent d'une importance primordiale aux histoires et historiographies des deux camps, c'était l'influence des rôles de genre dominant plutôt que la politique, la religion, ou l'idéologie qui transmettait le plus directement les souvenirs de l'expérience des hommes et des femmes qui avaient grandi dans le milieu de la classe ouvrière ukrainienne à Sudbury. En particulier, cet article se concentre sur les souvenirs des personnes interrogées en ce qui concerne trois secteurs d'activités faisant partie de la vie quotidienne dans les pensions de famille : les relations des enfants avec les pensionnaires, leurs travaux domestiques ainsi que leurs activités de loisirs.

## ARTICLE

# 'There Were Always Men in Our House': Gender and the Childhood Memories of Working-Class Ukrainians in Depression-Era Canada

**Stacey Zembrzycki**

WHEN BILL SEMENUK RECENTLY SHARED his memories about growing up in Depression-era Sudbury, Ontario as one of seven children born to a Ukrainian immigrant worker employed at the International Nickel Company (INCO) and his wife, he highlighted a number of personal narratives. One was a happy narrative of how, when the family moved from a neighbouring farm to "the Donovan" area of Sudbury, Bill always had "places to play," stating "there were ball fields, [we played] cowboys in the rock mountains ... [and in] the winter there was a lot of sliding [and] we used to crawl up the telephone poles and then drop ourselves into snow piles underneath." Another was a moving narrative about his mother's illness and eventual death. When his mother Mary became sick, he told me, "I used to ask to leave school early to take care of her." Sadly, Mary died in 1932 when Bill was nine years old. "It was very hard for a while after mother died," Bill explained, noting that often the family was "just glad to eat" and that "sometimes us kids would fight over potatoes."

Bill also pointed out that his "father always worked day shift" and thus he marvelled at the thought of how this man had looked after the whole lot of them: "He would leave at six in the morning and return at six at night. Father would do everything. I remember him sewing clothes, [and putting] patches upon patches." In addition, since many men could not find jobs in the Depression, there were always Ukrainian men who would come to Sudbury, a place where job opportunities actually existed, and stay with Bill's family. "These men," Bill said, "were good friends of my father [and they] looked after

us when mother died.” He added: “I remember the kitchen being the main room of the house where everyone congregated and told stories. We [children] would sit around and listen.”<sup>1</sup>

Bill Semenuk’s childhood narrative, which takes place against the backdrop of a family home that became a boarding house for Ukrainian male workers during the 1930s, is not an abstract discussion about the general conditions of the Great Depression. As we sat at his kitchen table and he recounted his childhood years, Bill, a member of Sudbury’s Ukrainian Catholic community, structured his narrative around what he considered to be his most important Depression-era memory: the death of his mother. Her death, he makes clear, dramatically affected his life and that of his father and siblings. By turning the history of this period into a biographical memory, Bill acted as a subjective and central historical actor in his narrative. In elucidating his general experiences in deeply personal terms, Bill’s narrative provided a means by which he could both order and validate his childhood experiences and understand the meanings of his life.<sup>2</sup>

It is also entirely possible that the gender dynamics of our kitchen table interview, in which a now elderly man shared his boyhood memories with a much younger Ukrainian-Canadian female researcher, affected how Bill told his tale. As oral historians note, the interviewer and the interviewee both participate, although perhaps to varying degrees, in the making of an oral history and/or memory text.<sup>3</sup> Taking this insight one step further, and explicitly gen-

1. This article is based upon 82 oral history interviews conducted with Ukrainians who were either born, or raised, or came to the Sudbury region prior to 1945; 50 of these interviewees were women and 32 were men. These interviews took place between October 2004 and June 2005. Those interviewees who wished to remain anonymous were given the opportunity to choose an alias. When quoted, an interviewee’s alias will be followed by an asterisk. Moreover, interviewees’ maiden names have been included in the body of this article as well as in the footnotes. Many female interviewees married men who descended from other ethnicities and thus they now have non-Ukrainian surnames. This inclusion is meant to denote their Ukrainian heritage. Bill Semenuk, interview by author, Sudbury, 11 November 2004.

2. Michael Frisch uses this line of reasoning to review Stud Terkel’s *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression* (New York 1970). In turning history into biographical memories, Frisch argues that Terkel’s interviewees have tried to retain a deeper sense of validation about their life while attempting to understand the society in which they have lived. See Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany 1990), 12–13.

3. See, for instance, Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford 1988), 271–275; Alessandro Portelli, “The Peculiarities of Oral History,” *History Workshop*, 12 (Autumn 1981), 103–104; Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, “Metaphors of Self in History: Subjectivity, Oral Narrative, and Immigration Studies,” in Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, ed., *Immigration Reconsidered: History, Sociology, and Politics* (Oxford 1990), 261–262; Joan Sangster, “Telling Our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History,” *Women’s History Review*, 3 (March 1994), 10–13; and Katherine Borland, “‘That’s Not What I Said’: Interpretative Conflict in Oral Narrative Research,” in Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, eds., *Women’s Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (New York 1991), 63–76.

dering it, feminist labour and immigration historian Franca Iacovetta has demonstrated how when female historians interview older immigrant male workers about their pasts, asking gendered questions, they may well encourage their male informants to reflect more fully on the women in their lives and on their gendered understandings of their pasts.<sup>4</sup> The gendered character of female narratives of the past has also been well demonstrated by feminist scholars, including labour and immigration historians, but perhaps most forcefully by those who have probed the silences and gaps in women's recollections of such deeply traumatic events as war-time rape and internment; such silences can represent coping strategies to protect fragile memories.<sup>5</sup>

Of course, Bill was not alone when it came to constructing biographical memories about growing up ethnic and working class in Sudbury during the thirties. Specifically, there were plenty of other Ukrainian working-class men and women who also lived out their boyhood and girlhood years in Depression-era family homes that doubled as boarding houses. In significant respects, both Ukrainian men and women who grew up in the Sudbury region during this period understood and viewed the Depression in similar ways. Many of them, for example, did not focus on the economic crash of 1929, an event that few children appreciated before they reached adulthood, but rather remembered the personal difficulties that their families faced during the Depression era as well as the years that preceded and followed it. As recent immigrants of humble and/or poor rural backgrounds, many working-class Ukrainians in Canada were accustomed to subsistence living and penny capitalism and thus the collapse of the wider economy in the thirties did not have as great an impact on their daily lives as was the case for many middle and upper-class Anglo-Canadians.<sup>6</sup>

4. Franca Iacovetta, "Post-Modern Ethnography, Historical Materialism, and Decentering the (Male) Authorial Voice: A Feminist Conversation," *Histoire sociale/Social History*, 32 (November 1999), 286.

5. For a Canadian discussion about the silences which result when informants are asked to recall events that have been deeply traumatic see, for instance, Marlene Epp, *Women Without Men: Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War* (Toronto 1999), 48–63; Epp, "The Memory of Violence: Soviet and East European Mennonite Refugees and Rape in the Second World War," *Journal of Women's History*, 9 (Spring 1997), 61–70; Paula Draper, "Surviving Their Survival: Women, Memory, and the Holocaust," in Marlene Epp, Franca Iacovetta, Frances Swyripa, eds., *Sisters or Strangers? Immigrant, Ethnic, and Racialized Women in Canadian History* (Toronto 2004), 399–414; Pamela Sugiman, "Passing Time, Moving Memories: Interpreting Wartime Narratives of Japanese Canadian Women," *Histoire sociale/Social History*, 37 (May 2004), 70–73; and Sugiman, " 'These Feelings That Fill My Heart': Japanese Canadian Women's Memories of Internment," *Oral History*, 34 (Autumn 2006), 78–80.

6. For a discussion about the ways in which Ukrainian immigrants structured their daily lives see Frances Swyripa, *Wedded to the Cause: Ukrainian-Canadian Women and Ethnic Identity, 1891–1991* (Toronto 1993), 20–62. It must be noted that Denyse Baillargeon makes a similar point about working-class housewives in Montreal, noting that they were already used to unemployment, low wages, and frugal living before the Depression crippled the economy.

Still, the Depression years were trying ones and my informants generally filtered their narratives into personal stories about struggle and despair. Their accounts of the difficulties, however, went hand in hand with memories that spoke to the issue of immigrant and working-class pride as well as stories about coping strategies and ultimately survival. At the same time, it must be noted that there were significant gender differences in how boys and girls lived and remembered their daily lives during this period, especially in regard to social relationships with male boarders, household work, and leisure pursuits that took place inside and around their immigrant boarding houses. To paraphrase the European oral historian Alessandro Portelli, all of these subjective – and gendered – narratives “tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did.”<sup>7</sup>

As an exploration of the childhood memories of working-class Ukrainians who grew up in Depression-era boarding houses (or houses with a few boarders) in a heavily immigrant northern Ontario town, this paper treats the oral histories as the subject, not merely the method, of analysis and highlights, in particular, the gendered differences that emerge in the narratives of the men and women that I interviewed. Moreover, this article argues that even within a politically polarized immigrant group such as the Ukrainians, where left/right, progressive/nationalist, and secular/religious splits were so pronounced, and thus central to shaping the histories and historiographies of both camps, it was the influence of dominant gender roles rather than politics, religion, or ideology that most directly informed the differing memories of experience that men and women had of growing up Ukrainian and working class in Sudbury.<sup>8</sup> The political egalitarianism professed by progressive Ukrainians,

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Baillargeon, *Making Do: Women, Family, and Home in Montreal During the Great Depression*, Yvonne Klein, trans., (Waterloo 1999), 107. For a related discussion about the ways in which race, class, gender, and marital status created or sustained privilege and disadvantage during the Depression see Katrina Srigley, “‘In Case You Hadn’t Noticed!’: Race, Ethnicity, and Women’s Wage-Earning in a Depression-Era City,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 55 (Spring 2005), 69–105. Also see Barry Broadfoot, *Ten Lost Years, 1929–1939: Memories of Canadians Who Survived the Depression* (Toronto 1973); Robert Collins, *You Had to Be There: An Intimate Portrait of the Generation that Survived the Depression, Won the War, and Re-invented Canada* (Toronto 1997); and Barbara Ann Lambert, *Rusty Nails and Ration Books: Memories of the Great Depression and WWII, 1929–1945* (Victoria 2002).

7. Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany 1991), 50.

8. While the beliefs of progressives rested upon communistic notions pertaining to class, nationalists stressed upward mobility and integration, preserved the Ukrainian language and culture, and emphasized the need for an independent, non-communist Ukrainian state in Europe. For a more sophisticated discussion about these contrasting identities see, for instance, Frances Swyripa, *Wedded to the Cause*; Rhonda Hinch, “‘Sincerest Revolutionary Greetings’: Progressive Ukrainians in the Twentieth Century,” Ph.D. Dissertation, McMaster University, 2005; and Orest Martynowych, *Ukrainians in Canada: The Formative Period 1891–1924*

for instance, did not transgress the boundaries of their households and thus traditional gender roles were assumed by inhabitants. This article therefore focuses on my informants' recollections regarding three areas of activity that were part of everyday boarding house life: children's relationships with male boarders, their domestic chores, and leisure activities.

Historians and other scholars who adopt oral history approaches do so in a variety of ways. In order to construct logical and meaningful historical narratives, many have conducted standard interviews with living subjects and have then examined these retrospective interviews alongside other sources of information, such as newspapers, surviving journals, and statistics; others have focused closely on their subjects as story-tellers. Few written sources discuss the domestic lives of Ukrainian children in the Sudbury region and thus this article will employ the latter approach.

When it came to conducting the interviews for this project, I was both an outsider and an insider to Sudbury's Ukrainian community. Although I grew up in the city, I neither participated in any community-sponsored activities, nor joined any Ukrainian organizations. My paternal *Baba* (grandmother), however, was very active in the organized life of the community, devoting much of her spare time to St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church. While *Baba's* stories about the community undoubtedly provided me with an insider perspective about the narratives which had shaped its history, I also struggled to understand and clarify aspects of the narratives which I found unclear as an outsider.<sup>9</sup> With *Baba's* help – she often telephoned Ukrainian men and women that she knew and convinced them to grant me an interview – I interviewed eighty-two of her friends and acquaintances in English using a life story approach.<sup>10</sup> It must be noted that *Baba's* connection to the church did not hinder my ability to interview Ukrainians who belonged to other institutions; my informants had Catholic, Orthodox, nationalist, and progressive affiliations. Moreover, my relationship with *Baba* was something that could be discussed with the men and women that I interviewed, opening up the conversations because it provided a level of trust in the interview spaces.

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(Edmonton 1991).

9. Paul Thompson and Sherna Berger Gluck discuss the ways in which insider/outsider relationships can impact the interview space. Unlike Thompson, Gluck also highlights the important roles that gender, class, and ethnicity play during an interview. See Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 140–141; and Gluck, "What's So Special About Women? Women's Oral History," in Susan Armitage, Patricia Hart, and Karen Weathermon, *Women's Oral History: The Frontiers Reader* (Lincoln 2002), 3–26.

10. See Robert Atkinson, *The Life Story Interview* (Thousand Oaks 1988). It is significant to note that all of my interviewees were of working-class status. The majority lived in working-class neighbourhoods, which are discussed below, and their fathers were employed at either INCO or Falconbridge, in working-class mining positions. In attempting to draw out the threads which link all of my interviews, I have looked for generalized patterns which connect interviewees in terms of their demographic, economic, and geographic circumstances.

While I certainly consider social and material conditions when turning to childhood memories of the Depression, my main intention is to “communicate with the past more directly.”<sup>11</sup> Childhood is a separate and socially constructed stage of existence which complicates the creation of a memory text; in terms of age, all of my interviewees were under the age of thirteen prior to 1939. Since as Neil Sutherland notes, adults tend to use childhood memories that are “really a reconstruction of what is being recalled rather than a reproduction of it,” this article will pay particular attention to the form, content, and silences of these Ukrainian narratives.<sup>12</sup> In making the act of remembering just as important as the memories themselves, we will be able to explore and evaluate how Sudbury’s Ukrainians used memory, experience, and history to construct their subjective Depression-era narratives.<sup>13</sup> Also, taking a cue from feminist gender historians of the immigrant working-classes, such as Iacovetta, Ruth Frager, Nancy Forestell, and, more recently, Rhonda Hinchey, I consider both male and female memories. Exploring the gender differences that marked these stories of the past permits an understanding of the gender dynamics which ordered the Depression-era households of Sudbury’s Ukrainians.<sup>14</sup>

My interviewees tended to couple their childhood memories about financial instability with those that recalled the many men in their lives, namely the boarders with whom they shared their private domestic spaces. While significant gender differences marked these relationships (see below), the prevalence

11. Frisch, *A Shared Authority*, 8.

12. Neil Sutherland, “When You Listen to the Winds of Childhood, How Much Can You Believe?” in Nancy Janovicek and Joy Parr, eds., *Histories of Canadian Children and Youth* (Oxford 2003), 23. Also see Sutherland, *Growing Up: Childhood in English Canada From the Great War to the Age of Television* (Toronto 1997). For a related discussion about the social construction of adolescence, see Cynthia Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth: Adolescence and the Making of a Modern Canada, 1920 to 1950* (Waterloo 2006).

13. For a discussion about the subjective nature of oral history and the importance of interpreting the silences which result in oral history narratives see, for instance, Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*, Robert Lumley and Jude Bloomfield, trans., (Cambridge 1987), 67–70; and Joan Sangster, “Telling Our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History,” 7–10.

14. See Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montreal & Kingston 1992); Ruth Frager, *Sweatshop Strife: Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement of Toronto, 1900–1939* (Toronto 1992); Nancy Forestell, “All that Glitters is not Gold: The Gender Dimensions of Work, Family, and Community Life in the Northern Ontario Gold Mining Town of Timmins, 1901–1950,” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1993; Forestell, “Bachelors, Boarding Houses, and Blind Pigs: Gender Construction in a Multi-Ethnic Mining Camp, 1909–1920,” in Franca Iacovetta, Paula Draper, and Robert Ventresca, eds., *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s–1960s* (Toronto 1998), 251–290; Forestell, “The Miner’s Wife: Working-Class Femininity in a Masculine Context, 1920–1950,” in Kathryn McPherson, Cecilia Morgan, and Nancy Forestell, eds., *Gendered Pasts: Historical Essays in Femininity and Masculinity in Canada* (Oxford 1999), 139–157; and Rhonda Hinchey, “‘Sincerest Revolutionary Greetings’: Progressive Ukrainians in the Twentieth Century.”



of male boarders in both girlhood and boyhood memories is striking; also surprising is the extent to which children were aware of the ways in which their family's boarding businesses functioned. Clearly, it reflected broader social patterns. As one of the most common survival strategies during the Depression years, boarding was a normal occurrence in this heavily masculine resource town and thus directly and indirectly touched the lives of most working-class residents. This is reflected in my sample: a majority of my interviewees, roughly 66 percent, recalled having boarders or roomers living in their houses at this time. Together, these domestic working-class childhood narratives shed light on the collective and shared experiences as well as the noteworthy gender differences experienced by Ukrainian men and women. Different political or religious affiliations, for example, did not produce dramatically different memories. Whether they frequented the Ukrainian Labour Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA) hall, St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church, St. Volodymyr's Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church, or the Ukrainian National Federation (UNF) hall, the Ukrainians who shared their stories with me recalled the boarding house or rooming house culture in which they grew up in a similar fashion. This is significant given what we know about this heavily polarized community. Historians have illuminated the ideological, political, and religious differences among Ukrainian Canadians, especially in the west.<sup>15</sup> However, this historiography does not entirely capture the range of experiences and memories of Ukrainians, including those who lived and worked in central Canada's urban cities and resource towns. Sudbury's Ukrainian community was also polarized, but the private experiences recounted by my interviewees point to similarities that cut across the ideological, political, and religious camps. The conversations at the dinner table may have been different – for example, Catholics discussed church politics and Sunday sermons while progressives debated the merits of unionizing local miners – but the mothers' gendered and ethnic roles and the gendered character of the household tasks done by boys and girls, were similar in all of these Ukrainian domestic spaces. In saying this I am not discounting the importance of politicized kitchen talk.<sup>16</sup> Rather, I note that although Sudbury's Catholic, Orthodox, nationalist,

15. See, for instance, O.W. Gerus and J.E. Rea, *The Ukrainians in Canada* (Ottawa 1985); Vladimir Kaye, *Early Ukrainian Settlements in Western Canada, 1895–1900* (Toronto 1964); Lubomyr Luciuk and Iroida Wynnycky, eds., *Ukrainians in Ontario* (Toronto 1988); Luciuk, and Stella Hryniuk, eds., *Canada's Ukrainians: Negotiating an Identity* (Toronto 1991); Manoly Lupul, ed., *A Heritage in Transition: Essays in the History of Ukrainians in Canada* (Toronto 1982); Vera Lysenko, *Men in Sheepskin Coats* (Toronto 1947); Orest Martynowch, *Ukrainians in Canada*; M.H. Marunchak, *The Ukrainian Canadians: A History* (Winnipeg 1982); Jaroslav Petryshyn, *Peasants in the Promised Land: Canada and the Ukrainians, 1891–1914* (Toronto 1985); and Frances Swyripa, *Wedded to the Cause*.

16. These discussions, often between mothers and daughters, took place within the home of radical families. Recent feminist scholarship about radical immigrant women in North America has shed light on these multi-generational female worlds. See, for example, Caroline Waldron Merithew, "Anarchist Motherhood: Toward the Making of a Revolutionary Proletariat



and progressive Ukrainians led very different public lives, they experienced a similar working-class struggle to make ends meet. Moreover, similar gender hierarchies and a gendered division of labour cut across the political spectrum as well as the racial-ethnic divide in Sudbury.

For Ukrainian families, as for others, boarding was a multi-faceted economic strategy, one that helped to bring in modest but critical funds in difficult times. There was also a definite gender dimension in these spaces, for most boarding house keepers were women; these women were usually wives and mothers who supplemented their husbands' larger but often insufficient and/or unreliable wages. As Bill Semenuk's story tells us, there were some men, usually fathers, who also took in boarders. The boarding house has featured in many North American immigrant histories, but the emphasis has tended to be on the male boarders who, as Robert Harney observed for Italian migrant men, became more "civilized" as they traded the brute life of frontier jobs for the more morally decent surroundings of this space.<sup>17</sup> Feminist labour and immigration historians, however, have shifted the focus off of the boarders, giving boarding house keepers and their economic activities a more public face. Some have characterized the practice of keeping boarders, whether in a private home or a larger boarding house, as a form of ethnic entrepreneurship, arguing that it was "a business like any other, where services were provided in return for cash."<sup>18</sup> Others, including Bettina Bradbury, have portrayed keeping boarders as a form of working-class female income-earning that kept family economies intact.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, in regard to immigrant boarding house-keeping, Donna Gabaccia and Franca Iacovetta suggest that it might be more helpful to think of this activity as a form of waged domestic service which allowed certain immigrant women to earn incomes within their own ethnic groups rather than in the homes of other North American families. And even under these conditions, at least some of the men were bound to be strangers.

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in Illinois Coal Towns," and Jennifer Guglielmo, "Italian Women's Proletarian Feminism in the New York City Garment Trades, 1890s–1940s," in Donna Gabaccia and Franca Iacovetta, eds., *Women, Gender, and Transnational Lives: Italian Workers of the World* (Toronto 2002), 217–246, 247–298.

17. See Robert Harney, "Boarding and Belonging: Thoughts on Sojourner Institutions," *Urban History Review*, 2 (October 1978), 8–37; Harney, "Men Without Women: Italian Immigrants in Canada," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 11 (January 1979), 22–44; and Harney, "The Commerce of Migration," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 9 (January 1977), 42–53.

18. Diane Vecchio, *Merchants, Midwives and Labouring Women: Italian Migrants in Urban America* (Chicago 2006), 67. Also see Vecchio, "Gender, Domestic Values, and Italian Working Women in Milwaukee: Immigrant Midwives and Businesswomen," in Gabaccia and Iacovetta eds., *Women, Gender and Transnational Lives*, 160–185; and Varpu Lindström, *Defiant Sisters: A Social History of Finnish Immigrant Women in Canada* (Toronto 1992).

19. Bettina Bradbury, "Pigs, Cows, and Boarders: Non-Wage Forms of Survival among Montreal Families, 1861–91," *Labour/Le Travail*, 14 (Fall 1984), 32; and Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Toronto 1993), 175, 178.

Although such work was never registered as wage-earning, it was otherwise similar to the work done by live-in Irish and Finnish immigrant domestics. Moreover, Gabaccia and Iacovetta note that boarding house keepers, much like domestics and factory workers, also faced sexual risks. Alternatively, illicit love affairs, usually between young male boarders and the housekeeper's daughters, could also take place. Hence, they argue that houses with boarders could be sites of pleasure and danger.<sup>20</sup> Whether we characterize keeping boarders as female waged labour, or as a form of petty ethnic entrepreneurship, which is the model I have adopted here, the various issues raised by this new historiography can help to frame the stories of Sudbury's Ukrainians during the Depression.

In considering the economic importance of boarding among Sudbury's Ukrainians, we must also understand it as part of a wider family economy and as a strategy, among others, for surviving in a particular set of economic conditions. As an ethnic entrepreneurship most often managed by my interviewees' mothers, it was a way for the family to earn extra money during these difficult years, improving its ability to pay the mortgage as well as the bills at the local grocery store. In addition to supplementing a father's wages, boarding was also an informal insurance policy when a father lost his job. Since Ukrainians with foreign surnames, or alleged links to communism, were the first to be fired during this period, a wife's boarding business ensured some steady income that allowed the family to survive such a disaster.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, since most fathers' days were spent at work or looking for extra work if they lost their jobs or had their shifts cut back, the mothers were the dominant figure in their children's lives.<sup>22</sup>

Heavily male resource towns offered women few opportunities for earning incomes and this, of course, affected the gendered family strategies employed by those who lived in these kinds of environments. For example, Nancy Forestell shows how masculine and feminine roles and identities were shaped by the dynamics of Timmins' mining industry, where the virtual absence of

20. Donna Gabaccia, Franca Iacovetta, and Fraser Ottanelli, "Laboring Across National Borders: Class, Gender, and Militancy in the Proletarian Mass Migrations," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 66 (Fall 2004), 69. Also see Donna Gabaccia and Franca Iacovetta, "Introduction," in Gabaccia and Iacovetta, eds., *Women, Gender, and Transnational Lives*, 3–41.

21. See, for instance, "Coniston – Letter From Maksym," *Ukrainski robotnychi visti*, 20 February 1930; "Sudbury," *Ukrainski robotnychi visti*, 8 July 1930, articles translated by Larissa Stavroff.

22. This was a generalized statement made by the majority of my interviewees. Ukrainian men and women regarded their mothers as dominant figures because in addition to running their households, they handled most of the disciplining that occurred in these spaces. Nick Evanshen, for instance, recalled that his mother Mary was very strict: "If I did something that wasn't right she would make me go outside, get a handful of rocks, and then I would have to kneel in the corner on the rocks with a broom over my head ... She was too busy to chase me around or spank me [and] that punishment stuck." See Nick Evanshen, interview by author, Sudbury, 14 May 2005.

female jobs meant that men were breadwinners and women were housewives who had little choice but to be economically dependent on their breadwinning husbands.<sup>23</sup> Although also a resource town and a mining community, Sudbury, unlike Timmins, which was effectively owned by the Hollinger Company, was not a company town.<sup>24</sup> In Sudbury, there were more opportunities for small-scale entrepreneurial endeavours, including female boarding-house businesses.<sup>25</sup> Ukrainian women may have had few formal job opportunities, but they were able to create their own economic opportunities at home. By taking in boarders, they either supplemented their husbands' incomes or managed to be financially independent, supporting themselves and their children if their husbands had either lost their jobs, or abandoned them, or died prematurely. In many cases, women were the primary breadwinners and housewives in these spaces. By placing memories at the heart of this analysis it is thus possible to illuminate the ethnic and gendered roles performed by Ukrainian women in these boarding houses. Since these memories belong to children who grew up in these spaces, getting "inside" these boarding houses also enables a discussion of the gendered contributions girls and boys made to these family economies.

It is also important to note that Sudburians had a unique Depression experience. In contrast to other parts of the country, this region remained relatively unscathed because of its nickel and the global demand for it. As Carl Wallace shows, the local market nearly collapsed in 1931 and 1932 but it quickly recovered between 1933 and 1937, stumbling in 1938 and then exploding with the outbreak of war.<sup>26</sup> Sudbury thus became a "destination city" during this period.<sup>27</sup> Those looking for employment, men of all ethnicities, would ride the

23. See Forestell, "All that Glitters is not Gold"; Forestell, "Bachelors, Boarding Houses, and Blind Pigs"; and Forestell, "The Miner's Wife: Working-Class Femininity in a Masculine Context, 1920–1950." Although her study does not focus on a mining town, Joy Parr discusses the gendering of work in the industrial towns of Paris and Hanover, Ontario. See Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880–1950* (Toronto 1990).

24. Kerry Abel's recent book about identity in northeastern Ontario also sheds some light on the dynamics of living in the company town of Timmins. See Abel, *Changing Places: History, Community, and Identity in Northeastern Ontario* (Montreal & Kingston 2006), 70–97.

25. Cleaning and cooking in neighbouring boarding houses as well as bootlegging were other entrepreneurial endeavours employed by Ukrainian women living in the Sudbury region. See, for instance, Peter Chitruk, interview by author, Sudbury, 10 January 2005.

26. C.M. Wallace, "The 1930s," in C.M. Wallace and Ashley Thomson, eds., *Sudbury: Rail Town to Regional Capital* (Toronto 1993), 143. Since the INCO Archive is closed to researchers it is hard to determine how many men lost their jobs during the difficult years of the thirties. Wallace however does give us an indication of the ways in which the Depression affected the region, stating that INCO cut its workforce from 8839 in February 1930 to 2000 full- and part-time employees in July 1932, while Falconbridge only offered 250 men employment in its mines during this period. See Wallace, "The 1930s," 144.

27. Wallace, "The 1930s," 139.

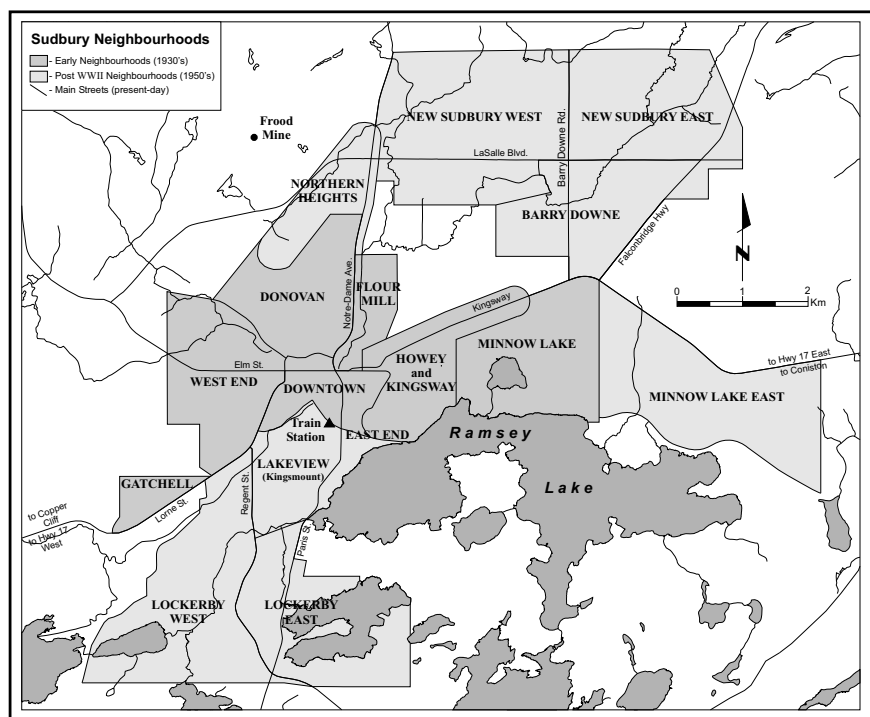
rails, disembark at the local railway station and walk to either an INCO mine or a Falconbridge Nickel Company mine to gather in front of the company gates in the hopes that they might be offered a job.<sup>28</sup> As a result, the town's population increased by almost 74 percent during the decade and of that, the Ukrainian segment rose from 4.1 to 5 percent.<sup>29</sup> Two groups of Ukrainians composed this population: those who had sojourned from Ukraine to work in the nickel mines before and after World War I, and those who came to Sudbury after facing crop failures on their prairie homesteads during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Due to its mining industry, Sudbury was an attractive option because it was one of the only places in Canada where men could obtain jobs during the difficult years of the Depression. In addition to offering a steady and good wage, Sudbury was enticing for both single men and men with families because of its vibrant Ukrainian community. This included St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church, a UNF hall, a ULFTA hall, and a number of neighbourhood stores, owned and operated by Ukrainian families. Although Ukrainians also formed an Orthodox community at this time, they did not build a formal ethnic space, St. Volodymyr's Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church, until 1940.

Those men who made the decision to come to Sudbury during the 1930s, both single and married men with children, settled in a variety of working-class neighbourhoods, both multicultural and ethnically homogeneous; the majority of my interviewees recounted what it was like to grow up on the streets of the Donovan, the West End, the East End, and Polack Town, in the INCO company town of Coniston. It must be noted that these neighbourhoods were not ideologically, religiously, or politically ordered; it was not unusual for a Ukrainian Catholic to live down the street or next door to a Ukrainian who was a member at the local ULFTA hall.

The Donovan was a multicultural immigrant neighbourhood that was established around 1907 and located just northwest of the downtown core. Most of the individuals who lived there depended upon wages earned at the nearby INCO-operated Froid Mine. The single or sojourning men who called this neighbourhood home often boarded at ethnically homogenous boarding

28. It is important to note that Ukrainian men who found themselves in Sudbury were however not guaranteed jobs at the local mines. There was no application process. Men physically lined up outside of the mining companies' gates and waited to be chosen by company officials. This was a process in which luck rather than skill played a major role in terms of selection. See, for instance, Olga Zembrzycki (nee Zyma), interview by author, Sudbury, 6 October 2004; and Charlie Rapsky, interview by author, Sudbury, 6 June 2005.

29. Wallace, "The 1930s," 138–139. According to the 1931 aggregate census statistics, Sudbury's Ukrainian population increased from 13 in 1921 to 761 in 1931 – the gender make-up of this group is unknown – and thus became the fourth largest ethnic group in the city behind those of English, French, and Finnish descent. See Canada, Bureau of the Census, *Population By Areas, Volume II* (Ottawa 1933).



houses, while those men with families usually owned or rented a house on one of the many ethnically diverse streets within this section of town.

The West End was also a multicultural neighbourhood with a mix of rented and family-owned dwellings as well as boarding houses. It was situated just west of the downtown core and was home to many of the men working in the INCO company town of Copper Cliff, located just west of Sudbury, in the INCO-operated refinery or smelter. Most Ukrainians lived on Eyre Street, Whittaker Street, Regent Street, or Riverside Drive in this neighbourhood.

The East End was a Slavic neighbourhood situated just east of the downtown core. The local railway station was located there, making it a highly transient place filled with boarding houses, bootleggers, prostitutes, and single men either looking for a job working at any one of the nearby mines, or for those employed by a lumber company, spending time between seasons. In the words of Peter Chitruk, a parishioner at St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church, growing up in the East End was like living in a "Wild West Show."<sup>30</sup> Most of the Ukrainian men and women that I interviewed who lived in this part of town

30. Peter Chitruk, interview.

grew up in boarding houses, which were most often run by their mothers and located on Drinkwater Street, Shaughnessy Street, and Van Horne Street.<sup>31</sup>

Lastly, many Ukrainian children called Polack Town in the INCO company town of Coniston, located just east of Sudbury, their home. They grew up "across the tracks" on Edward Street or on William Street, either "up-the-hill" or "down-the-hill."<sup>32</sup> Although there were only about four or five Polish families living in this ethnic enclave during the 1930s, everyone referred to this section of town as Polack Town. It is not clear why they did so but many believed that it originated with the English citizens of Coniston.<sup>33</sup> As Mary Clouthier (nee Werstiuk), a member of St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church, explained: "they didn't understand the difference between Poles and Ukrainians."<sup>34</sup> For most residents, this was not a derogatory label; Polack Town simply sounded better than Ukrainian Town and as Walter Shelekey, also a devout parishioner at St. Michael's, recounted, "you just got used to it."<sup>35</sup> This neighbourhood was a self-sufficient community within the larger company town, supplied by the Ukrainian-owned and family-operated Chmara and Wasylenki general stores. Many of the men who lived there had families and worked at the INCO-operated Coniston Smelter or for the town of Coniston, digging ditches, fixing wooden sidewalks, and shovelling snow.

As noted earlier, North American historians who have studied boarding house culture have focused upon the experiences of male boarders or female boarding house operators. Although some have used oral history interviews to analyze the gendering of male and female roles in these spaces, memories

31. See, for instance, Helen Smilanich (nee Pasichnyk), interview by author, Sudbury, 20 April 2005; Tom Zaitz, interview by author, Sudbury, 25 November 2004; and Steve Balon, interview by author, Sudbury, 20 April 2005.

32. William Street ran north to south and was divided by a rocky hill that was never blasted so as to make for one continuous street. Therefore, children who lived on the part of William Street located at the bottom of the hill referred to themselves as "down-the-hillers" while those living atop the hill on William Street called themselves "up-the-hillers." Although children from both sides of the street mingled at school, they tended to spend their spare time playing with those children who lived on their part of the street.

33. This sentiment was echoed in a *Sudbury Star* article which discussed the growth and history of Coniston: "The fourth sub-division is more ambiguously named 'Polack Town,' as it is called, is in reality, not Polack town exclusively. In that section across the CPR tracks from the company town and near the smelter live all the Slavic races that are usually parcelled together by the Anglo-Saxon with the name that is peculiar to a native of Poland ... Ukrainians [are] in the majority." See "Coniston's Population Increased by Leaps, Not by Steady Growth," *Sudbury Star*, 6 November 1935.

34. Mary Clouthier (nee Werstiuk), interview by author, Coniston, 16 May 2005.

35. Walter Shelekey, interview by author, Coniston, 12 May 2005. For a related discussion about the ways in which shared class and community interests helped to ease ethnic differences see Robert Ventresca, "'Cowering Women, Combative Men?': Femininity, Masculinity, and Ethnicity on Strike in Two Southern Ontario Towns, 1964–1966," *Labour/Le Travail*, 39 (Spring 1997), 125–58.



have not been the central source used to construct these histories. Instead, they have used census figures, government reports, newspapers, and literature written by social reformers to reconstruct boarding house culture from the "outside" rather than from the "inside"; since the majority of these studies have focused on the period before World War I, this is entirely understandable.<sup>36</sup> As a result, we know very little about the family dynamics of these types of households and even less about children's lived experiences in these places. Just as these characters often lingered in the backgrounds of these boarding houses, eavesdropping on late night gossip sessions between adults hovered around the kitchen table and playing anywhere but under mothers' feet so as to keep out of the way, these same children linger in the backgrounds of the adult-centered narratives used to study boarding houses. It must be noted that the absence of children in these narratives is not particular to this literature. Until recently, Canadian children had lacked a history of their own; they were passive rather than active agents in the writing of their history. As Rhonda Hinther points out, historians writing about children tended to focus on various social reform movements and the social policies and state institutions which evolved out of those movements and which, depending on one's perspective, helped to improve or impinge upon the lives of children.<sup>37</sup> The notable exceptions include Bettina Bradbury's, John Bullen's, and Robert McIntosh's impor-

36. For a discussion about Canadian boarding-house culture and the gendered roles within these establishments see Robert Harney, "Boarding and Belonging: Thoughts on Sojourner Institutions"; Harney, "Men Without Women: Italian Immigrants in Canada"; Harney, "The Commerce of Migration"; Nancy Forestell, "Bachelors, Boarding Houses, and Blind Pigs"; Forestell, "All that Glitters is not Gold"; Peter Baskerville, "Familiar Strangers: Urban Families with Boarders, Canada, 1901," *Social Science History*, 25 (Fall 2001), 321–346; Bettina Bradbury, "Pigs, Cows, and Boarders: Non-Wage Forms of Survival among Montreal Families, 1861–91," 9–46; and Richard Harris, "The End Justified the Means: Boarding and Rooming in a City of Homes, 1890–1951," *Journal of Social History*, 26 (Winter 1992), 331–358. For a discussion of the pertinent American literature see Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, *Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880–1930* (Chicago 1982), 68 and 173–174; Mark Peel, "On the Margins: Lodgers and Boarders in Boston, 1860–1900," *The Journal of American History*, 72 (March 1986), 813–834; Wendy Gamber, "Tarnished Labor: The Home, the Market, and the Boardinghouse in Antebellum America," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 22 (Summer 2002), 177–204; John Modell and Tamara Hareven, "Urbanization and the Malleable Household: An Examination of Boarding and Lodging in American Families," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 35 (August 1973), 467–479; and Joanne Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880–1930* (Chicago 1988).

37. Rhonda Hinther, " 'Sincerest Revolutionary Greetings': Progressive Ukrainians in the Twentieth Century," 210. For a discussion about the ways in which social reform movements, social policies and state institutions affected the lives of children see, for instance, Cynthia Comacchio, "Nations are Built of Babies": *Saving Ontario's Mother's and Children, 1900–1940* (Montreal 1993); Joy Parr, ed., *Childhood and Family in Canadian History* (Toronto 1982); Janovicek and Parr, eds., *Histories of Canadian Children and Youth*; and Neil Sutherland, *Children in English-Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth Century Consensus* (Toronto 1978).



tant work on child labour.<sup>38</sup> In recent years, North American studies dealing with children's everyday lives have increased in number, although they have generally dealt with children in cities, focussing for example on how urban immigrant and working-class children used the streets as their playgrounds.<sup>39</sup> Still, to date, few of the studies that have tried to get "inside" childhood and recover children's lived experiences have taken small towns or rural areas as their site of study.

Boarding was always a risky business but during the Depression it was particularly precarious.<sup>40</sup> A successful business depended upon reliable and employed clientele who paid their bills regularly, and this was made difficult with the uncertainty of the times.<sup>41</sup> Boarding either eliminated the effects of the Depression or it brought them right into the home, adding yet another challenge for the immigrant family to overcome. Nick Evanshen, a Ukrainian with no organizational affiliations, recalled the ways that his life changed when his parents, Steve and Mary, moved from their house on Whittaker Street to their new one at 268 Drinkwater Street; this was a large boarding house that had enough space for 30 boarders and roomers. Before undertaking this business, Nick remembered how his "mother went for days with very little food so she could scrape up enough to feed all five children," remarking "it wasn't very pleasant during the [the early days of the] Depression." After moving into the boarding house, he recalled how his mother would wake at three or four o'clock in the morning to make lunch pails and then she would spend her day cooking, cleaning, and doing laundry. He also understood that her labours mattered: the boarding fees "helped the family income, [and] improved the situation," and it meant that that they "always had enough food [to eat] when they lived on Drinkwater [Street]."<sup>42</sup>

For others, boarding proved to be more of a hassle than a solution to

38. See Bradbury, "Gender at Work at Home: Family Decisions, the Labour Market, and Girls' Contributions to the Family Economy," John Bullen, "Hidden Workers: Child Labour and the Family Economy in Late Nineteenth-Century Urban Ontario," in Bettina Bradbury, ed., *Canadian Family History* (Toronto 1992), 177–198, 199–219; and Robert McIntosh, *Boys in the Pits: Child Labour in Coal Mines* (Montreal & Kingston 2000).

39. See Sutherland, *Growing Up*; Hinthier, " 'Sincerest Revolutionary Greetings': Progressive Ukrainians in the Twentieth Century"; Enrico T. Carlson Cumbo, " 'As the Twig is Bent, The Tree's Inclined': Growing Up Italian in Toronto, 1905–1940," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1996; and David Nasaw, *Children of the City: At Work and At Play* (Garden City 1985).

40. Although working-class Ukrainians who lived in Sudbury used boarding as a coping strategy, it must be noted that working-class families living in other parts of the country did not have the means to follow suit. In particular, Denyse Baillargeon notes that because of small and often crowded urban living spaces, boarding was not an option for working-class housewives living in Montreal during the thirties. See Baillargeon, *Making Do*, 97.

41. It is unclear how much men paid for boarding arrangements. Children were not involved in the financial end of these businesses and thus interviewees could not comment on these fees.

42. Nick Evanshen, interview.

their family's economic difficulties. Olga Zembrzycki (nee Zyma), a life-long member of St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church, stated: "If times were tough some roomers left father holding the bag. They would leave to look for work elsewhere and never pay their rent. They always said that they would come back to pay [but] they never did." For her father Peter, who owned a small house on Frood Road and a larger rooming house on Kathleen Street in the Donovan, the absence of this extra income, and reduced shifts at INCO's Frood Mine, proved to be too much of a stress. He could not make the payments on his second mortgage and so he lost his rooming house on Kathleen Street. But, as Olga remarked, "we were lucky because we had another house to go to."<sup>43</sup> Pauline Kruk's (nee Mykoluk) parents, both of whom were members of Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church, faced a similar fate, nearly losing their only house in the Depression because of the pressures of providing for a large family which included ten children and sometimes up to three Ukrainian boarders who were often unable to pay their fees. Had it not been for one boarder who was particularly close to Pauline's parents, and paid regularly, Malanka and Jacob would have lost their home. And, unlike Olga's family, they did not have another house to fall back on.<sup>44</sup> Engaged in a difficult and sometimes uncertain venture, especially during the Depression, boarding house keepers could not always find reliable boarders.

One way of trying to ensure more trustworthy boarders was to have relatives, such as uncles, cousins, or grandfathers, stay in the home. This proved to be a better arrangement for some interviewees. Financially, these family members helped to pay the bills; splitting the cost of living made it possible for more families to buy homes rather than rent them. Their presence could also ease the emotional difficulties that came with immigrating to a new country. For example, those who knew their *Gidos* (grandfathers) and *Babas* (grandmothers), even if only for a brief period before they sojourned back to the old country, considered themselves lucky.<sup>45</sup> Still, some relatives took advantage of the situation. Bernice Crowe (nee Haluschak) had a vivid childhood memory of the four uncles (her father's brothers) who came to live with her family after getting jobs at Falconbridge Mine. When her mother, who spent some of her "leisure" time cooking in the ULFTA kitchen, got angry about this arrangement and confronted the men, they replied: "well he's our brother and we don't have to pay."<sup>46</sup> Taking on family members, then, could also involve considerable economic risk.

If not family members who, then, were these boarders? In some contrast to Italian immigrants who, as Harney explained, came to Canada via family

43. Olga Zembrzycki (nee Zyma), interview.

44. Pauline Kruk (nee Mykoluk), interview by author, 20 January 2005.

45. Anonymous interview, interview by author, Sudbury, 18 May 2005.

46. Bernice Crowe (nee Haluschak), interview by author, Sudbury, 17 May 2005.

chain migration or through an organized *padrone* system, most Ukrainian men who came to Sudbury did so in an unorganized manner, and often as a last resort.<sup>47</sup> Unless they had family in the region, most of my interviewees' parents came to Sudbury only after they settled in another part of the country and failed to obtain the standard of living that they had envisioned. Men saw advertisements for jobs in Sudbury or they learned about them from co-workers. John Stefura's father Alec, one of the founding members of Sudbury's UNF hall, received a letter from friends in the region who told him that "if you wanted a job INCO was hiring for 25 cents an hour and you could work for 6 ½ or 7 days a week."<sup>48</sup> If the men had family or friends in the region, they usually stayed with them until they could get settled and send for any immediate family members who were living in other parts of Canada or in Ukraine. In contrast, those men without a connection to anyone living in Sudbury would ride the rails to the town and when they arrived they would either hear about a boarding house from the men that they encountered or they would visit the local Ukrainian church, the ULFTA hall or the UNF hall where they would be welcomed and recommended to a boarding house operator. Thus, in contrast to the mixed neighbourhoods of the town, these boarding houses tended to be ethnically, ideologically, politically, and religiously homogenous; a progressive Ukrainian would not have boarded with a Catholic family for instance. Unless one of the operators was familiar with the men recommended to them, they always took a chance when taking in boarders. The desperation of the times meant that one could not be particularly fastidious.

Children who grew up in these kinds of households thus recalled that there were always men in the house, usually eating or sleeping. This was especially true for Paul Behun's family, all of whom were devout members of St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church. When his father John died in 1932, his mother collected \$30 a month in mother's allowance to raise Paul and his older brother Bill. To supplement that income, Anna took in three boarders, one for every shift at the nearby INCO smelter. While one man slept, the second man worked, and the third man remained awake. Anna had to do this in order to qualify for mother's allowance, rotating the men to prove to officials that she did not have a constant breadwinner in the house.<sup>49</sup> It is significant to note that although Anna's strategy was meant to help her evade officials, other Ukrainian women also employed bed rotation schedules to accommodate more men. By having

47. See Harney, "Boarding and Belonging: Thoughts on Sojourner Institutions," 8–37; and Harney, "Men Without Women: Italian Immigrants in Canada," 22–44.

48. John Stefura, interview by author, Sudbury, 24 January 2005.

49. Paul Behun, interview by author, Coniston, 12 May 2005. For a discussion about mother's allowances and the moral regulation of women see Margaret Jane Hillyard Little, *No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit: The Moral Regulation of Single Mothers in Ontario, 1920–1997* (Oxford 1998); and Little, "A Fit and Proper Person: The Moral Regulation of Single Mothers in Ontario, 1920–1940," in McPherson, Morgan, and Forestell, eds., *Gendered Past*, 123–138.

the men sleep in shifts, a three bedroom home with two beds in each room, for instance, could then meet the needs of eighteen men who worked the day, afternoon, and night shifts at the local mines. According to Anne Matschke, “the beds were always warm.”<sup>50</sup>

In these childhood memories, the boarders occupy different ranks with respect to the family. Some male interviewees elevated the men to the status of “uncles” while others could rarely remember the names of those with whom they had shared their domestic space. As the opening story tells us, after Bill Semenuk’s mother Mary died in 1932, his father John, a devoted member of St. Mary’s Ukrainian Catholic Church, had to raise seven children alone. Luckily he worked steady day shift at INCO’s Froid Mine and so he could come home in time to meet the children when they arrived from school. In those instances when he needed a babysitter, the male boarders looked after the children, congregating in the kitchen where they would play cards and tell stories that the children would sit around and listen to. For Bill these men were like family.<sup>51</sup> Taciana\*, who frequented St. Mary’s and the UNF hall, also remembered the men who lived in her parent’s home fondly; she reminisced about the many Ukrainian holidays spent with them at her mother’s kitchen table, eating traditional Ukrainian dishes and listening to stories about the old country.<sup>52</sup> It is, in this case, important to stress that adult memories about childhood are fallible and thus these now nostalgic stories may have been transformed with the passage of time.<sup>53</sup>

Other interviewees had very different memories of the boarders who had lived in their homes. These stories do not move toward a “happy ending,” but rather interviewees remembered these men as simply strangers who had shared their space. For instance, Mary Brydges (nee Ladyk), who took mandolin lessons at the ULFTA hall, stated that the men “used to come through the back door, through the kitchen and go straight upstairs,” eating with her family but otherwise living separately. Mary left school at the age of thirteen to help her mother run the family’s boarding house, and although she vividly

50. Anne Matschke (nee Kuchmey), interview by author, Sudbury, 7 May 2005. In referring to the material conditions of boarding houses it is also important to note that men ate in shifts. Women spent long days cooking for the men in order to ensure that each shift of boarders had enough food to eat. Although most homes had running water, these places lacked hot water. Using large wood-burning cook stoves, water thus had to be boiled for cleaning, cooking, bathing, and laundry purposes. On a related note, most homes had one indoor toilet and newspaper was often used as toilet paper. See Anne Matschke (nee Kuchmey), interview.

51. Bill Semenuk, interview. Employing the work of pre-industrial British historian Naomi Tadmor, it is important to broach the term “like family” critically, noting that the boundaries of Ukrainian families were quite fluid at times and thus emanated from relationships of co-residence and authority. See Tadmor, “The Concept of the Household-Family in Eighteenth-Century England,” *Past and Present*, 151 (May 1996), 113 and 120–125.

52. Anonymous interviewee, interview by author, Sudbury, 16 November 2004.

53. Sutherland, “When You Listen to the Winds of Childhood, How Much Can You Believe?” 20.

recalled waking every morning to make thirteen or fourteen lunch pails to send to work with the men, she could not remember any particular man.<sup>54</sup> Like Mary, Paraska\* had few memories when it came to discussing the boarders who had shared her home, even though many of them attended mass alongside her family at St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church or worked at INCO's Copper Cliff Refinery with her father. Since the men did not stay long, she never really got to know any of them.<sup>55</sup> Angela Behun (nee Bilowus), a member of St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church, echoed this sentiment, emphasizing that there were always different men staying with her family. Her house was like a "temporary stop-over," a place where the men would stay before switching to another boarding house or getting married.<sup>56</sup>

If a child developed a relationship with a boarder, he was usually the son, not the daughter, of the family. The girls spent a significant amount of time helping their mothers, while boys usually had few domestic chores. Nellie Kozak (nee Tataryn), one of five daughters in her Ukrainian Catholic family, remembered that when the one boy, her brother Steve, arrived "... God was born. For Ukrainian people, the son was everything and the girls were nothing. The girls would just have to work."<sup>57</sup> Lynne Marks has well documented the different gendered dimensions of working-class leisure and certainly there were important gender distinctions in Sudbury as well.<sup>58</sup> Boys like Steve tended to have more spare time than their sisters. Consequently, some boys spent much of their leisure time with the men who lived in their homes, often getting to know these men better than their own fathers who worked long twelve-hour shifts at the local mines. It must be noted that boarders, with whom boys formed bonds, often did not work at the mines. Rather they worked odd jobs and thus had more time to spend at home. Peter Chitruk remembered developing close relationships with many of the men living in his home, but one particular man, "Bill," stood out; Bill worked odd jobs in and around the region. They had a close bond and a special Sunday morning routine: Bill would buy the *Toronto Star* and read it to Peter while he sat next to him and looked at the pictures.<sup>59</sup> Nick Evanshen developed a similar bond with two brothers who boarded at his house, John and Peter Buyarski. When they were not working at the nearby East End Bakery, a job which took them away from home in the morning, John and Peter would baby-sit Nick, taking him swimming in the summer and skating in the winter. Nick admitted to seeing these

54. Mary Brydges (nee Ladyk), interview by author, Sudbury, 28 October 2004.

55. Anonymous interviewee, interview by author, Sudbury, 10 May 2005.

56. Angela Behun (nee Bilowus), interview by author, Coniston, 12 May 2005.

57. Nellie Kozak (nee Tataryn), interview by author, Sudbury, 6 June 2005.

58. See Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Small-town Ontario* (Toronto 1996).

59. Peter Chitruk, interview.

men more often than his father, fondly recalling that they bought him his first pair of skates.<sup>60</sup> Although babysitting was normally part of a woman's daily routine, these boarders undertook this task, sharing parental responsibilities with the boarding house operators with whom they lived. Many interviewees, both girls and boys, elevated some boarders to "uncle" status. However, it was most often the boys in a family who developed special and memorable bonds with the men. Mothers and fathers had different expectations when it came to their children: daughters were to emulate their mothers, and boys the actions of their fathers.

While girls may have had less time to spend with male boarders because their workload in the home was heavier than that of their brothers, we must also address the other ways in which parents regulated these relationships. Parents subtly limited the time their daughters spent with these men and monitored any interaction they may have had with them to ensure that relations did not turn sexual. For instance, girls often ate at different times from the men and slept in bedrooms that were located on separate floors. I say that these measures were subtle because when asked about their relationships with boarders, my interviewees noted that their memories contained no recollections of undue sexual anxiety about having had men living in their homes. Although these silences seem to indicate that sexual anxiety was not a part of my interviewees' experiences, it is important to recognize that the Ukrainians with whom I spoke may have suppressed, transformed, and/or chosen not to reveal these kinds of incidents to me when asked about boarding house culture.

We must, as Gabaccia and Iacovetta argue, nevertheless view boarding houses as sexualized spaces of pleasure and danger. Although the childhood memories of the Ukrainian men and women that I interviewed downplayed the fear and/or alarmism expressed by social reformers who argued that crowded domestic spaces threatened girls' sexuality, there is no doubt that sexual tensions and sexual misconduct of various types did occur in some of these households.<sup>61</sup> Instances of boarders guilty of sexually assaulting the girls with whom they lived can be found within the written record even if they were not reported by my informants.<sup>62</sup> Despite their silences on the issue of sexual assault, some intriguing stories did emerge in these interviews which give us

60. Nick Evanshen, interview.

61. For an examination about the ways that social reformers depicted the moral boundaries of urban space and, in particular, the boarding house see Jim Opp, "Re-imaging the Moral Order of Urban Space: Religion and Photography in Winnipeg, 1900–1914," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, 13 (2002), 86. For a similar discussion about the ways in which Italian and American "surveyors" depicted the work choices and morality of Italian women in Italy and the United States see Maddalena Tirabassi, "Bourgeois Men, Peasant Women: Rethinking Domestic Work and Morality in Italy," in Gabaccia and Iacovetta, eds., *Women, Gender, and Transnational Lives*, 106–129.

62. See, for instance, Archives of Ontario (AO), Record Group (RG) 22–392, Box 151, File: Swerda, John, Sudbury, 1920, Carnal Knowledge of Girl Under 14.



insight into some of the sexual tensions which occurred in these homes. One woman recalled that certain boarding house keepers treated the younger men as a pool of potential husbands for their daughters, in some cases making their choices very clear to the community so as to avoid unnecessary competition for their daughters.<sup>63</sup>

Significantly, my interviewees were also silent when it came to discussing the sexual tensions and/or sexual relations that may have occurred between their mothers and their boarders. As Gabaccia and Iacovetta note, Harney probably exaggerated matters when he suggested that the presence of a woman, the boarding house keeper, was enough to make Italian men, emerging from the brutalizing frontier, abandon their rough behaviour and become complete gentlemen. Although we may not be able to determine whether my interviewees' houses were sexually charged places, some of the men and women were forthcoming when it came to telling negative stories about other boarding houses and their operators; gossip is therefore essential to shedding light on those issues which my interviewees refrained from discussing.<sup>64</sup> While stressing that their parents' boarding houses had been filled with respectable men, they referred to certain Ukrainian boarding house operators as "floozy" who had left their husbands for boarders. These women became outcasts in the Ukrainian community because in leaving their husbands they also often left their children. At least this was the case with religious Ukrainians; no one from the progressive community raised this matter. Those Catholics who did share their memories of "bad" women stressed that these women never returned to church. Living in a common law situation, or as Ukrainians negatively referred to it, living *na bushwel*, was unrespectable. If a Ukrainian woman married, then the belief was that she had chosen a life partner. Regardless of whether a woman's husband abused her or their children, drank excessively, or lost his job, divorce was not considered to be an option.<sup>65</sup> The immigrant generation believed that there was no right or wrong reason for a woman to divorce, let alone abandon, her husband. Stories such as these therefore remind us that we need to study the silences that occur when doing oral history. Memories about boarders who became "uncles" need to be read alongside those of men who

63. Olga Zembrzycki (nee Zyma), interview.

64. For a discussion about gossip and rumour and the ways in which they can be used by historians see Franca Iacovetta, "Gossip, Contest, and Power in the Making of Suburban Bad Girls: Toronto, 1945–1960," *Canadian Historical Review*, 80 (December 1999), 585–623; Lynne Marks, "Railing, Tattling, and General Rumour: Gossip, Gender, and Church Regulation in Upper Canada," *Canadian Historical Review*, 81 (September 2000), 380–402; and Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa* (Berkeley 2000).

65. In her study of the Ukrainian bloc settlement in Alberta, Frances Swyripa shows how the Ukrainian community regulated itself through informal networks. According to Swyripa, formal legal networks were the last resort for most Ukrainian women. See Swyripa, "Negotiating Sex and Gender in the Ukrainian Bloc Settlement: East Central Alberta Between the Wars," *Prairie Forum*, 20 (Fall 1995), 149–174.





A Coniston Ukrainian boarding house operator and her Ukrainian boarders, circa 1930.  
Courtesy of the Multicultural History Society of Ontario

were cunning or abusive; memories of boarding houses as sites of pleasure alongside those that spoke to danger.

Although the sexual dynamics within boarding houses varied, all successful boarding businesses required thriftiness and this was especially true during the Depression. This burden fell upon the woman of the household. In performing this type of paid labour in the home, the boundaries between a woman's public and private spheres were inevitably blurred. Despite this compromise and the fact that boarding created more work for women and led to extra expenditures and infringements on their private spaces, this domestic business, as Bettina Bradbury reminds us, offered women a source of income comparable to a wage.<sup>66</sup> During the Depression, this wage came with a catch. If budgeting for a single family during these tough times was a difficult task, requiring women to cut back on essentials and non-essentials, budgeting for

66. Bradbury, *Working Families*, 175–178.

both their families and a group of hungry men could be daunting.<sup>67</sup> The boarding house keeper had to prepare enough food for her boarders and, at the worst of times, try to financially break even.

Not surprisingly, this was often difficult to do when boarders did not have enough money to pay their boarding fees. Ukrainian women responded to this challenge by preparing ethnic food. According to Harney, Italian boarding house operators and their boarders used food and language to insulate themselves from cultural change.<sup>68</sup> In the case of Ukrainian boarding house operators, ethnic food and language appeared to have had more to do with economics and less to do with an explicitly conscious effort to preserve ethnic culture and traditions. Ukrainian women stuck to what they did best and did not spend the few spare moments of their days pondering the ways that food and language defined ethnic boundaries. Ukrainian women, like most immigrant women feeding families on tight budgets, took their role as food providers seriously and drew on customary ways of stretching meals to feed their households.<sup>69</sup> A pot of borscht or a roast pan of perogies or cabbage rolls fed many hungry mouths and these foods could be made in large quantities for a relatively low price; it must be noted that these dishes were often made with seasonal ingredients. Such ethnic foods were a staple, made at least once a week to satisfy the boarders' hunger as well as the family's budgetary constraints. Boarding house operators also made a variety of soups. Like perogies made with flour and potatoes, and cabbage rolls made with cabbage and rice, large quantities of soup made with water, a small portion of meat and some kind of vegetable could be made quite inexpensively. Anne Matschke (nee Kuchmey), a member at St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church, remembered her mother preparing a different pot of soup for her boarders almost every day, especially during the Depression. If she did not have enough food to feed her boarders as well as her seven children, her mother Malanka would just "add more water to the soup."<sup>70</sup> Like perogies and cabbage rolls, soup was a cost efficient answer for those struggling to feed many hungry mouths on a small budget.

However, for those who ran larger boarding houses, a variety of Ukrainian foods and soups were simply not enough. Many boarders were not happy unless

67. For a discussion about Depression era budgeting see Baillargeon, *Making Do*, 91–111.

68. Harney, "Boarding and Belonging: Thoughts on Sojourner Institutions," 27.

69. Food is central to understanding the narratives of immigrants, especially immigrant women. See, for example, Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006), 137–169; Franca Iacovetta and Valerie Korinek, "Jell-O Salads, One-Stop Shopping, and Maria the Homemaker: The Gender Politics of Food," and Marlene Epp, "The Semiotics of Zwieback: Feast and Famine in the Narratives of Mennonite Refugee Women," in Epp, Iacovetta, Swyripa, eds., *Sisters or Strangers?*, 190–230, 314–340; and Hinthner, "'Sincerest Revolutionary Greetings': Progressive Ukrainians in the Twentieth Century," 136–138.

70. Anne Matschke (nee Kuchmey), interview.

they had one or two different types of meat with every meal. The high cost of this commodity posed a difficult challenge to women already struggling to break even; they had to not only find ways to fit it into their budgets, but also ensure that everyone received an equal share. But Justine Bilowus, a member of St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Women's League, met this latter challenge head on. When preparing a pot of stew or some kind of soup, she would tie a string around each piece of meat so that every man at the table would get his share of it.<sup>71</sup> When women were able to afford meat, they had to make it stretch and thus wasted nothing. Although Ernie Lekun's Ukrainian Catholic mother Mary did not run a boarding house, her resourcefulness is typical of those who did: "Every year mother's uncle from out west would send us a whole, frozen pig; Dad would just have to pay for the shipping. Mother would use every part of that pig, hand grinding it. I vividly remember her grinding the pig's ears to make blood sausages. Mother would use the rest of the head to make a soup, boiling the hell out of it until it fell apart. The only thing that went into the garbage was the bones."<sup>72</sup> Interestingly, the children said that taste was never compromised; nearly every one of my interviewees made sure to report that their mothers had been exceptional cooks. Preparing ethnic food was an economically efficient way for women to provide their boarders with the calories that they needed to work underground for twelve-hour shifts. Ethnic food may have helped to preserve Ukrainian traditions but it was above all a way for women to ensure that their boarding businesses were successful in tough times.

Boarding was also a labour intensive business and thus many mothers asked for assistance. While some hired single or married women looking to make some extra money, most relied on their children, whose labour was free and often readily available. In addition to managing their boarding businesses and overseeing their family's finances, mothers supervised their children, assigning them tasks to be done in and around the home.<sup>73</sup> Although mothers and their children conversed in Ukrainian, the tasks assigned to them were not ethnic but gendered: girls undertook domestic tasks within the household while boys performed masculine chores and errands outside of the home.

After Bernice Crowe's (nee Haluschak) father passed away in the late 1930s, her mother Stella, a member of the ulfta, decided to take in boarders to support her family. Although 6 men lived with them at a time, Stella cooked for about 25 to 30 men a day, serving as a type of restaurant cook for those who were rooming in the area. In speaking about the ways that she helped her mother, Bernice explained: "Every Saturday I would help mother with the cleaning, and I would sweep and then scrub those darn wood floors. It was

71. Angela Behun (nee Bilowus), interview.

72. Ernie Lekun, interview by author, Sudbury, 9 May 2005.

73. For a discussion about the ways in which women were financially responsible for budgeting the family income see, for instance, Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families*.

hard. [During the week] I was going to school and I would have to come home and do the afternoon dishes and set the table."<sup>74</sup> Helen Cotnam (nee Cybulka), who attended a French Catholic school and had no Ukrainian organizational affiliations, also helped her mother with her rooming business. They did not cook meals for the men but every week Helen had to help her mother clean the rooms that they had rented. Although they were lucky enough to have indoor plumbing, she emphasized that this was a mixed blessing because she had to clean the bathrooms the men had used. As she vividly recalled, it only took her a few dirty toilets to issue an ultimatum, insisting that her mother buy her a toilet brush before she would clean another toilet.<sup>75</sup> Like Bernice and Helen, Anne Matschke (nee Kuchmey) remembered the time she spent helping her mother run her boarding house, which included 10 men, at 295 Eyre Street. Before walking to school each morning, Anne had to make all of the beds in the house. She was also responsible for cleaning the floors: "I had to shake out all the old rag carpets and wash the floors on my knees. There were no mops, and I remember always looking backwards to see if I was almost done ... [The kitchen] was so big."<sup>76</sup> Helen Gniazdoski (nee Daniluk), a member of St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church, also had to help her mother with the boarding business, and she recalled an incident when her mother left her and her sister alone to do the men's laundry. Her mother arrived home from picking blueberries to find that the men's underwear had been turned pink.<sup>77</sup>

Running a boarding business was always hard work. Those girls who helped their mothers often undertook daily domestic chores, mainly cleaning. Surprisingly, few of them learned to cook from their mothers. Cleaning was a task that could be assigned to a child. If not done properly, it would not send the business into disarray. But as the women interviewed explained, cooking was a greater responsibility – while men may not have minded coming home to a house with dirty floors and unmade beds, they would have been upset to find that a meal was not waiting for them at the end of a twelve-hour shift – and so it was left up to the older women in the household. It is important to note that none of my interviewees recalled instances in which their mothers had failed to prepare a meal. Therefore it is difficult to determine whether these women faced consequences from the men with whom they lived. In addition to these domestic duties, girls were also responsible for caring for their younger siblings. When the oldest daughter in the household married – they often did so at a young age to alleviate the financial strain placed on the family – the next oldest female sibling would take over her domestic and child-rearing responsibilities. This familial female cycle was another essential

74. Bernice Crowe (nee Haluschak), interview.

75. Helen Cotnam (nee Cybulka), interview by author, Sudbury, 2 May 2005.

76. Anne Matschke (nee Kuchmey), interview.

77. Helen Gniazdoski (nee Daniluk), interview by author, Sudbury, 13 May 2005.



**Nick Evanshen plays the mandolin on the back steps of his family's boarding house while his mother watches through the window, circa 1934.**

Courtesy of Nick Evanshen

ingredient for a successful boarding business.

Boys' chores often took them outside of the home. Whenever Paul Behun's mother needed wood for the stove, he and his brother Bill would go into the bush, cut logs, and then haul them home, splitting them before stacking them close to the house.<sup>78</sup> If boys were not splitting firewood, they were collecting coal and shovelling it through the chute which carried it into the basement. Many mothers also kept a number of

farm animals in the backyard, including cows, pigs, and chickens. Most often it was the boys in the home who were responsible for milking the cows and cleaning the chicken coops and then delivering milk or eggs to customers in the neighbourhood. Blueberry picking was another way for a Ukrainian family living in northern Ontario to supplement its income and it was usually the boys in the household who were responsible for picking them. It was laborious and hot work, usually done during late July and early August.<sup>79</sup> Although he now enjoys picking blueberries, Stanley Hayduk, a Roman Catholic who attended St. John the Evangelist Church, remembered when he hated doing this task, recalling that he would only be allowed to play ball after he had filled a basket.<sup>80</sup> Like Stanley, Bill Semenuk spent many mornings during the 1930s picking blueberries to earn extra money. He looked forward to it though, as a morning of picking often went hand in hand with an afternoon of swimming

78. Paul Behun, interview.

79. Generally, interviewees stated that blueberry picking lasted about three weeks a year and supplemented the family income nicely. Although many interviewees recalled that this extra income helped to pay for groceries others, like Ernie Lekun's mother Mary, saved the money they earned. Mary, who made about 50 cents a basket, spent a number of years saving and, in the end, purchased her first refrigerator with the money around 1947. Ernie Lekun, interview. Also see "88,000 Quarts of Blueberries are Harvested," *Sudbury Star*, 20 July 1932; and "4,500 Baskets Sent to Toronto Each Day From District Points," *Sudbury Star*, 12 July 1933.

80. Stanley Hayduk, interview by author, Garson, 19 May 2005.

at Ramsey Lake.<sup>81</sup> Boys rarely helped their mothers when it came to domestic chores although many, including Frank Makarinsky, have fond memories of watching their mothers cook, waiting for such things like fresh bread to come out of the oven.<sup>82</sup> In highlighting memories like those recalled by Frank, I am not trying to deny that boys worked less than their sisters. Certainly chopping wood, shovelling coal into the house, and picking blueberries were difficult tasks. However, it is important to note that these chores were done less frequently than the daily domestic tasks assigned to girls.

As this description of the gendered division of child labour suggests, Ukrainians, like other immigrant and Canadian parents, had gendered expectations of their children, and those expectations reflected a response to economic realities as well as cultural and ideological factors. Daughters were trained to be future wives while boys emulated their fathers and learned what it took to be a successful breadwinner. By sending their boys to deliver milk or pick blueberries, parents gave them not only independence, but also financial responsibility, teaching them the value of a dollar at an early age. Ukrainian immigrants who arrived in early 20th century Canada brought a distinct peasant culture with them. This baggage, as Frances Swyripa shows, included a set of clearly defined gender roles and stereotypes: "They [women] were essential to the functioning of the family as the basic unit of production and consumption, yet they were regarded as inferior beings subject to the authority of their menfolk."<sup>83</sup> But this view was not limited to Ukrainians or even immigrants more generally. In Denyse Baillargeon's study about the Depression experiences of French-Canadian women who lived in Montreal, one of her informant's comments was similar to the one made by Nellie Kozak (nee Tataryn): "Little boys were like little kings. Very few homes made the boys work. They couldn't be touched. If there was something to be done, the girls did it."<sup>84</sup> Within the wider Anglo-Celtic society, an enduring Victorian ideology of separate spheres (which in practice were never separate) did not necessarily justify male privilege (the point was that boys and girls were to be trained for separate but complimentary worlds) but it could and did lead to a double standard. Boys were encouraged to undertake roles that would train them to be breadwinners while girls were trained for the domestic roles

81. Bill Semenuk, interview.

82. Frank Makarinsky, interview by author, Sudbury, 4 May 2005.

83. Swyripa, *Wedded to the Cause*, 26. Rhonda Hinthér also draws on Swyripa's argument and provides a convincing discussion pertaining to the ways in which this gendered cultural baggage was a part of the Ukrainian left. See Hinthér, " 'Sincerest Revolutionary Greetings': Progressive Ukrainians in the Twentieth Century," 128–129. Of course Ukrainians also adapted to their new northern setting, making ad hoc decisions which depended upon the local context. Making lunch pails and having boarders sleep in shifts, for instance, were strategies that Ukrainian women adopted in order to cope in this northern resource town.

84. Baillargeon, *Making Do*, 42.



that they would eventually assume. Economic factors led many working-class families to make strategic decisions about children's work. If a boy could make more money than a girl in the public sphere then he was sent to work, not his sister.<sup>85</sup> These gendered roles, then, reflected the interplay of a number of economic and cultural factors, including the dynamics of the mining town and the differing job opportunities available to men and women. But transplanted old world ideas about what it meant to be a "Ukrainian man" and a "Ukrainian woman" reinforced such gender roles.

Accounting for the situation and living it are two different things. It must be stressed that in reflecting upon their childhoods, my interviewees, especially females, were well aware of the gender dynamics that ordered their households.<sup>86</sup> In the women's opinions, boys were valued more than girls and were treated accordingly. Indeed, decades later there is still a great degree of bitterness in the voices of women who recall the broken dreams and the many limitations placed on them. Some remain upset that their parents did not encourage them to stay in school; they are haunted by the memory of the rhetorical question that their father had put to them: "Why go to school [when] you are going to scrub floors and do housework anyway?"<sup>87</sup> Most of them, however, shrugged off their feelings and subtly warned me not to stress these gender inequalities because "this was normal" for that time. As Michael Frisch warns, we must be sensitive to such differences when doing oral history or we risk creating a "discursive disconnect," essentially causing us to lose touch with the people we interview and the narratives we hope to reconstruct.<sup>88</sup> While we should listen attentively and read our interview transcripts carefully for trends and silences, we must not pass judgement on the opinions of past generations. Rather it is vital to note that these gendered notions structured the ways in which boarding houses operated and therefore they are central to the collective experience of Sudbury's Ukrainians. Moreover, these gendered notions of work are vital to understanding the child-rearing practices of most parents, not just Ukrainian parents, who struggled to raise a family during the first half of the 20th century.

When it came to reminiscing about their pasts, Ukrainian men and women used deeply personal biographical memories to understand their boyhood and

85. See Bradbury, *Working Families*; and Bradbury, "Gender at Work at Home," 177–198.

86. Although the Ukrainian men that I interviewed openly admitted to being treated in a more superior manner than their sisters, they did so in more hesitant and guarded ways than women, making sure to indicate that they had contributed to the family economy nevertheless. See, for instance, Joseph Maizuk, interview by author, Sudbury, 25 January 2005.

87. Olga Zembrzycki (nee Zyma), interview. Nellie Kozak's (nee Tataryn) mother echoed this sentiment, stating "... you don't need to go (to school) to wash dishes and diapers." See Nellie Kozak (nee Tataryn), interview.

88. Michael Frisch, "Working-Class Public History in the Context of Deindustrialization: Dilemmas of Authority and the Possibilities of Dialogue," *Labour/Le Travail*, 51 (Spring 2003), 153–164.



girlhood experiences. In particular, boarders and boarding house culture left indelible marks on the memories of Sudbury's Ukrainians. Regardless of their Catholic, Orthodox, nationalist, or progressive affiliations, my informants recounted similar working-class experiences, uniting an otherwise ideologically, politically, and religiously divided community in a collective struggle to survive.<sup>89</sup> There is no doubt that Sudbury's Ukrainians had very different experiences when they stepped onto the streets of their neighbourhoods or into their halls or churches, however an examination of their domestic spaces reveals that boarding house culture was a gendered, working-class experience shared by all those who lived it. Catholic girls who were chased down their streets by May Day protesters and progressive girls who were called communists in their schoolyards at recess both washed floors when they went home at night. Progressive boys who learned to speak Ukrainian and play the mandolin at the ULFTA hall and Catholic boys who spent their Sunday mornings as altar boys both ran errands for their mothers and spent their leisure time telling jokes to the boarders who lived in their houses. Mothers who sang in the church choir or slaved over the ULFTA stoves all prepared perogies and cabbage rolls to satisfy their boarders. In noting such similarities, I am not denying that difference is important; indeed, it is quite central to the story of Sudbury's Ukrainians. It is however meant to bring attention to an underdeveloped but ever present theme in the stories of men and women who grew up working class and Ukrainian in one northern Ontario town.

*This article is based in part on a chapter of my doctoral dissertation. I would like to thank Franca Iacovetta, John Walsh, Steven High, Marilyn Barber, Rhonda Hether, Myron Momryk, Kristina Guiget, Andrew Burtch, and Bryan Palmer for their comments on this article. An earlier draft of this article was presented at the Oral History in Canada Conference and therefore I would also like to thank all of the people who offered astute comments throughout the proceedings of that conference. These insights, along with those of Labour/Le Travail's anonymous reviewers, have enhanced this article. Above all however, I am indebted to those who shared their stories with me.*

89. Despite the egalitarian views that progressive Ukrainians maintained in the public sphere, especially in their ULFTA hall, they did not transfer these beliefs to their homes. "Equality" as Swyrypa notes, "often remained an elusive and contentious ideal." See Swyrypa, *Wedded to the Cause*, 151.

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Willie Seaweed (Siwiti), photographed by W. Heick, 1951.

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